

# Discipleship, Mentorship, and Fellowship as a Means of Transmission of Values.

Njock David Vivian

Dmin candidate, Adventist University of Africa

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51584/IJRIAS.2024.909050>

Received: 16 September 2024; Accepted: 21 September 2024; Published: 22 October 2024

## ABSTRACT

The Christian church especially the Seventh-day church is facing a challenge in keeping its standards in the domain of ethical values, to such an extent that pastors and church leaders seem overwhelmed. Unfortunately, the lack of effective ministries addressing such issue compels us to propose in this article three elements that can help to reduce the rate of declination of church standards and engage members, specifically youth in a discipleship committed to the preservation of values, engage the whole community in a mentoring of proximity and restoration, and finally to foster an inclusive community through fellowship. This article will focus on the community's contribution as a whole, highlighting the family, elders, youth, and youth leaders as effective instruments in implementing values transmission based on discipleship, mentoring, and fellowship. The final purpose is to help the church incorporate these tools as ministries and help young people incorporate spiritual values as a way of life, engage them in transmitting these values through inclusive fellowship, and provide excellent mentorship to improve their commitments and their faith.

**Keywords:** Discipleship, mentorship, fellowship.

## INTRODUCTION

The preservation of ethical values among Christians has become a big challenge today, general observations made in Cameroon, especially in the seventh-day church in Douala show that young people are struggling to keep their lifestyle according to the standard of the seventh-day church. Surveys made in Douala III among 207 members present two main issues: firstly, the gap between beliefs and behavior shows that Seventh-day Adventist members believe in their doctrines, and many think they are good and important for their salvation. At the same time, they find it difficult to practice, apply, and transmit them—secondly, there is a disparity in the adoption of doctrines by churches in the same environment. Meaning that, in the same area, members' behaviors are different regarding keeping values.

Previous studies addressing this subject link with the transmission of values emphasize the efficiency of discipleship. Douglas Fagerston argues that it is God's design for ministry in people's lives. Our programming and organization goals should be the making of Disciples"<sup>1</sup>. Other in the same vein give more strength to mentoring as a "process by which an older leader invests his or her life into a younger emerging leader for spiritual character and leadership development in an intense relation fashion." To be more complete on this area of TV, good fellowship systems are also critical depending on how they help young people come to the place where they can learn to help one another grow through listening and sharing, learning and supporting.<sup>2</sup> How discipleship, mentoring, and fellowship can be used to reduce these gaps and harmonize the teachings of values in the same environment? Some of the key questions addressed in this article are how the disparity in the adoption of values can be solved through these tools.

### How is discipleship used in the transmission of values?

Discipleship is a process of becoming like Jesus by spending time with Jesus. It's a ministry that includes the contribution of the entire church, the families, elders, parents, and youth leaders. This chapter aims to present the relevance of discipleship in TV through some components inside the community such as elders, parents, and peer groups.

## Elder Roles In Discipleship

Elders' role in discipleship is important, and the Seventh-day Adventist church sees the elders as the one who fills the shepherding needs of the congregation, including preaching, visiting, evangelizing, and providing administrative leadership<sup>3</sup>. The table below will present how elders are commendable in discipleship. It is a roadmap activity to help the elders reach the young people to train and involve them in the discipleship process.

Table 1. Elders' Responses on youth and young adult's Discipleship and Spiritual Development <sup>4</sup>

Specifics spirituals needs	Specifics naturals tendencies	Elders responses activities
Desire to belong	Love team-work	Small group unit's activity; a variety of activity
Self-actualization	Development and rapid changes in biologically	Community-based activity (AIDS, alcohol, sex depravation prevention; workshop; evangelism program, etc...) creativity; new challenge;
Know about God's love	Learn fast, ability to memorize, ready to accept spiritual things	Relevant Bible study; good style of worship;
More proof concerning Biblical teachings	More critical	Sincerity (message come from the heart); relevancy;
Affirm their Identity	Seeks more freedom	Mission and service; involving them in the leadership of the church.

These picture of the elders roles in the community are tools that can help to ministere efficiently young people in the church and help them to adopt the values share by seventh-day church.

