



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH



BWACHA MISSION DISTRICT



Mukobeko South Youth Department

SEMINAR 9

YOUTH OUTREACH

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MUKOBEKO SOUTH SDA CHURCH

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YOUTH OUTREACH

Comprehensive Evangelism

1. INTRODUCTION

THE CHURCH EXISTS FOR MISSION

When the apostle Peter, still in the first century of Christianity, sought to explain the reason for the existence of the church, he quoted what God had said to His people before Sinai: Peter reminded us that we, the church of God, is a “holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people chosen by God for the purpose of proclaiming the virtues of Him who brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

We exist for a purpose; we have a mission: to proclaim the virtues of Christ. Christ himself left this mission: to preach the Gospel to every tribe, language, and people. This same mission is identified in the context of the three angels’ messages when we see that each angel brings with him a Gospel to announce to everyone on earth. If the church exists for the purpose of evangelizing the world, then our young people’s programs should reflect this. We as leaders should be about the business of both evangelizing our youth, and recruiting them to take their place in the world church as young evangelists.

But what does “evangelist” mean? Is it only an official, paid position, someone who goes out and preaches to crowds at large meetings? Or is it true that, one way or another, every Christian is to be an evangelist?

If the word Gospel means “Good News,” then the evangelist must be happy about what he or she is sharing. To simply speak of the problems of society is not to evangelize. This is journalism. The act of evangelizing is something that, regardless of form or method, must take place in a context of “good news,” “happy novelty,” both to the speaker and to the listener. Evangelism does not deny the sad reality, but it brings back to this sad reality the joy that hope produces in the hearts of those who believe in the “good news” of the Gospel.

2. SEMINAR OBJECTIVES

This module will consider different forms of evangelism and how to motivate our youth to experiment with them to discover what their particular best place in mission is. We will also examine biblical models, and realize the importance of spiritual gift discernment in determining what an individual’s role should be in the mission of the church.

3. MANY DIFFERENT METHODS

When the writer of Hebrews begins his epistle by talking about the “various ways” through which God has always sought to speak to human beings, he not only describes a form of God’s action, but grounds a reality: in the transmission of the Gospel message, there are diverse ways and means of transmitting the same message. Let’s look at a few of them.

RELATIONAL OR FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

This is the method that is most often used and with which most people will be more comfortable. It is, in a very real sense, what Jesus did when He “mingled with the people, seeking their good.” Your youth already have friends. (Those who don’t are in need of a different kind of help, and helping them learn to be friendly and find friends will be a first step in evangelism, both to them and to the friends.) Help them learn to see that when they act in loving ways toward their friends they are doing the work of God. This



does not mean preaching to their friends or trying to convince them to believe what we believe. As a matter of fact, trying to argue someone into something does far more harm than good.

It does mean being there for their friends—having a trustworthy listening ear, watching for ways to help and encourage them, and also receiving help from them. The best kind of friendship is the one in which both friends are seeking to help the other be his or her best self. Then, when the relationship is strong and has grown in intimacy, at some point the friend will have questions about what you believe. Why, for instance, are you able to remain in a state of trust when things are going wrong? That is the time we need to be ready with answers for why we believe what we believe, what Jesus has done and is doing for us, and stories of grace we've seen in our own lives. That's when it's accepted as the best of Good News.

SMALL GROUPS

On a little more formal basis, all youth organizations should also have small groups which get together to sing, study the Bible, pray, and share stories. We have many excellent resources for how to begin and carry on small group ministries. If you already have small groups in place, it might just be the best place for someone to easily bring a friend who is beginning to have questions about faith and spiritual practice.

Hopefully, these friends would have already been invited to fun events, outings, or service opportunities the youth group is doing, and which many will enjoy even if they are not yet spiritually awakened.

LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

The priority area for the ministry of youth is the community. One of the main needs of young people, one of the main reasons they become bored and restless, is the need to be needed. The community is a real space, with real people, and real needs. Any action in favor of the community is an action that will produce reactions, transformations that can be perceived. This encourages all involved, but especially the young.

Although it seems romantic (even epic), the idea of serving in distant lands beyond the sea, as vital as this dimension of service is, is far from being the only possible way of doing mission. For the great majority of people, the call to mission takes place in the context of “flourish where you are planted”. There is no denying this local, daily dimension of evangelism. The ends of the world need the Gospel. But Jesus told His disciples to start first at home, in Jerusalem and Samaria, then all Judea.

Youth must be taught by example that every church has a special responsibility to its community. Although our system oversees the financial maintenance of mission in distant lands (see our Sabbath school offering system), the church cannot ignore that it has a special responsibility to the community in which it is situated. The Jerusalem of every young person is the place where he lives, the school where she studies, it is his university, her work environment.

