

COME & GO

April–June 2017

A Quarterly Evangelism and Discipleship Resource for Church Leaders

“I will
make you
fishers of men.”

Come and Follow!

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LTM Growth Stages

- 1. Come and See.**
- 2. Come and Follow.**
- 3. Come and Be With**
- 4. Go and Bear Fruit.**
- 5. Go and Make Disciples**



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By: Pastor Desmond James

As we conclude the first quarter of 2017, I wish to commend all who have been engaged in the Total Membership Involvement (TMI) Initiative. It has been my joy to be an eyewitness to the Lord Transform Me (LTM) coordinated approach to ministry and mission as the churches engaged and impacted their communities in a series of crusades where we led non-members into a saving relationship with Christ. **Come and See** in action!

In our comprehensive quest to replete our churches with active and faithful disciples, we wish to give laser focus this month to the **Lord Transform Me** strategic imperative: **“Come and Follow.”** I am forever fascinated with how Jesus trained ordinary men and women to turn the world upside down. It is so amazing and mindboggling how in three and a half years He turned them from learners to apostles, from those called to those sent. He bade them, ‘Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men’ (Matt 4: 18). Just imagine being trained by Jesus Himself! In John 1:35-42 the Bible chronicles a rich and instructive account from which I would like to extract four simple principles to **“Come and Follow.”**

Firstly, we must “Behold the Lamb of God”. In this context, John the Baptist, the one who was born to introduce the Messiah to the world, invites two of his disciples to fix their gaze on Jesus. Unlike his public declaration at the Jordan where he introduced Jesus to the world, he is issuing a personal invitation. *“And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’”* John 1:36. If we must **“Come and Follow,”** we must first see Jesus for who He is. He was not just announcing the coming of Jesus, he was telling them what to do. Jesus must become the most attractive distraction in our lives, in our churches, and in our world. Transformation will definitely take place when we look to Jesus.

Secondly, we must possess an incredible curiosity. They began immediately to follow Him. Jesus makes an inquiring statement. He stirred their curiosity. Jesus said unto them, “What seek ye?” John 1:38. In other words, “What do you want?” “What are you looking for?” They said unto Him, “Rabbi (*which is to say when translated, Master*), Where do you live?” John 1:39. The more we behold Him, the more we want to know Him. Imagine that in their very first conversation with Him, they recognized Him as their Master—as Lord of their lives. They decided He is not only good enough to save them but He is great enough to lead them. When we ‘come and follow,’ Jesus becomes the Master of our lives. He is indeed the answer to all our questions.

Thirdly, we must abide with Him. Upon His invitation, they abode with Him that day (John 1:39). The disciples spent the entire day with Jesus. Once we behold Him and enquire of Him, we will eventually spend time with Him. When last did you spend an entire day with Jesus? Jesus bids us “Learn of Me” in Matt 11:29. Learning takes place when we spend time with Jesus. Take time out to sit where Jesus sits, to go where Jesus goes, and to walk where Jesus walks, while just beholding the aura of His glory. Discipleship is not a two-week course in the classroom, it is a lifetime of walking and talking with Jesus and learning more and more of Him each day.

Finally, we must joyfully declare Him. Andrew, after spending the day with Jesus, ran to find his brother Simon Peter and said unto him, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:40). What conviction! He is my Saviour. He is my Lord. I have found what I have been looking for. I was lost but I have found the good Shepherd.

Yes, Saints of SLM! Jesus is still using ordinary men and women like you and me to bring His kingdom come. Today, I invite you to discover the joy and experience the thrill that common men and women with an uncommon calling receive when they have an extraordinary encounter to **“Come and Follow!”**

FOLLOWING CHRIST FOR TRANSFORMATION



By: Pastor Wayne Knowles

IN Matthew 4: 18 Jesus spoke two words to two fishermen that changed the world. He said to them, "Follow Me." Over two thousand years have passed and these two words are still making a difference in the lives of millions of people around the world. Many have given up houses, jobs, friends, and family to

follow Christ. By humbly surrendering all to Him these individuals have experienced a powerful, spiritual transformation that only Christ can give (John 1: 12).

Following Christ is therefore one of the key identifying marks of a disciple of Christ. In Luke chapters 9 and 14, Jesus declared to many around Him how serious a decision one makes when they decide to follow Him. The summary of following Christ is that there can be nothing as valuable, nothing as precious, nothing as close to our heart, and no one as dear to us as our Master. We must be sold out to Christ.

This is the type of commitment that Christ requires of us today. All church members, all church leaders must be committed to Christ above all else. No doctrine, no leader, no friend, and no group within the church can experience the power of God in their lives if they have not become committed followers of Christ. Commitment is the key to spiritual success in these last days. God cannot use us as He would, if we have not let go of our own preferences and desires. Hence, a follower of Christ must be bonded to Him (Rom. 1: 21).

The term "bondservant" in the New Testament (bond-servant or slave in some translations) is a translation of the Greek word *doulos*. In most cases, however, the term referred to a person in a permanent role of service. A bondservant was considered the property of a Roman citizen, **holding no right to leave his place of service**. The New Testament also notes that Jesus included bondservants as characters in His own parables (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:41-48). In contrast with the cultural view, Jesus taught that the greatest was the "servant (*doulos*) of all" (Mark 9:35).

In many New Testament books, the word bondservant was used in reference to a person's **commitment to Jesus**. Most of Paul's letters begin by referring to himself as a servant of Christ Jesus. James and Jude, half-brothers of Jesus, both refer to themselves as Christ's bondservants. The apostle Peter called himself a "servant and apostle" (2 Peter 1:1).

Despite proclaiming a message of freedom from sin in Jesus Christ, these writers were dedicated to Jesus as their one master. *Further, their service to the Lord was not one they could consider leaving.* Just as a bondservant was more than an employee who could leave for another job, these Christians were servants who could never leave their master for another. This is the type of commitment that Jesus was referring to when He said: **"Come and Follow Me."**

As we look forward to this new quarter we challenge all our members to follow Jesus as a bondservant is committed to his master. We encourage you to commit to Christ and His church like never before. I appeal to all members and leaders alike to be pure in doctrine, deep in love, strong in faith, and dogged in devotion to God and His Remnant Church. It is only when we unite as servants of God that we can truly be what God wants us to be. As a result we will do what He wants us to do. **Be His followers!**

COME AND FOLLOW ME

LET US READ Matthew 4:18-22

¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. ¹⁹ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ²⁰ And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. ²¹ And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. ²² And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Whenever Jesus calls us, we must obey Him. The experience of Jesus and His disciples lives on for thousands of years to show us how to truly grow in Christ. First, Jesus invited these disciples to get to know Him when He said to them, “Come and see” (John 1:39). That was the initial call. All true believers yearn for more and more of Jesus. They are committed to prayer, study, and meditate on Him and His word. Today, I want us to consider the second call that Jesus made on His disciples’ life. In this second and critical call He invited them into a deeper relationship with Him, when He said, Come and follow Me (Mat. 4:18).

