"A Perpetual Ministry" | June 30, 2012 | Order Info


A USA Today article that was published in 2011 excited the Adventist Church worldwide. It reported that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is "the fastest-growing Christian denomination in North America." The article also reported, "Despite its North American roots, the church is growing more than twice as fast overseas."

Although this was wonderful news, as a church we must remember that not everyone who joins, stays. Mike Jones, who left the church in 1983 and returned 16 years later, wrote an insightful article for the Adventist Review called, "Reconnecting: Winning Back Inactive and Former Church Members." He shares these statistics:

Denominational statistics show that more than 1.6 million members worldwide were dropped from membership or were missing between 2002 and 2006.

- The ratio of new members who join the Adventist Church to the number who leave is 100 to 24.2
- Worldwide between 2002 and 2006, 1,684,303 Adventists dropped out or went missing. This breaks down to an average of 6,478 who slipped away every week during this five-year period.
- Forty to 50 percent of our teenagers in North America become inactive by age 25. In his book Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church, Roger Dudley writes: "It seems reasonable to believe that at least 40 percent to 50 percent of Seventh-day Adventist teenagers in North America are essentially leaving the church by their middle 20s. This figure may well be higher."

The problem of losing members is not a new one. Back in 1943, Evangelist Arthur Kiesz had a method for reaching out to former members: "I am profoundly convinced, fellow workers, that in order to hold what we have, to bring new members into the church through evangelism, and to reclaim backsiders and ex-Adventists, we must faithfully visit the people in their homes. This contact shows our love and interest for them. My personal experience has proved to me that this is the most effective way."

Mike Jones says that after he turned in his request to have his membership dropped, he never heard from anyone. One of his sons called a few months later to tell Mike that the church bulletin stated he was no longer a member. Since Mike has been a former member who returned, he offers these helpful steps toward reclaiming:

1. Leave the former member on your church mailing list.
2. Watch for inactive members on Sabbath mornings when they visit.
3. Pray for but don’t nag your family member who has dropped out.
4. Consider anointing the former member who becomes ill.
5. Apologize for the church when a former member feels wounded.
6. Remember to claim God’s promises on behalf of the inactive or former member.
7. Listen, listen, listen.
8. Never give up. Don’t stop praying, and never give up. After all, God doesn’t.

All quarter we’ve been studying how to be more effective in our evangelism and witnessing. Perhaps we should begin at home—in our local churches—with a perpetual ministry.

~ nc

Additional resource: You Tube
How to Order Sharing Scripture

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