

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY FOR TRAINING ADVENTIST YOUNG CHILDREN OF NTONSO DISTRICT IN GHANA TO GROW AND REMAIN IN THE ADVENTIST FAITH

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Childhood is a stage every adult has passed through. For someone to become famous, wealthy, learned or an international figure, a foundation needs to be laid for him or her. Nobody knows what a child will grow to become in the future, that is why children are usually referred to as future leaders; the implication is that any child could grow and become a leader or a renowned figure. According to Solomon, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6).

After a study of child training and its outcome in the Bible, the study developed a strategy for training the Ntonso District Adventist young children to grow and remain in the Adventist faith. This study has gone through several steps since August 2010 to reach the final stage in November 2013. The study identified three major environments that may influence the growth and training of children, namely the home, the church, and the community, and the trainers being parents, church

leaders, and Children's Ministries' instructors. Strategizing the Children's department into smaller classes according to the age of the kids and having specific lesson materials for each level is highly recommended. Furthermore, there is the need for frequent in-service training to be organized for the teachers who handle the children. Parents and church leaders should also be sensitized about their roles in child training to help them cooperate with the children ministry leaders in molding the character of their children.

To measure the results of the training on the children and how it has checked their dropout from the Adventist faith, the first year of the new strategy of Children Ministries operation were compared with those of four years before the implementation of the strategy. The average rate of dropout of children from the Adventist faith before the implementation of the new training method was 26.3% in the district within two years. On the contrary, there was no loss reported one year after implementing the new training strategy.

Other positive achievements of the new strategy include the following: (1) the children are now witnessing to their peers in the community which has resulted in new children converts into the church; (2) children now enjoy their classes with variety of methods and visual aids; (3) the children have the privilege of worshipping with their parents and even preach to them on some occasions; (4) the study has led to an improvement in the devotional lives of most of the children in the Ntonso district.

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A project
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
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Bernard Adjare

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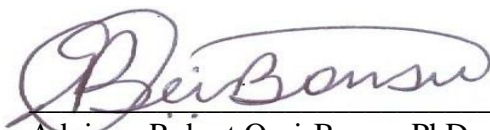
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I dedicate this study to all Adventist Children in the Ntonso District and my children (Evelyn, Emmanuel and Bright). It is my heart's desire that by His grace you will gain wisdom in the Word of God from the children's Ministries department, which will impact your lives now and the future. My desire for you is that you will grow in the grace of the Lord.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The importance and prominence given to Children Ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church cannot be overemphasized. Childhood is the lot of all humanity and one's way of life is shaped by his or her childhood. One's way of life is dependent on the kind of childhood he or she went through. In *Children's Ministries Guide for Smaller Churches*, Rick Chromey, a child trainer and a former General Conference Children's Ministries Coordinator, indicates that "a dynamic children's ministry is often what makes a church successful. Successes or failures in children's ministry will determine who is in the congregation a generation from now."¹

It is also important to note that equipping children in the early years of their lives will have lasting effect on their lives. Stephen Adjei and Georgina Adjei remark, "the period up to five years is the best time for laying social, spiritual as well as academic foundations for the rest of their lives."² The above quotation is in line with the age bracket for Children Ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Church Manual states, "Children ministries develop the faith of children from birth through age 14."³

¹"Children Ministries" General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church. <http://www.adventist.org/childrenministries> (July 23 2013), 5.

² Stephen & Georgina Adjei. *The Challenge of Parenting: Principles and Practice of Raising Children*. (Achimota, Accra: Christian Press 1991), 63.

³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald 2010), 85.

George Barna affirms that, “Children’s Ministries is about developing the faith of children ages birth to fourteen.”⁴ This study is in agreement with the above assertions that we need to train the children from infancy in order to leave lasting impressions upon them.

Rick Chromey notes: “many teens have grown disinterested in faith because of their church experiences as children. If we spend more time and money creating exciting children’s ministries, perhaps the excitement would carry over into the teen years.”⁵ The foundation we lay today in young people’s ministry will shape their future and attitude towards the church of God tomorrow. The church needs to take interest in the children in the church.

Statement of the Problem

There are a number of children who leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church before they grow to adulthood in the Ntonso district. There seems to be neglect on the part of parents and some church leaders in the district when it comes to early children training. Furthermore, there seems to be negligence on the part of church leadership when it comes to the church making available the relevant materials, tools and even the environment that suits child training in the Ntonso district.

There are indications that much attention is given to the adult church in the areas of worship materials, place of worship, and personnel for church services which are not so in the children department in the local churches in the district.

Solomon states that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (NIV Prov 9:10). This means that the

⁴ Barna, George, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, California: Regal Books. 2003), 5.

⁵ Chromey, Rick, *Children’s Ministries Guide for Smaller Churches* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1995), 82.

first and the highest aspect of child training is for the kids to know God in their early years before they are introduced to any other aspects of knowledge. This is the duty of both the church and the family. Unfortunately, the Children Ministries in the Ntonso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church seems to ignore this foundational work for children.

In this context, two major questions raise. What can the church do to salvage children leaving the church? What materials can be put in place to help develop the spiritual growth of our young people?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to develop a strategy for training children in the Ntonso district of the Seventh-day Adventist in their early stages of life to create dynamic and exciting children's ministries.

The aim of the study is to: (1) address and implement strategies for Children Ministry in the Ntonso district which could also serve as resource material for the children and their teachers in the local churches. (2) Effectively equip people who handle young children in the district to create exciting and educative children's ministries program for the Ntonso district of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. (3) Encouraging every parent in the district to take serious interest in the training of their wards to help them develop: socially, mentally, morally, emotionally, and spiritually. (4) Training Adventist children in the Ntonso district to develop interest in God's word and exhibit good morality for Adventist children worldwide to emulate. "Children who will have moral power to resist temptation will be prepared to stand unsullied amid the moral pollutions of this corrupt age."⁶

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Christian Education International Tract Society* (1894; 2002), 175, 176.

The study seeks to unearth the strengths and weaknesses of the various strategies being implemented in the children's ministries department so as not to repeat past shortcomings.

That this study leaves a legacy for children in the Ntonso district and other Adventist churches in the nation. Effective training results in good and disciplined workers, leaders with integrity, who are spiritually and ethically inclined, which is the desire of employing organizations.

Significance of Study

It is anticipated that the findings of this study would help the Churches in the Ntonso district in the following ways:

- a) Church leaders and children's Bible instructors will have ways and means to re-examine the ways of handling the children's department in the churches and adopt ideal strategies to deal with proper training and teachings in the church.
- b) Parents will have insight as well as resources to lead and train their wards in the homes. Also, parents will know their responsibilities and interesting ways to inculcate devotional lives in their wards and not to only depend on their teachers and others to train them for them.
- c) The study will benefit the children by building a solid faith and moral discipline and to save them from unbelief or "heresies" and any factors that lure them from the church when they grow.
- d) The nation will have a law abiding citizen as it implements the training strategy that will emerge from the study. If children are well trained under the guidance of God, they would be subject to rules and laws of the land

which would curb malpractices such as rubbery, drug abuse, murder, rape, etc. which the nation spends huge funds to restrain.

Methodology

This study employs both secondary and primary data. For its primary data, this study relies on surveys and interviews as the chief instrument. The questionnaire will be ordered in a selected category of people in both children ministries and adults across the district. Persons who completed the surveys and interviews are children, children ministry instructors, church leaders, parents, backslidden youth, mothers with babies and other church members.

The study also employed in-depth interviews. Extensive interviews with church leaders, children department instructors, youth, children and parents who are regular in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and conversant with children ministries were carried out. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide. There was an organized team that worked closely with the children for a period of nine months during the interviews and the implementation of the study. Workshop was conducted for children ministry teachers, parents and church leaders. Church elders were also assigned to the children's department as overseers to see to the training of the children. The data gathered from the entire workshop and supervision by the leaders were synthesized and analyzed.

The parents, church leaders, Bible instructors and every child within the district play a part in this study to make it successful.

For secondary sources, the study relies on resources gleaned from various libraries. Materials from the library that will be used include the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy writings, and books on children ministry, journal articles, magazines and

other relevant publications to get secondary data that will enrich the theoretical setting of the study.

Recommendations from the study are made available to the Central Ghana Conference administration for implementation in the field. This project targets four year period for its presentation.

Delimitations

Children ministries ranges between ages zero and fifteen (0-15) but for the sake of effective study, the children for this project is limited to four to twelve (4 -12) years. Although study will capture backsliding children who are beyond the stated years in the survey in chapter three, but it is the active children in the church that will be used for the study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In order to establish the foundation of children in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there is the need to search and review relevant literature on how the Seventh-day Adventist Church has in times past been involved in God's redemptive plan through various children ministry training programs. The review of literature is discussed under four subheadings – (a) Non-Adventist scholar's views on child training (b) Ellen G. White's View on child training (c) The Seventh-day Adventist Church philosophy of children ministries.

The importance of child training is universally acclaimed and the concern of all humanity. Due to the significance of child training, many scholars have written on the topic from diverse background. According to Clyde Narramore, "God tells us that 'Children are a heritage of the Lord.' (Ps 127:3) They are God's gift to us, to be trained for His glory."¹ Bruce Narramore also stresses the same point in a different way saying, the Bible says Children are gift from God; they are His reward. However, many parents today have lost sight of the fact that children are gift of God and that they should bring joy not conflict, to our homes. Narramoure frowns at parents who see children as burden and not gift from God by pointing out that "all children are bearers of the image of God," therefore, "Children born to a young man are like sharp

¹ Clyde M. Narramore. *How to Understand and Influence Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 66.

arrows to defend him.”² Furthermore, children are presented in the Bible as extremely important and worthy of respect and should be granted treatment as such.³ It therefore calls on parents to be sensitive to children’s rights, needs, and interests.

Robert Holman stressed the importance of respecting children as we train them. He is of the conviction that due to the fact that children are God’s creation they need to be treated with respect.⁴ He goes further to say that “Children are individuals with emotional, social, physical, spiritual and mental needs,” nonetheless, “they are not miniature adults”⁵ and should not be treated as such. Clyde Narramore pays attention to the importance of children and compares them to raw material. He indicates that “to take raw material of childhood and to mold it into godly adulthood is a job requiring the cooperation of both parents.”⁶ Both parents here refer to husband and wife. The spirit of prophecy also goes further to say that “the husband should remember that much of the burden of training his children rests upon the mother, that she has much to do with molding their minds.”⁷ It therefore calls for cooperation between both parents in raising their children.

²Bruce Narramore, *Why Children Misbehave: A Guide to Positive Parenting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 31, 12.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.. 30.

⁵ Robert Holman Coombs, *Cool Parents, Drug-free Survival Guide* (Boston, MA: Allen and Bacon, 2002), 98.

⁶ Clyde M. Narramore, *How to Understand and Influence Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 66.

⁷Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1855; 2002), 307.

Kenneth L. Bakers and John R. Kohlenberger whose study focused on the future results of child training indicate that proper training of children has to be done in such a way that it would last forever with the child in his or her growth. They go further to indicate that “the imperative ‘train’ includes ‘dedicate’ so the training should be with purpose.”⁸ This assertion is in tune with the injunction in the NEB that says train the child in the way he or she should grow or and when he grows he or she will not depart from it.

Parents and children in the contemporary world are besotted with diverse challenges. Applying child training techniques of yester years may not suffice today. This is buttressed by Jane Brooks comment that; “childrearing practices change from one generation to another. And the particular values of a cultural group within a society produce childrearing unique to that group and time.”⁹ It therefore calls for culture sensitive training methods for children. This also calls for planning and setting goes as you train young people. Stephen and Georgina Adjei support this view pointing out that “the Christian has specific goals to aim at which may not square with the values of society in general.”¹⁰ The training of children should not be done in vacuum but should be done with a goal in mind. This study therefore considers child training as referring to Christian child preparation which has specific goals and values in mind. It also considers the effect of the environment in which the children are being training and its effect on them.

⁸ Kenneth L. Bakers and John R. Kohlenberger III. *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 1:987.

⁹ Jane B. Brooks, *The Process of Parenting* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1981), 18.

¹⁰ Stephen Adjei & Georgina Adjei, *The Challenge of Parenting: Principles and Practice of Raising Children* (Achimota, Accra: Christian Press 1991), 55.

Stephen and Georgina Adjei are of the view that “Christian parents need to bring up their children in the fear and instructions of the Lord,” and go further to say that “parents must ensure that their children not only grow intellectually and physically but also spiritually and socially. The aim of Christian parenting is to produce mature men and women who have undergone balanced growth.”¹¹ They go further to say that “parents must support their instruction and disciplines with intercessory prayer for the Holy Spirit to work in them. Parents should not only pray for their children but believe God that they will be saved.”¹² Parents should intercede like Job on behalf of their children daily before the throne of God.