There are three points about Jesus’ second call to His disciples that I want us to consider: 1) The call comes from Jesus; 2) The call is surprisingly simple; and 3) The call is profoundly transformative.

First, the call comes from Jesus. By that I mean, the initiative lies all with him, not with us. Notice how the direction of the call goes: “While walking by the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw two brothers . . . casting a net into the sea. . . . And he said to them, ‘Follow me. . . .’ And going on from there he saw two other brothers . . . mending their nets, and he called them.”

The direction is all from Jesus to the ones He calls. **Jesus** went walking and **He** found them. He saw them when they were just going about their business, not looking for Him. There was nothing about them that was so special. They had been with Him for about a year now but they didn’t seek Jesus. He sought them. And He called out to them, “Follow me.” It was all, from first to last a divine initiative. God is still calling us today. Not just to get to know Him but to be more and more like Him. How many of us today will answer that call?

In his book, “Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew,” Martin Franzmann writes: *“Jesus takes the initiative and calls the disciples.... In rabbinical circles the initiative in discipleship lay with the disciple. ‘Take to yourself a teacher,’ is the advice given to the aspiring disciple by a Jewish teacher. . . . We have no record of a call issued by a Jewish rabbi to a disciple in all rabbinic literature. . . . What in Judaism was the pious duty of the disciple is here the sovereign act of the Master. . . . Jesus reserves the initiative for Himself.”*

Hallelujah! As with those first disciples, so also with us, Jesus’ disciples today. We didn’t seek Him. He sought us, and found us, and called us to be His own. Jesus said He came to seek and to save the lost. That was us. We were lost, lost in our sin and darkness, and we didn’t even know it. Like those first disciples, like all the lost people in the world today, we were just going about our everyday business, casting our nets and mending our nets, but unable to mend our relationship with God. That net was torn beyond repair, and we couldn’t fix it. That’s what it means to be lost, lost in sin and heading toward death, eternal death apart from God.

But then Jesus comes walking. He sees us, He finds us where we are. He speaks to us, words of life and forgiveness, because it is the call to come and follow Him. Jesus calls us in the gospel. He called you in your baptism, when you didn't do a thing to choose him. You were dead, and he brought you to life. *Before you decided to follow Jesus. He chose to call you.*

Suppose I wanted you to get from here to my house. There are two ways. I could give you directions; or you could just follow me. You would choose to follow me if you don't know the direction to my house. In the same way we don't know how to grow spiritually. We don't know how to get from sinner to saint. That's why Jesus left heaven and came to earth to show us the way. He says to us, "Follow me. I am the way the truth and the life" (John 14:6). It is that simple.

Well, that's kind of what Jesus does when He calls His disciples. The call is surprisingly simple in its content: "Follow me." That's it. Follow Jesus, come after Him. Not a lot of complicated directions to remember. Just one person to follow. Follow Jesus, keep on following Him, and you will get to where you need to go.

To be sure, the disciples will find out more, a whole lot more, along the way. They will grow in their understanding of what all is involved in being Christ's disciples. But at its heart, the call is essentially and surprisingly simple: **Follow Jesus. Stick close to him. He is the way.**

So, it is for us. We follow Jesus. We follow Him in faith. We stick close to him. That means being where He continues to speak to us, which is in His word. He leads, and we follow. Jesus takes us where He is going. He will lead us through our daily lives, He will lead us to that neighbor in need, He will lead us all the way to our home in heaven.

Which leads us to our third point: The call to discipleship is profoundly *transformative*. By that I mean, it is transformative in its effects. The call changes things, profoundly. It changes the direction of our Discipleship. It is very personal. It means being attached to Jesus' life

Look how that happened for the disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John. They were going about their business, casting their nets and mending their nets, "for they were fishermen," it says. Then Jesus comes and calls them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." This call had made an impact on their lives. "Immediately they left their nets and followed Him." And again, "Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

Now that is pretty dramatic! From fishermen to disciples to fishers of men! And to leave their previous lives behind so "immediately"! Is that how it goes for us?

Now we are disciples of Jesus, and our life takes a new direction. There is something more to do in our lives than just fishing. Yes! Something more than our daily duties. The call to discipleship does transform our daily lives even if we stay in our current occupation. Our vocation, our calling, is transformed. You may still be a commercial fisherman, or an auto mechanic, or a retiree, or a mom, but now your life is different.

So, this call that comes from Jesus really transforms our lives, profoundly, both in the way we live now and in the life we have waiting for us forever. My friends, today we have heard the Call to Jesus. This call comes from Jesus. The initiative lies all with him. The call is surprisingly simple in its content. It's simply Jesus calling us to follow Him. And that call is profoundly transformative in its effects. It changes our lives now and gives us a life that will last eternally. So, disciples of Jesus, keep listening as our Master calls us, day after day, "Follow me."

How many of us today truly want to have this life changing experience that only Christ can give? You would have to be more committed than you have ever been before. It is your desire to accept this call to Follow Christ, please raise your Hand. Let us pray!

SLM Lifestyle of Discipleship

Every Member Transformation (Five levels of Commitment)

A. Each Existing Believer (from inside to out)

1. *Come and See* (Personal spiritual connection to Christ)
2. *Come and Follow* (Commitment to Christ and His church - SDA church and its beliefs)
3. *Come and Be With* (Dedication to growth in spiritual knowledge, gifts and ministry abilities)
4. *Go and Bear Fruits* (Share your faith through a corporate or personal plan)
5. *Go and Make Disciples* (Grow and mature those we baptize = conservation)

B. From Unbelievers to mature members (from outside in to inside out)

1. *Come and See ...* (Learning about Christ)
UNBELIEVERS
2. *Come and Follow ..* (Accepting Christ and committing to Christ) NEW BELIEVERS
3. *Come and Be With ..* (Ministering for Christ)
4. *Go and Bear Fruit ...* (Winning Souls for Christ)
5. *Go and Make Disciples ...* (Make soul-winners for Christ)



C. Schedule for Monthly Emphasis (2017) •

1. **January to March (3 Months)** -- Come and See
2. **April to May (2 Months)** -- Come and Follow (Consecration and commitment to SDA church and its beliefs)
3. **June to August (3 Months)** -- Come and Be With
4. **September to October (2 Months)** -- Go and Bear Fruits
5. **November to December (2 Months)** -- Go and Make Disciples

Am I Following Jesus?