## Parents' Role In Discipleship

Parents are involved as the Bible says in Deuteronomy 11: 18-19 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house when you walk by the way when you lie down, and when you rise." Dean Borgman strongly believes according to studies on the role of parents in spiritual development that: "families are producing children who shape their beliefs by the lived-out faith of their parents that the family model of beliefs and practices is the largest determinant in a youth's own beliefs and practices."<sup>5</sup> And according to Larry Kreider in his book The Cry for Spiritual Mothers and Fathers, he says "A spiritual father or mother helps a spiritual son or daughter to reach his or her God-given potential". In the same line Charles M. Sell emphasizes on family worship by saying that: "We need family worship so badly. Parents will then have the opportunity to tell their children about God's saving love revealed in Jesus Christ. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, how can you fail to make opportunities within your children about Him?"<sup>6</sup> The table below will present how parent's can responses to the specific spiritual needs of their children.

Table 2. Parents' responses to the specific spiritual needs of young people and young adults. <sup>7</sup>

Specific spiritual needs for teenagers	Specifics naturals tendencies	Parents responses activities
Know that God loves	Learn fast, ability to memorize, ready to accept spiritual things	Provide spiritual materials (books, DVDs,) Bible studies, family worship
Affirm their identity	Seeks more freedom	Healthy Relationships, (sport, dinner, trips, etc...)
More proof concerning Biblical truth	Became very critical	Ability to answer all their question by using the scientific method, show more love and concern

## Peers' Roles in Discipleship

The next group is young people where we intentionally designed a peer discipleship role to mix them and help them to overcome their challenges. Ellen White's recommendation is as follows: "Let the youth be found in association with those who fear and love God; for these noble, firm characters are represented by the lily that opens its pure blossom on the bosom of the lake."<sup>8</sup> Dean Morgan points out the relevance of friendships to youth growth and says: "Without the bonding of teacher leader to the group and the bonding students to one another within a group, there can be little learning and growth".<sup>9</sup> Building a discipleship ministry for young people faith that lasts means building: a ministry with a focus on Jesus, a ministry that calls students to service, a ministry that matures faith, and a ministry that builds community. It is important in youth ministry to develop a community-based ministry<sup>10</sup> which is well presented in Table 3 how young people can disciple one another and how their specific needs can be addressed through youth community-based ministry. The table below is the response of peer groups for spiritual needs.

Table 3. Peers Group's response to youth and Young adult need for discipleship<sup>11</sup>

Specifics spirituals needs	Specifics naturals tendencies	Peers responses activities
Desire to belong	Love team-work	Small group unit activity, organize good camps and retreats,
Self-actualization	Development and rapid changes in biologically	Community-based activity (AIDS, alcohol, sex depravation prevention; workshop; evangelism program, etc...)

Combining all these social bodies in transmitting values through discipleship will maintain a climate of popularizing ethical values as pronounced in the Seventh-day Adventist community.

### Mentoring and transmission of values.

Mentorship is a broad concept and sometimes very difficult to define. The Australian Youth Mentoring Network [AYMN] defines it as "...a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement"<sup>12</sup> For Tom Schwanda's generic definition, mentoring is: "Coming alongside of an individual or group of individuals to learn a skill, develop an ability or deepen some experience of life."<sup>13</sup> Baraka Muganda explains that mentoring is a process by which an older leader invests his or her life into a younger emerging leader for spiritual character and leadership development in an intense relationship fashion.<sup>14</sup> According to all the above definitions, mentorship involves four key aspects: trusting relationship between the mentee and his mentor, spiritual care of the mentee, mental and social growth of the mentee through the guidance and leading influence of the mentor, and intentional desire to model and take care of the younger from the elders.

### Why Do We Need Mentorship as A Means Of Tv?

Drew Dyck in his book Generation Ex-Christian asked the question of why young people are leaving the faith and how to bring them back. As he tries to understand the phenomenon, Dyck describes six categories of young people who leave the church: postmodern leavers, recoilers, modern leavers, Neo-pagans, Rebels, and Drifters. These characters are linked with lifestyle and to solve these problems, mentorship can be the key. For how to bring them back, he suggests three main attitudes: "We need to know why we believe what we believe" (teaching), the church must develop strong relationships with young people and relevant programs of prayer.<sup>15</sup> Considering this conclusion it will be necessary to propose a mentorship approach that will help to educate, instruct, discipline, guide, and grow the faith of young people. Since mentorship can be formal or informal, in this paper, both forms will be suggested, and how the church can organize itself in that area. In the case of this research, the focus will be on the impact of peers, relatives, church elders, and youth leaders.

## Peers

Peers' pressures and influences are very important for the TV. In this chapter, how peers can mentor their fellow will be the concern.