All parents should aim at bringing their children up in the fear of the Lord so that it will influence their life choices. When children are trained in the fear of the Lord it will impact their adult lives positively to help them be men and women of integrity. As Stephen and Georgina Adjei point out, helping the children to grow spiritually implies “being in favor with God. God expects children of Christians to become believers too (Titus 1:6).”¹³ While the material needs of the children should not be ignored, parents “in the struggle to educate and provide materially for our children we dare not ignore the importance of spiritual growth. It should be the aim of Christian parenting to produce spiritually mature children who know and love the Lord and his Church.”¹⁴ This object can be achieved in diverse ways as suggested by the Adjeis’: “This comes only through the disciplined process of faith, obedience, prayer, Bible study, memorizing scripture, learning hymns, appreciating godliness and

¹¹ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 51.

¹² Ibid. 73.

¹³ Ibid. 41.

¹⁴ Ibid. 43.

putting the lessons into practice in personal living.”¹⁵ That is very interesting and rewarding.

Jean Piaget’s assertion may be true here. He indicates; “I hear liberal psychiatrists and theologians saying that children are born good and society teaches them how to be bad. It’s the other way around. They are born with a sinful nature and we have to teach to deny their selfish impulses and to be good, using both rewards and punishments.”¹⁶ This assertion maybe true but we need not lose sight of the fact that every child is uniquely different from everyone else. Narramore adds his voice to Piaget’s assertion pointing out that children have varied “abilities, potentialities, and possibilities. We realize they have intelligence of their own. And realize they have a moral nature”¹⁷ The varied and diverse nature of children by nature calls for carefully tailored method of training for our young people.

Counseling parents on how best they can build their children up, one parent educator indicates “If I were to give advice to parents, I’d say, make sure your kids feel capable, significant, and influential. Help them to have success experiences every single day and be actively involved in decision making.”¹⁸ The counsel to parents is that they should build their child up and help them have positive view of themselves. This is so because if parents fail to place premium on the right of their children it affect them emotionally and lead to spiritual maladjustment on the part of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Paul D. Meier, *Christian Child: Rearing and Personality Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), 155.

¹⁷ Bruce Narramore, *Why Children Misbehave; A Guide to Positive Parenting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 30.

¹⁸ Ibid.93.

the children even when they grow up. The implication is that parents have much role in building the adult life of their kids.¹⁹

It is a matter of fact that parents' way of life has much influence on their children. Clyde makes strong and factual comment on parents serving as role model to their children. "Children are influenced. And because each child needs an example, it is important that Christian parents live attractive Christ-honoring lives. There is no influence as great as an inspirational life."²⁰ Stephen & Georgina were specific on this point, "one major area, therefore, where parents ought to set the right example is in what they say to their children, and what they say about others."²¹ Parent should be cautious what they say and do in the home. As Holman remarks, "If parent pretend to be paragons of virtue but don't practice what they preach, kids will see through it. Home should be a place of truth, not deception. Kids are too smart."²² Parents should accept the fact that setting good example for their children is the best teaching method they can employ in the home. Be an example to your children in word and conduct. The assertion is attested to by a young adult who says, "I got a lot from my parents in morals, in church, and that keeps me out of a lot of things in my surroundings." This therefore calls for models of good parenting and the best examples are found in the Bible.²³

¹⁹ Ibid. 27.

²⁰ Ibid., 92.

²¹ Stephen & Georgina, 67.

²² Coombs , 106.

²³ "Safe-Guarding the Children," Reports from the Christian Science Journal (Boston: The Christian Science Publ. Society, 1997), 115.

Parents are cautioned to note that “truth, honesty and other virtues, as well as vices, quickly make their imprint on a child’s mind.”²⁴ There are positive virtues worthy of emulation by parents, and at the same time there are some vices that parents should eschew. Thomas Berndt indicates that “conflicts between parents or other family members may also contribute to distress, anxiety, and aggression in children.”²⁵ Therefore, when parents practice the virtues they want to inculcate in the lives of their children it will make positive impact on their lives. This is what is termed as “I do and you watch” form of education. Parents are encouraged this way, “if you want your kids to read good books, read good books. If you want them to be active rather than sit around watching TV, be active yourself. If you want them to love good music, play good music at home when they’re little.”²⁶ Stephen Adjei also cautions, “Remember, your children are watching, and learning quicker than you may think.”²⁷ According to Brook, “a child’s characteristics determine how a parent’s behavior is interpreted”²⁸ One of the challenges of Christian parenting is maintaining transparency and purity in word and deed. We are to teach by example. Our children will walk in our shoes. “Like father like son’ says it all.”²⁹ Parents therefore ought to teach their children by their own way of life and it will make a

²⁴ Stephen and Georgina Adjei, *The Challenge of Parenting: Principles and Practice of Raising Children*. (Achimota, Accra: Christian Press 1991), 67.

²⁵ Thomas J. Berndt, *Child Development*, (California, USA: Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc.1996,) 431.

²⁶ Coombs, 106, 94.

²⁷ Stephen and Georgina Adjei, 67.

²⁸ Brooks, 16.

²⁹ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 67.

great difference in their lives as they see their children reflecting their positive virtues, the contrary will be an indictment on the parents.

Ellen White commenting on setting examples for our children points out that parent “should set a right example before their children, and although the example of professed followers of Christ causes the children to think that their parents are too careful and severe in their restrictions, yet God will bless the efforts of these conscientious parents.”³⁰ This age calls for conscientious parents who will practice what they preach.

Time Aspect in Child Training

Speaking on the need for parents to spend quality time with their children, Robert Holman points out that “whatever time and energy you invest in reading with your child will yield results like compound interest on a financial investment.”³¹ Parents should remember that “life is not always self-gratifying; it involves responsibility, loving, caring and sacrificing.” Therefore, parents need to spend quality time with their children though it may not be conducive for them. Nonetheless, we need to constantly learn to do things that do not give us immediate recompenses.³² It is therefore no gainsay that parents serving as safe harbor for their children take “work and diligence and above everything else-time.”³³ We need to know that whatever time that we invest in training young people will be rewarding at

³⁰Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1855; 2002), 1:279.

³¹ Robert Holman Coombs, *Cool Parents, Drug-free Survival Guide* (Boston, MA: Allen & Bacon, 2002), 98.

³² Coombs, 119.

³³ Linda Peerson, *The Discipline Miracle* (New York: AMACOM, 2006), 20.

the long run. Therefore, if parents and the church join hands to train the young people in their midst, it will help prepare a generation to succeed them.

Jane Brooks adds further that “parent who wants to be effective must be willing to spend time, not only with the child but also in attending to, thinking about, and changing his or her own behavior as apparent.”³⁴ Parents today do not have time for their children and this is affecting children in diverse ways. It is worth noting that “a tense, bored, overworked, or stifled woman is in no condition to be a happy parent.”³⁵ Parents should see themselves as partners with their spouses and children. When we see our children as partners, we will treat them with respect and spend quality time with them. The most important message we can share with our kids is to assure them that we are there for them.³⁶ Good parenting requires quality time and planning for our children.

Parents and Children Relationship

When it comes to parent child relationship, it is recommended that parents have open relationship with their children. An open relationship with one’s children will help anchor them both home and the values that have been inculcated in them.³⁷ When parents spend quality time with their children it gives them opportunity to listen and know the needs of the children so that they can minister to their needs. It behooves fathers to “listen to the cries of your children, they are crying out for

³⁴ Brooks, 15.

³⁵ Narramore, 18.

³⁶ Peerson, 20; Narramore, 20.

³⁷ Coombs, 88.

protection, detection, and direction.”³⁸ According to Holman, good relationship building results in your son starting something for you to complete it. It is further evidence that “kids benefit emotionally and physically by helping others.”³⁹ Parents accepting and showing concern for their children is an important ingredient in the life of every child.⁴⁰ When children are given the emotional support that they need they “will be able to cope well with the demands of family, friends, school and society.”⁴¹ Furthermore, parents need to realize that “children need to be interacted with and talk to with as much courtesy and consideration as you would expect of yourself.”⁴² Parents finding time to interact with their children help to build them up.

It is worth noting that love is an important aspect of parent child relationship and it must be expressed in such a way that it will bring benefit to the children and also make parents comfortable. Furthermore, parents should bear in mind that “right attitudes towards children are essential for godly parenting.”⁴³ Furthermore, when it comes to building relationship with children, parents must consider their own needs as well as those of their children. “When parents begin to look at their relationships with their children, they often discover that they are clear about children’s needs, wishes, and feelings, but vague about their own. This is a

³⁸ Jeffery & Pattie Jean Brown, *A Guide to Parenting* (England: Grantham, Inc., 2003), 16.

³⁹ Coombs, 88, 96.

⁴⁰ Brooks, 15.

⁴¹ Ibid. 13.

⁴² Ibid. 14.

⁴³ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 39.

situation that demands attention.”⁴⁴ Whiles taking care of the need of their children, parents also need to attend to their personal needs.

Furthermore, to build better relationship with their children, parents are discouraged from unnecessarily punishing their children, instead, they can find ways of relating to their “children that remove a great deal of punishment and pressure. We open up ourselves and our children to new and positive experiences.”⁴⁵ Although there are no perfect parents, “no matter how good our attentions and no matter how hard we try, we are all going to make mistakes in rearing children.”⁴⁶ So one should not be perturbed when things go wrong in the process of training a child, it is better for parents to concentrate on the positive aspects of child training to help them develop attitude toward themselves and their children that focuses on the positive and helps to overcome the tendency to overemphasize their mistakes and failures.⁴⁷ Do not dwell so much on the failures that result from parenting. Furthermore, parents need to bear in mind that “children who are always rejected, who receive inconsistent comfort, or who are cared for by frightening caregivers are the most likely to show intensely demanding, aggressive, and angry responses.”⁴⁸

Early Stage Training

The most essential stage for child training is the early stage and many scholars have commented on it in diverse ways. Paul Meier speaking on the early

⁴⁴ Jane, 15.

⁴⁵ Bruce Narramore, *Why Children Misbehave: A Guide to Positive Parenting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid.. 20.

⁴⁷ Narramore. 21.

⁴⁸ Peerson, 12.

childhood training says “train your child adequately in the first six years of life and you need not fear whom he will choose for his friends when he becomes a teenager.”⁴⁹ We are further told that the first five years of a child’s life are the most important years because a “child learns probably more than half of what he needs to live by the time he is five.

Sadly the first five years of many children’s lives are often wasted.”⁵⁰ It therefore calls the parents and the Church to take much interest in the first five years of a child’s life. This is in agreement with the biblical injunction that we should train up the child in the way he should go and when he grows up he will not depart from it. It is a known fact that when care is taken, the first five years of a child’s life is the period for laying social, spiritual and academic foundation which will last the child the rest of his/her.⁵¹

It is said that “approximately 85% of the adult personality is already formed by the time the individual reaches his sixth birthday. All we can do is chip away at the last 15% of unclipped marble in an attempt to sculpt our children in to ideal Christian young adults.”⁵² Although some scholars gave the essential period up to five, others six, the reason is that not all children are fast learners. Stephen terms the stage that follows as, “the consolidation stage (7-12yrs),”⁵³ and he goes further to say that age’s five to seven are the unique years for making a lifelong decision to trust in the Jesus as one’s Saviour and Lord. This period in the life of a child calls for the

⁴⁹ Paul D. Meier, *Christian Child; Rearing and Personality Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), 155, 156.

⁵⁰ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 44.

⁵¹ Bakers and Kohlenberger, 1:63.

⁵² Meier, 150.

⁵³ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 63.

church and parents to encourage the children to practice the principles they have taught the children during the first five or six years of their lives.⁵⁴ This stage in question is very sensitive in areas like: Church, Home, Friendship, and School.

Many scholars have observed that, “between the ages of six and eight children begin in earnest to take their cues from their playmates.”⁵⁵ It is as a result of the importance of these early stages of a child’s development that this study chose from birth to fourteen as its scope, a period that the Seventh-day Adventist Children ministries can take advantage to inculcate church values in the lives of its young people. “Children’s Ministries aims to develop the faith of children ages birth to 14.”⁵⁶

Family Devotion in Child Training

Clyde Narramore observes that “if parent’s life does not reflect the Lord Jesus Christ, His words will tend to evaporate. They’ll have little effect.”⁵⁷ He goes further to say that “it does no good to preach ‘peace’ to your children if your own life is a sea of tumult, conflict and upheaval. A life lived in the presence of God is more readily heard, seen and emulated”⁵⁸ Robert Holman also observes that “religious participation offers young people the wisdom of the ages-insights from some of the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Clyde M. Narramore, *How to Understand and Influence Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 85.

⁵⁶ Children Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, <http://www.generalconference.childrenministries.Org>, accessed on September 7, 2011.