Mark 8:34

³⁴ *And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

(NIV)

In the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), Jesus' gave the command, "Follow me." This command is repeated in several times (Matthew 8:22; 9:9, Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; John 1:43). In many cases, Jesus was calling the twelve men who would become His disciples (Matthew 10:3–4). But other times, He was speaking to anyone who wanted what He had to offer (John 3:16; Mark 8:34).

In Matthew 10:34–39, Jesus stated clearly what it means to follow Him. He said, *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."*

Jesus' bringing a "sword" and turning family members against each other can seem a little harsh after words like "whosoever believes on Him shall not perish" (John 3:16). But Jesus never softened the truth, and the truth is that following Him leads to difficult choices. Sometimes turning back may seem very appealing. When Jesus' teaching went from the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–11) to the coming cross, many who had followed him turned away (John 6:66). Even most of His twelve disciples decided that following Jesus was too difficult the night He was arrested. They deserted Him (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50). Hence the question: **Am I following Christ?**

To truly follow Christ means He has become everything to us. Everyone follows something: friends, popular culture, family, selfish desires, or God. We can only follow one thing at a time (Matthew 6:24). God states we are to have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7; Mark 12:30). To truly follow Christ means we do not follow anything else. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." There is no such thing as a "halfway disciple." As the disciples demonstrated, no one can follow Christ by the strength of his own willpower. The Pharisees were good examples of those who were trying to obey God in their own strength. Their self-effort led only to arrogance and distortion of the whole purpose of God's Law (Luke 11:39; Matthew 23:24).

Jesus gave His disciples the secret to faithfully following Him, but they did not recognize it at the time. He said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing (John 6:63). And "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them" (verse 65). The disciples had walked with Jesus for three years, learning, observing, and participating in His miracles. Yet, even they could not follow Him faithfully in their own strength. They needed a Helper. This Helper is available to all of us today. This means that all of us can truly follow Christ.

Today, God is calling all of us to truly commit to Him and His church. We must connect doctrinally, prayerfully, and socially. How many of us are willing to commit our all to Christ today? (*Count the number of persons*).

Adopted from Following Christ
by Joseph Stowell

COME AND FOLLOW CHRIST THROUGH STEWARDSHIP

The question of Christ's identity kept raising its head throughout His ministry. It led Him to ask the disciples not only who the people thought He was but who they thought He was. Peter inspired by the Holy Spirit answered, saying that He was Christ. Having warned and commanded them not to tell this to anyone, Christ continued by saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." He followed up by saying, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23, 24).

In these two passages Christ first speaks of His suffering and sacrifice for us. The very people He came to save would reject Him. The leaders of the temple would kill Him but He concluded with the good news that He would be raised from the dead. Ellen G. White commenting on His unselfish sacrifice says, "He left His home of security and peace, left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, left His position upon the throne of the universe. He went forth, a suffering, tempted man; went forth in solitude, to sow in tears, to water with His blood, the seed of life for a world lost" (Christ Object Lesson, p. 36). Christ gave His all to save us. The question is asked, "What have you given up for Him?"

Of the second statement, Christ says, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." This is a call for self-denial and Christ has set the example. It is our privilege to walk in His footsteps. Self must be crucified if we are to follow His example. Paul understood it well when he testified, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me

and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Let us like Paul claim this testimony. Ellen White says, "Were the thousand channels of selfishness cut off that now exist, and the means directed in the right channel, there would be a large revenue flowing into the Lord's treasury. No one can practice real benevolence without practicing genuine self-denial. Self-denial and the cross lie directly in the path of every Christian who is truly following Christ . . . Will every soul consider the fact that Christian discipleship includes self-denial, self-sacrifice, even to the laying down of life itself, if need be, for the sake of him who has given his life for the life of the world?" (Review and Herald, July 14, 1896.) It is our privilege to cheerfully follow Christ in self-denial as we give of our talents, time, body temples, influence, and all our resources for His kingdom and glory.

Charles Heskey
Stewardship Director SLM



Modeling Christ in my Marriage and Family Life

Family Ministries

Am I wholeheartedly modeling Christ's teachings in my family life?

"The health and prosperity of society is directly related to the well-being of its constituent parts—the family unit. Today, as probably never before, the family is in trouble. Social commentators decry the disintegration of modern family life. The traditional Christian concept of marriage between one man and one woman is under assault. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in this time of family crisis, encourages every family member to strengthen his or her spiritual dimension and family relationship through mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility." (General Congerence)

The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. ... Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity." (General Conference)

Sadly, even in the church, many families are struggling to model Christ's ideals. Many couples conclude that, because of the many struggles of marriage, it is impossible to truly enjoy happiness, closeness and harmony. Many marriages are simply a show and consist of people pretending to be happy when they really are not. Many are enduring the marital experience rather than enjoying it!

Here are some practical ways that a church can assist families to model Christ:

1. Organize marriage assessment seminars so that couples can learn

where their strengths and growth areas are and can develop a practical approach to working on areas that may need growth.

1. Plan family devotional sessions and prayer sessions that bring families together to pray for each other.
2. Develop a marriage club in your church aimed at family life education and social interaction among couples.
3. Ensure that families are involved in church activities and encourage family units to participate in the various services.

Remember, you can only model what you have. In order to be a good model of Christ in family life we have to know Christ personally. "The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart." (Adventist Home)

Resources

A public statement released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Adventist Home. 1952. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980.

SLM Family Life Department

Seventh-day Adventist Christian Education Transformation

The purpose of Seventh-day Adventist schools distinctly embodies the concept the “Lord Transform Me Initiative” which is the focus of the world church. The *primary mission of a Christian school is to produce Christians and in our case Christians who are thoroughly grounded in historic Adventism. We believe that the opportunity for the integration of faith and learning is a transformational process that leads boys and girls to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour and embrace a religious identity that is biblically rooted with a value based approach that is intended to transform lives.*

According to the Review and Herald (862) the anti-education “bug” had firmly implanted itself in the Adventist mentality in the earlier years. The Adventist church established its first school in 1872 and did not have an extensive elementary system until nearly 1900. There was no doubt in the minds of the denomination’s leadership in 1872 that the purpose of the school they were establishing was to train people to spread the gospel.

Ellen G. White highlights that “A well-disciplined and informed mind can best receive and cherish the sublime truths of the Second Advent and that religious element should be the controlling power in our schools. If unbelievers choose this influence, it is well; if those who are in darkness choose to come to the light, it is as God would have it.

