OUTREACH TO YOUNG ADULTS

By Paul Tompkins

One of the most worthwhile youth ministries that I have ever had the privilege to be involved with is the Trans-European Division Relay programme. Relay is the TED Institute of Youth Evangelism and in the module on Youth Outreach we look at the examples and commands of Jesus, the teaching and practice of the apostles and the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy.

A key statement that we highlight is one that many of us know well and which I believe applies to all age groups, cultures and generations. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them follow me.”

This statement is used as the basis of a book Philip Samaan entitled Christ’s Way of Reaching People. Six progressive steps are taken from this timeless statement with which we too can follow Christ’s pattern to bring God’s love, power and compassion to those we know. Christ’s methods are about forging relationships with a purpose.

If I look back at my life I can see how this has worked in practice. The Youth Director in the South England Conference in the early 1970’s was Doug Sinclair and in so many ways he and his wife Pauline applied these principles. At the time I was in my late teens and over a number of years their loving relational ministry won a young lad to Christ and has also given me a love of youth ministry that lasts until this day. I still know of no better way of working with young people.

In applying this I believe that there are four key biblical elements that must be found in any balanced youth ministry, namely; Fellowship, Nurture, Worship and Mission. They can be visualised as four parts of a diamond (see illustration).

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1 Ellen G White, The Ministry of Healing, 143.
2 Philip Samaan, Christ’s way of Reaching People, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990
3 Acts 2 42-47
Four Important Dynamics of a Balanced Ministry To Young Adults

Fellowship

Mission

Nurture

Worship

These are the foundation aspects of Christian discipleship. Having met committed Seventh-day Adventist friends at Stanborough School I certainly had good fellowship. Doug and Pauline helped add the nurture aspect and this led me to worship with my local church at Stanborough Park. In turn we also were involved in youth camps that had mission elements as part of the programme and at a young age I remember helping run the church stand at a county show and later at other Impact Youth evangelism events.

Over the years I have learned further important aspects concerning youth outreach. One such method is called “Full Cycle Personal One-To-One Evangelism.” This cycle includes the following steps:

Friendship – people win other people to Christ and programmes are nothing more than tools in people’s hands.

Verbal Witness – As friendships and trust develops the Holy Spirit provides opportunities for the believer to share their story with their new friends. This can be as simple as sharing what Jesus has done in our lives.

Outreach – the next step involves the young person bringing their friends to a church related activity. The environment should be non-threatening, attractive and appealing and can later be further encouraged by friendship, attendance at meetings and studying the Scriptures together.

Conversion – this happens when the non-Christian accepts Jesus as his or her personal Saviour and Lord. This as a result of the person responding to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

Body-Life Programme – where the newly converted person has the opportunity to pray, worship, fellowship and study with God’s people on a regular week by week basis.

Discipleship – the new Christian needs his faith developed through mentoring by a more experienced believer. This may be the original friend or could be another from the church. They need to spend significant time with the new believer.

Spiritual parenthood – the process follows on from the previous point and comes full cycle when the new believer, having been nurtured and discipled becomes a spiritual offspring and in turn begins to gain maturity and reach out in friendship to another unbeliever.

Times change and society today is undoubtedly different from even a decade ago. But Christ’s methods endure and are appealing. All of us have friends, all of us effortlessly mingle with colleagues, work associates, family members and others who come into our paths on a regular basis. Having showed our sympathy, ministered to their needs and thereby winning their confidence the last and key step is to invite them to follow Jesus.

Even in the midst of today’s secular societies there are definitely still people waiting to know the power of saving grace. As is often stated we may be the only Christ some people will see, but by using His methods I have no doubt that young people can and will respond to the Saviours call.

support will be mutually given and cultural distinctions between leadership and led will be reduced.

- Skilful shepherds will see ministry as a plural exercise on the part of the body of Christ rather than as one man’s job. A diversity of skills and roles will then emerge and team-ministry will be sought after.

- Skilful shepherds will not seek training until the gifts of ministry are evident and tested. They will not put themselves forward on the basis of wishful thinking about hoped-for but untried potential.

- Skilful shepherds will see ministry as a task which demands training. The complexity of people’s problems and the eternal significance of the pastor’s work will cause them to reject a casual or self-confident attitude towards ministry. They will recognise that skill is demanded of shepherds who are to nourish their sheep. The skill will consist of a deep knowledge of the word of God and a deep knowledge of people infused into a personality which has been trained in godliness.

- Skilful shepherds will realize that the most essential food on which to nourish the sheep is the word of God. They will not be overwhelmed by people’s experiences nor overawed by their arguments. With gentleness and patience they will seek to submit the subjective experiences and perceptions of men to the objective and revealed truth of God.

- Skilful shepherds will lead the sheep. They will not be content for the flock to remain as they are, not even to manage them more efficiently. They will seek the growth of the flock numerically. They will also seek their progress, individually and corporately, towards maturity. They will not

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There has been much debate lately in our church about the requirement that an elected president in our church organisation should be an ‘ordained pastor of experience’. The debate is mainly due to the fact that this provision excludes women from leadership. Regardless of the gender issue and important as that may be, however, the provision in our policy is a way of saying to all of us who lead in the church that the pattern of good ministers or pastors, following Jesus Christ, is the pattern of our work and service in the church. Tidball’s summary of the ideal of skilful shepherds may help us focus on this calling that we have received, from God, from Christ, from the Holy Spirit, and from the Church.

In the list we have before us, one point strikes me as particularly important: ‘The skill [demanded of shepherds who are to nourish their sheep] will consist of a deep knowledge of the word of God and a deep knowledge of people infused into a personality which has been trained in godliness.’ Every day and every moment of our ministry as leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is an opportunity from God to grow in developing this skill. May God through the love of Christ and the power and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit fill us all with such growing skill as shepherds of our flock, regardless of place, time, culture and size. Thank you for your faithfulness in serving Him.

—Bertil Wiklander

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**TO THINK ABOUT…**

**GUIDE THE WAY**

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.” Psalm 32:8

God does not expect leaders to be perfect, but to be whole. To have integrity means to be whole, as in a whole number (an "integer"). Despite their human frailties, leaders can effectively guide those who follow.

This scripture reminds us that leaders must closely observe the flock for its needs and problems. God expects spiritual leaders to serve as guides. A guide takes a person or group safely to a planned destination. The Hebrew words for “guide” gives us several clues as to what God expects from those He uses as leaders:

- A guide is a spiritual head who unites and directs people in their walk with God.
- A guide takes people on the straight path that leads to fellowship with God.
- A guide gives accurate and godly counsel to those who need it.
- A guide leads with gentleness and trustworthiness, making others feel safe.
- A guide bases his or her direction on the Spirit and the Word of God.

*The Maxwell Leadership Bible*