**Organizing peers' mentor's team.** As a church, it is very important to build a constant and healthy peer mentor team. It brings three advantages according to Thomas Gullotta:

1. Children learn a range of cultural values, norms, and perspectives that may differ from those of their family and community;
2. It also fosters an acceptance of difference based on affinity and common interests;
3. Peer-group approaches should be an integral component of evidence-based prevention and intervention as it is one of the most important contexts for shaping and influencing behavior during the middle years.<sup>16</sup>

He also explains that friendships provide developmental and social benefits. Children choose close friends based on common interests and activities, enjoyment of each other's company and willingness to help or support. Friendships afford the opportunity for close bonds of companionship, loyalty, mutual reinforcement for good or ill, reliance, and a sense of belonging. Children in the middle years who participate in positive peer friendships share perspectives, experiences, and knowledge within the contexts of social interactions. Some children's ability to form close friendships is influenced by cultural perspectives that may limit or hinder associations with peers that are nonfamily members or are from cultural backgrounds different from their own.<sup>17</sup>

Alcoholism, sex addiction, pornography, and others, result from negative influences from peers or friends, Christian communities need to train young people in the development of peer mentor teams, with the advantage that they will have a positive influence on each other. Tiffany Field argues that "The use of modelling or peer imitation as a behaviour-change procedure has been noted to have direct effects on affective and cognitive skills as well as children's social relations."<sup>18</sup> Generally, this style of mentoring can be included in what David Kay and Roger Hinds qualify as General mentor which agrees that "anyone who helps another person to develop, to cope with change or any new experience is acting in a mentoring role although they may not recognize that they are doing so."<sup>19</sup> Organizing peers mentorship can bring more benefits to the community for the TV

## Relatives

Relatives are all members of the family. In the African context, the family includes the clan (parents, uncles, brothers, and cousins, and sometimes the village). They play a great role in mentorship. In this part, it will be a question of defining some basic principles concerning the contribution of the family in the mentorship, although in most cases it is informal.

In the African context some rites of passage such as initiation, naming ceremonies, and funerals, are means to share some values with young people. All these Initiation rites are considered very important community values. "The most elaborate rites of passage usually concern the initiation of the young into adulthood. In this way, a society not only socializes its young by outwardly moving them into new roles of social responsibility but also transforms them inwardly by molding their moral and mental disposition towards the world". This is because the traditional notion of personhood is essentially relational.<sup>20</sup>

If it is commonly known that parents or relatives play a great role in the process of transmission of values it has been observed that some researchers disagree with this position. For example, Dean Hoge, Gregory Petrillo, and Ella Smith after a deep survey in some churches based on the Transmission of Social Values from Parents to Teenage Children, found that the impact of parents on that area is very weak compared with the effect of the denominational membership which is slightly stronger. They conclude that children get their values from extra familial culture as much as from their parents.<sup>21</sup> The above discussion shows that the African context can be very useful in the area of TV; when considering that all elderlies in Africa have a right to discipline or to mentor the youngest one. But it can't be enough while considering the complexity of society today and mentorship as well<sup>22</sup>, it is important to develop a broad context of mentorship that includes other groups of mentors.

## Church Elders

The context of this study is to transmit Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle values to young people in the church. According to the organization of the SDA, elders play a key role in the spiritual development of the church. They are used as Bible teachers, coaches, counselors, and caseworkers.<sup>23</sup> All these activities are very close to mentorship according to the definition given by Miriam Rose Brooker who says that the mentor is someone who has greater experience and wisdom than the mentee, and who offers a combination of instrumental/career and emotional/psychosocial support (to varying degrees)<sup>24</sup>. Desmond Gaius Boldeau also believes that “the empowering nature of the “spiritual helping” aspect of the role and function of mentoring is “a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources. However, according to him, “living and modeling the life upon sound and credible values is the other side of the work of the mentor.”<sup>25</sup>

In the context of the church, it is important to understand that Elders are seen automatically as mentor whether formal or informal. As we present the mentorship model for young people, three aspects have to be taken into consideration which are: attraction, responsiveness, and accountability. The more intense and deliberate the relational commitment, the more likely changes, and growth will result.<sup>26</sup> R Hoge Benton Johnson and Donald Luidens strongly believe that beliefs and family factors have a great impact<sup>27</sup> as far as young adults' involvement in the church is concerned. Since the elder's role is to teach and train young people based on the core principle of the church and their beliefs, churches had reason to believe in the capacity of the elders in the area of transmission of values.