How do we come to and appreciate the power of the intangible? Daily in Seventh-day Adventist schools students are challenged to be service oriented, to commit to selfless service to their fellowmen and to extend God’s Kingdom on earth.

The daily worship sessions, the Week of Prayers, the Bible classes, the baptismal appeals and the integration of faith and learning throughout the school day all combine to help promote personal relationships with God. We want our students in their quest for academic excellence to see everything from heaven’s point of view as they grasp the richness of the Adventist heritage.

The apostle Paul surely must have had this in mind when he appealed to the church at Rome to permit God to completely transform their whole outlook, so that they could begin to see things as God does (see [Rom. 12:1](#)).

The purpose of SDA institutions is to give students distinctly Bible-based, Christ-centered worldview to teach them to “think Christian,” with a call for each student to personally commit to God.

Reference

1. “Questions and answers,” Review and Herald, 23 December 1862, 29.
2. Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian education (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1923), 45

SLM Education Department

CLM

Dwell Together in Unity

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Ps. 133:1

Christian unity is a mighty agency. It tells in a powerful manner that those who possess it are children of God. It has an irresistible influence upon the world, showing that man in his humanity may be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We are to be one with our fellow men and with Christ, and in Christ one with God. Then of us can be spoken the words, "Ye are complete in Him."

In the plan of redemption, a place is allotted to every soul. To each man is given his work. No one can be a member of Christ's body and yet be inactive. . . . The work of God's people may and will be varied, but one Spirit is the mover in it all. All the work done for the Master is to relate to the great whole. The workers are to labor together in concert, each one controlled by divine power, putting forth undivided effort to draw those around them to Christ. All must move like parts of a well-adjusted machinery, each part dependent on the other part, yet standing distinct in action. And each one is to take the place assigned him and do the work appointed him. God calls upon the members of His church to receive the Holy Spirit, to come together in unity and brotherly sympathy, to bind their interests together in love.

Nothing so manifestly weakens a church as disunion and strife. Nothing so wars against Christ and the truth as this spirit. . . .

He in whose heart Christ abides recognizes Christ abiding in the heart of his brother. Christ never wars against Christ. Christ never exerts an influence against Christ. Christians are to do their work, whatever it may be, in the unity of the Spirit, for the perfecting of the whole body.

Adopted from My Life Today - Page 281
Ellen G. White

Other quotations on Unity from The Spirit of Prophecy

No provision has been made for Christians to draw apart from one another. By our unity and love we are to reveal the character of Christ. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." *RH April 27, 1897, par. 7*

There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself, and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God had invested His church with special authority and power, which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising; for he who does this despises the voice of God. *MR311 11.1*

I WILL FOLLOW JESUS!

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:57-62

Have you ever known anyone who HAD to have the last word? They want what they say to hang in the air, to be remembered. Similarly, John, the Beloved disciple, wanted the last words of Jesus to hang in our memories for a long, long time. What were these last words in the book of John's gospel?

These precious last words in John's gospel book are "You follow me." Christianity is not just about the event of salvation, it is about a lifestyle of discipleship. We were saved not just to get to heaven; we were saved so that we can follow Christ. Following Christ is an individual thing. Jesus demanded this of Peter in His last words: "You follow Me" (John 21: 22). Just as Jesus called Peter to follow Him individually to serve Him, he is calling all of us today.

Absence of Rivalry

It is most interesting how this story developed from John 21:18. Jesus was ministering to Peter after He had denied Him. Peter's faith, position and purpose were now restored. Jesus told Peter how His death would glorify God. Suddenly Peter turns around and sees John following and asked Jesus: "What about him" (v.21)? "Would his death glory you as well?" Jesus responded, "That should not matter to you Peter, You follow me." Now the "you" is emphatic in Greek. It was saying *do not to focus on others*. **You** follow me.

How important it is that we understand that Christ has a role for each of us in the church? Each one of us, young and old, male and female, is called by God to fulfill this personal and individual role. This means that your role is not mine and mine is not yours. Jesus is calling you by name _____, **you Follow me**.

Peter's call to follow Christ was not a selfish call. Too many people today are confusing the individualized call with one of selfishness. They see themselves as the only ones that Jesus is calling. They are working alone. The truth is that ambition, pride, selfishness and one-upmanship, will destroy the Church. We can destroy the same thing that we are called to build up. It is for this reason that our spiritual general, Ellen G. White boldly declared:

"There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself, and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people (*The Remnant Church; Its Organization, Authority, Unity, And Triumph, Page 11*).

She also warned the church:

"Beware of those who arise that have a great burden to denounce the church. The chosen ones who are standing and breasting the storm of opposition from the world, and are uplifting the down-trodden commandments of God, to exalt them as holy and honorable, are indeed the light of the world. How dare mortal man pass his judgment upon them, and call the church a harlot, Babylon, a den of thieves, a cage of every unclean and hateful bird....

It seems almost impossible that anyone who had a genuine experience in the faith, should suggest such erroneous applications of Scripture, as applicable to God's commandment-keeping people" (p.12).

Imagine a sports team trying to win a game. Now, imagine a couple of players who want to be the star. The individual team members are focusing on competing against each other rather than the opposing team. They think of themselves rather than the team. Here is the natural result. Other team members will start to resent each other. Hence, instead of winning individually, they lose collectively. Such disunity will always destroy any team. In a similar way, rivalry or a self-centered approach of members will destroy the effectiveness of the church.

Rivalry can destroy the church. While Jesus was with His disciples, they were disputing over who should be first in the kingdom of God. Jesus promptly challenged them to be humble in the cause of God (Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-15). When the disciples argued about the greatest, Jesus used a child as an object lesson. He showed them how they needed to become little people before they can be exalted.

Now this is the same message he was telling Peter again. Do not worry about the others, YOU follow me. Do not compete with others, YOU follow me. Do not worry if someone is a better teacher, preacher, or singer, YOU follow Me. YOU serve me the best way you can. This is so important because rivalry, disunity and the like destroys authentic ministry. They will destroy the church. So, Let us simply **Follow Christ**.

Follow Christ

Let me ask a few questions. How many of us are Christians? Please raise your hands. How many are true disciples of Christ? Raise your hands! ----- Why not the same number for each? If you raised your hand the first time and hesitated the second time, there must be a reason. The truth is only disciples can be called Christians. We need to understand that a disciple and Christian are the same person. A disciple is a follower, and Jesus said, "follow Me." The key phrase is "follow Me." It is more than just "watch Me." It is more than just "listen to me." It is more than just "read about Me." It is "Follow Me. We must make all the sacrifices necessary to follow Christ.

