

VALUEGENESIS:

FAITH

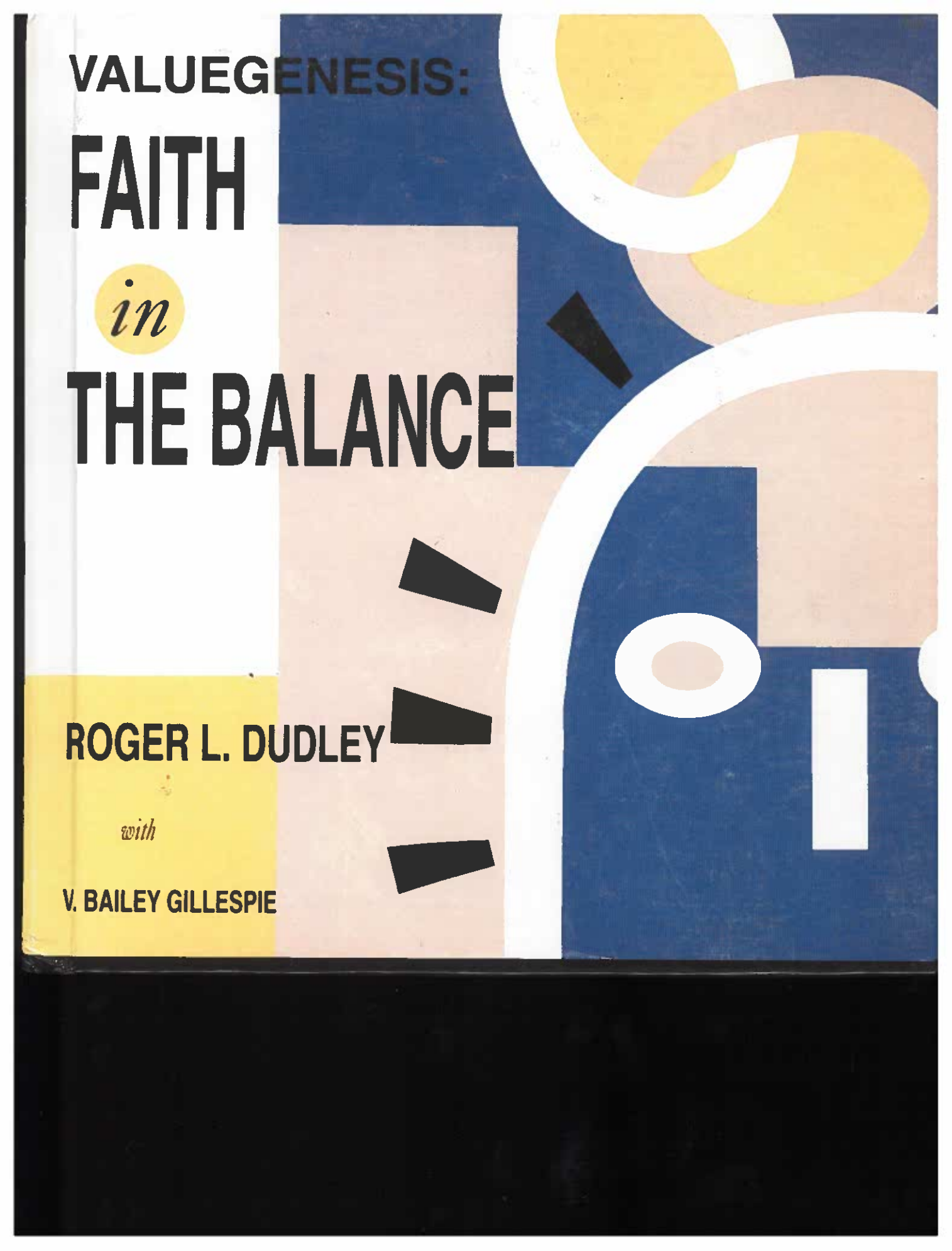
in

THE BALANCE

ROGER L. DUDLEY

with

V. BAILEY GILLESPIE



Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance

*A Project Affirmation
Publication coordinated with*

*John Hancock Center for
Youth Ministry at
La Sierra University*

*North American Division
Joint Boards of Education*

La Sierra University Press

**Valuegenesis:
Faith In The Balance**

A Project Affirmation Publication

**Text by
Roger L. Dudley**

with

**Foreword and Marginal Notation by
V. Bailey Gillespie**

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Acknowledgments

While I am the sole author of the core of this book, the study which it reports was a joint project involving a number of people. The field research was conducted by Search Institute of Minneapolis, Minnesota, under the guidance of a Project Affirmation Coordinating Committee consisting of Charles T. Smith, Jr., the overall coordinator of Project Affirmation; V. Bailey Gillespie and Stuart Tyner of La Sierra University, Riverside, California; Steve Case, youth pastor in Sacramento, California; and Peter L. Benson and Michael J. Donahue of Search Institute.

This team was advised in matters of research design, questionnaire construction, and preparation of mate-

Valuegenesis probes attitudes toward home, school, and church. Caring deeply about their children's well-being, the vast majority of Adventist parents cannot conceive of a future without Adventist schools. Careful estimates indicate that church members will spend \$8 billion on Adventist education in the 1990s alone. As a return on that investment, they expect the schools to:

1. Provide quality academic training.
2. Serve as a major avenue for spiritual development and for transmitting Adventist culture and values.
3. Protect young students from teachings and influences they consider undesirable.
4. Educate and develop a new generation of Church leaders.
5. Win young people for the Lord.

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rials by a Consultation Committee consisting of Melvin Davis from Oakwood College; Edwin Hernandez from Andrews University; Jan Kuzma from Loma Linda University; Gail Rice and Won Kil Yoon from La Sierra University; Marvin Nygaard, research consultant from Calgary, Alberta; and the author of this book from Andrews University.

The entire team is responsible for the research study and its voluminous findings, but I was chosen to author this report—a task which has occupied a major portion of my time over a six-months' period. In writing I had no access to the raw data but was dependent on the computer printouts furnished to me by Search Institute by the box full. I also studied several drafts of the official report that Search Institute prepared for the North American Division and its

Boards of Education.

In some cases I have borrowed language from these drafts where such language seemed to adequately describe my own understanding of a point, but in the vast bulk of the book the words are my own. Though I could not have written the book without the material furnished to me by the others involved in this project, I must take full responsibility for the selection

Valuegenesis is a project which explores how faith is developed and how commitment is learned.

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of that which is included and for the interpretations that I have placed on the findings.

I would like to especially thank the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists for a grant that made it possible for me to spend time on this project and Andrews University for allowing the necessary release time. I would also like to thank my wife, Dr. Margaret (Peggy) Dudley, for assuming extra household duties during this project, thus providing another type of "release time."

All of us connected with Project Affirmation pray that God will use this report to point the way to a bright future for our educational system and our youth ministry in North America.

*Roger L. Dudley, Ed. D.
Andrews University, 1992*

What Valuegenesis discovered can provide the basis for new approaches, new dialogues, and new way to help youth find their Savior.

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Foreword

When I first got involved in editing and adding the marginal notations in this volume, I was active in Project Affirmation's task force on faith, values, and commitment. My work as task force chairperson provided me access to the *Valuegenesis* data base and allowed me to meet regularly with the small coordinating team who directed the actual research. Charles T. Smith Jr., Steve Case, Stuart Tyner, and I met regularly during 1990-91 with the professional researchers at Search Institute to assure that the data was being interpreted correctly and that the research available to the Adventist church was both *interesting* and *helpful*. This committee recommended that the book you are about to read take on a format which makes

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this data as "user friendly" as possible.

To read this book is to become involved in the *Valuegenesis* study in a creative way. As you look through this book you will note that there are here, in reality, two books in one. The major part of the text was written by Dr. Roger Dudley from Andrews University, while the text around the text, so to speak, is mine. Together they form a complete look at *Valuegenesis*—this major study of adolescence and youth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This extra text provides two distinct advantages for the reader. First, it pulls out specific information, data, questions, and scales which the study used in determining its conclusions and suggestions. Second, it provides added emphasis to some of the exciting findings of this research which Dr. Dudley so ably provides. And there actually is a system at work in these special sidebars. For example, often the words will be enlarged and italicized. These are major points in the chapters which the author feels are important. There will be sample scales from the actual questionnaire which are helpful in your understanding of this study. Finally, there are some actual fill-in sections. Here you are asked to make some judgments. Your answers are strictly personal and require some commitment on your part.

Anyone who has teenagers knows that they are of special concern. Often they do not respond as adults

Project Affirmation coordinated four task forces

1. Faith, Values, and Commitment
2. Academic Quality and Valued Educators
3. Marketing
4. Financial Issues and Strategies

The Church needs common agreement on the complex issues of faith development and commitment. Note what you think five of these issues are?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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would like. Sometimes they have their own priorities which conflict with those of their parents'. Youth wear their opinions in their clothes and through their music. Any parent who believes he or she has all of the answers for his or her children just does not know what is real. This research is an attempt to provide a picture of the youth of the church. They are our possession, our charge. They are both the future and present of the church. They are the best and the worst of what we have nurtured.

On the whole, youth reflect their parents. Youth's concerns must become our concerns if we are to provide clear, concise answers to those who lead them in the local congregation and in their schools. But finally, this research provides a close look at Adventist families. It is here that the research comes back home to us. We hope this book forces you to take a close look at your own family and those activities, attitudes, theologies, beliefs, premises, and feelings that have helped your children become what they are.

We believe that through closer investigation into our own attitudes and behaviors we can make the necessary changes which help the grace of Christ to be seen. We think that if this happens, then this book will have served a broader purpose than just informing you about what Adventist youth are like. You will become involved in the planned-change process yourself.

It is hoped that this book will begin the discussion

It is hoped that this book will begin the discussion in addition to providing essential answers.

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in addition to providing essential answers. The book should encourage change rather than simply explain the causes for it. The data are only as good as the questions which probed youth's spirituality. We recognize flaws in those questions, but still realize that these data are the best the church has to offer as of this date. As time goes on we hope that this body of data grows to reflect the positive changes that our church has made which impact youth's lives. Perhaps this will begin the significant process of looking at what *is* in order to become what *might be*.

Both Dr. Dudley and I present this material to you for your analysis and understanding. We hope that it will cause you to rethink both your attitudes toward youth and your methods to produce innovative change needed to ensure the salvation of our youth. We want the Lord to find faith on the earth when He comes. We hope you will be a part of that discovery.

*V. Bailey Gillespie, Ph.D.
La Sierra University, 1992*

How to get a copy of *Valuegenesis Reports*

There have been a number of *Valuegenesis* official publications. This book is a summary of the latest research data. A number of *Valuegenesis Reports* are planned and will provide additional material of interest. Most reports are available by writing to the Office of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Springs, Maryland 20904-6600.

Can you think of some reasons why the Adventist church would want to examine the religious development of the youth of the church?

Make a list of three things you would like to know about your youth? When you finish reading this book, review your list then see if *Valuegenesis* has answered any of your questions.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Chapter 1

Heartbeat of the Church

Once upon a time, in the days when clergy received no regular salary but survived on occasional gifts from those to whom they ministered, a preacher was invited to speak before a certain congregation. As a financial inducement, he was promised the entire collection that would be received at the meeting.

The auspicious day arrived, the preacher delivered his sermon, and the two offering plates were passed. One of the officiating deacons came first to the rostrum and held the plate before the speaker. Thinking that he should set a good example for the audience, the minister fished into his pocket, produced a quarter (no mean sum in those days), and deposited it into the offering plate. The deacons walked up and down the

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aisles; then the closing hymn and benediction brought the service to an end.

Now it was pay-off time. The presiding elder transferred the quarter from one plate to another, then to his hand, and finally gave it to the minister. "Here is your honorarium, preacher," he explained.

The minister stared for a moment at the quarter. Finally, he found his voice. "But this is what I put in, myself."

"Well, preacher," the elder explained, "I figure it like this. If you'd have put more into it, you'd have got more out of it."

What We Have Put into It

When it comes to Christian education, the Seventh-day Adventist church can hardly stand accused of not having "put enough into it." Early on, our fledgling denomination realized the need to evangelize its youth and to train them for service.

For the first few years after the Great Disappointment in 1844, Sabbath-keeping Adventists were so preoccupied with the imminent second return of Christ they had no time to think of building institutions. Children would never grow to adulthood, they thought. Very, very soon Jesus would be here, and all these things would pass away. But within a very short time—even before official organization in 1863—

Check which item below best describes your understanding of the purpose of Seventh-day Adventist education:

- A way of growing a church
- A way of providing quality education to the total church membership
- A fulfillment of a Biblical model of educating for eternity
- A cost-effective way to do evangelism

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leaders began to realize their responsibility to provide for the youth of the young movement.

Thus, in 1852, James White began publication of the *Youth's Instructor*, a journal that was continuously published until 1970 and which through its successor, *Insight*, extends to the present day. A major purpose of the paper was to provide Sabbath school lessons for the children and adolescents. On the first page of that first issue of August 9, 1852, the editor observed: "The young, at this day, are exposed to many evils and dangers, and they must have right instruction to enable them to know how to shun them."

