



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH



BWACHA MISSION DISTRICT



Mukobeko South Youth Department

# SEMINAR 5

## MENTORING

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MUKOBEKO SOUTH SDA CHURCH

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# MENTORING

## *Ownership, and Empowerment in Youth Ministry*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Apart from the AY department, there is little space for young people in the different organs of the church, and many adults are reluctant to change that by giving up any of their positions to youth. Yet, in many churches, young people make up the bulk of our membership. Statistics show a percentage of 60 to 90 in some parts of the world.

Where they are not given a job to do, or even a say in how things are done, young people are less and less interested in the life of the church because they find it rather suitable for older people and leaders. The older ones are worried about losing youth, and yet the need for commitment and involvement of young people in the life of the church is the most effective means of developing their spiritual life and preserving it. When they feel part of the ecclesiastical structure, they will have a sense of belonging and they will remain in the church.

It is time for leaders to seize the moment by recognizing the spiritual gifts of the youth and elevating them to positions of leadership as they are trained for them and develop the abilities. We need to have a plan in place for passing on the baton of mission and leadership. It must be an intentional effort and a thorough promotion and advocacy by the youth leader to the church leadership. The youth want to belong. They have a right to belong. We can help them do that.

### 2. SEMINAR OBJECTIVES

This module of the seminar will seek to develop a “Pass it On” philosophy. We will:

- Understand the need to “pass it on” to the youth in all sectors of the Church.
- Know the scriptural bases of involving the youth in the development of the church
- Know the steps to follow in the process of using young people for better results.

The youth will be the leaders of the future, ready or not; why not get them ready now, rather than merely dropping the church in their laps when we are no longer here?

### 3. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPOWERING YOUTH AND GIVING THEM RESPONSIBILITIES

More than ever before, young people remain important to the growth of a community. The psalmist says: “Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants, and our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace” (Ps. 144:12). Young people must be trusted because there is life in them. The wise man declares: “Strength is the glory of young people” (Proverbs 20:29).

### LEADING THROUGH GOOD MENTORING

The Bible speaks about the importance of drivers in the personal development. In Hebrews 13: 7, it is said that the mentor leaves an impact and a behavior to imitate:

“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” Adults in churches have a part to play in helping the younger ones grow and imitate them so that they can have the necessary discernment to move forward.



In the Bible, young people are presented in a positive way and their physical, mental and moral qualities are highlighted. They are considered as the equals of their elders. In fact, in biblical times, a Jewish young person was considered to become an adult in the spiritual realm of life at 12 or 13. From that point on, they were usually apprenticed to a person experienced in whatever their life work was to be, so that they were completely ready to take over even something as serious as priesthood at 30. Jesus began His official ministry at 30, but He began doing spiritual guidance as needed, even to temple leaders, at 12. The spiritual work to be done by elders is the same as that of the youth's.

“Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity” (1 Timothy 5.1-2). Young people have deep spiritual abilities. They have the same spiritual potentialities as adults. “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God dwells in you, and you have conquered the evil” (1 John 2:14). Certainly, the Apostle was inspired by the books of proverbs which confirmed that young people are strong. This force is at once physical, moral, and spiritual. “Strength is the glory of young men” (Proverbs 20:29).

#### 4. WHAT DOES THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY SAY?

First, it would behoove us to remember that our denomination was founded by young people. At 54, Joseph Bates was the “father figure” of the group. The others were in their late teens and twenties. Their hearts were on fire for God in a way that tends to fade in age. The Spirit of Prophecy shows the importance of the emphasis to be given to youth. “Let not the youth be ignored; let them share in the labors and responsibility. Let them feel they are part of the act in helping and blessing others” (6T, p.435).

Within a few decades, we lost a lot of our young people through our negligence (and it's still going on today). “Very much has been lost to the cause of God because of inattention to the young. Ministers of the gospel should form a happy acquaintance with the youth of their congregations” (Pastoral Ministry, p. 275).

There is a need for mentors who can be accepted by young people. “We should seek to enter into the feeling of the youth, sympathizing with them in their joys and sorrows, their conflicts and victories. Jesus did not remain in heaven, away from the sorrowing and sinful; He came down to this world, that He might become acquainted with the weakness, the suffering, and the temptations of the fallen race” (Gospel Workers, p. 209).

It is important to give responsibilities to the youth as they can be used by God to accomplish great things. “God wants the youth to become men of earnest mind, to be prepared for action in His noble work, and fitted to bear responsibilities” (Messages to Young People, p. 21).

That is why Ellen White makes this urgent appeal: “We must manifest confidence in our young men...” (Christian Education, p. 206).

#### 5. EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTH

The main reason older adults are reluctant to allow youth to lead is because they are inexperienced. This is true. They must be taught and given responsibilities as they show aptitude. This is how they gain experience. We need to remember, we, too, started out young and inexperienced.

Youth empowerment is of paramount importance as it allows for young people to grow up with skills. The aim is to enable them to participate in the life and development of the church by helping them grow in



knowledge and aptitude. In this case, the youth are allowed to take initiatives, given a share of authority, taught to make decisions and implement what is best for them in the church.

The aim here is to enable young people develop their ability to take initiatives and participate in the development of the church. Young people can be a key and a lever for the development of the kingdom of God, whether for evangelism or within the church. David Wilkerson said, and I am convinced: “Young people are a part of the church today, but all the leaders of tomorrow.”

In order to become good leaders of tomorrow, the youth must be part of the church organization of today. They should be integrated into the present life of the church. There is, therefore, a need to position young people on the right path so they can have the necessary discernment to move forward.