When we accept Christ and His mission, we give ourselves to become His disciples. Such a disciple is more than just an academic student.

Students get "*information*" from their teacher *but* disciples get "**transformation**" from their teacher. Transformation happens because disciples follow and *imitate* their teachers. **Yes!** A disciple **trains** to be like his teacher (Luke 6:40). A disciple also loves like His teacher loves (John 13:34-35). Hence as disciples we are growing to be like Christ.

Jesus said to all His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Deny yourself! Take up YOUR cross! Follow Christ! This is what Jesus requires of us.

Paul understood Jesus' call to discipleship. He understood what it means to follow Christ. Paul was glad to spend and be expended for the souls of others (2 Cor. 12: 15). In 1 Corinthians 15:31 he said, "I die daily."

Jesus wants **all** of us to be devoted disciples, not mediocre members of a congregation. Fred was a mediocre Christian, but one day he decided that he will not be mediocre any more. Now this is what his Christianity looked like after Fred changed. He attended church services and Sabbath School classes more regularly. Other than these, Fred was no different than unbelievers. So, when he begun to read the Bible, light shone on him. It was at this point that it became clear to him that Christianity is not merely about "attendance." Being a Christian is not about being a "member" of an organization. Fred learnt that being a Christian is about being a citizen of the Kingdom of God. It is about Jesus being our king and we are His servants.

Are you a Christian? If you are a Christian, you are also a disciple. So, let us follow Christ without any rivalry. Follow Christ even if it means suffering, sacrifice, and inconvenience. Follow Christ to serve, to help, and to give. Jesus says to all of us today, "follow Me," share in my gospel, and lay down your life for the kingdom. If you have not died with Christ, then today is a good day to die....so that you can truly live. Amen

Total Member Involvement: Every Member Following Jesus

What Can I do?

Everyone can do something to hasten the coming of Jesus! “We have no time to lose. Every moment is golden and altogether too precious to be devoted merely to self-serving.” You can:

- Pray for the advancement of the Gospel in hard-to-reach areas of the world.
- Pray for fortitude on behalf of workers who are currently serving.
- Pray that God will show you how you can work in His vineyard.
- Support Adventist World Radio, Hope TV, the Voice of Prophecy, Second Advent Radio, or other Bible schools, so their work can continue over the airwaves.
- Support and pray for Adventist Mission and indigenous workers in unentered areas.
- Participate in local and institutional health outreach events, such as health expos, or Pathway to Health events.
- Get involved in a Sabbath school care group, or church outreach.
- Volunteer with a local Community Service event or ADRA project.
- Organize a health seminar, small group, Bible study, or evangelistic series in your home using the New Beginnings DVD.
- Help with Children’s, Youth, or Pathfinder community service projects.
- Volunteer with evangelistic events, Revelation seminars, or prophecy seminars.
- Befriend new members and nurture them.

We Have No Time to Lose

“The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their effort with those of ministers and church officers.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 9, page 116. “The salvation of sinners requires earnest, personal labor. We are to bear to them the word of life, not to wait for them to come to us. Oh, that I could speak words to men and women that would arouse them to diligent action! The moments now granted to us are few. We are standing upon the very borders of the eternal world. We have no time to lose. Every moment is golden and altogether too precious to be devoted merely to self-serving. Who will see God earnestly and from Him draw strength and grace to be His faithful workers in the missionary field?”

Following Christ may mean that we must sacrifice time and money. This is often necessary to help us fulfill the divine mandate that Christ has given to us. We are not to sit and allow the work for which Christ died falter because of dissention and lack of fervor in the church. So, let us rally together to finish the work that God has called us to do.

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God was poured out on all 120 persons because they were of one mind, praying for each other. Let us, like these disciples, pray for the work and thus allow the Spirit of God to use us in mighty ways. God is waiting to use you in mighty ways. Will you follow Him into a deeper experience of spiritual blessings?

SLM Personal Ministries Department

The Power of the Spiritual Experiences in the Life of a Child

The strategic goal of the Lord Transform Me initiative is to organize and nurture the children of the Church to grow their relationship with the Lord, develop strong social relationships with others both within and outside the Church through effective ministry activities, and to train them to reap and disciple others through intentional initiatives.

Children should enjoy the family, church and school experiences. The Sabbath school focus on the Grace Link Curriculum is an excellent resource when consistently followed. It gives children repeated opportunities for accepting Jesus, growing in faith, sharing their faith with others and for discipleship.

Carson (2012) also concludes that “if a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.” Parents are well placed to create this sense of wonder in the lives of their children.

A child's experience of the nature of God begins in the home. Parents should take the responsibility of parenting seriously and focus on the spiritual development of children. According to Walworth (1947) “a pound of parent is worth a hundred pounds of preacher.” Experiences to build Faith and strengthen character create bonding opportunities that will last a lifetime. Parents should be very concerned about their children's spirituality. Read the following suggestions for nurturing the spiritual lives of our children

- ✓ Teach children to pray and help them to develop a prayer life. (Practice what you preach. If you do not, children will soon discover your inconsistency and will follow you).

- ✓ Read stories about faith and dramatize the lives of Adventist pioneers
- ✓ Have pioneer dress up Sundays
- ✓ Prepare family quizzes on Adventist Heritage
- ✓ Create booklets of written and answered prayers
- ✓ Sing songs of faith and be excited about the return of Christ
- ✓ Have lots of dialogue (two way conversations that address doubt and build faith)
- ✓ Memorize scripture in fun and creative ways
- ✓ Practice the health message
- ✓ Watch value based programs together
- ✓ Appeal to the children's moral sense (Create scenarios and let them tell you what they would do)
- ✓ Faithfully attend church every Sabbath and faithfully attend prayer meetings
- ✓ Ensure that they attend Sabbath school on time and that they are a part of all church programs that are planned with their age group in mind.
- ✓ Make the Sabbath worship fun with creative activities that inspire hope and anticipation for Christ's second coming. E.g. Sabbath packages, presentation of bouquets or cards, setting the table for the unseen visitor, the evening of treats

Children can also experience transformation and live lives that are pleasing to God.

1. Walworth Dorothy “General of the Army: Evangeline Booth, “Readers Digest 51, no. 304 (August 1947) 36-40
2. Carson Rachael (1998) *The Sense of Wonder*. New York: Harper

SLM Children's Ministries Department

Modeling Christ as a Single Person

Are You single? Are you wholeheartedly modeling Christ's teachings in your life?

Singleness is not a sin or a disease; it is simply a state of being. Paul refers to singleness as a gift. Truth is that Christ was also single! As a single person, how can I wholeheartedly model Christ and His teachings in my life?