⁵⁷ Narramore. 93.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

world's greatest teachers and sages regarding human choices and behaviors.”⁵⁹ It therefore calls for parents to use diverse ways to “to make religion a positive part of their family life.”⁶⁰ It is imperative that children in their early ages are grounded in the Word of God and be taught why parents or the church believes what they believe. It is incumbent upon the church and parents to teach Christianity in a way that any generation may appreciate.⁶¹

The best way to inculcate church and family values to our children is through family devotion. Parents need to have family devotion together as a family and its value should not be underrated. However, we are cautioned to make it brief so that it does not become a torture but a joyful period of sharing Christ that will be yearned for by the children. Parents and the church are therefore encouraged “to create a total spiritual atmosphere in the family, with emphasis on positive communications between parents and teenagers. If you have the right kind of discipline in the home, nagging will be totally unnecessary.”⁶² Meier suggests that the best time for family devotion is mealtime, though it must be creative. He advises that parents buy “their children Christian story books to supplement some good secular books. Reward them for memorizing Bible verses, but select verses which are short and understandable to the child.”⁶³ He goes further to say that he regularly reminds his kids of their

⁵⁹ Coombs, 119.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 120.

⁶¹ Meier, 160.

⁶² Meier, 158.

⁶³ Ibid, 153.

responsibilities before the Lord and encourages them to “make some personal commitments to the Lord, perhaps in the form of personal devotions.”⁶⁴

Holman notes that, “traditionally, Scientists and therapists have devalued religion. Religion has not been given much credit in the mental-health business. One psychotherapist noted: ‘I believe that his is one of the biggest mistakes therapists make.’ Nonetheless, “today, however, spirituality is increasingly recognized in Science and clinical practice.”⁶⁵ Parents should stop complaining about God in the house and instead make bare before their children the value of serving and worshipping God. It is during their early stages in life that parents can inculcate the value of religion in their children. It should be our prayers that by God’s grace all our children will bear imprints of God’s name in their lives wherever they may find themselves as they grow up.⁶⁶ As Thomas Berndt indicates, parents should encourage open communications between them and their children. “Parents who value open communication explain the reason for their rules. These parents allow their children to discuss rules and express their own opinions about them.”⁶⁷ There is therefore the need for open communication between parents and their children to help the children ask questions concerning their beliefs. Family devotion time is a period that should be cherished in every Christian home because it serves as opportunity to inculcate Christian values in our children.

For children to grow with a firm foundation in the faith there should be a devotional life to nurture the faith of all the family members. This finding confirms

⁶⁴ Ibid., 158.

⁶⁵ Coombs, 117.

⁶⁶ Clyde M. Narramore. *How to Understand and Influence Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 67.

⁶⁷ Berndt, 434.

Ellen White's statement that, "I saw that many souls might be saved if the young were where they ought to be, devoted to God and to the truth; but they generally occupy a position where constant labor must be bestowed upon them or they will become of the world themselves."⁶⁸ The children find themselves in a stupendous crisis in the world and the only way to save them is spiritual nurture which comes from devotion.

Narramore also agrees with this assertion pointing out that "among all Christian activities, few, if any, are more important than daily family devotions. Attendance at church and prayer meeting, as important as they are, can never take the place of the family altar. Here is where you develop Christian character, receive godly instruction, and learn to walk intimately with the Lord."⁶⁹

Devotion is another way "God looks upon us each day, nothing rejoices His heart more than seeing a family gathered around the Bible, worshiping, praying and learning of Him. . . Spiritual food is like other food. It should be eaten daily if it is to do the most good."⁷⁰ Stephen and Georgina adds to this discussion pointing out that "our children need to grow spiritually. This is the meaning of being in favor with God. God expects children of Christians to become believers too (Titus 1:6)."⁷¹ This assertion is in the right direction because family devotion plays major role in a child's life. Narramore states further that "daily devotions with your children are so important that they must not be abandoned."⁷² He goes further to say that "if you can't arrange

⁶⁸White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6: 206.

⁶⁹Narramore, 67.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 68.

⁷¹ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 43.

⁷² Narramore, 68.

for a most desirable amount of time, use a shorter period.”⁷³ In another section Narramore states, “if you earnestly seek God’s guidance, He will make it possible for you to continue this important method of influencing your children for Christ.”⁷⁴ And that guidance comes from daily family devotion. It is believed that “family devotions fortify us against temptations and emergencies of life. To the Christian family there is nothing that pays greater dividends. There is no greater challenge!”⁷⁵ The Seventh-day Adventist Church recommends that “Children’s leaders can also Nurture this personal devotional lifestyle through the organization of stewardship camps, mission camps, and other activities to involve children in growing their love for Jesus.”⁷⁶ Stephen and Georgina add, “it is important therefore that in discipline, teaching, family devotions and other such activities, each of the children get their needs met.”⁷⁷ Frank York adds his voice that “Satan’s goal, from the beginning of creation, was to cause men and women, boys and girls to rebel against God.”⁷⁸ The only way to shelter our children from Satan’s goal is to bring them to the family altar (devotions) and it is a major tool for child training in Christian perspective.

Impact of Reading on Children

Child training cannot be done only by direct contact with the children but also indirectly through reading. Parents are therefore admonished to “cultivate in your

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁶ Seventh-day Adventist Church Statement on Children Ministries (Elect. ed) 8/5/13.

⁷⁷ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 61.

⁷⁸ York and Laru, 114.

child a love of good books. This will provide a lifetime of pleasure and open doors of understanding, opportunity, and success.”⁷⁹ Someone asserted that “the thing I did get from my parents and Sunday school teachers was an introduction to the Bible. My journey into self-worth began when I started reading the Bible on my own in that home for unwed mothers.”⁸⁰ That is also the reason why every parent should go through the Bible with their children so that they can be taught the whole counsel of God. “In parenting, as in many areas of life, the Bible is neglected to our peril.”⁸¹ Reading the Bible and devotional literature therefore become imperative in child training. Another method of inculcating values in children in the early stages of their live is for parents to encourage them to read the Bible.

The Role of the Church in Child Training

It is dangerous to allow your ward to attend a church that has no proper children ministries in place. It is a known fact that the church one takes his or her family to is important. As indicated by Stephen and Georgina “part of developing a vision for children’s ministries is to consider the needs of the Children in your church so that you can tailor your programs to meet them. Don’t rush too quickly into programming just to have something to show to the church. Children are our prime consideration.”⁸² They continued that,

The Bible has to be our firm foundation and practical Christianity our way of life. A healthy church can be one of the most useful influences in the emotional and spiritual development of our children, and a healthy church stands on

⁷⁹ Holman, 97.

⁸⁰ Reports from the *Christian Science Journal Safe-Guarding the Children*. 94.

⁸¹ Stephen & Georgina Adjei. 56.

⁸² Ibid.

three legs, like a tripod: (1) a sound doctrinal leg; (2) an evangelistic leg; and (3) a relational leg, with genuine sharing and intimate love among the members of that local body of believers.⁸³

It is a known fact that children who are involved in either Sunday school or Sabbath School demonstrate “significantly better conduct in the areas of honesty, co-operation, persistence, and inhibition of undesirable behavior.”⁸⁴ According to Pollster George Gallup Jr., “I think that most of Satan’s biggest projects are being carried out by various sections of organized religion.”⁸⁵ This is important because children generally accept everything the parents teach them as truth, and their religious beliefs are largely that of their parents.

It is argued that children of Christian parents often make decision to follow Christ early in their lives and they grow into the Christian faith. It goes further to say that “by fellowship in a good church where one not only hears the Bible faithfully expounded but has opportunity of service, and by obedience to the commands of the Lord, especially the command to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20).”⁸⁶ That is why parents should be particular about the Church they attend with their children. Parents and the church have the responsibility of helping children develop right relationship with God and this can take place in the home and in the church. The influence of parent’s religion on the lives of their children therefore makes this statement worth

⁸³ Meier. 154.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 155.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 156.

⁸⁶ Stephen & Georgina Adjei. 41, 42.

considering that “successes or failures in children’s ministry will determine who is in the congregation, a generation from now.”⁸⁷ What a statement!

Stephen Adjei and Georgina Adjei assessed, “it is only human pride that makes men think that pulling the right cards they can produce the right child.”⁸⁸ This is the reason why you should choose the right Church for your children to help them in God’s direction through sound doctrines. It is no wonder that the Adventist Children Ministries coordinator points out that “many teens have grown disinterested in faith because of their church experiences as children.” It goes further to say that Children Ministry should therefore strive “to provide multiple ministries at other times that will lead children to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him.”⁸⁹ The dictum “‘Trust in God’ should be a banner worn on the hearts of all Christian parents.”⁹⁰

Church Elders Responsibility

The church has a role to play in child training and it is the responsibility of the church elders to spend time for the children ministries as they do to the adult church. Jane commented on this this way, “the parent who wants to be effective must be willing to spend time, not only with the child but also in attending to, thinking about, and changing his or her own behavior as a parent.”⁹¹ She states further that,

⁸⁷ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventista , “Children Ministries,” <http://www.generalconference.childrenministries.Org> (July 23 2013), 54.

⁸⁸Stephen & Georgina Adjei. 74.

⁸⁹ “General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Children Ministries Coordinator” <http://www.generalconference.childrenministries.Org> (July 23 2013), 55.

⁹⁰ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 69.

⁹¹ Brooks, 15.

“when parents pay attention, they find the clues to understanding the child’s feeling.”⁹² Linda Pierson also states further that “the way a parent reacts to a child determines to a high degree how the child turns out. Parents who react to their child with a great deal of anger or with inconsistent or unwise responses run a high risk of creating terribly unhappy kids.”⁹³ This is how they put it, “the first five years are most important. In fact, a child learns probably more than half of what he needs to live by the time he is five. Sadly the first five years of many children’s lives are often wasted.”⁹⁴ Meier also admonishes that “train your child adequately in the first six years of life and you need not fear whom he will choose for his friends when he becomes a teenager.”⁹⁵ He added that, “Approximately 85% of the adult personality is already formed by the time the individual reaches his sixth birthday. All we can do is chip away at the last 15% of unclipped marble in an attempt to sculpt our children into ideal Christian young adults.”⁹⁶ It can therefore be said that the first five or six years of a child’s life is very important for the child’s development. It is clear from the study that as a result of church leaders neglecting their responsibility towards the children in the early years of the child’s life, it leads to backsliding among the children.

Training Children at Home

Home is known to be the main ground for child training and the family is the first instructors. A study on early child training cannot be complete without

⁹² Ibid., 45.

⁹³ Pierson, 6, 7.

⁹⁴ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 44.

⁹⁵ Meier, 155, 156.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 150.

considering the role the family plays in child rearing. Parents need to take seriously the attitude of their kids in the home. “The home first and foremost affords the opportunity for children to learn respect for authority which is later reinforced at school.”⁹⁷ The family should be given priority in everything we do as parents and Church, because “families that Communicate on regular basis have successful and meaningful relationships.”⁹⁸

Schuller observed that children go astray as a result of home input, therefore, “when too much of a negative emotion continues to show, it is time to take a serious long look at a child’s friends, habits, regular television programs, yes, even in his room or favorite and private desk drawer.”⁹⁹ When parents relent in their daily talk and sharing with their children it may lead to “all sorts of irritations and crises.”¹⁰⁰ The children are aware of the fact that the home and the family are the environment around them, “when they are in our care, we need to offer a safe environment where children feel welcomed, valued and accepted.”¹⁰¹ And this is supported by Schuller who points out that “life in a family is a rich experience when we train ourselves to look and count all the positives.”¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁹⁸ Arvella Schuller, *The Positive Family* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 40

⁹⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 46.

¹⁰¹ Coombs, 91.

¹⁰² Schuller, 86.

Parents as Instructors

Parents should see themselves as instructors, “God expects us to raise responsible citizens and not just to produce babies.”¹⁰³ Parents become responsible when they serve as instructors who bring up responsible citizens. For the instruction children receive from parents equip them to live responsible lives and also to become responsible citizens. When parents who instruct their kids well “will be forever humble and grateful that God’s great salvation came to your family and that the instrument He chose was you!”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, “as parents we must set realistic and attainable goals with our children and then support them to reach the goals by encouragement.”¹⁰⁵ Pierson encourages that “you will not need to become an expert in child development. What you will need is a set of principles that you can apply to the difficult behaviors that most children display as they grow up.”¹⁰⁶

Stephen gave the difference between parents and teachers this way, “it is sad to realize that the teachers often think they are the authorities in training children. It is even worse when parents leave the basics of training children to teachers. The real authorities are parents and teachers are helpers.”¹⁰⁷ Stephen and Georgina quoted the Bible to parents as instructors. “Deuteronomy 6:4-9 says we must teach our children naturally, and continuously whether in bed, sitting in the house or during a walk”.¹⁰⁸ “They all need love and care. They need to be free to play, explore, create

¹⁰³ Stephen & Georgina Adjei. 64.

¹⁰⁴ Narramore, 93.

¹⁰⁵ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Linda Pierson. *The Discipline Miracle* (New York, NY: AMACOM, 2006), 7.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen & Georgina Adjei. 44.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 72.

and express themselves. They need to be instructed with the right values and be challenged to learn and master new skills and knowledge.”¹⁰⁹ The home instruction of children cannot be over emphasized. When children are well instructed in the home, the task of the Church in their training becomes supplementary. However, when the home instructional foundations are not well laid, the responsibility becomes that of the church to train the children in the fear of the Lord.