However, this does not merely mean teaching them to do all the things we already do, in the ways that we do them. The other reason older adults fear to give youth responsibilities is that they may have different ideas than ours. Good! We must learn to listen to and welcome their ideas. In the same way that we are asking them to learn from us how to discern the working of the Spirit and whether a given idea will be for the greater good of the congregation and community, so we need to learn from them how to listen “outside of our own boxes” of long-ingrained habits and culture.

### NEED OF GOOD MENTORING

Mentoring is an intentional relationship that is created between a less experienced person and an experienced one. The experienced person thus becomes a growth model for the inexperienced one. According to David Clutterbuck “A mentor is a more experienced individual willing to share knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust” (Encyclopedia of Strategic Leadership and Management, p.1177). Mentoring is, therefore, a means of self-development. It is a way of helping the mentor develop himself and develop the other. It is not a ready-made lesson, but a potential for young people to develop through mentor orientation.

### WHAT DOES MENTORING INVOLVE?

- Spiritual accompaniment. The mentor is committed to guiding and providing spiritual direction to the young person by leading them to adopt a life based on Christ and be committed to the spiritual activities of the Church. For example, praying with the youth, including them in personal prayer time, and, importantly, allowing them to see the way the mentor deals with challenges and struggles that come into his or her life.
- Physical accompaniment. The mentor tries to help the young person in their physical development. Find out what physical activities interest the mentee and join them in doing those. Encourage them, too, to learn new ways of being active. Walk together, jog together, clean up a road or park or stream together. Show them ways that physical activity can be helpful to those around them, not only to their own health.
- Moral accompaniment. The mentor helps the young person “cleanse his way” (Psalms 119:9). A mentor is worse than useless if he or she is not already a committed Christian, dedicated to living a life close to Jesus’ side, which will therefore be worthy of emulation. As we already studied, this doesn’t mean being perfect. The mentee will learn the most by seeing how a faulty human humbly lives by holding onto Christ in all situations. Find out what your mentee believes his or her strengths and weaknesses are, and work together on ways to deepen the strengths and shore up the weaknesses. The mentor can be a strong help in situations of peer pressure, for instance, especially if the parents are not filling this role, for whatever reason. One thing you will both be reminded of is that people are stronger together.





- Social support. The mentor must assist the young person in creating and maintaining healthy relationships. Our young people are in the most tumultuous period of their lives as they figure out who they really are. They are likely somewhere in the process of choosing partners, from first beginning to think about the opposite sex to seeking to learn whether God has a mate for them, and if not, how to live pure lives as singles. This may be their central concern, but you are in a position to help them to understand that only whole individuals can have healthy marriages, and whole individuals must have strong relationships in all spheres of life—from their siblings, parents, and extended families to the church family relationships, and including community, school, and work relationships outside the church. If the salt never leaves the shaker, it won't be much use to God. Some of the older young people are already parents, as well, and that leads to a whole new level of mentoring. In order to succeed in mentoring, one must be able to go through the monitoring stages. The feeling of belonging will begin when young people find in adults the people on whom they can rely, able to guide them and help them acquire the necessary capacities for leading.

In our particular context, the mentoring relationship would be between a present church leader and a young person who is interested in becoming a church leader. The relationship should be based on mutual interest—for example, a young musician should mentor with, say, a choir director or music minister, while one who may someday want to be a pastor could mentor with a pastor or elder, and one who is good with children can mentor with a Sabbath School leader or superintendent. The mentee can assist, then gradually take on more responsibility until he or she is prepared to hold an actual office in the area of interest.

#### TRY THE YOUTH IN THE CHURCH

Care must be taken to avoid underestimating the quality of the content that must be taught young people. The key to drive the machine of the church must be given to the youth. Once in motion, they can, and they will make the machine their personal property, so be sure they know how to drive. As they grow in ability and understanding, show them all the complexity of running a church. Help them see how to lovingly deal with conflict. Let them try things. And let them make mistakes without being judged or rejected. If they have a strong mentor, they will be able to withstand mistakes and will increasingly be able to discern where they went wrong and what to do differently next time. If you don't know how to fail, you will never succeed.

A sense of belonging makes the church a family where the youth find their place. In the same way that children don't run away from their families so long as they feel they belong and maintain lifelong love and commitment to their families even after they grow up, so the young people will remain in the denomination when they feel they are part of the family. They may move to other congregations as they grow—in fact, the best outcome would be their starting new churches! But they will always belong. And the home church of their childhood and youth will retain a special glow even if they move away, because that is where they learned to truly follow Christ into abundant life, and into the ministry He had planned for them.

## 6. WHAT TO DO?

- a. The integration of young people begins with a strong will of the community to welcome them. There should be a willingness to welcome young people. They need to feel connected, appreciated, expected, and respected.
- b. Encourage and help the congregation develop dedicated and trained mentors.



- c. Invite young people to participate in events that will strengthen them spiritually, intellectually, physically, etc.
- d. Encourage and allow them to organize activities, camps, sports events, etc.
- e. Give them opportunities to lead church programs.
- f. Appoint young people in diverse positions of the church and train them to perform. They will do better and better each time they try.

The attraction of young people to church services depends on the quality of the program, the opportunities they will be offered, and the training they have received. Integrating young people into church life requires the taking of responsibility.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Young people have plenty of strength, energy, and ideas, and as they usually have time they can commit themselves fully (and free of charge) to the church. The sooner the young person feels needed and important, the more loyal they will become, and the more difficult it will be for them to leave the church.

## 8. ACTIVITIES

- a. Go around the departments of your church and report how many young people are appointed in each area.
- b. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the report?
- c. Choose a young person and mentor them for a year.

## 9. RESOURCES

Young Adults - Mentoring Series available for free download at [www.youth.adventist.org](http://www.youth.adventist.org)

The Way to Success