According to Dennis Franck the "gift of singleness" is found in at least two places: Matthew 19:11 and 12, and 1 Corinthians 7:7. Regarding the gift of singleness, Jesus told people that "not everyone can receive or accept serving God as a purpose for staying single. It is for those to whom the capacity to receive it has been given." In other words, it is a GIFT! Singleness can be a gift for life, or can be chosen for a period of time to develop one's identity, character and direction before marriage.

In 1 Corinthians 7:7 Paul agreed with Jesus' teaching about the gift of singleness. He said, "I wish that everyone was as I am (single). But each person has their own gift from God. One has this gift, another has that gift." It is clear in verse 8 that Paul was single when he wrote I and II Corinthians because he said, "to the unmarried and the widows, it is good for you to stay single as I am." So, singleness is a gift and marriage is a gift.

Singles fall into several categories and, as a result, have different needs and face different challenges. Many singles are not bothered by staying celibate, are content being single and not having a romantic relationship, give little thought to marriage,

and find great satisfaction serving God in their spare time. For other singles marriage is a priority. **Whatever the cause of singleness, modeling Christ ought to be a priority.**

When we model Christ as singles we become new creatures in Christ Jesus and will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Galatians 5:22, 23. Former lusts will be overcome by faith in the Son of God. Singles will follow in Christ's steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The worthless customs and fashions of the world are laid aside. (Steps to Christ).

Resources

1. <http://singles.ag.org/articles/singleness-a-gift-are-you-kidding-me>
2. <http://www.adventistsingleadultministries.org/article/33/resources/8-single-principles>
3. <http://www.ellenwhite.info/books/bk-sc-07.htm>

SLM Family Life and Singles Ministry Department

How is Total Member Involvement Done?

A few months ago, our G. C. president, Pastor Ted C. Wilson, was asked about Total Member Involvement. Here is the question: *What is Total Member Involvement, and how should it be done?*

Here is his answer:

Total Member Involvement (TMI) is really the last great proclamation of the Advent message. It's an initiative that encourages everyone in the Seventh-day Adventist church to find ways to actively bring friends, neighbors, and even strangers to Jesus.

TMI is an intentional soul winning plan that discovers the needs of family, friends, and neighbors, then shares how God fulfills every need. To do this, we must first ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, pray often, become diligent students of God's Word, and then share it with others. And there are so many possibilities for sharing!

Personal witnessing, literature distribution, small groups, health ministry outreach, community services, Pathfinder and youth programs, and of course, public evangelism are just some of the ways in which we can reach others for Jesus. Whether you are a lay member, pastor, or church administrator, we need to become completely involved with God's advent message to the world. Everyone doing something for Jesus.

The amazing results that we recently saw in Rwanda (97,344) are a direct result of Total Member Involvement and serve as a wonderful example of what God can do when people are totally committed to reaching others for Him.

Only in heaven will we see the full results of how God has used us to bless others through Total Member Involvement!

Ellen G. White supports our President's message very well when she appealed to the church in her day to rally together to labor for the Master. Here are two of her impressive statements about working for the master:

In every church there is talent, which, with the right kind of labor, might be developed to become a great help in this work. That which is needed now for the upbuilding of our churches is the nice work of wise laborers to discern and develop talent in the church—talent that can be elevated for the Master's use. There should be a well-organized plan for the employment of workers to go into all our churches, large and small, to instruct the members how to labor for the upbuilding of the church and also for unbelievers. It is training, education, that is needed. Those who labor in visiting the churches should give the brethren and sisters instruction in practical methods of doing missionary work. {9T 117.2}

All the preaching in the world will not make men feel deeply the need of perishing souls around them. Nothing will so arouse in men and women a self-sacrificing zeal as to send them forth into new fields to work for those in darkness. Prepare workers to go out into the highways and hedges. We need wise nurserymen who will transplant trees to different localities and give them advantages, that they may grow. It is the positive duty of God's people to go into the regions beyond. Let forces be set at work to clear new ground, to establish new centers of influence wherever an opening can be found. Rally workers who possess true missionary zeal, and let them go forth to diffuse light and knowledge far and near. Let them take the living principles of health reform into the communities that to a large degree are ignorant of these principles." *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 9, page 117.

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SLM Personal Ministries Department

WHEN WE SEE JESUS!

Scripture: Matthew 9: 35-10:1

Jesus has the ability to see the true condition of the world.

In this text we see Jesus travelling and preaching. He meets a lot of different people. He takes care of the sick and the poor. But He doesn't just stop in front of the physical and economical problems. He is able to see what normal people are not used to seeing, because they do not care to look at the hearts of people as Jesus does. A large crowd of people is now around Jesus. They are sick and poor, this is sure, but their illness and poverty are not just physical or economical. There is in a human heart, a deep need of spiritual restoration of which only Jesus can take care. Jesus can see their need of encouragement, of dignity, of hope. And this need exists also in people who are not physically sick or economically poor. There is no difference among men as for the fundamental needs of the heart.

Jesus expresses two considerations about these people.

1) The first consideration is explicit and negative. Jesus says that they are "**wary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.**" We may understand that, for Jesus, these people are lost and confused, in danger of losing their lives, a prey of discouragement, of ignorance, of false teachers as the ones that just in the previous encounter, were attributing to Satan Jesus' healing of two blind men (v. 34).

2) The second consideration is implicit and positive. Jesus compares the people in the multitudes to mature crops ready for harvesting. What is good with these people is not that they are in need, but that *they know that they are in need. They know it and are looking for positive answers.* They may be lost and confused, sick and

poor, but they have accepted to go to Jesus. Maybe they do not understand Jesus fully, but they see in Him love for them and power to help them. And Jesus wishes to give them a positive answer.

Who can Jesus turn to help them?

These people need and deserve help, and Jesus wishes to help. But even Jesus, even our Lord, even the Son of God, cannot do everything for them. The crops are mature, people are ready to enter God's kingdom, but nobody is there to help them to find the way and to enter in. The mature crops risk being destroyed by a storm, by a fire, by natural decay. Being mature is not being safe. Somebody must gather the crops and put them into the safe place of God's kingdom. **Who must help?**

Jesus' prayer about the workers doesn't specify of whom He was thinking. Nevertheless, in the Gospel of Matthew, it is evident that a first application is done to the twelve apostles. We can see this by the fact that Matthew, just after quoting Jesus' words about the need of workers, tells us of the Twelve being called to their mission of preaching the Gospel (Read Matthew 10:1).