The expansion to formal Christian education came within fifteen years of official denominational organization in 1860. While individual Adventists had conducted home elementary schools for short periods in various places, the first official church school was established in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1872 and reorganized as Battle Creek College in 1874. Several secondary schools were founded in the 1880s.

The big spurt in Adventist Christian education came in the 1890s. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, the decade saw the establishment of five colleges, many academies, and more than two hundred elementary schools in the United States as well as new schools in ten other countries.

Adventists have continued to invest heavily in their schools, creating an educational system that

Goals of this book:

1. To gain a portrait of Adventist youth.
2. To identify areas where the family, church, and school needs to focus for the formation of values.
3. To suggest practical ways of becoming more effective in nurturing faith in the home, church, and school.

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stretches from kindergartens to doctoral-level universities throughout the world. It is the second largest parochial education system in the world. Since this book, however, reports on a vital study done in the North American Division (United States, Canada, and Bermuda), we will confine further remarks to that area.

During the 1989-90 school year, in the North American Division, more than 50,000 students were enrolled in kindergarten through grade eight and another 16,000 at the secondary level. These students attended nearly 1,100 elementary schools and junior academies and 93 senior academies. Nearly 17,000 additional students attended the Division's twelve colleges and universities. Between 1985 and 1989 these schools of higher learning conferred more than 18,000 degrees.

The cost to maintain such a system is staggering. In the most recent school year, educational institutions in the North American Division employed 7,150 teachers and administrators. On top of that, the operation required a host of support personnel such as maintenance workers, cooks, bus drivers, secretaries, and janitors. In addition to salaries, operating a gigantic educational system involves many other expenses: buildings, equipment, libraries, utilities, maintenance, insurance, supplies, food, etc. Since schools are operated by many different entities, it is difficult to

Adventist Schools can fulfill the expectation of Adventist parents by focusing on two basic goals:

Goal 1: Provide quality Adventist education that enables students to reach their maximum potential in:

- spiritual maturity
- academic excellence
- social interaction
- physical development
- emotional well-being

Goal 2: Affirm teachers and the value of Adventist educators by:

- recognizing their ministry of education
- appreciating, respecting, and supporting their endeavors
- paying them adequately
- providing them opportunities for professional growth

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determine precisely what the costs are, but the annual operating expenses for educational work in the Division have estimated to be between five hundred million and one billion dollars.

Where does all this money come from? A great deal is supplied by tuition paid by the parents of students or the students themselves. Yearly tuition income is estimated at about 80% of operating expenses. Most of the rest comes from subsidies from congregations, local conferences, union conferences, and the General Conference. These two major sources of income ultimately come from the pockets of our faithful members. In addition, some funds come from government or foundation grants and from earnings of school industries. The total fixed asset value of all our educational institutions in North America is conservatively estimated at \$840,000,000. The market value would be much greater.

Yes, Adventists have "put a lot into" their system. And we have gotten a lot back out of it too. Most church leaders at every level around the world have received at least part of their education in denominational schools. I teach at Andrews University where our list of alumni reads like an Adventist Hall of Fame. All of our colleges and universities can claim the same thing.

Less noticeable, but fully as important, are the thousands of lives being transformed daily. A recent

List individuals who you know that have made a significant contribution to your religious life that have attended Adventist schools.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

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report from the Division Office of Education estimates that in its K-12 schools, approximately 68,000 individual Bible-study contacts are made each day during the school year. One young beneficiary of this ministry recently wrote as follows:

"My life changed drastically this past year. My love for God grew, opening my eyes to what a wonderful church we have. It's because of Adventist schools and great teachers. One thing that helped me was having other religions come to my Bible class. Hearing and discussing what they had to say opened my eyes to how right our church really is."

Ellen White once wrote that the schools of the prophets, founded by the prophet Samuel in ancient Israel, "were intended to serve as a barrier against the wide-spreading corruption, to provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors" (*Education*, p. 46). Those three objectives are just as relevant to Adventist schools today. They provide the reason for the church being in the business of education. If we can successfully attain these goals, most Adventists will feel that the immense expenditure of money and effort was all worthwhile. In contemporary society, and in a world with many distractions, Adventists often think that the goals of Christian education may have changed. But these Biblical goals

The purpose of the schools of the Prophets were:

1. To serve as a barrier against the corruption of the day.
2. To provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of youth.
3. To promote the prosperity of the nation by educating God-fearing leaders for the church.

What do you think the purpose of Adventist education is today? How has it changed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

There are a number of serious realities facing Adventist education today—enrollment, financial, educational, and societal realities. On the following pages you can examine the realities that informed the Valuegenesis research project.

Serious Reality #1: Increasing costs of education

- In 1970 typical NAD Adventist college tuition cost \$1,453.
- In 1980 tuition was \$4,125.
- In 1989 it was \$7,980.

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are just as valid now as when they were written. The only change we might make to update them might be the necessity for training for a life of service in many of the hundreds of occupations that the Biblical record had not considered.

Trouble in Paradise

But in spite of lofty dreams and concentrated effort, all has not gone well. Our educational institutions have always faced problems and challenges, but events of the 1980s have placed special attention on our schools. One serious problem has been the failure of enrollments to keep up with projected increases.

Our elementary schools have done reasonably well, maintaining a stable enrollment over a recent five-year period. But the church has grown so that the ratio of students to members has fallen behind. Secondary education has fared worse. Academy enrollments were down nearly 1700 students over the same five-year period. In the early 1970s, I served as principal of one of our major boarding academies—a school with well over 300 students. By the mid-1980s this historic institution had closed off the main building and had only about 115 students in attendance. I was on the faculty of a 250-student boarding academy in the late 1970s. By the mid-1980s its enrollment had been cut in half.

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Other fine academies that had served their fields well for many years have been forced to close their doors. Some have been saved from bankruptcy only by Herculean fund-raising efforts by their constituencies. While the total number of senior academies in the Division actually increased by four between 1985 and 1990, this is largely due to the shift away from boarding academies to small day academies at centers of Adventist population. For example, my own large conference, Michigan, at one time had three boarding academies. Today it has one. The same is true of Oregon. Yet both of these conferences have larger memberships than they did in their educational heydays. Throughout the Division a number of studies have indicated that fewer than half of the children from Adventist homes are attending Adventist schools.

Failure of enrollment to keep up has resulted in loss of tuition income. Other factors have combined to put our schools in a financial squeeze. Economic recession during the early 1980s made it difficult for many parents to find tuition money. It also reduced tithing income, and hard-hit conferences have not been able to increase subsidies proportionate to the inflation of operating expenses. Rising educational standards have made education a more expensive undertaking, calling for computers, more sophisticated science equipment, and enriched library and media materials. Insurance and utility costs have sky-rocketed.

Serious Reality # 2:
Longterm, declining enrollment in Adventist schools and colleges

Serious Reality #3:
Increasing numbers of parents with limited finances desiring an Adventist education for their children

Serious Reality #4:
Declining proportion
of dollars available to
education from
various levels of
church organization

Serious Reality #5:
Increasing parental
demand for quality
academic education
and preparation for
the "real" world

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Faced with the squeeze, parents and students have noticed that other options are available, some offering a high-quality education. While this report does not deal directly with education above the twelfth grade, a letter from a young man in his first year out of academy is typical of the attitude of many members:

"I attended a non-Adventist college this year because an SDA college was and still is far too expensive. Our Adventist college costs approximately \$12,000 a year to attend. Even with financial aid it would still cost me over \$3,000. A highly accredited non-SDA college near my home can be attended for less than \$1,500, minus any student aid! For one-eighth the price, I will have to stick with non-SDA schools."

All of this may point up an erosion of faith commitment on the part of our members and their children. While the cost of Christian education vis-a-vis income does seem to have risen over the last few decades, parents and children do not seem as ready to bear heavy sacrifice as did many of those in another generation. The desire for increased consumer goods, the debt-driven economy, and the availability of attractive options have led many to turn away from sending their children to our schools.

By the mid-1980s many of those responsible for our schools seemed overwhelmed, even discouraged. Teachers, parents, pastors, school administrators, and

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students often found it challenging to pull together to work through the difficult situations that they were encountering. It was easy to blame each other for the problems. The need was great to gain a clear sense of mission, to agree on shared visions of the future, to set specific goals, and to develop strategies to move our schools from where they were to where they wanted to be—plans that would guarantee accountability and responsibility as those concerned worked together to achieve that shared vision of the future.

Faced with these problems and committed to Adventist Christian education, the North American Division through its Boards of Education commissioned the Seltzer-Daley Company to conduct a broad market research study. This consisted of a series of extensive (about 45 minutes each) telephone interviews with a representative sample of members, pastors, educators, and administrators concerning attitudes toward Adventist schools. The study sought to determine if a consensus could be forged. Were Adventists insufficiently interested in education or so divided as to make consensus and improvement impossible?

While Seltzer-Daley uncovered problems and challenges, it also found important areas of consensus, such as: (1) Adventist education is central to the mission of the church and the salvation of its children. (2) Adventist education is the key to the future survival of the church. (3) Adventist education is the

Serious Reality #6:
Increasing competition
from public and other
private schools

Serious Reality #7:
Continuing demand for
Biblically based educa-
tion leading to faith and
service commitment

Serious Reality #8:
Increasing student
choice in educational
options

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Serious Reality #9:
Increasing demand
for participation in
change at the local
level

Serious Reality #10:
Declining youth
commitment to
institutional religion

Serious Reality #11:
Declining commit-
ment to service and
the public good

means for developing lay and clerical leadership of the church. In other words, our people still affirm the basic educational goals that Ellen White described as descending from the schools of the prophets.

Seltzer-Daley also found that members, pastors, educators, and church administrators pretty well agreed on what they want from our educational system: (1) excellent education for their children, (2) Biblical values to permeate their schools, (3) excellence in *both* spiritual and academic pursuits, (4) educators who care about their children, (5) better information about the educational programs and processes relating to Adventist schools, and (6) a sound financial base for Adventist education so that all students who wish to participate will be able to do so.

A heavy load is made light when lifted by many hands. Encouraged by the areas of agreement, Division leaders launched a program to mobilize the resources of the church at all levels to revitalize our educational system. The new endeavor was labeled Project Affirmation.

Project Affirmation

Project Affirmation was a three-year program of the K-12 and Higher Education Boards of the North American Division which sought to establish grass-roots consensus on the vision of Adventist education

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and to translate the visions of leaders and members into educational change. It has set in motion a process of planned change that will continue into the twenty-first century.

The research and planning work of Project Affirmation has been largely carried out through four task forces: Faith, Values, and Commitment; Academic Quality and Valued Educators; Marketing; and Financial Issues and Strategies. Each group has been conducting research, making recommendations, and developing resources to improve Adventist education. A number of reports and products resulting from the work of these task forces are being made available to the church. Over 200 facilitators have been working in local conferences with church and school groups in order to obtain local input to the study and to begin the planned-change process.

This book deals with only one of the many projects—although, no doubt, the most ambitious and expensive one. This is a research study growing mainly out of the work of the task force on Faith, Values, and Commitment. The results, however, will inform every phase of Project Affirmation. The study, named *Valuegenesis*, is probably the most important piece of research on church youth ever conducted by any religious body in North America.

Valuegenesis was designed to provide a picture of the value systems of Adventist youth—particularly

Serious reality #12:
Increasing complex-
ity in bringing about
large-scale social
change and the
consequent need for
taking initiative at
the local level

Much of the material for the preceding two sections of the text has been drawn from Charles T. Smith, Jr., "Project Affirmation: Building Consensus, Planning for Success," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 52 (Summer 1990), pp. 14-17.

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those in our schools—and to determine what factors in Adventist homes, schools, and churches nurture the values and faith that we cherish in our young people. The study also evaluated the quality of Adventist education from the perspective of pastors, teachers, parents, students, and school administrators and sought suggestions for improvements.

Valuegenesis

The *Valuegenesis* study was conducted for the Division Boards of Education by Search Institute of Minneapolis in consultation with researchers at Andrews and La Sierra University (formerly Loma Linda University Riverside), and a few selected educators outside of the Adventist system. In order to collect the needed information, a special research instrument was designed and constructed. This instrument was based on a similar questionnaire used by Search Institute in a study of adolescents and adults in six major Protestant denominations. The similarities allow comparisons of our youth with those of other churches. To this base many new items were added and many were modified to reflect values and behaviors peculiar to Adventism. The instrument was comprehensive—calling for approximately 500 responses and requiring about an hour and a half to complete.

The research instrument came in five different

A sample of 20 percent of all Adventist schools was chosen. First, schools were divided by the nine Unions of the NAD, and then within Union, into four school types:

- elementary schools (K-6, K-8)
- junior academies (K-9, K-10)
- senior boarding academies (9-12)
- senior day academies (K-12, 9-12)

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forms: for youth, parents, pastors, teachers, and principals. All forms had a common core, but each then continued with questions unique to its own form.

A sample of 20% of elementary schools and academies in the North American Division was selected by a stratified-random method which ensured proportionate representation of geographic location and school type. This selection produced an initial sample of 271 schools. Each school was asked to designate a survey administrator who supervised the process of surveying all students in grades six through twelve.