Ellen G. White

Ellen White has given remarkable comments on child training in the home and church. She calls on parents to set the right example before their children in order for them to emulate. Parents should also set their affections on things above. And forsake the things of the world.¹¹⁰ It is clear that training a child in the knowledge of God is not an easy task, Ellen White encourages parents pointing out that “with faith in God and earnest prayer, believing parents should press on in the rugged path of duty,” because “the salvation of children depends very much upon the course pursued by the parents.”¹¹¹ Accordingly, child training is obligatory for every parent and it should be learned. Parents are admonished to recognize their deficiencies in child training and learn their lessons because when they are not able to instruct their children, they help to “swell the numbers in Satan’s ranks?”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1855; 2002), 279.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 217

¹¹² White, *The Adventist Home*, (Washington DC: Ellen White Publications, 1952), 221.

Ellen White goes further to say that “I have been shown that parents generally have not taken a proper care.”¹¹³ She continues that, “Satan and his host are making most powerful efforts to sway the minds of the children.”¹¹⁴ How does Satan do it? “I saw that many souls might be saved if the young were where they ought to be, devoted to God and to the truth; but they generally occupy a position where constant labor must be bestowed upon them or they will become of the world themselves.”¹¹⁵ Parents and church leaders have important role to distraught Satan’s plans, for “if parents do not take a decided, firm course, their children will be borne down with the current, for Satan and his evil angels are working upon their minds, and the example of unconsecrated professors makes the work of overcoming far more laborious for them.”¹¹⁶ Some parents leave out the most essential part in training and “attend carefully to the temporal wants of their children; they kindly and faithfully nurse them in sickness, and then think their duty done.”¹¹⁷ This is to say that the duty of child training is far beyond nursing ones ward. The salvation of children depends very much upon the course pursued by their parents.

Ellen White discourages parents who look down upon children pointing out that “in the closing scenes of earth’s history, many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet

¹¹³Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 1* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1855-1868), 221.

¹¹⁴White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1: 279.

¹¹⁵*Ibid*, 6:206.

¹¹⁶White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:279.

¹¹⁷*Ibid*, 384.

with spirit and power.”¹¹⁸ The children who will be to do that are those who have been trained in the knowledge of God. Such children “have been taught the fear of the Lord, and their hearts have been softened by a careful and prayerful study of the Bible.”¹¹⁹ She understood that in the later days the young ones will be imbued with the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel than even elderly ones can do.¹²⁰

Those who procrastinate on training their children are warned that, “Children of eight, ten or twelve years, are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion.”¹²¹ White continued that, “Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ.”¹²² Parents who think that their kids are too young to receive religious instruction may find this statement by Ellen G. White worthy; “it is still true that children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received.”¹²³ Parents need to instruct their children on religion in spite of their age.

Both Spiritual and behavioral character formations depend on parents, according to Ellen White, “the little children may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years. They need to be educated in spiritual things, and parents should give them every advantage, that they may form characters after the

¹¹⁸ Ellen White, *Counsels to Teachers* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1855; 2002), 166, 167.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ White, 1: 400.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1: 400.

¹²³ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1950), 515.

similitude of the character of Christ.”¹²⁴ She goes further to say that “too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his character than all that it learns in future years.”¹²⁵

Training the children in the way of the Lord is a way of loving God. Therefore, “those who love God should feel deeply interested in the children and youth. To them, God can reveal His truth and salvation.”¹²⁶ White continues that “Jesus calls the little ones that believe on Him, the lambs of His flock. He has a special love for an interest in the children. . . . The most precious offering that the children can give to Jesus, is the freshness of their childhood.”¹²⁷

Ellen White sets Jesus’ example to everyone by saying “When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages,--to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians”¹²⁸ She further argued that “Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, Suffer them to come; as if He would say, They will come if you do not hinder them.”¹²⁹ Another way of saying this is that if we do not neglect the children in Christian training, they will know Jesus.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1950), 193.

¹²⁶Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1950), 373.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸White, *Desire of Ages*, 517.

¹²⁹Ibid.

Biblical View of Child Training

Adventist philosophy of child training is derived from the Bible. It begins with God choosing Abraham who is said to be capable of training his children to keep the way of the LORD. Genesis 18:19 indicates "*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.*" Matthew Henry comments thus on this passage "Abraham made it his care and business to promote practical religion in his family. He did not fill their heads with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation; but he taught them [children] to keep *the way of the Lord, and to do judgment and justice.*"¹³⁰

Adam Clerk adds that the instructions Abraham gave his household are "not only to preserve the truth in their creed, but maintain it in their practice."¹³¹ Moses wrote in the entire law (Torah) thus; *Children bring joy and blessings to adults.* God provides many benefits to parents through parenting their children (Num 5:28; Deut 28:4, 11). Children need to be taught how to develop a relationship with God. One of our greatest challenges is to pass on our beliefs and understanding of God to our children (Exod 12:26, 37; Deut 6:1-7). Children are so valuable to God that He commands us to protect them.

Samuel and Ezra wrote that parents are to ensure the spiritual and physical security of their children (1Sam 20:42; Ezra 8:21). The two major words in these verses: (I Sam and Ezra 1Sam 20:42; Ezra 8:21) are (*na'ar*) a noun and (*khanakh*) a

¹³⁰Matthew Henry, *Bible Commentary: Matthew Henry Notes on Abraham Family*; CD ROM; Bible Works, 2007.

¹³¹Adam Clark, *Bible Works: Adam Clark's Commentary on Genesis 18:19*; CD ROM; Bible Works, 2007.

verb (*khanakh*) means “to train up; to dedicate” the word dedicate here is the same as dedication of building or anything for holy use.¹³²

Train up; therefore, refers to dedicating something for holy use. The term (*na'ar*) is traditionally translated “child” here (so almost all English versions), but might mean “youth.” The noun can refer to a broad range of ages: infant (Exod. 2:6), weaned child (1 Sam 1:24), young child (Jer. 1:6), lad (Gen 22:12), adolescent (Gen 37:2), or young man of marriageable age (Gen 34:19). The context focuses on the child's young, formative years.

The wise man king Solomon states that Children need to be train for future results, “*train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” (Prov. 22:6). The key word here is “train” and it transcends any other way of bringing up a child. The Zondervan commentary elaborates on this verse this way; “Proper training of children will endure throughout their lives. . . the imperative “train” includes “dedicate” so the training should be with purpose.”¹³³ That purpose is for Christian parents and church leaders to inculcate religious values in them (the children) in their early stage. The phrase “in the way he should go,” suggests early instruction and Zondervan comments that “there is a standard of life to which children should adhere . . . they have to be young enough when change for the better is still possible, the consequence is when they are old they will not depart from it.”¹³⁴ Bruce made an interesting remark on this verse saying that “I call the biblical

¹³² Henry, *Bible Commentary*, 2007.

¹³³ Kenneth and Kohlenbberger, 1: 987.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

concept ‘loving authority.’”¹³⁵ Training of children in the early state is very essential regardless to social status or position.

Solomon continues with another proverb, “Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished” (Eccl 4: 13). This is to say that a trained child is more useful than a renowned untrained person. Good training comes from the word of God. Thus, Solomon says “to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; . . . the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:2, 7). It is obvious from the Bible that parents who heeded to the instructions of Prov 22:6 and direct their children in the early stages of their lives are bound to have excellent children who will grow up to become useful to their nations and community. Biblical examples of such children are: Joseph, as compared to all the wise men in Egypt (Gen 39-41); Samuel, as compared to the children of the prophet Eli who did not heed the instructions of God (1 Sam 2:12-18, 22, 26); Daniel, as compared to all the wise men in the province of Babylon (Dan 6); Moses, whom from his childhood had instructions from his mother and grew (Exod 2:9, 10) before going to the palace where riches could not influence him (Heb 11: 23).

The prophet Joel and the Psalmist agreed that child training cut across generations (Joel 1:3; Psalm 78:3-6, NIV). Matthew Henry commenting on Joel’s account says “let them know what dismal tokens of the wrath of God you have been under, that they may take warning, and may learn obedience by the things which you have suffered.”¹³⁶ The *children* are to be trained to stand in awe of God and of His judgments, and to tremble before him.¹³⁷

¹³⁵Narramore, 30, 31.

¹³⁶ Henry, “Joel 1:3”

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Mathew Henry comments that “the honor we owe to our parents and ancestors obliges us to attend to that which our fathers have told us, and, as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard.”¹³⁸ He continued that “in teaching our children the knowledge of God, we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. . . Our great care must be to lodge our religion, that great deposit, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us.”¹³⁹ Proper training and transmission of good values from parents to their children should be paramount in the life of all parents.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul agrees to all the assertions of the Old Testament passages above and makes child training imperative to parents. Parents are to ensure that their wards receive proper discipline. Paul states, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). He also warned that child training should not be provocative in Col. 3:21.

Adventist Philosophy of Education

Commenting on child training, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Children’s Ministries department states:

Children are a gift from God. He gives children to parents as a special sign of love and personal fulfillment (Deut. 7:13; Ps. 127:3). Children bring joy and blessings to adults. God provides many benefits to parents through parenting their children (Num. 5:28; Deut. 28:4, 11). Children are so valuable to God that He commands us to protect them. Parents are to ensure the spiritual and physical security of their children (1Sam. 20:42; Ezra 8:21). God enjoys the nature and personality of children and asks adults to learn from them. Scripture identifies attributes such as sincerity, humility, simplicity, and trusting as qualities

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

found in children, and God treasures these characteristics (Matt. 18:3; 19:14; Phil. 2:15).¹⁴⁰

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in general regards children ministries as one of the most important ministries in the church.

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the right of every child to a happy and stable home environment, and the freedom and support to grow up to be the person God intended. In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the fundamental importance of children by adopting the “Convention on the Rights of the Child.” In harmony with many of these lofty principles, and considering the value Jesus placed on children when He said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt 19:14, NIV),¹⁴¹

Based on the above statement, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has made it a basic principle to regard children as of fundamental importance in all the ministries in the church.

Any instruction, law, or commandment that God declares to His people, He did not leave out children. Training children in the early stages is an instruction from God to every parent which should not to be ignored. The best way of passing on true knowledge and values to the next generation is by imparting parental knowledge to their children. Based on the biblical accounts above, the Adventist came out with a philosophy for the Children’s Ministries department which states,

Children’s Ministries is about developing the faith of children ages birth to fourteen. While Sabbath School provides for religious education once a week, Children’s Ministries look at the whole child

¹⁴⁰ “Children Ministries,” General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church <http://www.generalconference.childrenministries.Org>, accessed on September 7, 2011.

¹⁴¹ ”Seventh-day Adventist Church Statement on Children Ministries” General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church. <http://www.generalconference.childrenministries.Org> (July 23 2013), 55.

and seeks to provide multiple ministries that will lead children to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him.¹⁴²

The Children's ministries department of the General Conference therefore aims at training young people in the fear of the Lord. It is believed that children should be monitored and trained daily to exemplify Christ in all their lives. The church is the main institution that should inculcate biblical principles in the children and this is done through the children department.

Child training has won the respect and study of many scholars because they see it as important and a universal issue that cuts across culture, sect, religion, tribe or national boundaries. This chapter highlighted areas such as the relevance of time in child training pointing out that children need ample time and concentration. Any trainer, be it parents; church leaders, guardians, or teachers should have time for their children and be patient with the children when it comes to their upbringing.

Parents should have cordial relationship with their children in order to allow the children approach them with their problems. Early child training is recommended as an integral part of child training. Children acquire more knowledge from age zero to age seven than the rest of their lives. Ellen White affirmed the earlier commentators' view that "too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his character than all that it learns in future years."¹⁴³ This therefore means that child training begins right after birth and parents should not neglect this golden time.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald 2010), 128,129.

“With God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27) and without God child training will grow futile therefore family devotion is imperative for the training of minors. The devotional services conducted in the home carry value in the children’s lives. Family devotion enhances the level of understanding and it becomes part and parcel of their lives when they grow which fulfills proverbs 22:6 condition that “when they grow they will not depart from it.” Another important child training tool emphasized in the chapter is the importance of reading as tool for shaping the character of the children in academic, spiritual, social and physical wellbeing. It is recommended that parents inculcate the habit of reading in their children by making available to their wards educative books. The church and the home are platforms for child training and parents together with church leaders are to serve as instructors for their children. Parents should be careful not to shift all the training responsibilities on church and school teachers. The proceeding chapter describes the local setting of Ntonso district. It also gives biographical background of the community and the History of the Adventist Church of the area.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

This chapter describes the local setting of the Ntonso District to unearth the situation in the churches in the district with regards to child training in general, their devotional life at home, the parents' involvement in the children's department, and the resources for their wards on spiritual nurture, survey and personal observations.