These twelve have become a model for all Christians. The truth is, the Twelve were not the only ones Jesus was calling to preach the Gospel and look after others. If it were so, it might mean that this mission is limited to the professionals, to the missionaries, to the priests, to the pastors. But this is not Jesus' intention and we have many reasons to deny this idea.

First, Jesus prayed that God may send workers to harvest the crops. The Twelve disciples were the first to answer this appeal, but not the only ones. The Twelve are the model of what everybody must do. An example is given by Jesus' promise to the Twelve of being, one day, with Him, sitting on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). Is the promise only for the Twelve? Not at all! In another text, the same promise is applied to all Christians who, as the Twelve did, have decided to follow Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:2,3). In the same way, Jesus' prayer does not concern only the Twelve but all those who accept to have a part in God's plan for the salvation of this world.

Secondly, Jesus didn't send only the Twelve to preach the gospel. In the Gospel of Luke, we find Jesus sending other people to preach the Gospel: *"After these things the Lord appointed seventy **others** also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'*" (Luke 10:1).

Why does Luke say of these people that they are "others?" It is evident that Luke was thinking of the Twelve who had already been appointed by Jesus to preach the Gospel. Get ready for this point. *The harvest is so large that The Twelve are not enough. So, Jesus sends seventy "**others** into the field."*

It's surprising to see how Luke places the commission to these "other" seventy, in just the same context that we find in Matthew for the Twelve. Both stories contain Jesus' consideration about the harvest and, if you continue reading what follows both stories, you will see how in both cases Jesus continues with the description of the opportunities and troubles they would live while accomplishing their mission. Hence, the great commission is not for a small group of professionals. It is for all of us who accept to co-operate with God for the salvation of the world.

Thirdly, all of us are to work for Christ. What we have seen in the book of Acts and in all the rest of the New Testament is that God expects everyone who is saved to share the Gospel using his or her gifts and abilities.

Today our situation is not much different. When I consider the spiritual situation in which we live, I ask myself whether Jesus would again offer His prayer to God for sending workers into the mature crops of our communities, such as _____.

Most of what Jesus said about the Jewish multitudes in front of Him, can be said of the crowds we see around us: **"they are weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd."** If Jesus **"was moved with compassion for them"**, how can we not have compassion for the people around us? Every one of us can work for Jesus.

Many, today, do not have the joy of knowing Jesus' true teaching, of enjoying the true salvation offered by Him. Who must go to help them? May God send workers into His fields to harvest the crops! Workers who have seen the ripe harvest. Workers who are willing to allow Jesus to mature and equip them for the work of the kingdom. Workers like you and me.

All of us have a personal need to spend time with Jesus. This was how the disciples experienced transformation and became powerful apostles. Today, Jesus calls us. Like Peter we lack faith. Like Andrew we have much to learn. Like James and John, we are selfish sometimes. Like Matthew we have a past. Like Thomas we doubt sometimes. When we see how the apostles of limited competence did so much for the Church, we should have confidence that if Jesus could use them he can certainly use us. With Christ by our side, we too can grow from strength to strength and accomplish great things for God and his kingdom. **How many of us today are willing for God to use us? Let us pray.**

(<http://www.adventist.org.mt/sermon/s05.html>)

SLM Personal Ministries Department

Propelled by Total Member Involvement, Adventist Church Tops 20 Million Members (Pt. 1)

*A record number of people join the church,
as local churches are planted rapidly to
nurture new members.*

A major drive to engage every church member in Total Member Involvement has helped propel the Seventh-day Adventist Church past 20 million members for the first time in its history.

The Adventist Church had 20,008,779 members as of Dec. 31, 2016, a net increase of 882,332 people, or 4.6 percent, from the previous year, the church's Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research said.

In another milestone, a record 1.2 million people were baptized last year, including an unprecedented 110,000 in Rwanda, while new churches continued to be planted at a rapid rate.

"What these statistics tell me about the church's efforts to fulfill its mission is that church leaders and, increasingly, church members are putting considerable resources into reaching new souls for God's kingdom," said David Trim, director of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. "Total Member Involvement has a huge role to play here, and the record baptisms in 2016 already reflect TMI."

Total Member Involvement (TMI), implemented in its first full year in 2016, is a world church initiative that encourages every church member to actively share the gospel in his or her community. Outreach efforts include literature distribution, Bible studies, cooking classes, health seminars, free clinics, and public evangelistic meetings.

Reacting to the new membership figures, Seventh-day Adventist Church president Ted N.C. Wilson emphasized the connection between church growth and the involvement of every church member, especially lay people.

"The engagement of lay people in Total Member Involvement is so important to what we are seeing happen in the world church," Wilson said.

"The Holy Spirit is leading our church members to be so actively involved in every aspect of personal and public witness," he said by e-mail. "Let us never forget the counsel given to us in 'Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9,' page 117: 'The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.'"

Duane McKey, TMI coordinator for the world church, said the membership growth is "clearly an indication that TMI is blessed by God."

"When the whole church is mobilized like in Rwanda, when every member is doing something, God is there and God will bless," McKey said. "This truly is an illustration as to how the work can be finished!"

Source: <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2017-03-01/propelled-by-total-member-involvement-adventist-church-tops-20-million-members/>

SLM Personal Ministries department

Propelled by Total Member Involvement, Adventist Church Tops 20 Million Members (Pt. 2)

Personal Ministries

Record Accessions

Statistics indicate that the Adventist Church, founded in 1863 with only 3,500 members, is going from peak to peak in membership growth. The church has witnessed record accessions in each of the past three years, with 1,167, 506 new members in 2014, followed by 1,260,880 new members in 2015, and 1,314,950 in 2016, Trim said. (Dr. David J.B. Trim is the director of **Archives**, Statistics, and Research at the World Headquarters of Seventh-day **Adventists**).

Last year also was the first year that baptisms — as opposed to professions of faith — exceeded 1.2 million, he said. In all, there were 1,271,305 baptisms and 43,645 professions of faith in 2016.

The Adventist Church, which is organized into 13 world divisions and two attached fields, saw the highest growth in the East-Central Africa Division, with 338,638 new members (334,571 baptisms and 4,067 professions of faith) for a total reported membership of 3,502,462. The division's territory includes Rwanda, where 110,476 people were baptized after months of prayer and other TMI efforts culminated in evangelistic meetings at more than 2,000 sites in May 2016.

Blasious Ruguri, president of the East-Central Africa Division, said a tremendous miracle happened in Rwanda because of the active involvement of church members — “lay women, lay men, pastors, church elders, pastors’ wives, children, and church leaders from all church levels.”

“Never before had this kind of involvement been seen,” Ruguri said. “This unusual phenomenon brought an unusual awakening in the whole country.”