In addition, one parent from each family was invited to participate in the study, and the appropriate form of the survey was completed by the principal and up to four randomly selected teachers. Pastors of constituent churches were asked to invite all young people in grades six to twelve who were affiliated with their congregations but not enrolled in any Adventist school and one of their parents to complete the survey. The pastor was also given a survey to complete. In a special oversampling, all senior academies were asked to participate on an “in-school only” basis. In this oversample all students, four teachers, and the principal were administered questionnaires.

At the conclusion of the data-collection process, completed questionnaires had been received from more than 16,600 respondents—a massive project, indeed. More than 1800 of these were rejected for

For the reader who would like more details on the technical aspects of the research, an Appendix to the book has been included where issues such as research design, sample selection, data-collection procedures, and response rates are discussed more fully.

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various technical reasons, leaving nearly 15,000 upon which to base the analyses. These are divided as follows: 10,641 Adventist students in Adventist schools, 457 Adventist students in non-Adventist schools, 1044 non-Adventist students in Adventist schools, 1892 parents, 155 pastors, 383 teachers, and 176 principals.

Our chief interest in this book is the responses of the Adventist students. We will usually combine the answers of both those in our schools and those in public schools to form a sample of over 11,000. Sometimes, however, we will contrast the responses of those in the two school systems. To some extent we will also draw on the information from parents, pastors, teachers, and principals. Much of what is to be reported in the following chapters does not appear in print in any other publication in the Adventist church. Some is reflected in Reports 1-3 now available through the Joint Boards of Education of the Adventist church.

The major purpose of this book is to present the most pertinent findings of the *Valuegenesis* study to the Adventist church in North America and to draw implications both for our educational system in particular and for youth ministry in general through the channels of our homes, churches, and schools. The book lays no claim to being exhaustive. Such a massive study, both in terms of the size and complexity of the sample and in the number of items addressed, can

One major purpose of this book is to present the most pertinent findings of the Valuegenesis study to the Adventist church in North America and to draw implications both for our educational system and for youth ministry in general.

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be viewed from innumerable angles. If every possible detail were described and every potential relationship between items were explored, "I suppose," to borrow from the Apostle John (21:25), "that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Therefore, this work should be seen as a first report, a "skimming of the cream" of the study. It represents what we believe to be the highlights of *Valuegenesis*—what the church most needs to know. Other valuable information lies waiting to be uncovered and shared with our leaders and members. The complete computer data set has been stored at Search Institute, Andrews University, La Sierra University, and the Project Affirmation office at General Conference headquarters where it will be available to responsible scholars who wish to mine this information in the coming years. We hope that many will take up this challenge and enrich the church through its use.

There is a great deal to learn from looking at these data. We on the committee do not feel that this book is the definitive analysis of the data, but simply a first look at the significant results. This book is not simply an academic exercise either. The winning, holding, and training of our youth comprise the heartbeat of the church, and its future may well depend on how well we utilize these findings. Let us move ahead in an attempt to catch a glimpse of this unique portrait of Seventh-

Valuegenesis is unprecedented in size and scope, including more than 11,000 youth in the total survey process, over 40 percent of whom are from ethnic minority groups. *Valuegenesis* provides an omnibus portrait of Adventist youth, documenting and evaluating the current condition of their faith, their values, their loyalty to Adventism, and how each of these is reflected in their behaviors.

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day Adventist youth as they are seen questing after God and building a personal, vibrant, life-giving faith.

Chapter 2

Reasons for Celebration

Greg was like many other academy students. Not a “bad kid,” not hostile and openly rebellious, but not overtly religious either. In the religion class I taught, he sometimes played “the Devil’s advocate” in the various doctrinal and ethical issues that we discussed. He was always good-natured in his dissent, and I considered him my friend. But he had not impressed me as being particularly spiritual.

Then, near the end of the school year, the pastor scheduled a final Friday night communion service. After a brief meditation in the chapel, we separated and went to the rooms designated for the service of washing feet. I held back to make sure that every

Celebrate the Promise

75% of SDA school youth are certain that they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ.

91% of youth definitely believe Saturday is the true Sabbath.

65% consider it important to be active in an Adventist church.

72% of academy seniors say that there is a “good” (45%) or “excellent” (27%) chance that they will be active in the Adventist Church when they are 40 years old.

*Nearly all
Adventist
teenagers hold
spiritual values
that are
important
to them.*

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fellow had a partner. When all seemed to be paired off and about their sacred task, I noticed a group of three young men. One was Greg. I walked over and asked quietly, "Does one of you need a partner?" Greg looked up and smiled. "We were going to do a threesome," he said, "but, Dr. Dudley, you don't have a partner. Here, let me serve you."

I sat down while Greg brought the basin of water and washed my feet. Then he paused. "Dr. Dudley, I'd like to pray with you," he offered. I nodded my assent, and Greg, still kneeling at my feet, offered a simple and beautiful prayer asking God to guide and bless me. I was surprised and deeply moved. The memory of the experience continues to refresh me spiritually over the passage of time.

This story illustrates a truth that I have seen demonstrated many times in many ways in my years of youth ministry. Nearly all Adventist teenagers hold spiritual values that are important to them. To the worried parent, the alarmed teacher, or the concerned pastor, these adolescents may appear as if they never had a serious thought or never cared about anything having to do with ultimate meaning. Because they wish to identify with their peer group, they may put on a facade of indifference to religious values. Yet, when one gets close to these young people, over a period of time glimpses can be seen that reveal something deeper than what has been apparent on the surface.

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Some surprises are in store for those who have viewed teenagers as careless and have not yet discerned the real importance of spiritual values to them.

We have just culminated the most comprehensive look into the lives of Seventh-day Adventist young people that the Adventist church has ever undertaken. More than eleven thousand youth have completed an exhaustive twenty-four-page questionnaire composed of 465 items. We are about to look at an album of snapshots of those poised to become the new generation of Adventist members and leaders.

Certainly, we will discover problems—serious problems. These are challenges that call us to change, and they constitute the real reason for investing so heavily of money and personnel in such a study. But is there any word of encouragement? Do the findings give reason to thank God? Is the *Valuegenesis* study an occasion of celebration?

Most assuredly, yes! In spite of the problems and challenges, in spite of the difficult—even perilous—position in which the church finds itself concerning the retention and dedication of the new generation, a silver lining shines through. We may rejoice and celebrate over a number of facts that *Valuegenesis* has brought to light. Before we take up the findings in more detail, this chapter is dedicated to some reasons for celebration.

More reasons to celebrate

88% believe their mothers feel comfortable talking with others about matters of faith.

31% of academy seniors report having family devotions at least once a week or more. Almost twice the number of homes reporting family devotions in other Protestant or Catholic homes.

63% of youth state that they are active in efforts to promote social equality.

Adventist young people are nearly twice as likely to emphasize the importance of religious faith as are those in mainline Protestantism.

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Personal Religion

First of all, religion plays a major part in the existence of many of our young people. They were asked: "How important is religious faith in your life?" About half indicated that it was either the most important or a very important influence in their lives. Only 2% said that religion was not an important influence at all.

Many of the same questions on the *Valuegenesis* survey were recently asked of a national sample of adolescents in five mainline Protestant bodies in the United States (United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian Church USA, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). Only about 25% to 30% of these youth stated that religious faith was either the most important or a very important influence in their lives. So Adventist young people are nearly twice as likely to emphasize the importance of religious faith as are those in mainline Protestantism.

Adventist teenagers are not committed simply to religious faith but to faith in a Person—Jesus Christ. More than three-fourths were sure that they had made a definite commitment to Jesus, either at a specific moment or gradually in the course of their development.

Adventist young people still believe in and practice prayer. "How often do you pray or meditate, other

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than at church or before meals?" was the question. More than half (53%) prayed at least once a day, and over two-thirds prayed privately on at least a weekly basis. Less than half of mainline adolescents prayed that often. Only 5% of the Adventists never prayed personally.

These adolescents felt some burden to share their personal faith. More than three-fourths, at least once during the past year, had tried to encourage another person to believe in Jesus Christ. The same proportion had told someone about the work of God in their lives. However, most of these youth had engaged in such sharing only once or twice in the preceding year. Still, a good beginning had been made.

Our Adventist teenagers also demonstrated a good understanding of salvation by grace alone. They were much more likely to adopt a grace orientation (which emphasizes the unconditional love of God and salvation as an unearned gift) than a law orientation (in which one believes salvation is earned through good works). Various items on the survey were combined to form scales for both grace and law orientations (to be discussed in more detail in chapter 6). On a Grace Scale that can range from 1 to 5, the average score for the youth was around 4.75, indicating a solid grasp of Gospel principles. A typical item is: "I know that God loves me no matter what I do." Here, about 95% agreed at all grade levels.

Adventist teenagers demonstrated a good understanding of salvation by grace alone. They were much more likely to adopt a grace orientation than a law orientation.

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Law orientation was not nearly as high, although over 60% tended to agree with the statement: "The way to be accepted by God is to try sincerely to live a good life." But the average on the Law Scale declined from 3.91 for sixth graders to 3.40 for those in the twelfth grade, indicating that our youth are gradually growing in their understanding of the Gospel message with its emphasis on righteousness by faith. Youth seem to grow toward a grace orientation in their lives.

When compared with mainline adolescents, Adventist youth were significantly higher on a variety of measures of faith and commitment. They revealed greater maturity of faith (to be discussed in chapter 4), had over twice the proportion possessing an integrated faith, and had higher percentages expressing loyalty to their denomination. More of them read the Bible on their own on a weekly basis or more often, and considerably higher proportions have tried to encourage someone else to believe in Jesus Christ. Greater percentages (more than half) have helped the poor, sick, or hungry during the recent past.

Finally, the young people in our sample were interested in learning about spiritual things. They were presented with a list of topics and asked to indicate how interested they would be in learning more about each one at school or at church. Topics were sexuality, drugs and alcohol, Adventism, the Bible, gaining a deeper relationship with God, other

What do you think a grace orientation means? How would you be different if you were grace oriented? Note below some suggestions.



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racism and ethnic groups, and how to talk with one's parents. The topic "gaining a deeper relationship with God" was easily the leader in both spheres of instruction with 74% indicating interest in learning more about it at school and 77% at church. The next highest topic was the Bible with 62% and 67% indicating interest respectively. Certainly, this must be one of the most encouraging findings to emerge from the study.

Loyalty to the Church

We may also celebrate that our youth are basically loyal to the Seventh-day Adventist movement. When asked how important it was for them to attend a church of the Adventist denomination, 75% said it was important or extremely important. Only 9% replied that it was not important. Nearly three-fourths claimed to be satisfied with their denomination. Fewer than 9% indicated dissatisfaction. Only 6% wished that they had never been baptized. And 90% indicated that if they moved to another city where they could choose from many different churches, they would still choose to attend an Adventist congregation. The youth, by and large, do not see switching faith communities as an option.

Of course, loyalty is not measured simply in reference to other denominations. It is possible to leave Adventism without a thought of joining another faith,

Valuegenesis asked the following questions about the nature of the Bible:

- The Bible contains no more truth or wisdom than do the religious books of other world religions.
- The Bible is the work of people who collected stories which had been created to explain the mysteries of life. It contains a great deal of wisdom about the human experience.
- The Bible is the work of people who genuinely loved God and who wanted to share their understanding of God's activity in the world.
- The Bible is the work of people who were inspired by God and who presented God's message in terms of their own place and time.
- The Bible is the work of people who copied what God told them word for word, and who wrote without being influenced by their own place and time.

Circle the answer which best describes your beliefs.

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and, indeed, most of those who drop out do not affiliate with another religious body. Does loyalty mean that the youth see themselves as lifetime Adventists?

Perhaps the most important question on the survey is: When you are 40 years old, do you think you will be active in the Adventist Church? To this 72% replied that a good or an excellent chance existed that they would remain. Only 2% saw no chance, with another 7% foreseeing a small chance. Naturally, we would like to see 100% commitment, but, given the turbulence and drive for independence in adolescence, a long-term desire to be an Adventist on the part of nearly three-fourths must be an occasion for celebration.

The young people were also quite active in their local congregations. Over 80% claimed to attend church at least once a week—better than the average adult rate in the North American Division. Also four out of five regularly attended some church-sponsored event other than divine worship or Sabbath school, and more than a fourth spent at least an extra hour a week at such events. Nearly 40% invested more than ten hours per month in congregational programs designed specifically for their age groups, and almost three fourths have been working together with the older generation in church activities. Youth involvement in local congregational life was exceptional in many ways. We are aware that participation and involvement are significant ways in which faith and

Answer these questions for yourself:

1. ___ I read my Bible on my own once a week or more.
2. ___ I pray or meditate, other than at church or before meals, once a day or more.
3. ___ I have tried directly to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ three or more times in the last year.
4. ___ I have tried directly to encourage someone to join the Adventist Church three or more times in the last year.

Valuegenesis Responses for Youth:

1. 41%
2. 53%
3. 43%
4. 26%

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commitment are nurtured.

Orthodoxy

“As a [person] thinketh in his heart, so is he [she].” Commitment is not only an act of loyalty and will but also of intellect and ideology. While belief alone may not prevent apostasy (the devils believe), one who does not believe what the church teaches will probably not remain in it. The good news is that Adventist youth prize the Adventist tradition, accepting its core beliefs and values.