A former pastor of the Ntonso district, J. K. Mensah, observes that about 60 percent of the youth between the ages of 13 to 15 years left the church during four years of his ministry at the district. He attributes this to the neglect and shirking of responsibilities by parents and church elders. He goes further to say that early training that influence children's lives for better future was missing in the churches.¹⁴⁴ It could be that parents have concentrated so much on the acquisition of wealth at the expense of the moral training of their children. Again the church is obsessed with organizational structure, infrastructural development or fundraising that its core duty of nurturing children spiritually has been neglected. The daily activities of the community and the local churches projects serve as a clue to confirm this.

History of Ntonso Community

The Ntonso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is situated in the Kwabre East District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Ntonso, the town which bears

¹⁴⁴ Pastor J.K. Mensah, *Workshop Conducted on Sabbath School/Children Department*, March 11, 2006.

the name of the district, was built by one Opannin [literary Elder] Gyakye Amo, a famer and a hunter from the Adako clan. Gyekye migrated from Nsuta-Ashanti, and was also the one who built a village near Nsuta called Amoaman, now a town of about five thousand population. Gyakye Amo used to pay homage to the Asantehene [the Ashante King] by walking from his village, Amoaman to Kumasi, about two hundred and forty miles to and fro. He therefore decided to acquire a land in order to be closer to the king. The then Ashanti king Asantehene asked him to go for any place of his choice and he chose a land on the Kumasi-Mampong road which was closed to the village of another man by the name Adugyamfi, whose village is known as Gyamfi Wonoo. The location that Gyakye chose to settle in order to be close to Kumasi the residence of the Asante king has now become the Ntonso town. The village was named after the owner of the village close-by called Adugyamfi. When Gyekye went to inform the Asantehene that he had acquired or secured a place close to Gyamfi's village, he said, "I stayed at Adugyamfi *anintonso* [literary I stay at Adugyamfi's eyebrow] meaning he stayed closed to Adugyamfi. The short form of the term "anintonso" [literary eyebrow] is Ntonso which eventually became the name of the town.¹⁴⁵

Ntonso was founded by a single person (Gyakye Amo) in the 15th Century. I had the opportunity to live in the town for four years and have a personal estimation this way; Ntonso community can now boast of over 6,000 population, about thirty basic schools and one senior high school. The town is located 24 kilometers on the Kumasi to Mampong road. It is between Mamfonteng and Agona which are all located on the Kumasi – Mampong Highway. The major vocation of the people is the production of mourning cloths which are used for attending funerals. Funeral is one of

¹⁴⁵Peter Boakye, A Royal of Ntonso Palace Stool, Interviewed by the author, Ntonso, 6 February 2013.

the ceremonies that attracts much attention in Ghana, particularly in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Kente is one of the most popular and expensive clothes for special occasions in Ghana. Ntonso is also among the producers of the Kente cloth in Ghana. Currently, majority of the labour force engage in the Kente industry. They have the weavers, and those who produce the tread for making the cloth, there are traders who also send the finished products to other cities to sell. The kente trade has made Ntonso the leading town in terms revenue mobilization in the Kwabre District Assembly with the district capital at Mampong, Ashanti.

The Ntonso town has produced famous and outstanding personalities such as: Kwame Preprah (former Finance Minister for Ghana), Kwaku Adu Gyamfi (Ecobank Director of West Africa) Professor Kofi Owusu Mensa (Adventist Church Historian) and many more for the nation Ghana as well as the Adventist Church.

History of the Adventist Church in Ntonso

To trace how Adventism came to Ntonso, Kofi Owusu Mensa, a renowned Adventist Church Historian who incidentally hails from the town, wrote that Adventist came to Ntonso in 1914 through a foreign evangelist by the name William H. Lewis and his team.¹⁴⁶ Owusu-Mensa indicates that one of the first converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Ntonso, Nana Kwasi Brempon (alias Kwasi Asuo) informed him that William Lewis and his company made their first contact with the village chief and discussed plans to begin the church at Ntonso in late October, 1914. The historian continues that the village chief Nana Kofi Dei, was reluctant in welcoming the Adventist at that time because he had earlier promised to receive another Christian denomination to the village. The story goes further to indicate that

¹⁴⁶ Owusu Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism*, (Osu, Accra: Advent Press, 2005), 128.

as a result of the reluctance of the village chief to accept the Adventist missionaries, they moved on to settle at Agona and this may be the reason why Agona became the center of Adventism in Ashanti instead of Nsuta “during the Lewis years of 1914-1917 and subsequently, became the headquarters of Seventh-day Adventism in Ghana for a number of years.”¹⁴⁷ The story continues that “as a result of straight evangelistic efforts of Lewis *and his team* [emphasis supplied] Adventism registered a good number of souls at Ntonso in the initial stages.”¹⁴⁸ After 1914, Adventism became the most dominant denomination at Ntonso and its environs. The Ntonso district has a prominent place in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana and is known as one of the oldest places to have received the Adventist message.¹⁴⁹

The Ntonso District is made up of 13 churches with 1,600 baptized Adventists as at the end of the first quarter, 2011. The children population alone stands at 915 which is about half the population of the adults.¹⁵⁰ About 90 percent of these children are wards of the adult church members and only 10 percent of these children’s parents are not church members.¹⁵¹ Having had the opportunity to serve as the district pastor for this district, I have personally observed that, the children strive to survive in the faith in which they were born. Those who joined (whose parents are not members) find themselves in the “wilderness.” The parents spend almost all of their time on their businesses, pushing their responsibilities on the school teachers,

¹⁴⁷ Owusu Mensa, 141.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 151.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 201.

¹⁵⁰ Ntonso District, Office of the District, *Quarterly Statistical Report to Central Ghana Conference*, (1st Quarter 2011).

¹⁵¹ Ntonso Central Church, Church Record Book, 2009/2010.

and neglecting the children's spiritual nurture. This might be a contributing factor to the children leaving the church before they grow into adulthood.

Professor Kofi Owusu Mensa, one of the prominent personalities the district has ever produced for the world Adventist Church, attests that the youth in the church today are totally different from those of their days in terms of knowledge of the gospel, behavior, attitude towards church activities and spiritual life. To him, most young people today have no respect and time for God and His work. He attributes the current plight of young people to the training they receive from their parents nowadays.¹⁵² According to the Ntonso district Sabbath School statistical reports, between 2008 and 2011, 200 children left the church before reaching adolescences.¹⁵³ This means 50 children representing 18% leave the church each year in that four year report. Based on the statistics given above, if the trend of children dropout (backslide) from the churches continue in the same rare without an antidote, the children ministries in the district will collapse and the church also will have no future in the district.

Economic and Socio-Cultural Lifestyle

The Ntonso town and the surrounding towns are well known for the production of locally manufactured traditional cloth, which includes mourning cloths, clothes for special occasions and the renowned Ghanaian Kente cloth. Tracing the history of their occupation, Opanin Peter Boakye, (alias Agya Peter) indicates that Ntonso became a notable town for morning cloth production as a result of the different groups of people coming to Ntonso demanding these clothes because they

¹⁵²Owusu Mensa, Retired History Professor, interview by author. Central Ghana Conference, 4 February, 2013.

¹⁵³Ntonso District, Office of the District, *Quarterly Statistical Report to Central Ghana Conference*, (2008-2011).

are done better than any other town in the Asante Region. The dying and waving of diverse cloths is the main occupation of the people of Ntonso. According to Agya Peter, the town's folk also added kente weaving to the trademark mourning cloth production because the main occupation of the nearby villages such as Adanwomase and Bonwire is kente waving.¹⁵⁴ Today, only the aged who cannot work and children are exempted from the Kente and the mourning cloth business. Almost everybody in the Ntonso town and its environs do business related to cloth manufacture or dying. There are significant numbers of people who travel from the district with the kente cloth at the end of every month to sell around the country. Some of the town's folks have stores filled with kente and materials for weaving cloths, and the creative youth and active adults are the weavers. The main income generating venture in the entire community is the kente waving business. The mourning cloth business has now decreased since it does not generate income as the kente cloth which is accepted nationwide.

General Data of Respondents

This section of the study looks at the general data of the respondents of the survey. Different questions were administered to the churches in the Ntonso district to ascertain their views on Children's ministry activities in the district.

Table 1 is the ages of the respondents. The indication is that 32 out of 114 respondents representing 28.1% were of the ages between 10 and 18, most of which are the target group under study. Respondents nineteen years and above were 82, representing 71.9% which also includes parents, Church leaders, and children instructors who are supposed to have strategy for training young people which is the concern of this study.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Table 1. Age Distribution

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
10-14	18	15.8.	15.8
15-18	14	12.3	33.3
19-35	34	29.8	63.2
36-60	35	30.7	93.9
61 and Above	13	11.4	100.0
Total	114	100.0	

Table 2 depicts a representation of respondents and their portfolio. Out of the 114 respondents, 32 representing 28.1% are children who study in the children's Sabbath School department. The remaining 71.9% are Church administrators, elders, children instructors, Youth leaders, adult members, and other parents who are not part in the other categories.

Table 2: Status/Position

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Church Administrator	9	7.9	7.9
Church Elder	12	10.5	18.4
Children Instructor	17	14.9	33.3
Youth Leader	11	9.6	43.0
Children Dept. Member	32	28.1	71.1
Church Member	19	16.7	87.7
Floor member Parents	14	12.3	100.0
Total	114	100.0	

Table 3 gives the number of parents who responded in this category. Out of 70parents, 50 of them representing 71.4% were living with their children and 20 parents representing 28.6% were not living with their children.

Table 3: Parents Living with their Children

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	50	71.4	71.4
No	20	28.6	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 4 shows that out of the total 70 parents' respondents, 48 parents representing 68.6% said all their children were Adventists and 22 respondent parents representing 31.4% said their children were not Adventists.

Table 4. SDA Children

Adventist Children	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	48	68.6	68.6
No	22	31.4	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 5 shows that 19 parent respondents representing 27.2 % affirm that some of their children have backslidden from the faith and 51 respondents (72.8%) claim that their children are still holding onto the Adventist faith.

Table 5. Backslidden Children

Backslidden Children	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	19	27.2	27.2
No	51	72.8	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 6 shows that 23 parents (32.9%) responded that they always visit their wards during the Sabbath School programs, 29 or 41.4% said they rarely visit their wards during the children's worship period. From the respondents, 18 (25.7%) responded that they have never visited the children's department.

Table 6: Visit Children Department

Parents visit	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	23	32.9	32.9
Rare	29	41.4	67.1
No	18	25.7	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 7 shows that 32 adult respondents representing (45.7%) said they have never donated anything to the children's department. 17 (24.3%) have donated once, 13 at 18.6% for 2 or 3 times and 8 respondents (11.4%) have donated 4 times or more.

Table 7: Donations to Children Department

Donation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Nil	32	45.7	45.7
Once	17	24.3	70.0
2-3	13	18.6	88.6
4+	8	11.4	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 8 is the picture of Parents and elders rating children's ministries teachers performance, class work, and service, this is how it went: performance - 27.2% as very good, 31.45% as good, 25.7% as average, and 15.7% poor.

Table 8: Teacher Performance

Teacher Performance	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Good	19	27.2	27.2
Good	22	31.4	31.4
Average	18	25.7	25.7
below Average	11	15.7	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 9 representing Parents responding to the Church Services in the Children department, this is how they rated their services, – 19.3% respondents said it was excellent, 39.5% also gave them good, 27.2% respondents believed it was average and 14% said it was poor in that order.

Table 9: Children Department Service

Service	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	16	22.9	22.9
Good	22	31.4	31.4
Average	21	30	30
Poor	11	15.7	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

In Table 10, parents were asked about their suggestions for the children's departments, these were some of the suggestions they made: 13 parents representing 18.6% suggested Bible study to be the first priority of the children, 9 parents (12.6%) suggested Bible games, 8 parents representing 11.4% indicated that the teachers sent to the children's department should be selected based on maturity, educational level and experience with children, 6 parents representing (8.6%) suggest visual aids for teaching the children, 9 parents (12.9%) said they are concerned about the spiritual growth of the children, another 6 parents (8.6) said the children should worship with

the adults during the divine service period, 7 at (10%) suggest that the children be taken out to study nature and finally another 12 parents (17%) said the classes for the children should be arranged according to their ages and should be sizable to help the teachers manage the kids well.

Table 10: Suggestions for Children Department

Suggestions	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bible Studies	13	18.6	12.9
Bible games	9	12.9	18.6
Teachers	8	11.4	11.4
Visual Aids	6	8.6	8.6
Spiritual Growth	9	12.9	12.9
With Elders	6	8.6	8.6
Nature Study	7	10	10
Class Arrange	12	17	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 11 is an account of Parents together with their children responding to questions regarding their family devotional lives. This is how they rated their home devotions: 17 respondents (18.4%) said they have family devotions every day, 51 respondents (49) did not hold family devotions, and 36 respondents (34.6%) said they sometimes hold family devotion. Out of 114 total respondents, 104 answered this section. Those who failed to answer might be singles who are yet to raise a family.