In the ideals of Youth Ministry, we can clearly perceive this broad and inclusive vision of the Mission, for, driven by the “Love of Christ” that motivates me, the target challenges me to preach the Advent Message to the whole world in my generation. “Everyone” includes those who are close to me. By committing myself, in the Vow, to take part in the Youth Ministry of the local church, I am showing interest in my local reality. In the purpose, I am reminded that I exist for the youth, the church and my fellow human. In the Objectives I understand that I exist to Save from Sin and Guide in Service. In the Mission statement, I am urged to “work for the young, fostering fellowship and spiritual motivation, empowering them to serve the church and the community.”

Not only that but doing local community service of some kind is one of the most effective forms of evangelism. It raises awareness of the church as a whole, and of the youth in particular; it's something you can invite youth to help with, and it opens doors no other kind of service. If someone is worrying



about basic human needs, from where their next meal will come from to how they will get their lawns mowed or get to their next doctor's appointment, it's hard for them to be very interested in going somewhere to hear a sermon.

PUBLIC PROCLAMATION

Here we come to the thing that most people first think of when they hear the word “evangelism.” It is an important part of our mission to the world, and some of your young people will be interested and gifted in the ways they need to be to help with public proclamation. When your church puts on evangelistic series, your youth can be helpful in every aspect of this endeavor, from planning, inviting, putting up posters, stuffing envelopes, and sharing it on all their social media networks, to greeting at the door, sitting with guests, helping to answer questions, and yes, preaching and singing, too. For that matter, why wait until a special series to let them try all these ways of helping? You may have a budding young preacher in your midst who could learn invaluable lessons by preaching now and then.

When members of your youth ministry has already been active in being true friends to those they know, meeting and praying in small groups and inviting others to join in, and doing visible community service that matters—not for the purpose of “getting people to come to your meetings or to church,” but simply because they are in need and it's the right thing to do—then many more will, in fact, be interested in the public meetings.

4. TEACH THEM TO APPRECIATE THE DIVERSITY

Every method, every form, every way of evangelizing should be taught in such a way that the young enjoy it. Remember: “Gospel” is something happy for those who speak as well as for those who listen. Therefore, evangelization must take place in such a context that the youth appreciate it.

In Module One (The Youth Leader as a Spiritual Leader, Mentor, and Friend), it was mentioned that young people, especially in the context of postmodernity, are pragmatic. They believe in what works. They need to see how the things they believe affect real, day-to-day life. A method of evangelism that works in practice will always be a method that the young will appreciate. Realizing that your actions are providing a reaction in the intended direction will bring tremendous satisfaction and joy to the young person who is involved in the process of evangelism.

It is especially important that each young person is being carefully led to discover and use his or her own special gifts.

THE DISCOVERY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS WILL HELP TO CONNECT THE YOUNG TO THE TYPE OF EVANGELISM THEY ARE COMFORTABLE WITH.

We have observed that the AYM Mission Statement challenges me to empower young people to serve the church and the community. This training includes training, but it is not limited to that.

Empowerment includes making young people fit to fulfill the mission of proclaiming the gospel. If we already understand that this proclamation must take place in a context of good news, something good for the proclaimer and the receiver, there is no denying the crucial importance of allowing the young person to do what they need in a way that they like. No matter what age we are, we all have seen the sad results when someone, perhaps for years, has dutifully filled a position they really don't like and for which they are not gifted or fitted, just because they think they must. This is not evangelism, nor is it a good way to run a church!



The most effective way for evangelism to happen is for the young person to fulfill his mission in the context of exercising his spiritual gifts. It is therefore the duty of the youth leader to guide the process of discovering the Spiritual Gifts of their youth. This discovery will help affirm the youth and young adults in the kind of evangelism they feel comfortable with. And there is no denying the reality: Happy people work better. A young person doing what she needs in the way she likes, is a young person doing what she needs to be happy.

While she discovers true joy in service, others are discovering the joy of following God. That is evangelizing. Happy—it will be more effective. Happy—they will feel more fulfilled. Happy—they will be more creative in finding ways and means to bless their community with the reality of a transforming Gospel.

5. METHODS

Try it: Instead of you alone wanting to determine the form and manner in which your young people should evangelize, dialogue with them about possible ways and means, how they would like to see it done. Ask what they like to do. Challenge them to think of new ways to do what needs to be done. Analyze together the reality of your local community. Help them realize every community is different. What is the character of theirs? What are the values of the community? What are taboos? What are the connection values? If evangelism is “Good News”, what would be the “Good News” in the context of this individual community? The people of the community have already tried the “Bad News” of Satan. We all are victims of sin. Look for ways to transform the life of the community for the better.

For example: A universal value of connection is love. Christ knew that. Christ’s method in all the communities He visited was to love. When He loved, He attracted. Those who felt loved and supported were also attracted. Loving is always right. Yet different actions say “Love” to different people and in different places. Together with your youth, study the differing methods of Jesus. When did He use friendship evangelism? When did He use small group evangelism? What kinds of community service did He do? When and how did He proclaim publicly? Then determine which of these methods will work best in your community. You may use them all, at some point. Have a plan. But also pray a lot, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in ways that seem to you to be completely off your plan!

