

KINGDOM BUILDERS

To Win – To Hold – To Train

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S PEN:

*South Central Conference
Sabbath School Department
Mission Fellowship*

Peace, grace, wisdom and power be multiplied to you from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Sabbath School leadership training and development is in full swing. Leaders are growing in wisdom and knowledge of how to strategically prepare to have stimulating, thought provoking interactive discussions that are relevant to everyday life.

Part of our training is facilitating Sabbath School study at Divine Worship in place of the sermon. It is an exciting time. And it bears evidence that members are thirsty students eager to sit at the feet of well prepared facilitators as they follow the example of the Great Teacher in asking questions. This method of teaching allows for deep soul searching answers. And those Ah-ha moments are times of discovering new nuggets from the Word of God. That's making the Word come alive in our hearts.

For those of you who have been missing this time, I encourage you to join the dialogue each week. If you would like to discuss the subject further, start a Bible study in your home or decide on a time to return to church in the evening.

Whatever you do, take time to study the Word. Therein is life eternal.



*At Jesus' feet,
Shirley Scott*

THE CHURCH OF ACTS 2...

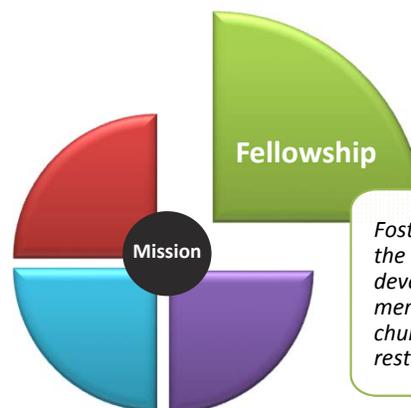
When I first was asked to be director of our Sabbath School department, God and I had a serious talk. Of all the ministries that He would ask me to lead, Sabbath School was the last one I could ever imagine. It dawned on me that the "Moses complex" had smitten me. God truly has a sense of humor and calls you to launch out into the deep. The good thing is He equips those He calls.

After my talk with Him and feeling that He was leading, I began to pour into books, search engines, speak with past directors, etc., etc., etc. It was then that I discovered what the pioneers had in mind in 1863. That discovery took me to the book of Acts, Chapter 2. There it was! A model of the Sabbath School, the foundation on which God would grow His church. Take time and prayerfully read it. All four elements are there encircled by prayer.

In our last newsletter we talked about one of these elements: Bible Study. This issue we will focus on Fellowship.

Fellowship is one of the reasons many come to Sabbath School (and to church). Some churches thrive because of this aspect. Taking time to relate to others and to share life experiences speak volumes.

Take time to review these suggestions and feel free to put them to work in your church. For more information, this quarter's Sabbath School Toolbox has some great suggestions on how to build a relational Sabbath School. Be proactive about the Sabbath School experience at your church, and your members will say with delight, "I ❤️ Sabbath School!"



Foster fellowship among members in the weekly Sabbath School program, develop projects for recruiting new members and integrating them into church life, and finding ways of restoring inactive members.

FELLOWSHIP: IMAGES OF HOME

The word “fellowship” conjures up different images in people’s mind. In an informal survey I conducted, I asked individuals the first word they thought of when I said the word “fellowship.” Their responses ranged from “Ugh” to “a guy fishing (fellow + ship),” to “potluck dinner.” However, the response that comes close to my understanding of fellowship is that “fellowship is the feeling of home.”

What a Fellowship

Fellowship is the one of the four focuses that the General Conference Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department stresses for a vibrant Sabbath School experience: fellowship, Bible study, service and mission. But I have observed that many of our members have the same opinions of fellowship as those whom I surveyed:

- They may have a negative experience --- “Ugh.”
- No experience: “A guy fishing.”
- A positive experience: “The feeling of home.”

Whatever your opinion of fellowship, I would invite you to consider again what fellowship means in the context of Sabbath School.

In general, people need to connect several things before they can “hear” the Word of God and apply it to their lives:

- They need to connect with the community in which they are studying.
- They need to connect with the people with whom they are studying.
- They need to connect with the topic. Why is this important for my life?

Thus, I believe the component of fellowship within the Sabbath School experience is imperative to optimal learning and transformation.

Ellen White refers to fellowship as “participation, partnership.” What a beautiful description of this special time, a time to participate and partner with God’s people in the experience of learning about God, others, and ourselves within the context of community. I think that’s why, while God can use technology to get the message out to people via radio, television, etc., it’s within the context of fellowship that God can most transform us into His image.

What a Joy Divine

Whenever I am a visiting preacher at a church, I strive to always attend Sabbath School. I find that in entering into the experience of fellowship, Bible study, service, and mission not only feeds my spirit for that day, but it offers the opportunity to more deeply participate and partner in worshipping God. Even on those Sabbaths that I’m in my home church and I’m unable to go to Sabbath School, I feel as if something is missing.

What image does the word “fellowship” conjure up in your mind? I hope it reminds you of home.

Bonita Joyner Shields
2014 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

WHO NEEDS FELLOWSHIP?

“Why do people not come to Sabbath School?”

When this question is asked in various Sabbath School workshops, seminars, or congresses, one of the most common answers is, “Lack of fellowship.”

Every Sabbath School revitalization program must consider fellowship.

One Sabbath during August 1996, my family visited my sister-in-law and her family in New Albany, Indiana. That Sabbath the church had not organized a fellowship dinner. However, my sister-in-law learned that guests from Idaho had just arrived in town, so she invited them to eat at her home.

While we were enjoying good fellowship at the dining room table, the husband of this family from Idaho said: “My wife and I had planned to visit around before deciding on our permanent church. But since we have been invited to lunch by your family today, we will immediately transfer our membership to your church.”

One year later we again visited that church and found that man serving as one of the Sabbath School superintendents. He is a pillar of the church fellowship program.

What can we do? Consider the following:

INTRODUCTIONS

Instead of just keeping a guest book open at the reception desk for guests to sign, diversify your fellowship approaches. Introduce guests during Sabbath school class time or during church announcement period and invite all church members to welcome them. Follow up by arranging for members to visit guests in their homes.

NURTURE

Make sure that longtime members get regular visits too, especially the elderly, single parents, and other single members. The stiff-upper-lip members and professional smiles may also be longing for fellowship. Visit them in their home. Give them the gift of fellowship.

UPDATES

Do not inform only guests and missing members about upcoming Sabbath School or church program; update members who are absent on any given Sabbath about announcements they have missed. Assign active students to nurture these “11 o’clock only” members. Find out what they need from Sabbath School. Note when they are absent and show that their absence is a personal loss.

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Here are some practical suggestions for a Sabbath School to enhance its “fellowship quotient.”

The Sabbath School Council could:

- ❖ Develop a hospitality plan that includes warm, effective greeters.
- ❖ Provide cards in the pews for members to write such notes as “I appreciate you” or “I missed you!” collect and mail to members.
- ❖ Plan a weekend retreat, a picnic, or a Thirteen Sabbath potluck featuring foods of the division receiving special emphasis during the quarter.
- ❖ Plan small classes for those who wish to increase their fellowship.
- ❖ Organize sponsors for new members to help them enter the established fellowship circles of the church.

The Superintendent Could:

- ❖ Mention achievements, hospitalizations, anniversaries, new jobs, and other life happenings from the front.
- ❖ Occasionally have “mixing bowl” moments during which everyone, including those on the platform, wanders about greeting visitors and other members.

Even study audience classes can fit in a few minutes for fellowship before starting the lesson study.

*Dorothy Eaton Watts
2006 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*

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