Table 11: Family Devotion

Family Devotion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	17	16.3	16.3
No	51	49	49
Sometimes	36	34.6	100.0
Total	104	100.0	

Table 12, when the parents and their children were asked if their families prayed together every day, this was the rate of their response: 31 respondents representing 29.8% said they did, 30 respondents representing 28.8% said they did not, and 43 respondents (41.3%) said they sometimes prayed with their family.

Table 12: Pray with Children

Parents pray with children	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	31	29.8	29.8
No	30	28.8	28.8
Sometimes	43	41.3	100.0
Total	104	100.0	

Table 13 is an account of Religious books possession. In answer to the question whether their families have religious books in the home, these are the reactions from both the parents and the children. 80 respondents (77.2%) said yes they have religious books at home, and 24 respondents (23%) said they do not have any religious books in their home.

Table 13: Possession of Religious Books

Religious Books	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	80	77	77
No	24	23	100.0
Total	104	100.0	

Table 14 is when parents and children were interviewed on how they spent their leisure time, this is how the answer was rated: 30.8% made up of both parents and children use their leisure time for Bible study, 24% for school assignments and lesson notes and the remaining 45.2% use their leisure time for sleeping, counseling, visitations, and games as shown in the table above.

Table 14: Leisure Time

Leisure Time	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bible Study	32	30.8	30.8
Sleep	10	9.6	9.6
Counseling	10	9.6	9.6
Visit	12	11.5	11.5
Games	11	10.6	10.6
School work	25	24	24
Lesson Notes	4	3.8	100.0
Total	104	100.0	

In Table 15, Children's teachers were also interrogated about their work in the children's department. Since some of the teachers were also parents, they were able answer questions on the parents as well as the teachers, and some church members who had taught in in the department before. Considering the number of years the teachers had been in the children's department, only 20 % said they had been with children ministry for 4 years and above, the rest 80 % had spent at most 3 years in the children ministries as shown in Table 15 below.

Table 15: Years Taught in Dept.

Years Taught	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
One year & Below	18	36	36
2yrs	14	28	28
3yrs	8	16	16
4yrs	6	12	12
5yrs plus	4	8	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Children department teachers who were Senior High School graduates and Middle School Form Four leavers were as high as 60% as against those who were trained as professional teachers and those with higher certifications and therefore would have more knowledge to impart to the children's ministries were stood at 40% low as indicated in the table 16 below.

Table 16. Teachers' Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Degree & Above	6	12	12
Diploma	5	10	22
SHS	14	28	50
Form Four	16	32	82
Cert A	9	18	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Table 17 is the answer to the question as to whether the teachers received orientation when they were appointed to teach at the children's department, 36% affirmed that they got orientation before starting to teach in the children's department

and that there is an ongoing periodical training and orientation in their churches, and 64% said they worked in the department without any orientation both before or after they started.

Table 17: Orientation

Orientation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	18	36	36
No	32	64	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

In Table 18, the teachers rated the elders' participation in the programs of the children's department such as: preaching to the children, teaching, leading their lesson study guides, singing to the children, and many others, this is how the respondents were rated: 12% rated the elder's involvement as excellent, 18% gave them good, and 32% gave them average and 38 rated them poor.

Table 18: Teachers' Evaluation of Elders' Participation in Children's Department

Elders Participation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	6	12	12
Good	9	18	30
Average	16	32	62
Poor	19	38	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

In Table 19, only 6 out of 50 teachers representing 12% disagreed that children often leave the church when they grow as a result of weak foundation in the faith, the remaining 44 teachers at 88% said they either strongly agree or agree.

Table 19: Weak Foundation

Weak Foundation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	29	58	58.0
Agree	15	30	88.0
Disagree	6	12	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

In Table 20, 26% of both current and former teaching respondents said they always had budget for the children's department, 36% said they did not have budget for the department, and 38% said it was done occasionally.

Table 20: Children Department Budget

Budget	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	13	26	26.0
No	18	36	62.0
Sometimes	19	38	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Table 21 deals with the question, whether the department has materials for the children to work with; 14 (28%) teachers said yes, 19 of them representing 38% said they had very few materials and 17(59.6%) said they did not have materials for teaching the children and they improvise.

Table 21: Materials for Children's Department

Materials	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	14	28	28.0
Very Few	19	38	66.0
No	17	34	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Table 22 gives laudable suggestions such as elders should preach in the children department 18%, classes should be divided according to ages 14%, children should join adult during worship (divine service) than children department having their service separately throughout Sabbath services. 12% suggested enough books should be provided for the children’s department, 14% were in favor of Children Programs, 6% said children should have their own hymnals (song book) and 14% said much attention be given to teachers of the department especially on their education on the work and teachers should not be changed frequently the department.

Table 22: Suggested Changes

Suggested Changes	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Elders Preach	9	18	18.0
Separate classes	7	14	32.0
Worship with Adults	11	22	54.0
Books	6	12	66.0
Children Programs	7	14	80.0
Hymns	3	6	86.0
Change Teachers	7	14	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Table 23 below, Children department teachers were asked what they think were some of the reasons why some Adventist children leave the church when they are growing, these were their responses: 36% said peer pressure, lack of parental guide – 44%, and unattractive programs – 20%.

Table 23: What Drives Children Away From the Church

What Drives Children	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Peers	18	36	36.0
Parental guide	22	44	80.0
Programs	10	20	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Table 24 is the outcome of the suggestions that came from teachers for training the children: 22% went for wholistic training which comprises spiritual, social, physical, and mental development, 24% suggested Spirit of Prophecy reading (study), 20% suggested social programs to attract the children and 34% affirmed family devotions in the homes.

Table 24: Suggested Training

Suggested Training	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Wholistic training	11	22	22.0
SOP reading	12	24	46.0
Socialization	10	20	56.0
Home Devotion	17	34	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

In Table 25, when it came to questioning the children, they also answered on all the areas demanded such as: parents, teachers, and their services. First of all, 15 children representing 46.9% parents are Adventists, 10 representing 25% parents are not Adventists, and 9 (28.1%) had one of their parents as Adventist, while the other half attended different denomination or no church at all.

Table 25: Adventist Parents

Adventist Parents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	15	46.9	46.9
No	8	25	71.9
One of them	9	28.1	100.0
Total	32	100.0	

In Table 26 below, when the children were asked whether they liked the teaching style of their teachers, these results came out: 37.5% affirmed yes, 21.9% answered no, and 40.6% preferred somehow, meaning some of the styles fall below their liking.

Table 26: Teaching Style

Teaching Style	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	12	37.5	37.5
No	7	21.9	59.4
Somehow	13	40.6	100.0
Total	32	100.0	

Finally, Table 27 is the results on the question as to whether the children would like to join the adults in their chapel for worship or remain at the children's worship center, 19 children representing 59.4% chose to remain in the children's department despite any deficiencies in the department and 13 representing 40.6% decided to join the adults.

Table 27: Join Elders

Join Elders	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Remain	19	59.4	59.4
Join	13	40.6	100.0
Total	32	100.0	

Family Devotions

Tables 11 and 12 came out with lapses with regards to family devotion and prayers. Besides all the commentary on family devotions above, the findings of the study show that parents and children who have devotions together in their homes were 16.3% less while the rest of 49% did not do it at all and 34.6% were having it sporadically.

Prayer on the other hand was treated insignificant in some families. Only 29.8% make prayer part of their family life, 28.8% were not praying at all in the homes, parents did not have time to pray with their kids, neither kids remind their parents on that and 41.3% also prayed occasionally whether they are in need or trouble before praying or when they have time before doing so. Any family that ignores the issues of devotion and prayer is not only depriving the family from spiritual benefits but also may lead the children to Satan's prey that would eventually lure them from the gospel faith. This study has unearthed one of the reasons that lure Ntonso District Adventist Children from the gospel faith when they are growing.

Parents' Participation in Children Department

Based on the finding above, it can be said that the input of parents in children's ministries were is very minimal. Parents simply do not have the time for their wards in this area of child training. Tables 6, 7,18,21,23 show that elders who

could have made up the deficiencies of parents were in the same vein with them. The areas that give indications that church elders showed negligence on child training in the same way parents showed ignorance in family devotions are: 1) table 6 which gives the picture of elders visiting the children department to see what entails in their studies and services, only 32% were doing so regularly. 41% rarely went there and 25.7% did not visit the children at all. 2) table 7 revealed that 45.7% shamelessly affirmed that they did not donate anything being cash or kind to the children for the past two year when this interview was conducted, 24.3% donated only once, 18.6% did it 2 or 3 times and 11.4% was the highest of 4 times donation within the past two years. 3) Table 18 attested that church elders participated poorly with 38%, 32% average, 18% good and only 12% excellent in the children's department activities. 4) In table 23, 44% gave answer that lack of parental guide is what drives away children from the church than any other means.

All the above findings confirm that parents who were also church elders in the churches in the Ntonso district had no time for the Children Ministries. These parents and elders did not preach to the children, no enough materials for them, no donations, and budget that will help provide things for them and the fate of the children lie in the hands of their Children Ministries teachers, no orientation for the teachers before they engage them in teaching the children in the department, and no monitoring mechanism that see the needs and improvements of the Ministries.

Should these parents and elders take counsel from Dean Shelley's statement that says "parents of visited kids have been the most ecstatic of all-once they get over the initial shock. They're eager to have us all come in and visit their youngster!"¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Merrill, Dean; Shelley, Marshall, *Fresh Ideas for Families, Youth & Children* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Word Books, 1984), S. 67.

Stephen and Georgina Agyei added that “parents must ensure that their children not only grow intellectually and physically but also spiritually and socially. The aim of Christian parenting is to produce mature men and women who have undergone balanced growth.”¹⁵⁶ This balance growth comes from the home where parents are the teachers, the church where church elders are the main supervisors since they are the overseers of all the church members including the children. The time devoted to children today will be of great benefit in the future. Although the time parents spend on their kids today “don’t give us immediate rewards”¹⁵⁷ as Stephen and Georgina Adjei observed, it involves responsibility, loving, caring and sacrificing. This district parents need to invest time in the training of their children to help them nurture their character. Such a parental training should not be shifted onto anybody else. This study therefore has a point to develop a program that will be guide to the parents and elders for a better child training.

Backslidden Children

When parents neglect to provide religious materials for their children, leave all the preaching and teachings in the hands of their teachers, and send teachers to the children department without any orientation, then one can say emphatically that they have shun their parental responsibilities and eventually paving way for the children to leave the church because if the church is so important and has some training impact on them, their parents would have themselves fully in the running of the children department in the churches of the district. Table 5 revealed how the children were backsliding in the district, 27.2% and this came from parents who in the churches of the district and are probably Adventists. There is a probability that some children

¹⁵⁶ Stephen & Georgina, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 119.

backslide but their parents were not Adventists and therefore did not give account on them; the percentage could have been higher if all the non-Adventist parents were captured. It is an alarming issue that children who will grow and lead the children in the future backslide from the gospel faith within a period of time. If nurturing God's flock and still has a leakage of 27.2% should be an alarming issue to tackle. If this problem is not arrested in this level, who knows how the backsliding percentage will rise in the future years. The study has a great interest in this finding to develop a strategy to help maintain the youth in the churches to become leaders in the future.

Qualified Teachers

Child training is a team work comprising parents, elders and teachers. The teachers responsibility in the training of children is very important, it therefore requires that teachers in the children's department should be qualified enough based on education, age and parental experience. However, findings in this study suggest otherwise. Tables 15, 16 and 17 show that the teachers who were in the children department lack knowledge enough on child training to be posted to the children department. The educational levels of the teachers were not encouraging. Senior High School students were in majority (28 %), from four leavers 16% and those with diploma and degree and above were 10% confirming that the most of the teachers were not educated enough to handle this sensitive department. This really affirms what Ellen White says about the children's department teachers. She indicates that "children's leaders and teachers need to understand children and how they grow their faith. They need to know how to organize programs, teach children, nurture them and meet their needs."¹⁵⁸ But unfortunately, these teachers do not get enough orientation as shown in table 17 in order to be sensitized about the children they handle. Another

¹⁵⁸ White, 6: 429.

unfortunate thing is that most of the teachers spend a very short period of years and at the time they are becoming familiar with the children, they go and new teachers come. This could be seen in table 15 that the teachers who had spent 1 year and below were 36% highest in the categories.

Survey

Further survey conducted in the district brought out very important issues to consider in this study. A boy of eight years said he would like to join the elders in worship because their teachers in the children's department whip them with canes in such a way that he comes to church on the Sabbath in fear. When asked if he felt like staying home on the Sabbath without coming to church, he answered "my father will beat me." This means the children in that church suffer from abuse (beating) which scares them from the church.