The youth were presented with ten fundamental doctrinal statements. Six responses were possible ranging from “I have never heard of this” to “I definitely believe this.” The percentage of those who definitely believe ranged from 45% to 91% and for only three doctrines was below 65%. For every doctrine but one, the next most frequent choice was: “I am uncertain but lean toward believing.” No more than 4% chose “I definitely do not believe this” for any doctrine, and in half the cases fewer than 1% were definite unbelievers. Large majorities affirmed basic Adventist doctrines like the Sabbath, the second coming of Christ, the importance of the Ten Commandments, and the unconscious condition of the dead. (More details about orthodoxy will be given in chapter 5.)

Even more encouraging is the finding that ortho-

Answer these questions for yourself:

1. ___ When people die, they remain in the grave until the resurrection.
2. ___ Ellen G. White fulfilled Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days.
3. ___ The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ.
4. ___ The body is a temple of God, and we are responsible in every area of life for its care.

Valuegenesis Responses for Youth:

1. 89% definitely believe
2. 52% definitely believe
3. 60% definitely believe
4. 83% definitely believe

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doxy seems to increase as the youth grow older. A scale created by combining all of the orthodoxy items and scored from 1 to 5 reveals that the average orthodoxy score steadily increased from 4.44 in the sixth grade to a high of 4.62 in the twelfth grade. This suggests that some of the lack of definite belief can be accounted for by lack of knowledge. As young people have increased opportunity to study and growing maturity to understand some of the more complicated Adventist doctrines (such as the investigative judgment), they are more likely to believe them. Definite belief in the investigative judgment was expressed by only 36% in the sixth grade but rose to 56% in the twelfth grade.

About 65% held to the standard Adventist position on the inspiration of the Bible with another 14% having taken a somewhat more liberal stance but one which still accords great respect to the Scriptures. Only 4% relegated the Bible entirely to human sources, but the remaining 17% espoused a verbal inspiration theory that could spell trouble down the line when they meet challenges to their faith from the intellectual community.

What we believe is related to the moral judgments we are called upon to make. The survey asked if certain practices were right or wrong. Efforts by one racial group to keep people of another race from moving into their neighborhood were deemed to be

67% definitely believe that God created the world in six 24-hour days.

91% definitely believe that Jesus will come back to earth again and take the righteous to heaven.

91% definitely believe the Ten Commandments still apply to us today.

45% definitely believe that the investigative or pre-advent judgment in heaven began in 1844.

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always or often wrong by 79% of the Adventist young people. While this was slightly lower than the five mainline groups of youth, it was somewhat higher than Southern Baptist adolescents who tended to be in the 60s.

Nearly 82% judged that a company paying women employees less than men employees for similar work was always or often wrong. Here again, the Adventist teenagers tended to position themselves between the slightly higher mainline and the slightly lower Southern Baptist youth.

On the item "passing laws to make it illegal to discriminate against women and minorities," 61% felt the practice to be often or always right. Other items will be discussed in chapter 8, but these illustrations show that the majority of our Adventist youth have developed keen powers of moral judgment and a sense of social justice. For this we can be truly thankful.

Standards of the Church

Standards are, of course, a sticky point, and it may well be that more young people eventually drop out of the church because of the rules and regulations than for any other reason. In later chapters we will certainly have to look at some of the problems with standards uncovered by this research. For this chapter, though, we want to ask if anything heartening has appeared.

Is religious faith the most important thing in your life?

15% of the North American Division youth think so.

35% of the North American Division youth think it is an important influence, but other things also are important for them.

2% say religious faith is not important in my life.

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The answer is yes.

Youth in all grades overwhelmingly endorsed the standards on temperance issues. The percentage in agreement that one should not use illegal drugs was 91%; not use tobacco, 91%; not drink beer or liquor, 87%; not drink wine, 73%; not eat unclean meats, 72%; and should exercise daily, 85%.

Most also agreed that one should observe the Sabbath (88%), and the majority agreed with the Adventist position that sex should occur only in marriage (68%) and the need to wear modest clothes (65%). Indeed, only 18% agreed that "Adventist rules and standards just don't make sense," and about two-thirds felt that "Adventist rules and standards serve a useful purpose." Only 7% felt that the latter statement was never or rarely true.

Agreement with standards is one thing; behavior concerning them is another. The survey included a list of at-risk behaviors such as using alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine, binge drinking, cheating, fighting, stealing, getting into trouble at school, and pornography. The youth were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how many times that they had done each of these behaviors in the past year where 1 = 0 times, 2 = 1-2 times, and so on up to 7 which equaled 40 or more times. For every item the majority of the young people had never engaged in any of the behaviors, and multiple infractions were very infrequent. The average

Here is a list of "at-risk" behaviors.

- Binge drinking
- Marijuana
- Suicide
- Depression
- Shoplifting
- Aggression
- Sexual activity
- Cocaine
- School trouble
- Alcohol

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score on the seven-point scale was only 1.5. With the exception of caffeine, only small percentages used chemical substances—much smaller than the percentages of public school students as revealed by national studies. Our youth basically live good clean lives. Again, let us thank God.

Happy Adventist Families

No influence on the life of the developing child is as important as that of home and family. We know that the breakdown of the family so often witnessed in modern society has its effect on the Adventist home. We are not immune to the pressures of the surrounding culture. Adventist families suffer unhappiness, and Adventist husbands and wives divorce each other. But amid the problems of family life the *Valuegenesis* survey has discovered some good news. Many Adventist homes are still doing well.

For example, 72% of the youth agreed that "my family life is happy, and nearly 78% agreed that "there is a lot of love in my family." Only 11% disagreed with the latter statement. In spite of the conflict resulting from the adolescent need to gain emancipation, 73% indicated that they get along well with their parents, and an overwhelmingly 80% admit that their parents give them help and support when they need it. Also 76% said that their parents often tell them that they

Valuegenesis and the family

72% agree that their family life is happy.

78% agree that there is a lot of love in my family.

73% indicate that they get along well with their parents.

80% admit that their parents give them help and support when they need it.

76% said that their parents often tell them that they love them.

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love them.

The question was asked: "How many times in the last month have you had a good conversation with one of your parents that lasted 10 minutes or more?" For those who believe that adolescents communicate with their parents mainly by grunts and snarls, some surprises are in store. Nearly half (47%) reported four or more such conversations. What is more, the percentage reporting this frequency tended to increase with age, rising from 39% in the sixth grade to 51% in the twelfth grade. Only 10% reported no substantive talks within the past month.

While the reported frequency for daily family worship was not as often as we would like to see, one aspect of the picture was bright. In homes where family worship is being conducted, nearly 80% found that worship to be meaningful. And, as we shall see later, perceived quality of family worship is a very important predictor for a host of other desirable attitudes and behaviors.

Kudos for Adventist Schools

The *Valuegenesis* study has implications for many aspects of Adventism—home and family, pastoral ministry, youth ministries, youth publications, and Sabbath school leadership, to name a few. But at its heart, it addresses the educational system. The prob-

Valuegenesis suggests some ways you may make your family more effective?

- Parents set limits
- Parents punish wrong behavior
- Parents enforce standards about Adventist way of life
- Parents enforce popular cultural standards
- Parents talk with youth about faith
- Loving, caring family
- Regular family worship

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lems and challenges facing Adventist schools were what sparked the massive project, and the results must, in the end, help us to better structure and market Adventist Christian education. Thus we are intensely interested to know what the research has revealed about our schools. While the subject will be dealt with more fully in later chapters, this is the time for some encouragement. What cause do we have for celebrating Adventist education?

The young people seem in many ways to be supportive of the schools. For example, 85% agreed that a way must be found to provide financial aid so that any Adventist student can afford to attend an Adventist school or college, and less than 5% disagreed. About 70% agreed that Adventist schools should be a top priority among Adventist leaders. Also, support tends to increase with grade level. On a scale of 1 to 5 measuring positive attitudes toward Adventist schools, the scores rose from an average of 3.64 in grade six to 3.78 in grade twelve. And more than half (57%) believed that Adventist academies are exciting and interesting—quite an admission for this age group. When asked: "If you could choose your school, what kind of school would you choose?" three-fourths of the youth indicated that they would pick an Adventist school. Only 16% said they would choose a public school.

Valuegenesis information allows us to compare

A Valuegenesis priority:

85% agree that a way must be found to provide financial aid so any Adventist student can afford to attend an Adventist school.

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Adventist students in our educational system with other Adventists who were in public schools. While no significant differences were discovered on a number of measures, students in the Adventist schools were higher on important variables such as (1) a favorable attitude toward our schools, (2) the number of close

The Adventist young people were notably lower than the public school group on a number of deviant behaviors, including alcohol and marijuana usage, cheating in school, and engaging in sexual intercourse.

friends who were also Adventists, (3) agreement with church standards, especially on substance abuse, (4) denominational loyalty, (5) frequency of personal prayer, (6) tithe paying, (7) educational aspirations, and (8) frequency of family worship. They were also lower on an Index of At-risk Behaviors (see chapter 14 for details).

Another reason for hope comes from a comparison of our youth sample with a national study of 50,000 sixth- to twelfth-grade students in public schools. The Adventist young people were notably lower than the public school group on a number of deviant behaviors, including alcohol and marijuana usage, cheating in school, and engaging in sexual intercourse. While our schools are not perfect, they do provide a protective environment against damaging practices that is much greater than that found in public institutions.

It is also encouraging to note that certain indices of

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faith and commitment tend to rise as more years are spent in Adventist schools. Those who have received more of their education in an Adventist environment were more likely to have a grace orientation toward salvation, to profess loyalty to the denomination, to believe traditional Adventist doctrines, to have positive attitudes toward Adventist schools, to accept Adventist standards on alcohol and drugs, and to accept other Adventist "cultural standards" such as Sabbath observance, abstinence from unclean meat and premarital sex, modesty in dress, and daily exercise. Those who obtained all of their education in the Adventist system were more likely than those who obtained less than half to predict that they would be active in the church at forty years of age.

On the basis of several national studies, students in our schools were compared with students in public and Catholic schools. On three ingredients of academic effectiveness frequently cited in educational research, Adventist schools rated very well. Adventist school students in grades 10 to 12 have double the percentage of national public high school students who spend six or more hours per week on homework. Higher proportions of Adventist students enter four-year colleges or universities than either Catholic or public high students as can be seen by this comparison:

Public school students	30%
Catholic school students	51%

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Adventist academy students 66%

Finally, Adventist schools have fewer of the type of behavior problems that disturb the learning process than public schools do. These include: student absenteeism, students cutting class, verbal abuse of teachers, vandalism of school property, and, especially, student use of alcohol and other drugs.

Parents of students in our schools were generally supportive of the character-building nature of the teaching ministry. More than 85% of these parents indicated that the church schools had had a positive influence on the religious faith of their children and on their beliefs about what is right and wrong.

Adventist schools are more likely to employ minority teachers, indicating the ethnic diversity among us. Throughout the nation, public school teachers are 10% minority, and Catholic teachers are 5%. But Adventist schools in North America are staffed with 17% minority teachers.

Teachers in our schools were considerably more likely than those in other systems to feel respected in today's society (two-thirds felt this way) and much more likely (86% versus 46% for public and 60% for Catholic) to advise a young person to pursue a career in teaching. Our teachers were generally positive on the clarity of the mission of our schools and believed that they received a high degree of support from their administrations.

What could your school or church do to help in the process of character building?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

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Adventist teachers are highly dedicated to the task of transmitting faith and values. Two-thirds talked with individual students about matters of faith and values often or very often, and the same proportion talked in the classroom about their own personal faith often or very often. Another 72% found ways to integrate religious concepts into the subject matter often or very often, and almost all (96%) felt an obligation to promote the religious faith of their students. Indeed, 42% of the teachers said that their number one motive for entering the teaching profession was that it was "God's choice for my life." In second place with 24% was the view that teaching is a ministry. The dedication of Adventist teachers and the results of their ministry are cause for celebration.

It seems appropriate to add my own testimony. I spent my first seven years in public school. But in the eighth grade a one-room church school was started by our little congregation in our small town, and I attended for two years, taking all subjects from the same teacher. In the tenth grade I went to boarding academy (Union Springs, New York) for three years. Here I decided to become a minister and was given my first opportunities to preach as part of the traveling "seminar."

So I entered Washington Missionary College and completed the ministerial course. While I was there, both of my parents dropped out of the Adventist

Adventist teachers are highly dedicated to the task of transmitting faith and values. Two-thirds talked with individual students about matters of faith and values often or very often, and the same proportion talked in the classroom about their own personal faith often or very often.

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church (nineteen years later I was able to rebaptize them). I have often thought that if I had not gone away to our schools, I too would have dropped out. With my parents leaving the church and an almost complete lack of social support in our small congregation, it is hard to imagine that I would have remained faithful. My life would certainly have taken a different course. And I would not have met at college and married my dear wife with whom I have shared the last thirty-nine years. So I thank God for Adventist schools and the lives they have molded. And in the findings of the *Valuegenesis* study we can all find reasons for celebration.

Chapter 3

Warning! Danger Ahead!