Alain Coralie, executive secretary for the East-Central Africa Division, said the Rwandan experience proves that “a healthy church singly focused on God's mission will result in huge numerical growth.”

“In the East-Central Africa Division, we believe what happened in Rwanda in 2016 is just the beginning of greater things to come,” he said. “We are planning bigger campaigns this year and hope by God's grace to see even bigger results.”

The Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division had the second-highest growth with 276,601 new members, bringing its official membership to 3,747,573.

To God be the Glory. Let us continue to work for the Master!

Source: <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2017-03-01/propelled-by-total-member-involvement-adventist-church-tops-20-million-members/>

SLM Personal Ministries department

Propelled by Total Member Involvement, (Pt. 3)

Retention and Discipleship

Trim also pointed to continuing record levels of church planting. A total of 2,655 local churches were established last year, or one new church every 3.3 hours, a figure just shy of the record of one new church every 3.2 hours in 2015.

"The statistics show that Global Mission's focus on church planting is bearing fruit," said Gary Krause, director of the world church's Office of Adventist Mission. "I would say that church planting continues to be at least a major factor if not the major factor in powering sustained growth as new believers are nurtured in fellowship as growing disciples."

Worldwide, the Adventist Church has 154,710 congregations, which include local churches, companies, and groups.

World church leaders rejoiced about the church's rapid growth, but they also underscored that efforts must be made to nurture new members.

"We must remember that retention and nurture are the other side of the same coin as evangelism," said G.T. Ng, executive secretary of the world church.

Krause echoed that sentiment.

"All heaven rejoices when just one person comes home to the Father," he said. "Let's join heaven's celebration and praise God for these precious people. As a church, we now have the awesome responsibility to care for them, and to help nurture and grow them as committed disciples who, in turn, will share their new faith with others."

While robust membership growth was reported last year, 352,722 members were deducted because of dropped membership or

being registered as missing in church membership audits, Trim said. He noted that this is the lowest deduction since 2006.

"It would be wonderful if we could think the program of audits had now picked up all the members who have left the church and deducted them from official records," he said. "But we know with great certainty from a number of sources that that's not the case."

He said an average of 584,000 people were deducted annually over the past 10 years, and if the same number had been deducted in 2016, overall membership would not have reached 20 million.

"The spiritual lesson here is that we shouldn't be so blinded by numbers that we seek only to add, that we only baptize and don't nurture new members into a life of active discipleship," he said.

"However, all these borne in mind, we can still praise God for passing the important milestone of 20 million in our reported membership and praise God even more for the more than 1.3 million people who united themselves with God's remnant church in 2016," he said. "Now we need to make sure we retain them all so that they are in the kingdom at the last judgment."

Source: <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2017-03-01/propelled-by-total-member-involvement-adventist-church-tops-20-million-members/>

SLM Personal Ministries department

THE CHURCH A TRAINING CENTER

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.”

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

That which is needed now for the upbuilding of our churches is the nice work of wise laborers to discern and develop talent in the church, —talent that can be educated for the Master's use. There should be a well-organized plan for the employment of workers to go into all our churches, large and small, to instruct the members how to labor for the upbuilding of the church, and also for unbelievers. It is training, education, that is needed. Those who labor in visiting the churches should give the brethren and sisters instruction in practical methods of doing missionary work. —*Testimonies for the Church* 9:117.ChS 58.1

God expects His church to discipline and fit its members for the work of enlightening the world. An education should be given that would result in furnishing hundreds who would put out to the exchangers valuable talents. By the use of these talents, men would be developed who would be prepared to fill positions of trust and influence, and to maintain pure, uncorrupted principles. Thus great good would be accomplished for the Master. —*Testimonies for the Church* 6:431, 432.ChS 58.2

Every worker should be understandingly efficient. Then in a high, broad sense he can present the truth as it is in Jesus. —*Testimonies for the Church* 7:70.ChS 58.3

There should be no delay in this well-planned effort to educate the church members. —*Testimonies for the Church* 9:119.ChS 58.4

The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers. —*Testimonies for the Church* 7:19. ChS 58.5

It is evident that all the sermons that have been preached have not developed a large class of self-denying workers. This subject is to be considered as involving the most serious results. Our future for eternity is at stake. The churches are withering up because they have failed to use their talents in diffusing light. Careful instruction should be given which will be as lessons from the Master, that all may put their light to practical use. —*Testimonies for the Church* 6:431.ChS 58.6

The people have had too much sermonizing; but have they been taught how to labor for those for whom Christ died? Has a line of labor been devised and placed before them in such a way that each has seen the necessity of taking part in the work? —*Testimonies for the Church* 6:431.ChS 59.1

It is by education and practice that persons are to be qualified to meet any emergency which may arise; and wise planning is needed to place each one in his proper sphere, that he may obtain an experience that will fit him to bear responsibility. —*Testimonies for the Church* 9:221.

By Ellen G. White
Adopted from Christian Service, Chapter 5

SPECIAL FEATURE

Forming a Life of Biblical Spirituality

By Dr. Wayne Knowles

22Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: 24But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.
(Numbers 14:22-24)

Anyone who has seen Christ as their Saviour must now commit to follow Him. All of us who are true believers in Christ and His church will commit to Him with all our hearts. We must discipline ourselves to make the necessary sacrifices to be all that Christ wants us to be. It takes all that we have, to truly follow fully all that Christ requires of us. These include: 1). Changing our Habits, 2). Surrendering our wills daily, 3). Promoting church unity 4). Having regular worship times, 5). Building authentic relationships with others, and 6). Readily giving self and means to the cause of God.

Evaluate and Celebrate “Come and Follow”

Each member should evaluate and celebrate their spiritual growth in the area of Come and Follow. Remember that “Come and See” refers to each member’s spiritual connection to Christ.

1. Consider how the five pointers on the table below relate to your spiritual growth over the past three months. See how you can improve for the next three months.
2. Score yourself on a scale of 1-5 for each of the pointers in the table.
3. Challenge yourself to improve in these areas of your spiritual connection.

Come and Follow	Months					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
GROWING to be like Christ (Come and Follow)						
<i>How can I grow to be like Christ? (Colossians 1:28; Matthew 4:19)</i>						
1. I am <i>growing</i> spiritually through regular quiet time in God’s Word & prayer.						
2. I am <i>responding</i> to challenges with acts of peace, faith and unity.						
3. I am <i>avoiding</i> addictive behaviors with food, television, busyness, etc.						
4. I am <i>honoring</i> God with my finances & my personal giving (budget) to God.						
5. I am <i>spending</i> time with my Spiritual companion to foster spiritual growth.						
Come and See Total						