Mr. Oduro in the Bonwire Church in the Ntonso district, who is an instructor in the children's department, appreciated this study and the visit. He indicated "thank you pastor for visiting us here, we do not normally see this here for a preacher of the day to come here and visit us in the children's department." When asked further, he described the children department as a place where the parents come and dump their babies. Elders and parents do not care to come and see what goes on over there and they feel neglected. Another woman in the department reaffirmed what Mr. Oduro said pointing out, "oh so why can't we even get to hear the announcement that goes on in the main church are we not part of the church?"

In the course of the study, I visited the Kasaam SDA Church in the Ntonso district, and when I went to the children's department, only the children were there playing while the adults were enjoying their service and I was told they had been left on their own for over an hour. I asked them why they were not studying but playing,

the children answered that their only teacher was not present and this is not the first time, whenever their teacher was absent, they only played and went home when the adults' service closed. No elder come there to see whether the children are also being nurtured on spiritual food.

A 12 year old girl delivered a sermon on September 17, 2011 on the occasion of the Adventist Pathfinders' day celebration in the Ntonso central Church. She based her sermon on the gospel of Matt 19:14 "But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" This girl preached to the adult church that day by stressing her findings that parents and the elderly ones are forbidding them [the children] to come to Jesus. One of the points she stressed in the message which lead me to research further to authenticate her accession was that, "children Sabbath school quarterly study guides from primary to youth always come late and sometimes they do not come at all. But no one hears any church leader or adult church members complaining about it. On the contrary, if the adult Sabbath School Study Guide delays for some few days, there will be a "hoola balloo" [noise making *emphasis supplied*] about it in the churches.

The table below represents the delivery dates of the Sabbath School Study Guide for both the adults and the children in the Central Ghana Conference.

Adult's Sabbath School Quarterly	Children's Sabbath School Quarterly
2010 1 st & 2 nd Quarter - 29/12/2009	2010 1 st & 2 nd Quarter - 11/02/2010
2010 3 rd & 4 th Quarter – 17/06/2010	2010 3 rd & 4 th Quarter – 14/07/2010
2011 1 st & 2 nd Quarter - 29/12/2010	2011 1 st & 2 nd Quarter - 18/01/2011
2011 3 rd & 4 th Quarter - 16/06/2011	2011 3 rd & 4 th Quarter – 06/07/2011
2012 1 st & 2 nd Quarter – 29/12/2011	2012 1 st & 2 nd Quarter – 05/01/2012
2012 3 rd & 4 th Quarter – 28/05/2012	2012 3 rd & 4 th Quarter – 28/07/2012

Considering the table carefully, there was not a single period that Children Sabbath School Study Guide came together with the adults lessons. This seems to support the view that the Church considers the Adult's Sabbath School Study Guides more important than the children's own. This is an indication that the children see everything goes on in the Church only that they do not have the chance to comment on all of them so if a platform is given them to express their views, parents marvel at the outcome. The 12 year old girl preacher above has rightly revealed a selfish motive of the elders and parents in the churches here.

Personal Observations

In the course of the study, it was observed that there were children whose parents are not Adventists attending Sabbath morning children's department service. These children became Adventists mostly through their friends. The interview could not capture the non-Adventist parents whose backslidden children were not counted.

Furthermore, it was realized that the teachers in the children's department do not spend enough time in the department to help them be well acquainted with the children's needs before they leave. This may be attributed to the fact that the department is not interesting enough to attract qualified teachers, and there is no motivation for the teachers. The sizes of the classes are also intimidating; the teachers are usually Senior High School graduates who are waiting to continue their studies so they leave abruptly and this affects the department.

Elders and parents do not see the children's department as part of the church; if they do, preaching roster, budget for the department, and provision of teaching materials would not be ignored in any way. The church, school, community, and the home are all contributing environments for child training; nonetheless, the foremost of them all is the home. That is where most of the early years of the children are spent.

As Stephen indicates, “the first five years are most important. In fact, a child learns probably more than half of what he needs to live by the time he is five. Sadly the first five years of many children’s lives are often wasted.”¹⁵⁹ The parents are the first teachers before their academic and church teachers, but the parents’ responsibilities and the home school seems ignored.

¹⁵⁹ Stephen & Georgina Adjei, *The Challenge of Parenting*, 44.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Design of the Program

The study therefore reorganizes the children department into levels and recruits teachers who would be trained to have the expertise to handle the children from their early stages till they grow to join the adult church. The children department work will not be a Sabbath service section only, but the time they spend at home, in school and with their non-Adventist colleagues are all incorporated. Therefore the parents, teachers and friends who also have influence on these children are also to serve as resource personnel in this study.

A seminar was conducted to develop ways and means of developing effective children ministries in the Ntonso district of Seventh-day Adventist Church. The result of the seminar will be implemented within six months and will be evaluated through various plans that will be developed for Church leaders, parents, children ministries teachers and children of the children ministries.

Both parents and church elders are therefore supervisors on the children's devotional services and also supplies for devotional books needed, and children department instructors are guide for their Bible study and worship.

This chapter describes the program development, implementation and evaluation. On August 15, 2011 the Ntonso District at a general meeting unanimously accepted the proposal to use the district as a case study for this study and that the children's department had been chosen for this study. The district leadership was informed that

they study aims at finding a strategy for training the young children to grow and remain in the Adventist faith. The meeting went further to set up a six members committee to work with the researcher to design a program that will help the study.¹ The committee proposed three different workshops for all church leaders, parents, and children's ministries instructors.

Goals of the Project

The workshops aim at equipping the children instructors on techniques of handling the children in the department.

Secondly, the role of parents in the home, their involvement in the children's ministries, and what church leaders ought to do to help the department grow were all considered.

Below are the workshop topics:

Program Schedule for the 3 workshops

Table 28: Workshop 1: For the Children Ministries Instructors (It was opened to all).

Date	Topic	Facilitator	Time
Nov. 13, 2011	Jesus' ministry to children	Pr. Bernard Adjare	10:00 – 11:00am
	Job Description of the Children Ministries Coordinator	Pr. Osei Kofi	11:30 –12:30pm
	How to begin in the C/Ministries	Mrs. Elizabeth Osei	1:00 – 2:00pm
	Teaching with Visual Aids	Eld. Collins O. Tutu	2:20 – 3:00pm
	Developing a Balanced Plan and Planning Programs	Mr. Philip Oti Agyen	3:00 – 4:00pm

¹ Ntonso District General Meeting Action taken on Sunday, Aug., 15, 2011 at the headquarters church at Ntonso at 10.00am

Workshop 2: For all Parents in the Church, Non- Adventist Parents Invited.

Date	Topic	Facilitator	Time
Dec. 4, 2011	Children and Discipline Peer Pressure Control Family Nurturing through Devotions and Bible Study Parent Teacher Relations	Pr. Bernard Adjare	10:00 – 11:30am
		Eld. Omane Agyekum	12:00 – 1:00pm
		Pr. Bernard Adjare	1:15 – 2:00pm
		Mr. Philip Oti Agyen	2:20 – 3:00pm

Workshop 3: For Church Leaders, Church Administrators, and Departmental Directors.

Date	Topic	Facilitator	Time
Jan., 8 2012	The Church and Children Ministries Working in Children Ministries Planning a Budget for the Children Ministries Church Leaders and Parents Responsibility	Pr. Bernard Adjare	10:00 – 11:30am
		Mrs. Gifty Anti	12:00 – 1:00pm
		Amos Opoku Boateng	
		Mr. Philip Oti Agyen	2:20 – 3:00pm

The record indicates that 50 children instructors attended the first workshop, 120 parents attended the second workshop and 86 church leaders and directors attended the last workshop. The total participants for the three workshops were 256.²

Implementation of the Program

This section of the study provides the steps and strategies needed to implement the program. There are three environments that can be considered for child training namely; the home, the church, and the community. After a month of

² All the 3 workshop groups came from the district churches. The 3 different workshops expected about 600 participants but had 256. This number was used as a pilot program.

preparation and further in-service training, the leaders who attended the workshop and all the workshop participants were used to coordinate the strategy.

Children Ministries and Instructors

The Children's Ministries instructors who attended the workshop reorganized their local church children's department into various classes according to the age of the children. The classes were: Level one 4-6 years; Level two, 7-9 years; Level three, 10-12 years; and Level four 13-14 years. All the teaching materials for the each class were selected according to the level of the children's knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, the instructors were taught how to use cupboard paper to create teaching aids such as animals, human, etc at the workshop to be used as visual aids. These visual aids were used as teaching aids in the classes and were supervised by the researcher in all the churches throughout February 2012. Bible animations (biblical story pictures) were also used in the classes as teaching aids. The teaching aids were introduced in agreement with Narramore who points out that "touch alone is an inadequate means of communication. Vision is better."³ He goes further to indicate that, "one picture is better than a thousand words . . . Religious films graphically portray solutions in a Christian manner."⁴ On this note, the strategy uses these teaching aids to instill biblical knowledge in the children and it also occupies the children and helps them to pay attention to the teacher.

All the selected churches prepared preaching roster for the children's department which gave the opportunity for some church elders and other adults the opportunity to preach to the children. The preaching roaster gave the opportunity to

³ Clyde M. Narramore. *How to Understand and Influence Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 83.

⁴ Ibid.

the children to experience different messages and teachers each Sabbath. A simple program booklet was prepared for the Children Ministries for Church Services. See Appendix C for sample.

The program also encouraged parents to visit their children's class at least once in a quarter to worship with them at the children's department to experience the children's worship. As indicated by Shelley, "parents of visited kids have been the most ecstatic of all—once they get over the initial shock."⁵ There are several testimonies about what parents' visits to their wards at their study can do. So visiting the Children's department during worship services plays significant role in the children's life.⁶

In reference to the question as to whether the children should join the main church during the divine service or worship alone, this study chooses to side with the suggestion of the First Church of the Nazarene that "why not both?"⁷ What pertains in the above church is that the above church has full-fledged children's church program for ages 4 through 10 which runs only three (or four) Sundays a month. On the last Sunday of each month, children join the adults for the regular service, in which the service is conducted to suit the standard of the children.⁸ In this strategy, the children were given a Sabbath in a quarter to worship with the adults. The reasons are: the teachers also get a week to rest and also worship with their families in the adult church. There are two benefits to this according to Walter, "our children's church

⁵Merrill, Dean ; Shelley, Marshall: *Fresh Ideas for Families, Youth & Children* (Waco, TX: Christianity Today; Word Books, 1984), S. 67.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 78.

staff really appreciates getting a ‘breather’ once a month, when they can worship with their own families.”⁹ The strategy aids the children to learn from the adult worship and apply those lessons when they return to their services afterward; they are usually well behaved and attentive throughout the rest of the service.

The Home: A Training Environment

Family devotions have come to stay in the homes of the chosen church members. Those who attended the workshop are spearheading this agenda. Every family, seeing the importance of family devotion has made it their first priority in the home. However, because of the nature of work and school hours of some people, the devotional time is flexible to suit all the members in the family. Some have theirs at dawn, morning, evening or at night, what is important is that there should be devotion before the family goes to bed. This process is ongoing and each family gives report on it every Sabbath during the adult Sabbath School study time, and the reports are encouraging. To those who neglect this important facet of family life, Narramore warns, “too many Christian parents suppose their children are Christians when they actually are not.”¹⁰ It is through devotion that a child become so acquainted to God and demonstrate it throughout their lifetime. It is most vital to deal with your child individually to be certain that he knows Christ as his own personal Savior and it is family devotion which does it best.

This strategy instructed parents to divert their children’s attention from all secular television programs and replace them with religious videos and Bible games. There are several Bible games such as the gospel, the book of Acts, Minor Prophets, Pentateuch, etc in religious bookshops. Parents were entreated to buy quality religious

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Narramore. 89.

materials for their kids to use at homes. This is also ongoing after the parents learnt their usage at the workshops and the results are extraordinary.

There is also a Bible discussion time in the home known as “dinner show.” All the family members sit around a table once a week and talk about questions arising from their Bible readings in the week. This gives the children the privilege to have assistance from their parents in Bible study.

There is also witnessing hour for the children in the community. The children visit their colleagues who are not Adventists to share the Bible stories they have learnt in the week every weekend. This witnessing program is part of the home activities that parents are expected to monitor. The witnessing aspect of this program is aimed at inculcating the principle of witnessing among the children. When children adopt a habit of witnessing, “when they grow they will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22: 6). Now almost every child is eager to give a testimony on Sabbath about how the witnessing program is going on.

Another assignment that has been given to parents is that they encourage and monitor the reading habits of their children daily. The type and number of books to read is assigned by the parents according to their children level and ability. The little ones are aided by the parents in the reading. This also instills reading habit in them so when they grow they will not depart from it. Another area in this study is athletic. Robert Holman said, “three activities merit special mention: athletics, service, and reading.”¹¹ He explains that “young people who exercise vigorously usually feel good during and after their exercise and experience a sense of calmness and reduced stress.”¹² Parents were obliged to exercise with their kids every day for good health.

¹¹ Coombs, 96.