"I'm usually not one to get involved in things like this, but there are a few things I need to say even though I know it won't make any difference. I think I speak for most of the teenagers in Adventist academies right now. We have been treated very unfairly. Parents and teachers think we're such bad kids, and they wonder why we get into trouble. Well, I'll tell you why. We've had religion shoved down our throats with *no choice* for our whole lives. Parents don't realize it's like picking a career for your kid that he doesn't want to do. . . .

"I'll tell you why I quit going to church. While I was at academy, we had to go to a worship in the morning, Bible class, a worship at night, every day;

Review your own attitudes toward religion. Check the boxes that apply to you.

- I am deeply committed to God's purposes and mission.
- I believe service to others to be an essential part of my religious behavior.
- I often doubt God's very existence and concern for me.
- I participate in a rich, regular devotional life.
- I have what I consider a maturing faith.

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Evaluate these statements.
Are they true or not?

True False

People often blame others for their distance from the church.

Most teenagers put on acts to please their parents.

Youth are tired of being hypocrites.

Most youth believe they are committed to Jesus Christ.

then on Saturday, Sabbath school, church, AYA, and worship. I got so sick of never having any time away from religion that I vowed when I got out I wouldn't have anything to do with it. Also, I got into drinking, drugs, sex, everything just to be rebellious that I *never* would have thought of doing before I went to academy.

"Now I've been out for a year and for the first time in my life I've hung around with people outside the church. They are the nicest people, all my new friends, that I've ever met. Adventists are cold. I've never felt so loved. They actually care about me, not how much money I can give them.

"Also, I'd like to say that I've been going to Adventist schools for twelve years, and I'd say I've met maybe twenty actual Christian Adventist teenagers. Almost all of them put on an act to please their parents or whomever. I quit going to church because I was tired of being a hypocrite like all the other teenagers who are afraid to stand up to their parents.

"I'm so much happier now that I can finally be myself. I'd like to at least still believe in and talk to God, but I'm so bitter toward the church that when I think of God, I think of the church, and I can't get close to Him. I just want you to know that a lot of Adventist teenagers feel this way; they're just too scared to admit it. You said you were doing all these surveys to try to figure out why our teenagers were turning against the church. Well, now you know."

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Whew! This ex-Adventist young woman is nothing if not straightforward. I asked for it, and I got it. But before you tune her out as an incorrigible rebel, stop and consider. My mail tells me that she speaks a lot of truth. Many of our teenagers do agree with her. She touches on a number of fundamental problems in our attempt to transmit values: failure to make religion attractive, restrictive structures, lack of love and caring, hypocrisy, neglect of personal growth and fulfillment. If the church wishes to take Project Affirmation seriously, we will have to listen to her (and those who share her feelings) and learn from her and them.

In the last chapter we learned that the findings from the *Valuegenesis* study provided reason for celebration. Now for the bad news. They also point up problem areas that challenge the church. Before moving into a topical discussion of what we have learned from this research (which will comprise the remainder of this book), we will dedicate this chapter to a brief survey of the problems that serve as danger signals to our movement.

Faith and Commitment

In the next chapter we will discuss the meaning of mature faith and the measurements used to assess it. Here we must note that Adventist youth are only

Fundamental problems in our attempt to transmit values:

1. Failure to make religion attractive

2. Restrictive structures

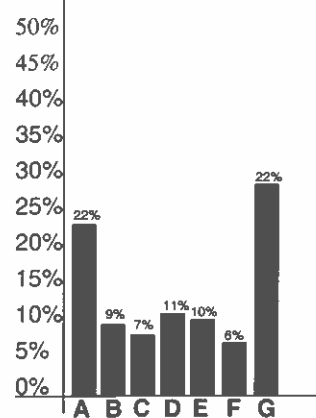
3. Lack of love and caring

4. Hypocrisy

5. Neglect of personal growth and fulfillment

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

Faith Maturity in Context: Percent of Youth in Grades 7-12 with High Faith Maturity*



- A** = North American Division
- B** = Disciples of Christ
- C** = Evangelical Lutheran
- D** = Presbyterian Church
- E** = United Methodist
- F** = United Church of Christ
- G** = U. S. Southern Baptist

* Percent with a score of 5.0 or higher out of a possible 7.0 on the 38-item Faith-maturity scale.

moderate in their faith development. On a seven-point Faith Maturity Index they averaged a tepid 4.44. Nor did this Index tend to rise with advancing age—a trend one might expect to result from Christian nurture. In fact, a slight decline took place from the sixth-grade average of 4.61 to the twelfth-grade average of 4.44 (both grades ten and eleven were 4.40). A score of 5.0 and above places one in the high faith-maturity class, but only 22% of the total sample were so classified. A greater proportion of the sixth-graders (29%) had higher mature-faith scores than any other group. Only 20% of the academy sophomores and juniors scored over 5.0.

On the basis of their mature-faith scores, the youth were classified into four groups: undeveloped faith, vertical faith, horizontal faith, and integrated faith (an explanation of these will be given in the next chapter). Close to half (43%) of the young people had an undeveloped faith, in which both the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of faith are relatively low. Only a fourth had developed an integrated faith in which both vertical and horizontal dimensions were alive and well. The church will have to ask what kind of Christian experience it is fostering through its religious education program in both congregations and schools.

In the last chapter we noted that Adventist youth tend to be higher on grace than on law as a way of

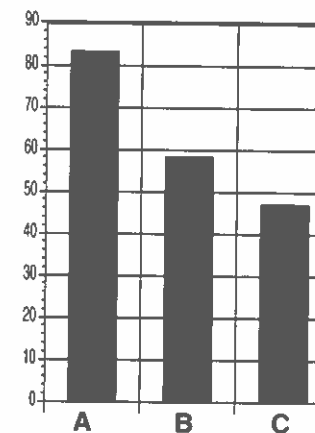
FAITH IN THE BALANCE

salvation. In spite of this, a substantial portion still identified with law-orientation items. For example, 83% agreed that: "I know that to be saved I have to live by God's rules," and more than half (58%) disagreed that "There is nothing I can do to earn salvation." Nearly half (47%) even agreed with a statement like: "The more I follow Adventist standards and practices, the more likely it is that I will be saved." And 44% believed that: "The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living." While acceptance of righteousness by faith is strong, Adventist youth do not find it inconsistent to also embrace legalism. A great deal of clarification is necessary to help our youth understand the basics of salvation.

Another concern is that only 13% of these adolescents read the Bible daily on a devotional basis. On top of this, devotional activity seems to decline as the young people move upward through the system. About half (52%) of the sixth-graders read the Bible on their own at least once a week, but only 38% of the academy seniors did so. The proportions of those who pray or meditate, other than at church or before meals, on a daily basis declined from 60% to 48% over the same grade span. If one of the goals of Christian education is to foster a rich devotional life in our adolescents as they advance toward adulthood, we seem to be going in the other direction.

In the previous chapter, we rejoiced because large

Law-Orientation Scores



A. 83% agree = I know that to be saved I have to live by God's rules.

B. 58% disagree = There is nothing I can do to earn salvation.

C. 47% agree = The more I follow Adventist standards and practices, the more likely it is that I will be saved.

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

Adventist Orthodoxy

Percent who "definitely believe" that:

- When people die, they remain in the grave until the resurrection.

Grade 6 = 81%

Grade 12 = 92%

- The wicked will *not* burn forever but will be totally destroyed.

Grade 6 = 55%

Grade 12 = 72%

- Ellen G. White fulfilled Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days.

Grade 6 = 51%

Grade 12 = 53%

- The SDA church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ.

Grade 6 = 59%

Grade 12 = 60%

- The body is a temple of God, and we are responsible in every area of life for its care.

Grade 6 = 76%

Grade 12 = 85%

majorities of these teenagers expressed belief in most of the distinctive doctrines of the Adventist church. Nevertheless, chinks in the armor do appear. Fewer than half (45%) definitely believed in the unique Adventist contribution that "the investigative or pre-advent judgment in heaven began in 1844." However, this lack of affirmation may be related to the fact that many do not really understand the doctrine enough to be sure that they believe it. An additional 22% replied that "I am uncertain but lean toward believing." As central as this teaching is to Adventism, the church will have to discover new ways to communicate it to the rising generation.

The next lowest support was for the item: "Ellen G. White fulfilled Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days," where slightly more than half (53%) definitely believed, but where an additional 27% leaned toward believing. Has the plagiarism controversy of the past decade had an impact on this age group? We can't say for sure, but the church is challenged to find ways to transmit an appreciation of the gift of prophecy which will be both intellectually and spiritually satisfying.

To a lesser extent, fairly substantial minorities were ambiguous in their belief in the doctrines of creation and the destruction of the wicked. Also, little difference in orthodoxy was discovered between Adventist students in our school system and those in

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

the public schools. With all our religious training, we might have expected a marked difference.

Problems were also discovered in the families that produce these young people. At least 20% of the adolescents come from homes where their parents have divorced. Less than one-fourth of the homes had daily family worship; less than 10% had both morning and evening worship.

Altruism and Service

Adventists believe strongly in service to others. Like our Master we aim to go about doing good, and our schools were established to enable our youth to catch a vision of service to God and humankind. Yet in the service area, our youth are only average. Here are the percentages of those that felt certain activities were quite or extremely important: to spend time helping people, 65%; to tell other people about God, 57%; to help people who are poor or hungry, 68%; to help promote social equality, 53%. These figures do not spell disaster, but they are not grounds for self-congratulation either. Even worse, holding service to others as a value does not seem to increase from grade six to grade twelve. All of our religious education does not seem to make much of an impact in this area. The vision of service still calls for clear articulation.

On the other hand, 79% indicated that it was quite

Materialism Scale

How important is it to you in your life to . . .
(% "quite" or "extremely" important)

- Have lots of nice things

Grade 6 42%

Grade 7 48%

Grade 8 49%

Grade 9 50%

Grade 10 49%

Grade 11 47%

Grade 12 45%

- Have lots of money

Grade 6 32%

Grade 7 42%

Grade 8 48%

Grade 9 48%

Grade 10 49%

Grade 11 49%

Grade 12 48%

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

or extremely important to have an exciting, fun-filled life, and 47% felt the same about having a lot of nice things and having lots of money. While materialism as a scale was slightly lower than that of service, the narrow margin between the two must be cause for concern.

When it comes to actual behavior, the evidence is more clearly unsettling. The goal of nurturing youth who consistently serve the needs of others has not been achieved. Nearly half of the teenagers spent no time whatever on helping people who are poor, hungry, sick, or unable to care for themselves. Furthermore, this percentage increased over the grades. While 39% of the sixth-graders spent no time helping others, 53% of the academy seniors were not involved at all.

Also, nearly two-thirds of our youth sample spent no time on promoting any kind of social equality, and over half spent no time on trying to make their own town or city a better place in which to live (e.g., by volunteer work). On an Altruism Scale of 1 to 6, our sample averaged only 2.1.

Our youth are also somewhat hesitant about engaging in evangelistic-type service. During the past year, 44% never, even once tried to encourage someone to join the Adventist church. Another 30% tried it once or twice. Ellen White speaks of what could be accomplished with "such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish" (*Education*, p.

Nearly half of the teenagers spent no time whatever on helping people who are poor, hungry, sick, or unable to care for themselves. Furthermore, this percentage increased over the grades.

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

271), but at the present the army appears to consist mostly of noncombatants.

Perhaps some of this is due to lack of confidence. Fairly large proportions seemed to suffer from low self-esteem. For example, 50% agreed that: "At times I think I am no good at all," and a fourth have not yet discovered a clear purpose in life.

Relationships with the Church

Possession of positive attitudes toward the local congregation in which one holds membership is a crucial factor in retention in the church. Information from the study indicates that trouble lies here. A decline over the age groups on a scale measuring positive attitudes toward the local congregation can be observed. On this scale, ranging from 1 to 5, the average student in grade six scored 3.57 with lower averages each successive year until the mean was only 2.97 for those in the twelfth grade.

To be more specific, note the percentages of those that responded with "true" or "very true" to the following items: "Programs at my church are interesting," 31%; "Programs at my church make me think," 27%; "I can be myself when at church," 45%; "I look forward to going to things at my church," 36%; "My church offers enough things for kids my age," 29%; and "I go to things at my church because I want to,"

Note the percentages of those that responded with "true" or "very true" to the following items:

- "Programs at my church are interesting" (31%).
- "Programs at my church make me think" (27%).
- "I can be myself when at church" (45%).
- "I look forward to going to things at my church" (36%).
- "My church offers enough things for kids my age" (29%).
- "I go to things at my church because I want to" (50%).

You can do something about changing the thinking climate and perception of warmth in your church.

• Be creative. What could your local church do to change the attitudes suggested by Valuegenesis research?
(Complete this sentence)

"I think we could . . ."

Send your responses to the
John Hancock Center for
Youth Ministry, La Sierra
University, Riverside, CA
92515. Attention Climate
Control

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

50%. Not exactly a ringing affirmation. If we are going to hold on to this generation, we will certainly have to make the local church more attractive to it.