The human being is reactive. By default, it reacts to the stimuli it receives. If one is simply criticized in his worldview, he will become defensive (or go on the attack). He will close his heart (and maybe his fist). Now if he feels loved he will open his heart. Jesus left the example.

6. ELLEN WHITE ON JESUS’ METHODS

“Christ Lifted the Stigma from Poverty—Christ has ever been the poor man’s friend. He chose poverty, and honored it by making it His lot. He has stripped from it forever the reproach of scorn by blessing the poor, the inheritors of God’s kingdom. Such was His work. By consecrating Himself to a life of poverty He redeemed poverty from its humiliation. He took His position with the poor that He might lift from poverty the stigma that the world had attached to it. He knew the danger of the love of riches. He knew that this love is ruinous to many souls. It places those who are rich where they indulge every wish for grandeur. It teaches them to look down on those who are suffering the pressure of poverty. It develops the weakness of human minds and shows that notwithstanding the abundance of wealth, the rich are not rich toward God.” (Welfare Ministry, 172.3)

“Our Savior went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate. He took the little children in His arms and blessed them, and spoke



words of hope and comfort to the weary mothers. With unfailing tenderness and gentleness, He met every form of human woe and affliction. Not for Himself, but for others did He labor. He was the servant of all. It was His meat and drink to bring hope and strength to all with whom He came in contact” (Gospel Workers, 188).

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior 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” (The Ministry of Healing, 143).

7. THE PROPHETIC DUTY OF THE YOUTH

It is the youth who will finish the work. The youth leader who is able to instill these mission principles into the hearts of young will not only be fulfilling a leadership role but will be helping the youth fulfill the purpose for which Adventist Youth Ministry exists. The young have a mission, and this mission is a prophetic duty. They will finish the job. Joel prophesied that young people would be directly involved in proclaiming the message: “[In the last days] I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28).

The target “The Advent message to the whole world in my Generation” establishes the sense of urgency that must be imprinted. The mission of preaching the gospel must now be completed in their generation.

8. CONCLUSION

It is the leader’s responsibility and privilege to cultivate that passion and commitment, while encouraging increasing levels of participation of each young person in the fulfillment of the mission in a holistic way. This integrity in the fulfillment of the mission will give qualitative aspects (forms, methods, and manners) and at the various levels of involvement (personal, small groups, public proclamation, local community service projects).

By challenging young to engage in these various levels, the youth leader will be giving the young the blessing of having day-to-day, mission-driven involvement. Youth will learn how to testify of their faith at the level of personal relationships, whether by studying the Bible with someone through a series of Bible Studies or through every day or occasional dialogues where they will always have the opportunity to impart spiritual values and experiences.

They can participate in Small Groups and Youth Sabbath School Classes where they can experience a maturing of their faith as well as help other young people to grow. They will have the opportunity to engage in public proclamation, both on a normal Sabbath and in public evangelism series. They will participate in local community service projects where they will have the opportunity to involve non-Adventist friends—or help them in projects they already have

going on.

Remember, this is one of the most effective methods of personal evangelism today: Involve those who intend to evangelize in joint actions to meet the needs of a community. Giving people a sense of belonging is the most effective way to make them believe. For many years, people first had to show that they believed before they were allowed to belong. But that’s not the way Jesus did it. The world changed. Involvement in common experiences is the most effective way to convey values and make them common. It is the “Test Drive” of the Gospel. First try it, then want it for yourself. It works.



BE OPEN TO CHANGE

Although these various levels of involvement can be achieved through various structures present in the context of the church and the Youth Ministry, they do not need to (and should not) be restricted to pre-existing structures. For an ever-changing society, methods, forms, and ways must continue to change. Your youth will be your best source of new ideas and creative methods.

Love (by God and people) is the driving principle that will ground all actions. But the methods, forms and ways need to be relevant to the reality with which it is intended to dialogue. Emphasize therefore the importance of guiding young people in discovering their spiritual gifts, and in the challenge of applying these gifts, in methods of evangelism preferred by themselves (under the guidance of the leader).

But there remains one final question: Why by themselves? Simple: Young are the best translation of the reality in which they are inserted. They are the best thermometer of this reality, and can become an effective thermostat of the reality of a postmodern, relativistic, pluralistic, individualistic, and pragmatic society. Ellen White said it accurately: “The Lord appointed the youth to be His helping hand” (3T, p. 104).

9. ACTIVITIES

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

- A. Discuss the four different evangelism methods outlined here. Which are your youth already involved in? Which do you want to branch out into?
- B. Make a list of at least two ways to encourage each of the methods within your youth ministry.