## Youth Leaders

In the Seventh-day Adventist church, youth leaders are very important for the training and spiritual growth of young people. In the local churches committee, youth ministries have about five members on board according to the various clubs which are: adventurers clubs, explorers, ambassadors, young adult ministry, and campus ministry.<sup>28</sup> Youth ministry aims to work for the salvation of young people by helping them to grow spiritually, physically, mentally, and socially. Youth ministry also provides an environment of fellowship, and equip young people to work for the salvation of others and finally train young people to perform and assumes greater roles in the church and mobilize their energy by involving them in the different aspect of the church activities.<sup>29</sup>

In summary, the work of the youth leader is to pay attention to the growth of young people in the church and how to involve them according to their gifts and talents in the church activity.

Talking about the mentorship of the young people in the church, especially when it involves behaviors and transmission of values, youth leaders is the key person. According to Kohlberg's theory of Moral Development, three levels of decision-making in terms of morals are identified: a decision to gain a reward or avoid punishment, a decision to protect or establish a good reputation, and a decision based on principle.<sup>30</sup> Considering this aspect of decision-making by youth especially when behaviors, principles, or reputations are mentioned, the task of the youth leader according to Dave Allen is to help their young people to do a self-analysis on the motives behind their moral decisions. That is where knowledge about mentorship is very important for the youth leader. Since mentorship works with a sample, the purpose of the youth leader is to show himself as a model for more impact.<sup>31</sup>

In the same line with Dave Allen, Bary Gane asks a question why a special youth ministry? He emphasizes the importance of faith development, and he says that it is the role of youth leaders to support and guide through the difficult years when identity is being formed and faith tested and tried.<sup>32</sup> Considering that youth ministry can be seen as a shelter environment for the discussion of critical issues of their faith and must provide an intergenerational context of faith-building.<sup>33</sup> To achieve this purpose youth leaders must be well equipped and well trained in the area of mentorship.

## Fellowship and the Transmission of Values.

Young people have a great sense of belonging and to achieve the process of transmission of values, fellowship is one of the best ways. One of the strongest attributes of youth ministry is a sense of community that the young

people enjoy as a result of fellowship with one another. Christian community, commitment, conversion, and Christian growth don't just happen, they cannot be legislated or forced. They are gained by:

1. Growth which usually comes from relationships with others.
2. Developing a relational and holistic approach to meeting youth needs through relationships forged out in fellowship.
3. Having young people come to the place where they can learn to help one another grow through listening and sharing, learning and supporting.<sup>34</sup>

The above three gains express the need for a good relationship in the church for the well-being of the young people. That seems to be a great challenge today in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Cameroon specifically, and all over the world where many of the local churches create a different environment for the young people because of space, children and youth with specific needs, and other logistics challenges.

Since the transmission of values involves unity and a good relationship with all the components of the church, it will be very important to pay attention to what Fernando Arzola says when he talks about the ecclesiological Problems inherited from the Enlightenment; he raised two specific problems:

Firstly, Pragmatism led the church to be more of a cooperative system than the body of Christ. In this context, the pastor or a youth leader is viewed as a chief executive officer, and the laity functions under this managerial leadership with the principal goal of legislating morality.<sup>35</sup>

The second problem is individualism where youth ministries tend to focus on contemporary matters rather than understanding their place within the communion of saints.

Fernando calls after these observations for the unity of the church, where the whole is found in each place. That is the real meaning of true fellowship which focuses on inclusive worship.

Mark DeVries on the same line as Fernando argues that: when adults and youth work together in ministry and service, they tend to wind up spending time together outside a program context. In addition, if the church never segregates by age group, all families will get to worship and interact together. The identity of totally separated youth groups can create a cool versus uncool environment.<sup>36</sup> By doing that the church will achieve three challenges.

1. The church will look like a body
2. The church will be more inclusive
3. And the church will open the door of grace to everybody.

In conclusion, a good fellowship context is essential to create an environment of inclusive teaching without discrimination or segregation. The whole church will be involved in the transmission of values.

This article highlighted three components that lead to a dynamic transmission of values to young people which are: discipleship, mentorship, and fellowship. The complexity of this issue helps to understand that, TV involves a matrix of activities and dedicated people which can help young people to live according to the standard of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

## Summary

Discipleship, mentoring, and fellowship are important tools in the area of TV. Discipleship is useful in character development through values teaching, and setting up an activity profile that allows spiritual and family leaders to feel involved in the formation of disciples. Mentoring is complement to discipleship in the accompaniment of people, discipline and in the redemption of some desperate cases. For this ministry to be effective, we're going

to call on all the church components, including the young people themselves. Finally, the fellowship will focus on the quality of life in the community in which our young people's characters develop. The combination of these ministries, if properly implemented, can make all the difference in the transmission of values.