A definite decline may also be seen between the sixth and twelfth grades regarding the way the youth perceive their congregations. The figures are the average percentages of those who say "quite true" or "very true" in describing their local churches:

It challenges my thinking	50% to 22%
It encourages me to ask questions	46% to 23%
It is open to new ideas	61% to 28%
It feels warm	61% to 38%
It accepts people who are different	83% to 47%
It is friendly	77% to 52%

This ominous decline over the adolescent period presages separation and apostasy if the challenge is not met. We face a tremendous task to make our congregations inviting to the turbulent teens.

The situation appears even more grim when the data from the youth in the five mainline denominations are examined. At every grade level mainline youth were higher on perceiving a congregational climate of warmth and of encouraging thinking. They found the religious education programs to be more interesting, the services provided for youth to be more adequate, and the adult leaders to be more caring.

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They were more than twice as likely to look forward to going to things at church.

Challenges also arise in the area of church support. Only slightly more than one-fourth of the students said that they always pay tithe on money received. Over 40% contributed nothing to the church beyond the tithe, and less than 30% gave offerings regularly.

The youth were asked to evaluate how important various goals were to them; to tell what they want in life. One possible goal was "to be active in the Adventist church." Nearly two-thirds indicated that this objective was quite or extremely important, and only 7% said that it was not at all important. But the decline with age group is disturbing as 79% chose it as important in the sixth grade but only 59% in grades eleven and twelve with fewer having attributed this importance in each successive year. Thus, leaders face the challenge of how to keep the church from fading in relevance as youth move through the adolescent period.

The Dilemma of Standards

The church today faces a real dilemma in the area of standards. If traditional standards are abandoned, the community of faith loses its reason for existence and the distinction that sets it apart. But if standards are perceived as inconsistent and unreasonable—not

One purpose of religion in life is to provide goals, direction, and purpose to people.

Thus, leaders face the challenge of how to keep the church from fading in relevance as youth move through the adolescent period.

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applicable to life in the late twentieth century—young people leave the church and turn elsewhere. The *Valuegenesis* study uncovered more problems in this area than in any other.

In the last chapter we noted that large majorities supported Adventist standards on alcohol and drug usage and on Sabbath-keeping. Good news! The bad news is that some other life-style standards had much less support. Only a minority (39%) agreed with the Adventist stand on wearing jewelry, and about the same proportion (42%) actually disagreed with it. On several other codes small majorities were in *disagreement*, such as: caffeinated drinks, 51%; rock music, 55%; and dancing, 58%. Only about a fourth still agreed with these prohibitions. In the most perilous position of all is the standard: "One should not watch movies in movie theaters," where only 19% agreed and 64% disagreed. If these standards are still important, the church has a great selling job ahead of it because the new generation does not see it the same way that their fathers and mothers did.

Another danger area concerns our position on extramarital sex and modesty in dress. About two-thirds agreed with Adventist standards in these areas, but nearly a fifth (18%) disagreed on both items and another 14% and 18% respectively were not sure. Surrounded by a culture saturated with the "sexual revolution," Adventist youth may be slipping from the

***Valuegenesis* uncovered more problems in the area of popular cultural "standards" than any other. Here are the statistics.**

The question was, "do you disagree with this standard?"

- Wearing Jewelry (42%)
- Listening to rock music (55%)
- Drinking caffeinated drinks (51%)
- Dancing (58%)
- Movies in theaters (64%)

(Grades 6-12 averages)

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

church's traditional vision of sexual purity. Counteracting this trend may be one of the greatest challenges facing the church.

This observation is supported by the finding that 17% were no longer virgins. As might be surmised, this percentage rises with age. Non virgins constituted 12% of the students in grades seven and eight (double that of mainline Protestants), 15% of those in grades nine and ten (same as mainlines), and 26% of those in grades eleven and twelve (mainlines were 33%).

The youth were asked how often they participated in various other deviant behaviors within the past year. While Adventists were consistently lower than either mainline Protestant or Southern Baptist youth, yet the percentage who participated at least once during the period rose rather significantly with age cohort. The steepest rise was seen in alcohol use where 15% of those in grades seven and eight had participated, but 37% in grades eleven and twelve. The same trend, however, was observed for cheating on a test, marijuana use, and binge drinking (five or more drinks at a time). An alarming 20% of the academy seniors had participated in this latter behavior at least once during the past year.

Ten of these behaviors have been classified as "at-risk" indicators when they occur with certain frequencies. They will be discussed in a later chapter. Here we would point out that Adventist youth are

A Question of Morality

Non virgin status in Seventh-day Adventist youth

Grades	%
7 & 8	12%
9 & 10	15%
11 & 12	26%

Mainline Protestant Churches

Grades	%
7 & 8	6%
9 & 10	15%
11 & 12	33%

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

40% believed that the “emphasis on Adventist rules and standards is so strong that the message of Christianity gets lost.” Half agreed that “non-Adventists laugh when they hear what Adventists are forbidden to do.” Close to half indicated that the church is so preoccupied with behavior that it tends to lose sight of the essential message of the Gospel.

clearly not immune to these behavioral risks. Approximately 60% of sixth-graders and 73% of academy seniors gave evidence of having one or more of the at-risk indicators. Nearly a fourth of the seniors evidenced three or more of the indicators.

Standards are one thing; perceptions of the process of teaching and enforcing them are another. This may be a source of growing tension among the youth. Although two-thirds believed that “Adventist rules and standards serve a useful purpose,” sizeable minorities expressed dissatisfaction with the process. For example, 47% claimed that “some adults insist on certain rules or standards for younger Adventists that they do not observe themselves,” and 40% believed that the “emphasis on Adventist rules and standards is so strong that the message of Christianity gets lost.” Half agreed that “non-Adventists laugh when they hear what Adventists are forbidden to do.” Close to half indicated that the church is so preoccupied with behavior that it tends to lose sight of the essential message of the Gospel.

These concerns about process increased with grade level. By the time they reached grade twelve, the majority did not have favorable attitudes toward the way standards are taught and modeled. This growing dissatisfaction is serious business for the future of the church. We will explore the subject more fully in a later chapter, but one theme stands out. Strict en-

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forcement of standards does not build mature faith and commitment in general, but enforcement in a climate of warmth and caring seems to have positive results.

Challenges to the School System

In the previous chapter we noted some findings concerning the schools and educational system of Adventism that supplied reason for celebration. But, of course, not all is sweetness and light. The *Value-genes* study also uncovered problems and challenges. While these will be discussed in more detail later in the book, in this chapter we will review them briefly.

One problem is that while the youth generally rated Adventist schools as spiritually superior, they were uncertain as to their academic qualifications. Slightly fewer than half agreed that “Adventist schools provide a better academic program than do public schools.” In addition, this affirmation tends to decline with age group so that while 57% of the sixth-graders agreed, only 44% of the seniors did so.

It isn’t just the youth either. Only small majorities of the parents, pastors, and teachers believed that Adventist schools were academically superior to public institutions. The problem is complicated by the fact that members today are not willing to choose a school simply on its spiritual qualifications. They tend to

What should we do?

- There is widespread belief that the Seventh-day Adventist church schools do not have the quality of academic life that parents would like.
- Slightly fewer than half of the youth agreed that “Adventist schools provide a better academic program than do public schools.”

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

demand top scholastic quality.

Part of the problem may be that teachers in denominational schools are not as likely to have advanced degrees (masters or doctorates) as their counterparts in other systems. For example, 45% of the Adventist teachers held an advanced degree

Adventist students in the seventh and eighth grades were nearly twice as likely (42% versus 22%) as those in both public and Catholic schools to say they often feel "put down" by their teachers, and they were much less likely to report the presence of real school spirit.

compared to 50% in the public schools and 52% in the Catholic system.

A number of teacher concerns need to be addressed. While 76% of the teachers in our schools indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current teaching jobs, that figure is somewhat below the 80% for public schools and the 85% for Catholic schools. Only 39%, moreover, were satisfied with their salary and benefits. And money isn't everything. Another measure of satisfaction is shown in the fact that 37% said that they do not feel respected by their fellow Adventists, and over a fourth (27%) did not feel supported by their local Adventist pastors. All of this may predict that it will be harder to recruit and retain top teachers.

Problems also appear on the student side of the ledger. Adventist students in the seventh and eighth grades were nearly twice as likely (42% versus 22%) as those in both public and Catholic schools to say they

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

often feel "put down" by their teachers, and they were much less likely to report the presence of real school spirit. While not appreciably different from public school students, they were ten percentage points lower than Catholic pupils on "students get along well with the teachers" (65% versus 75%) and "discipline is fair" (68% versus 78%). In general, the students indicated some ambivalence toward schools. While they tended to be slightly positive, they did not provide a ringing affirmation for our system (see chapter 13 for details).

When students in our schools are compared with those in public schools, Adventist youth are generally much lower in frequency of deviant behaviors—a reason for celebration mentioned in the last chapter. But often little difference is discerned in the values that were expressed. Only minor differences occurred between the two groups on the importance of values like "to have lots of money," "to have an exciting, fun-filled life," and "to spend time helping people." The differences were particularly small in the higher grades.

What happens when a student spends more years in Adventist education? To locate this, Adventist youth in grades 6-12 were grouped into categories representing different amounts of Adventist schooling, from *no* years to *all* years. *Valuegenesis* research indicates that as the number of years of Adventist schooling increases, a student's grace orientation is

Three Reasons to Celebrate:

- When students in our schools are compared with those in public schools, Adventist youth are generally much lower in frequency of deviant behaviors.
- The longer a student is in Adventist education the stronger is his/her support of the school system.
- The more years in Adventist education the higher is his/her acceptance of Adventist way-of-life standards.

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

Reasons for Concern

The impact of Adventist schooling:

- Lower acceptance of "popular cultural" standards
- Lower scores on "Horizontal Faith" and relationships to people
- Values regarding service to others decreases
- Prosocial behavior (helping others in need) goes down

slightly higher, denominational loyalty tends to grow, Adventist orthodoxy increases, attitudes toward Adventist schools are more positive, and there is greater acceptance of alcohol and drug standards; also, a slight increase of Adventist way-of-life standards is indicated. It also seems that students who attend Adventist schools exclusively are more likely than other Adventist youth to be active in the church at age 40 and less likely to be involved in "at-risk" type behaviors.

The differences, however, are not consistent. In some areas, amount of Adventist schooling is not related in any systematic way to positive outcomes. Such is the case with vertical faith, law orientation, *overall* acceptance of Adventist standards, dissatisfaction with standards, positive attitudes toward the local congregation, and materialism as a value. For five other measures (horizontal faith, witnessing about Jesus, acceptance of certain standards, service to others, and pro-social behavior), those with less time in Adventist educational institutions were actually higher than those who had taken more of their schooling in our system (see chapter 14 for details).

The situation was even more ominous for the parents of our Adventist students. For them, in the majority of measures of faith, commitment, and values (12 out of 19), desirable outcomes decreased with amount of Adventist schooling, and two undesirable

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

outcomes (dissatisfaction with standards and materialism as a value) increased with years of Adventist education. In the other five areas, no differences were seen. No positive impact of Adventist education was discovered in the nineteen measures employed. Because the parents received their education some years ago, this may indict the system of yesterday more than that of today. Or perhaps it pinpoints a weakness in the long-term, residual effects of our educational process. At any rate, it presents a serious problem that begs to be addressed.

The differences we see because of years of schooling could be due to the effects of Adventist schools or to the different types of people choosing Adventist schools. For example, horizontal faith may be less among every-year attenders because those with lower horizontal faith may tend to disproportionately choose Adventist schools. However it is interpreted, there is major work to do in helping to promote outcomes which too often appear low.

We have surveyed some of the problems and challenges to the church that have been uncovered by the *Valuegenesis* study. These balance the reasons for celebration outlined in chapter 2. Now that we have a general "feel" for the findings of *Valuegenesis*, we will begin to examine them in more detail. We will find that the nature of the problems themselves point to the directions for solutions. Most of the remaining chapters will take a topical approach.

Chapter 4

Growing Faith

It was after hours, but I was still working in my office when the knock came at the door. I opened it to greet a solitary student holding a ready-for-action, King James Bible. "May I ask you a question?" he inquired. When I nodded my approval, he began to read from 2 Chronicles 16:9: "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

He stopped and looked up. "My question is: What does it mean to be perfect?"

What indeed! With this question, Christians have

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struggled for centuries. Does it indicate a state of absolute sinlessness? Does it connote a mystical experience in which the presence of the Divine is apprehended in extrasensory ways? Does it point to flawless theology or an exhaustive grasp of the "real truth?" Is it a Mother Theresa-like life of selfless service?

It is beyond the scope of this book or the skills of this author to settle such a complex question. Yet, I would like to pursue a particular direction of thinking. The New International Version rendering of the passage which the student brought to my attention reads "fully committed," suggesting a direction of the will and heart. In Ephesians 4:13, Paul called upon Christians to come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The marginal reading is "full-grown," and the NIV renders the phrase, "become mature."

The implication is that perfection is an experience of growth within a wholehearted commitment. The text does not imply that individuals finally "get sinless" but that they finally grow up to the maturity of faith. The individual's faith steadily matures toward the standard set by Jesus Himself. Ellen White wrote: "At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 65).

Maturity of faith suggests continued growth.

"At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement" (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 65).