¹² Ibid., 95

The exercise could be indoors or outdoors based on the age of both parents and the children.

Parents were encouraged to prepare their children to be selected as guest preachers on special days.¹³ See below for how and when a guest preacher's day is celebrated. This prepares the children well from childhood to grow as outstanding preachers. It also said that, "all parents can find countless opportunities to teach spiritual truths to their children"¹⁴ when they instruct their children in sermon preparation.

The Church: Training Environment

The church is an environment that gives a "wholistic"¹⁵ nurture to the believers. If the church ignores to do what is required of her, then where else can believers find nurture? The children will be successful when the church is particular on their spiritual nurture and this is confirmed by the statement "successes or failures in children's ministry will determine who is in the congregation, a generation from now."¹⁶

Every church in the district now has Sabbath afternoon program for the children. What they do during the afternoon program are: 1) Bible and Sabbath School study interchangeably, 2) praying for the younger children, 3) parents read Bible stories together with the children and pray together.

¹³ Guest preacher's day is one Sabbath in a quarter when a child from the children's department is given the opportunity to preach to the adults church in the divine service.

¹⁴ Narramore. 88, 89.

¹⁵ Wholistic is a term which implies the whole person development: Spiritual, Social, Mental, and Physical aspect.

¹⁶ www.GeneralConferenceChildrenMinistries

During the study time, the older children have their own Bibles and Sabbath School lessons, and are also provided children's version of Ellen G. White's books to read. Sometimes the elders spend time with the children to interact with them about what they have studied and ask them questions on how they can apply them in their Christian lives. This program is known as "My Bible Hour." My Bible Hour last for about 2 hours where selected parent and teachers meet the children one on one in Bible study and storytelling.

Another aspect of the program implementation is that the elders who attended the workshop were assigned to prepare a budget for the Children's Ministries in their churches. It was resolved that when the nominating committees are electing church officers, the teachers appointed to the children's department should professionally trained, also, there should be elders in charge of Children's Ministries, and it should include educated and experienced parents who can handle the children well, rather than choosing young high school graduates with little experience to handle children. The elders are now agents who see to it that all the new methods imparted to the Ministries' instructors are implemented. Since February 2012, all the above are going on successfully.

Evaluation

The program strategy was evaluated after one year of implementation to determine its successes and failures. The following points were considered: the problem of children leaving the church; parent child relations in the home, the introduction of classes for age groups on the children's department, teachers posted there and their performances were all considered.

Tables 29 and 30 below shows that, in 2010 Parent respondents affirmed that 19 children at the rate of 27.2% had backslidden from the faith and 51 children at 72.8% still held the faith. In the year 2012 there were no backsliders in the Children’s department. All the parents affirmed that all their wards are in the church and enjoying their services.

Table 29. Backslidden Children as at 2010

Parent respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	19	27.2	27.2
No	51	72.8	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Table 30. Backslidden Children in 2012 after the Program Implementation

Parent respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	0	0%	0%
No	70	100%	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Tables 31 and 32 give a contrast between the study of the year 2010 and 2012. In 2010, Parents and their kids devotional life was, 17 people at 16.3% had devotions at home every day, 51 people representing 49% did not have family devotions, and 36 at 34.6% seldom had devotions. After the implementation, 71.9% have family devotion every day, 1.7% still does not have devotions and 26.3% rarely have it due to the nature of their work which keeps them away from their family frequently.

Table 31. Family Devotion in 2010 Before Program Implementation

Parents & Children	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	17	16.3	16.3
No	51	49	49
Sometimes	36	34.6	100.0
Total	104	100.0	

Table 32: Family Devotion in 2012 after program implementation

Parent respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	17	16.3	16.3
No	51	49	49
Sometimes	36	34.6	100.0
Total	104	100.0	

Further survey reveals that all the teachers in the department are educated, trained and experienced people who discharge their duties well and without murmuring. Teaching materials and visual aids are now used in abundance and the teaching styles have improved. The children, who used to come to church with fear of being beaten, now march to church enthusiastically because teachers no more use canes on them; they also find some practical activities to do in class which make their classes lively and enjoyable.

In 2010, 14 at 28% teachers and children said they had materials for the children, 19 at 38% said they had very few and 17 at 34% said they did not have. After the implementation, this is the picture in 2012; 90% said they have enough materials in addition to Quarterly Sabbath School Study guides, 8% said they have very few, and only 2% still do not have materials. Tables 33 and 34 show the difference below.

Table 33: Materials for the Children as at 2010

Materials	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	14	28	28.0
Very Few	19	38	66.0
No	17	34	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Table 34. Materials for the Children in 2012

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	45	90.0	90.0
Very Few	4	8.0	98.0
No	1	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Church Elders participation in Children’s Ministries services and programs are now unique. They visit them at their services; they preach, teach and donate to the children every Sabbath. During the Sabbath afternoon program called *My Bible Hour*, it is the elders who lead the children in the Bible study.

Currently, the Sabbath School Councils in the local churches within the district serve as the monitoring teams in the children department. All the needs of the Children’s department are not left to the teachers to contend with, rather, the council sees to it that the department is provided with all the relevant materials needed to make the ministry effective. Furthermore, the Council sees to it that the elders and teachers discharge their duties as expected. The home devotions, evangelism, and Bible studies are all monitored and reported quarterly to the church board.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study aimed at finding the causes of children leaving the church and a better way to curb the problem through the Children Ministries. It is a program developed from the Ntonso District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Central Ghana Conference.

In the first chapter, the author drew the readers' attention to the rate at which Adventist children leave the church when they are growing, and attributed the causes to the kind of training they get and who handle them in their early years in the church. Teachers, parents and church leaders were his culprits. The author suggested that nurturing the children in the church requires the effort of the children's department, the home, and the community to help curb the problem.

In chapter two, a literature survey was conducted. Scholars' views on early child training, parents training in the home, the role devotion plays in child training and the contributions of church in child training were gleaned from different authorities. It was realized that proper and early training of children will have lasting impacts on the children's life for eternity, the books they read, the time parents spend with them, and religious materials they use are all essential tools the both spiritual and physical nurture of children.

Chapter three discussed the description of the project taking into consideration the context of Ntonso District of the Central Ghana Conference. A pre-program survey and interviews were conducted and the results analyzed.

In chapter four, a program for training was designed. It was then implemented and evaluated for a period of twelve months. The results were also recorded and examined to find out how the program seems to help resolve the stated problem in chapter one.

Conclusion

Training Children have now assumed a higher recognition in the Ntonso district that every program and activities in local churches in the district give rooms for children participation. The study has revealed some shortcomings that affect children, therefore the church in collaboration with parents and teachers have taken child training as a major priority in the Ntonso community. The whole district has now embraced the idea of working to enhance children ministries in the district. Teachers are now equipped with new teaching methods, parents who were pushing this important responsibilities on teachers are now Bible instructors in their homes. Church leaders have become training agents and are taking on child training in early stage in the church so they can remain in the church when they grow. This affirms the proverbs that state, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10 NKJV).

The local churches Children Ministries in the district have now been re-organized in smaller structures according to the children’s age groups. Elections of teachers to work in the ministry are based on professionalism, knowledge in the church beliefs and experienced.

Materials such as Bible story books, craftwork items and visual aids are acquired for the children for effective learning. Every local church in the district has

increased her children's Sabbath School study guide since they have now realized the roles the study guide play in child training. The used of materials in the children's ministries are highly participated.

The home is now one of the most essential places for training, and parents are helping their children in their devotional lives, Bible studies, sermon preparations and witnessing. The churches now have budget for the Children's Ministries in the churches and the elders have become coordinators in children's programs. The Children Ministries now have one Sabbath every quarter to worship with the adults. They also have a Sabbath when a child preaches to the adults and adults also have one Sabbath to interact with the children in a quarter. Every Sabbath afternoon is now secured for the children to have a Bible hour with the church elders. Now the Children's Ministries turnouts have improved tremendously throughout Ntonso District.

Recommendations

Another aspect of training which has a very strong impact on children is Music. Music, with its great influence is a tool for child training but unfortunately this study could not handle it as expected due to its broader view as against the time limit for this study. I therefore recommend for anyone who would be interested in child training study to take "Music as a child training tool" to cover all the areas that will be a blessing for any reader.

I therefore invite anyone who would see any area of study about children that would be beneficial to this study to take that project in order to provide more materials for all those who would need them for child training.

During the study, the following problems were acknowledged and are recommended for future study and research:

The children's department does not have their own song books that they use for their service. They depend on the adults hymnals which seems incomprehensible for their levels. It is therefore recommend that the Central Ghana Conference take it upon itself to put together a team of musicians to work towards such a project. Though it might seem a big venture, the results will be enormous.

For conducive worship atmosphere, all children's departments in the church need a chapel or a convenient place of worship. The case in the Ntonso district show otherwise, most children worship in classrooms. It is recommended that the churches build convenient place of worship for the children ministry to thrive. There could be a simple building plan that will cost less and could be beautified to suit a worship center.

There are nice visual aids produced by the children's ministry department of the General Conference that may be of great benefit to the children but ordering it individually is costly. It is therefore recommend that the Adventist Book Center (ABC) in the Central Ghana Conference orders such materials in bulk and sell them to the Children Ministries in the various churches, especially the Ntonso District for an effective teaching. Artists are also encouraged to produce local teaching aids to help in this regard.

I also recommend to the Central Ghana Conference to take a serious care on the printing and delivery of the children's Sabbath as the do for the adult ones, since the conference orders for the printing of the study guide from the press on behalf of all the churches in the conference.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHILD TRAINING

This questionnaire is on the research topic, a strategy for training Adventist children to grow and remain in the gospel faith in the Ntonso District. It is in partial fulfillment on Master of Arts Degree on Theological studies. Please provide the appropriate response to the questions below by marking (√) to your answer. Section A is answerable to everyone after which you choose the section(s) applicable to you.

SECTION A – GENERAL BACKGROUND

I. Age: 10 – 14 15 – 18 19 – 35 36 – 60 61 and above

II. Sex: Male Female

III. Marital Status: Married Single Divorced Widow

IV. Status: Church administrator Former Church administrator
 Church elder Children Instructor Youth leader
Children Dept. Member
 Church member Parent

V. Your current position in the local Church

.....

VI. Education status:

.....
.....

SECTION B – PARENTS’ CORNER

a. State the number of your children:

.....

b. Do you live with your children? Yes No

c. If no

why?.....
.....

- d. Are all your children Seventh-day Adventists? []Yes []No
- e. If no, how many are not Adventist and why?
.....
- f. Do you attend the same Church with them? []Yes []No []
Some of them
- g. How many of your wards are in Children department?
.....
- h. Do you have any backslidden child(ren) from the faith? []Yes []No
- i. How often do you visit children dept. services?
.....
- k. How many times have you preached, taught, counseled, acted in the
children dept. for the past two years?
.....
.....
- l. How many times have you donated any item(s) to the children
department for the last two years?
.....
.....
- m. How do you see the performance of the teachers who handle your
children in the department?
.....
.....
- n. How do you see their services? []Excellent []Good []Average []Poor[
Mediocre
- o. How do you see their classes[]Excellent []Good []Average []Poor
[]Mediocre
- p. What changes do you suggest for the children department and why?
.....
.....

SECTION C. – PARENTS AND CHILDREN AT HOME

- 1. Do you have family devotions at home? []Yes []No []Sometimes
- 2. Do you pray together with your family in the morning and evening? []Yes []No []Sometimes
- 3. Do you have any religious books for worship and study at home? []Yes []No

4. At home what do you use your leisure time for?.....
5. How would you grade your home devotion services? Excellent Good Average Poor Mediocre

SECTION D. - CHILDREN DEPARTMENT TEACHERS

1. How many years have you taught in the department?
.....
2. Education Level? 1ST Degree & above Diploma SHS JHS Form 4 Others
3. Do you have preaching roster for your class? Yes No
4. Do you have any orientation regarding teaching in the department? Yes No
5. Church elders/leaders participation in Children services and programs. Excellent Good Average Poor Mediocre
6. Adventist children often leave the church when they grow because they were not grounded well in the faith. Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
7. The children departments are considered in church budgets. Yes Never Sometimes
8. The children departments have materials for services and classes. Yes No Very few
9. Where do the children worship? chapel classroom under tress others
10. What are the pressing needs for the children department?
.....
11. What changes do you suggest for the children department?
.....
12. What do you think would be the cause for children leaving the church when they grow?
.....
.....

13. What changes and suggestions do you suggest for training of Adventist children in the home and church?.....

.....

SECTION E. – CHILDREN’S CORNER

What class are you in school?

.....
.....

Are your Parents Adventists? Yes No One of them

Do you study and worship in the children department? Yes No

If yes how do you see it? Excellent Very good Good Poor Mediocre

Do you like the teaching styles of your teachers? Yes No Somehow

Do you like remaining at the children class or want to join the elders? Remain Join elders

(For all sections respondents) Please add any suggestions that would help in the children training.....

.....
.....

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