## CONCLUSION

Discipleship, mentoring, and fellowship have been presented in this article as effective tools in the transmission of values. The church, families, youth leaders, and elders will find in the exercise of these ministries a means of impacting the spiritual life of all young people. The decline in spirituality observed in our churches is sufficient evidence of a lack of teaching, training, and care for young people who are sufficiently influenced by the world. It is therefore important to develop an inclusive fraternal communion that engages all sensibilities in a single body where everyone recognizes each other. In addition, if discipleship has often been perceived as a reserved domain, this article tries to break the ice by allowing all ecclesial bodies to invest in it according to their different contexts. Finally, emphasis has been placed on the contribution of mentoring in preserving these achievements in the life of youth; this will make for an inclusive component that integrates formal and informal mentoring.

---

## ENDNOTES

1. Douglas L. Fagerstrom, *Singles Ministry Handbook*; 1988; p 211.
2. Youth ministry handbooks, 225
3. North American Division Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists, *Quick Start Guide for Elders*, <https://www.sdachurch.com/about/our-approach/job-descriptions/elder/> accessed on the 13 may 2024,
4. General Conference of the Seventh day Adventists, *The youth ministry of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Pathfinder Basic training Staff*; 2004, P 19-25.
5. Dean Borgman ; *Foundations for Youth Ministry Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture*; 2013; P 118
6. Charles M.Sell, *Family Ministry*; 1995, p293
7. General Conference of the Seventh day Adventists, *The youth ministry of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Pathfinder Basic training Staff* ; 2004, P 19-25.
8. Ellen G White; *Message to Young People 1930*; Ellen G. White Estate, Inc. 2014; p 381.
9. Dean Borgman ; *Foundations for Youth Ministry Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture*; 2013; P 130
10. Duffy Robbins; *Building a Youth Ministry that Builds Disciples*, 74.
11. General Conference of the Seventh day Adventists, *The youth ministry of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Pathfinder Basic training Staff* ; 2004, 19-25.
12. Miriam Rose Brooker; *Youth Mentoring as an Intervention with Disengaged Young People: A Literature Review Report for the Department of Communities Western Australia*, p7
13. Tom Schwanda, *Spiritual Mentoring: How to Help Others Grow in Their Relationship with Christ C.S.* Lewis Institute Mentoring Training, P 1
14. Baraka Munganda, *Dmin class note 2019*.
15. Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian*, p 1-185.
16. Thomas P. Gullotta and Gary M. Blau; *Family Influences on Childhood Behavior and Development Evidence-Based Prevention and Treatment Approaches*;74
17. Ibid,
18. Tiffany Field; *The Utilization of Classroom Peers as Behavior Change Agents*; p31.
19. David Kay And Roger Hinds, *A Practical Guide To Mentoring How To Help Others Achieve Their Goals* , p21.
20. Boubakar Sanou, *Missiological Perspectives on the Communal Significance of Rites of Passages in African Traditional Religions*, p 40
21. Dean Hoge, Gregory Petrillo, Ella Smith, *Transmission of Religious and Social Values from Parents to Teenage Children*, page 578.
22. Floyd McClung in his book *the Cry of Spiritual Mothers and Fathers* in pages 130 describes the different

kinds of spiritual parenting which may be involved in different types of spiritual parenting relationships as disciples, coaches, teachers, counsellors and so on with their spiritual daughters and sons.

23. Seventh Day Adventist Church Manual, p 111
24. Miriam R, Brooker; *Youth Mentoring as an Intervention with Disengaged Young People: A Literature Review Report for the Department of Communities Western Australia*, P71
25. Desmond Gaius Boldeau, *developing a Mentoring Model, Based on Christ's Approach to Discipleship, for Intern Pastors in the British Union*, p 37
26. Ibid. 39
27. R. Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald Luidens, Determinants of Church Involvement of Young People Adults who Grew up in Presbyterian churches. P 253.
28. Seventh day adventist church manual, 2015 p 109
29. WAD working policy, 2019-2020 p 415
30. General conference of the Seventh day Adventists youth department, getting it right, P 55.
31. Ibid, 55-59.
32. Ibid 84
33. Ibid 85
34. Youth ministry handbooks, P 225
35. Fernando Azola and others ; Youth ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Five Views, P 116£
36. Fernando Azola and others; Youth ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Five Views, P 136.