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

Faith Maturity

What then would constitute a maturing faith—a vibrant, life-transforming experience marked by both a deep, personal relationship to a loving God and a consistent devotion to serving others? *Valuegenesis* utilized a pioneering way of assessing faith maturity, developed from 1988 to 1990 by Search Institute for its recent national study of adults and youth in six Protestant denominations.

In this conceptual scheme faith maturity is not simply a set of right beliefs. Rather, it is conceived more as a way of life, as a set of priorities, dispositions, and behaviors which evidence that faith is deep, vibrant, and life-changing. A person of mature faith integrates into his/her life eight core dimensions of faith:

1. Trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus;
2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace;
3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices as part of one's religious life;
4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others;
5. Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith which supports and nourishes one another;

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

6. Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality;

7. Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice;

8. Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice.

It is evident that these eight dimensions embrace two overall themes. A person of mature faith experiences both a life-transforming relationship with a loving God—the *vertical* theme—and a consistent devotion to serving others—the *horizontal* theme.

Within each of the eight core dimensions, representative statements of mature faith were constructed. A total of thirty-eight were used in the Mature Faith Scale and comprise the first thirty-eight questions on the *Valuegenesis* questionnaire. Seven responses were possible to each statement: never true, rarely true, true once in a while, sometimes true, often true, almost always true, and always true. To simplify a picture of the faith maturity of our Adventist youth, we list the percentages of those who chose either often true, almost always true, and always true for each item.

- I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor (54%).
- I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross and rose again (98%).
- My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day (60%).

The person of maturing faith integrates eight core dimensions of faith:

- Trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus;
- Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace;
- Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices as part of one's religious life;
- Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others.

The person of maturing faith continued:

- Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith, and support and nourish one another;
- Hold life-affirming values, including a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, commitment to racial and gender equality, and a commitment to healthy living;
- Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice;
- Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice.

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

Some key percentages in Seventh-day Adventist youth's understanding of their growing faith:

- My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day (60%).
- My faith helps me know right from wrong (81%).
- I help others with their religious questions and struggles (30%).
- Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world (77%).
- I take time for periods of prayer or meditation (41%).

- I help others with their religious questions and struggles (30%).
- I tend to be critical of other people (reversed scoring) (30%).
- In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs (30%).
- My faith helps me know right from wrong (81%).
- I do things to help protect the environment (43%).
- I devote time to reading and studying the Bible (25%).
- I have a hard time accepting myself (reversed scoring) (28%).
- Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world (77%).
- I take excellent care of my physical health (71%).
- I am active in efforts to promote social equality (43%).
- I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually (41%).
- I take time for periods of prayer or meditation (41%).
- I am active in efforts to promote world peace (21%).
- I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine (92%).
- I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world (45%).
- As I grow older my understanding of God changes (79%).
- I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and

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- obligations I have (reversed scoring) (48%).
- I give significant portions of time and money to help other people (18%)...
- I speak out for equality for women and minorities (43%).
- I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people (47%).
- My life is filled with meaning and purpose (66%).
- I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world (reversed scoring) (29%).
- I believe that I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved (reversed scoring) (78%).
- I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious (61%).
- I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my country and throughout the world (50%).
- I try to apply my faith to political and social issues (31%).
- My life is committed to Jesus Christ (75%).
- I talk with other people about my faith (42%).
- My life is filled with stress and anxiety (reversed scoring) (44%).
- I go out of my way to show love to people I meet (45%).
- I have a real sense that God is guiding me (60%).
- I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues (reversed scoring) (54%).

Commitment to God

75% of the youth in Adventist schools believe that their lives are committed to Jesus Christ.

60% of the youth in Adventist schools have a real sense that God is guiding them.

47% feel God's presence in their relationships with other people.

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- I like to worship and pray with others (49%).
- I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony (54%).
- I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation (75%).

Those items labeled "reversed scoring" are stated negatively as far as the concept of faith maturity goes. Thus, when they were calculated into the Mature Faith Scale, the numbers were reversed so that choice number 1 (never true) received the highest rating and vice versa.

On any item a respondent could receive a score of 1 to 7. Responses to the thirty-eight items were averaged, yielding for each person a mature faith score that could range from 1 to 7. A score between 1.00 and 2.99 indicates low faith maturity, a score between 3.00 and 4.99 indicates moderate faith maturity, and a score of 5.00 or above evidences high faith maturity.

The average faith-maturity score for all Adventist youth was 4.44, which is in the moderate range. Faith maturity tended to drop slightly after the sixth grade but to remain relatively stable between grades seven to twelve. About 22% of the sample were in the high-faith-maturity category, with the highest proportion in grade six (29%) and the lowest in grades ten and eleven (20%). While faith maturity is not a complete construct and one might argue that it does not identify

Faith maturity tended to drop slightly after the sixth grade but to remain relatively stable between grades seven to twelve.

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all aspects of faith, it is a beginning.

Types of Faith

Running through the Mature Faith Index are two themes: the vertical theme of having a deep, personal relationship with a loving God and the horizontal theme of translating this personal affirmation into acts of love, mercy, and justice toward others. If we select certain items from the thirty-eight in the full index, it is possible to construct two subscales—one for vertical faith and one for horizontal faith. On these seven-point subscales, Adventist youth averaged 4.8 (or moderate) for vertical faith. Horizontal faith was somewhat lower at 4.0. Our youth seem more likely to relate to God than to their fellow humans.

The scores for these two subscales were split at the median (middle score) to determine whether a given individual could be classified as high (over 4.05) on horizontal faith or high (over 5.26) on vertical faith. Each person could then be classified into one of four faith types as follows:

- (1) *Undeveloped faith*—Low on both vertical and horizontal faith;
- (2) *Vertical faith*—High on vertical but low on horizontal faith;
- (3) *Horizontal faith*—High on horizontal but low on vertical faith ;

Remember these four faith types

- (1) *Undeveloped faith*—Low on both vertical and horizontal faith;
- (2) *Vertical faith*—High on vertical but low on horizontal faith;
- (3) *Horizontal faith*—High on horizontal but low on vertical faith;
- (4) *Integrated faith*—High on both vertical and horizontal faith.

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Initial interest in things spiritual leads to a vertical faith. After establishing a relationship with God, one turns outward, expressing a horizontal faith, sometimes to the detriment of the personal relationship with God that characterized "first love." Finally, as the person matures, both vertical and horizontal faith are present in an integrated faith orientation.

(4) *Integrated faith*—High on both vertical and horizontal faith.

This typology might be viewed in a developmental framework in which faith begins basically undeveloped. Then initial interest in things spiritual leads to a vertical faith. After establishing a relationship with God, one turns outward, expressing a horizontal faith, sometimes to the detriment of the personal relationship with God that characterized "first love." Finally, as the person matures, both vertical and horizontal faith are present in an integrated faith orientation.

These stages might be expected to be observed in someone being converted or renewing their faith life at any age, but we might also expect that they would be reflected in the lifespan of the individual, with the most integrated faith displayed among the older and/or most religiously involved individuals.

The *Valuegenesis* findings are consistent with this thesis as far as the major divisions of life are concerned. Integrated faith was most prevalent among the older respondents, and it increased as the individual's level of involvement in church matters increased. Thus, pastors (77%), principals (68%), and teachers (64%) were far more likely to be represented in the integrated-faith group than were the youth (25%). Parents of students in Adventist schools (50%) fell between. On the other hand, smaller proportions of academy and junior- academy students than of sixth-

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graders manifested integrated faith.

The findings reveal that 43% of all Adventist youth had an undeveloped faith, in which both the vertical and the horizontal dimensions are relatively low, 8% were classified as having vertical faith, 24% possessed horizontal faith, and 25% had reached an integrated faith in which they were high on both dimensions. Any change across age groups, though slight, seems negative. The percentage with undeveloped faith was at a low in grade six (38%), rose to a high in grades eight and nine (45%), and dropped slightly by grade twelve (42%). The percentage with integrated faith ranged from 35% in grade six to 22% in grade eleven with seniors coming back up to 26%.

The proportion of Adventist youth with undeveloped faith (43%) was lower than that of any of the five mainline Protestant denominations mentioned earlier, which ranged from 56% to 68%, though slightly higher than Southern Baptist youth at 40%. Conversely, the 25% with integrated faith was higher than that of any of the mainline churches which ranged from 6% to 13%, but lower than that of the Southern Baptists which placed 30% in that group. The Southern Baptist Convention has rated comparatively well by, in part, placing high emphasis on developing and maintaining effective religious education programs delivered through congregations. None of these six denominations has developed an alternative school

"Religion tends to liberate young adolescents more than to restrict them. In part, this means that young adolescents hold a view of the creator of the universe as benevolent rather than judging and punishing. The more they hold a liberating view of religion, the more likely it is that young adolescents will:

- have a positive attitude toward the church,
- have high self-esteem,
- not be racially prejudiced
- engage in helpful, considerable behavior toward others,
- refrain from drug and alcohol use,
- refrain from antisocial behaviors.

The more horizontal their orientation is, the more likely it is that young adolescents will:

- place high value on world peace, and
- have a value orientation that emphasizes a concern for people."

Peter Benson, Dorothy Williams, Arthur Johnson, *The Quicksilver Years: The Hopes and Fears of Early Adolescence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 122.

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Note

- Compared to mainline Protestantism, the Adventist church seems to be doing quite well in faith development.

Note

- Nevertheless, the fact that more than four out of ten of our adolescents are marked by an undeveloped faith is a cause for concern.

A Point of Concern

- Because persons with undeveloped faith are particularly prone to slip into lifelong church inactivity.

system such as that found among Adventists. This may suggest the need to restudy our congregational religious education program (e.g., Sabbath schools, Pathfinders, youth meetings, outreach activities, etc.).

Compared to mainline Protestantism, the Adventist church seems to be doing quite well in faith development. Nevertheless, the fact that more than four out of ten of our adolescents are marked by an undeveloped faith is a cause for concern, in part because persons with undeveloped faith are particularly prone to slip into lifelong church inactivity.

The Mature Faith "Package"

Our understanding is enhanced when we see the kinds of attitudes and behaviors that accompany mature faith—the life-style package, if you will. We indicate this by using correlations. Since we will also be referring to correlations several other times in this chapter and throughout the other chapters of the book, a brief explanation may be in order for those not familiar with the term as used in the social sciences.

Correlation refers to the "going-togetherness" of two variables. If one variable tends to go up as the second rises (e.g., school grades and intelligence scores), they are said to be positively correlated. If one tends to go down as the second goes up (e.g., body weight and vigorous exercise), they are said to be

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negatively correlated. If no pattern can be discovered in the changes of two variables (e.g., personal income and shoe size), they are said to be not correlated or to have *zero correlation*.

The number indicating the strength of the correlation is called the *coefficient of correlation*. Coefficients may range from -1.00 (perfect negative correlation) through 0.00 to +1.00 (perfect positive correlation). While perfect correlations may be found in the physical sciences, human behavior is so complex and multifaceted that they are never encountered in the social and behavioral sciences. For example, years of research indicate that the correlation between intelligence scores and school grades is about .50 (the plus sign is usually omitted). While intelligence has a strong positive influence on grades, other factors also play a part.

The square of the correlation coefficient reveals the percentage of the variability of the one measure that can be explained by knowing the variability of the other measure. Thus, if intelligence scores and school grades are correlated at .50, then variation in intelligence accounts for 25% (the square of .50) of the variability in school grades.

While scholars disagree as to what constitutes a "strong" correlation, we will use a common designation and consider all coefficients under .20 to be "weak." Coefficients in the .20s and .30s are consid-

Words to Remember

Coefficient of correlation: the number indicating the strength of the correlation.

Square of the correlation coefficient: reveals the percentage of the variability of the one measure that can be explained by knowing the variability of the other measure.

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ered “moderate,” and those of .40 or higher will be regarded as strong. Designations apply to both positive and negative coefficients. We will mention only correlations that are moderate or strong.

Statisticians consider not only the strength of a correlation but also its significance. In this technical usage significance refers to the probability that the relationship could have been discovered in the sample if no correlation existed in the larger population from which the sample was drawn. Since significance is partly a function of sample size, correlation coefficients of .20 or more are highly significant in this study with its large sample. The probability is less than one out of a thousand that the sample correlation could have occurred by chance.

Maturity of faith was positively correlated between .20 and .29 with positive attitudes toward Adventist schools, orthodoxy, perceptions of their congregations as warm and caring, overall satisfaction with Adventist standards, agreement that their families enforce Adventist standards, paying tithe, time spent in church programming, perceptions of a good family environment, perceptions of quality in their teachers, frequency of talks with parents, and self-esteem. It was negatively correlated between -.20 and -.29 with feelings that academies need to modernize, feelings that churches need to modernize, wanting to make one’s own goals and live as one pleases, mate-

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rialism, and at-risk behaviors.

Maturity of faith was correlated between .30 and .39 with endorsement of church standards, altruism, a grace orientation to salvation, time in intergenerational church contact, perceptions of congregational leaders as warm and caring, having religious peers, positive purpose in life, and perceptions of high quality in their family worships. It was correlated between .40 and .49 with having Adventism as a life goal, perceptions of their congregations as having a thinking climate and an accepting climate, denominational loyalty, frequency of personal prayer, and intentions to remain an Adventist at age forty. Correlations in the .50s were found with frequency of devotional behaviors, value of service, and importance of religion. This is quite a package and suggests many fruitful areas in which to minister to our youth. Most of these variables will be discussed either in this chapter or in upcoming ones.

When a variable is correlated with many other variables—called predictors—the total explained variability might well add up to more than 100%. This is because the predictors are also correlated with each other, and therefore, the variability that they explain overlaps to some extent. For example, value of service and frequency of devotional behaviors both explain more than 25% of the variability of mature faith. But because they are also related to each other, they are both explaining some of the same variability.

Another Word to Remember

Predictor: A variable correlated with and presumed to influence the variable under study.

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To determine the unique explanatory power of each predictor, statisticians use a technique called multiple regression analysis. Here all the overlap is removed, and it is possible to determine how much variability each predictor explains uniquely and thus which ones make the greatest contribution when all

Taking all of these relationships together, the most important predictor of mature faith was a scale labeled "Value of Service."

other variables are controlled. We will not bog down these pages with statistical details, but we will mention throughout the coming chapters which variables are the most important predictors of various measures. This information has been gathered from a large set of multiple regression analyses.

Taking all of these relationships together, the most important predictor of mature faith was a scale labeled "Value of Service." This scale (to be discussed in a later chapter) is composed of four items which the youth rated as to their importance: "to spend time helping people," "to help people who are poor or hungry," "to show love to other people," and "to help promote social equality." Apparently, when we are able to help young people accept and live by those values, we foster the development of faith maturity.

The second most important predictor of mature faith was a scale on "Personal Piety." Here youth

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reported the frequency in which they engaged in five devotional practices: prayer, watching or listening to religious programs, reading the Bible, reading Ellen White, and reading religious literature. While the "Value of Service" attitudes encourage the development of horizontal faith, the "Personal Piety" practices enhance vertical faith, and the two together lead to faith maturity. Other important predictors were a grace orientation to salvation, having a purpose in life, and the perception of a thinking climate in the local congregation.

In another set of regressions, variables from the family, the congregation, and the school were combined to determine which ones best predicted a particular measure—in this case, mature faith. We will refer to these here and throughout the coming chapters. In these analyses, separate regressions were performed for grades six to eight and grades nine to twelve.

For the lower grades mature faith was best predicted by perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation, frequency of talking with friends about God, quality of family worship, frequency of family projects to help others, extent to which the family upholds Adventist standards, and quality of the school religious program. For the academy students the same six variables were chosen except that quality of the school religious program was easily number one, and two additional variables were selected: peer reli-

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How important is it to you to attend a local church of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination?

- It is not too important at all. I could just as well attend a church of another denomination (3%).
- It is not too important to me (6%).
- It is somewhat important to me (16%).
- It is important to me (44%).
- It is extremely important to me (31%).

How satisfied are you with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination?

- Very dissatisfied (3%).
- Dissatisfied (5%).
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (18%).
- Satisfied (39%).
- Very satisfied (35%).

giousness and time spent in intergenerational church contact. Mature faith seems to be fostered by quality religious programs in both home and school, working together with family and friends, and serious and open religious discussion.

Commitment and Loyalty

While the presence of a mature faith is significantly related to commitment to the church, other, more direct measures were also included on the research instrument. The Denominational Loyalty Scale combines three questions. The items with the percentages selecting each response are shown in the sidebars on these pages.

Loyalty to Adventism appears to be high. Over 90% gave at least some importance to attending an Adventist church in contrast to that of another faith, three-fourths were satisfied with the Adventist church, and 90% would find another Adventist congregation if they relocated. With a range of 1 to 5 on the three-item scale, the average of all the young people was 4.1, and scores of 4.0 or greater were obtained by 70% to 75% of the students in all grades. A slight decline in these percentages did occur over the grade groups, however.

On multiple regressions using family, congregation, and school variables, the most important predictors of denominational loyalty for students in grades six to

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eight were perceptions of a warm climate in the local congregation, perceived quality of family worship, family enforcement of Adventist standards, number of close friends who are Adventists, frequency of church attendance, and perceptions that teachers and leaders in the local congregation are caring.

For grades nine to twelve the leading predictor was the perception of a thinking climate in the local congregation. All six of the variables from grades six to eight were also included. Another significant predictor was the quality of school religious programs. The climate in the local congregation and the personnel that support that climate seem to be crucial to developing denominational loyalty for, in this sense, all church is local. But the home and the school, through the quality of their religious programming also have an important part to play.

Another commitment measure is the Adventism as a Life Goal Scale with two items. When asked how important certain goals were in their lives, 65% felt it was quite important or extremely important "to live my life according to Adventist standards." The same percentage indicated that it was equally important "to be active in the Adventist church."

The average for the four-point scale was 2.8. While moderately high, these scores were not as positive as those for Denominational Loyalty. Furthermore, they tended to decline with age. While about

If you moved to another city that had many churches from which to choose, would you attend an Adventist church?

- No (1%)
- No, probably not (1%)
- Maybe (8%)
- Yes, probably (22%)
- Yes, absolutely (68%)

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A Key Point

If young people agree that the standards and rules of the church are relevant and reasonable; if they perceive their local congregations to be places that nourish and stimulate their personal development; and if they understand and believe the doctrines of the church; then they are likely to be committed and loyal to the denomination.

79% of the sixth-graders indicated that both goals were quite or extremely important, only about 60% of the academy seniors felt the same way.

Overall, Denominational Loyalty was most strongly predicted by the scores on three other scales: Acceptance of Adventist Standards, a Thinking Church Climate as perceived by the youth, and high Adventist Orthodoxy. These three appear to be so basic that we will devote a later chapter to each. Here we might note how they are intertwined. If young people agree that the standards and rules of the church are relevant and reasonable; if they perceive their local congregations to be places that nourish and stimulate their personal development; and if they understand and believe the doctrines of the church; then they are likely to be committed and loyal to the denomination. This finding suggests a number of directions that our ministry for youth ought to take.

Denominational loyalty was also strongly related to commitment to Adventism as a life goal (.60), and both were correlated in the mid-.50s with the intention to remain an Adventist at age forty. Loyal *now* means loyal in the *future*.

Salience

Salience refers to the importance of religion in one's life and is, therefore, another way of measuring

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commitment. One question was selected to provide an overall view of the place of faith in the lives of our youth. It read: "How important is religious faith in your life?"

- It is not an important influence in my life (2%).
- It has some influence in my life (14%).
- It is important, but other things are also important (35%).
- It is a very important influence in my life (34%).
- It is the most important influence in my life (15%).

Certainly, religion seems to be important to Adventist youth, though not the most important factor in the lives of the majority. On this five-point item the average score was 3.5—halfway between "important" and "very important." Notice that about half selected the two most positive choices. This pattern was relatively stable across the grades. From a high of 53% in grade six, there was a gradual decline to 46% in grade ten, followed by a resurgence to 50% in grade twelve.

Salience was correlated between .20 and .29 with satisfaction with Adventist standards, orthodoxy, perceptions of congregational climate as warm, a grace orientation to salvation, tithe paying, intergenerational church contact, perceived teacher quality, and purpose in life. It was negatively correlated between .20 and .29 with perceptions that academies and churches need to modernize and with materialism.

Key Word to Remember

Salience: refers to the importance of religion in one's life and is, therefore, another way of measuring commitment.

Things that Help Commitment

Grades six to eight:

- Perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation
- Quality of family worship
- Religiousness of peers

Grades nine to twelve:

- Quality of family worship
- Perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation
- Religiousness of peers
- Quality of the school religious program
- Frequency of talking with friends about God
- Family enforcement of Adventist standard
- Number of close friends who are Adventists

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Saliency was correlated between .30 and .39 with frequency of sharing one's faith, endorsement of Adventist standards, perceptions of congregational climate as accepting and thinking, value of service, religious peers, and perceptions of high quality of family worship. It was correlated between .40 and .49 with Adventism as a life goal, frequency of devotional practices, denominational loyalty, and intentions to remain an Adventist at age forty. The correlation with maturity of faith reached .55.

For those in grades six to eight, the most important predictors of saliency were perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation, quality of family worship, and religiousness of peers. In grades nine to twelve, all three of these were included with quality of family worship first. Four other predictors were also significant: quality of the school religious program, frequency of talking with friends about God, family enforcement of Adventist standards, and number of close friends who are Adventists.

Three of these variables have to do with peers. Apparently youth take the cue from their friends when deciding on the role of religion in their lives. But notice that quality of religious programming both in family and school is also important. All of this is supported by the climate in the local congregation to help determine how important religion is in one's life.

Christianity is not merely a commitment to a

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religious faith, however, but to a Person—Jesus Christ. Notice in the sidebar how the youth described that commitment:

More than three-fourths believed they had made a commitment of some sort to Christ, and very few were sure they had not. Most commitments were of the gradual type; only about an eighth had experienced a sudden conversion.

Commitment to Jesus Christ leads naturally to the desire to be a part of His body. Nearly 70% believed that it was important or very important to belong to a church. Only about 10% felt that this was not important.

As we look back over the subject matter of this chapter, we are cheered by the high degree of loyalty to the denomination that has been expressed and by the extent of the commitment to Jesus Christ on the part of Adventist youth. We take some comfort in noting that Adventist young people evidence more development toward faith maturity than do those in leading Protestant churches, but we quickly remind ourselves that we must look at the standard set by Jesus and not that of other faulty humans.

We find reason for concern in the fact that our adolescents are only moderate in their faith maturity and that nearly half possess a faith that must be regarded as undeveloped. We are especially troubled that indices of faith and commitment have a tendency

Valuegenesis Report on Commitment

- I am not committed to Christ (2%).
- I am not sure if I am committed to Christ (21%).
- I committed my life to Christ at a specific moment (13%).
- My commitment to Christ developed gradually over a period of time (38%).
- I've been committed to Christ since I was a young child (26%).

What can your family or local church do to help youth in their commitments to Jesus?

Be creative in the space below. List seven activities which you now believe would help establish commitment to Jesus.

A.
B.
C.
D.
E.
F.
G.

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to decline between the sixth and twelfth grades because we would expect to see an increase as a result of our extensive program of Christian education and nurture.

Finally, we are challenged to find ways to transmit values of service to others and to encourage devotional habits among our youth. We need new means of making the standards of the church relevant to the rising generation, and we must develop a more open climate in our congregations that will encourage the exploration of faith questions. We must also seek to make our historical doctrines come alive for twentieth-century teenagers. To this latter subject we now turn our attention.

Chapter 5 To Believe Or Not To Believe

Sociologists of religion tell us that a characteristic of all religions—in common with all other social groups—is that they invariably include or imply a body of beliefs. As adherents to a faith system attempt to understand ultimate reality and to deal with their experiences with the sacred and the supernatural, they develop explanations, work out rationales, and discover “truths” that are eventually systematized into a corpus of official teachings.

The complexity of these belief systems varies greatly among religions. In tribal societies, they may never be formally codified but held as taken-for-granted realities and passed along from generation to generation. Major world religions, on the other hand,

Orthodox Beliefs

To discover that religion is or is not important provides one piece of information, but if religion is significant, then the content of what is believed is especially important. *Valuegenesis* discovered some helpful information in this area of concern.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always put a high premium on the belief component of religion. From its very beginnings its founders searched diligently for "truth," and many Adventist doctrines are the result of a careful arrangement and interpretation of multitudinous Scriptural passages.

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all have their sacred books that provide the basis for determining the beliefs that each group holds. In a religion such as Christianity the Bible provides a common ground of belief, but scholars utilize it as a starting point from which to develop intricate theologies and produce systematic doctrines that fill volumes.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always put a high premium on the belief component of religion. From its very beginnings its founders searched diligently for "truth," and many Adventist doctrines are the result of a careful arrangement and interpretation of multitudinous Scriptural passages. Some teachings are linked to detailed interpretation of Biblical prophecies. While major points are fairly straightforward, the chances are high that the ordinary members on the street, and even those educated in the parochial school system, do not comprehend all the details of Adventist doctrines and could not give a cogent defense of them.

And yet, belief is important. While intellectual understanding and assent alone do not make one a Seventh-day Adventist Christian (according to James 2:19, the devils believe and tremble), yet belief is basic, for all principled behavior proceeds from right understanding. In a very real sense, we are what we think.

Thus, it is of tremendous importance that the next generation of Adventists understands and embraces the "truth" as we see it. If the church of tomorrow does

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not "buy into" this message, Adventism trembles on the brink of extinction, for if we cease to believe, we will soon cease to behave.

Adventist Youth and Basic Doctrines

With this in mind, a section to measure belief in Adventist historical teachings, or orthodoxy, was included on the *Valuegenesis* questionnaire. The youth were presented with ten fundamental doctrinal statements. Six responses to each were possible as follows: "I have never heard of this," "I definitely do not believe this," "I am uncertain but lean toward not believing," "I am uncertain whether or not I believe this," "I am uncertain but lean toward believing," or "I definitely believe this." For each statement the percentage that definitely believed is listed in the sidebar.

Four of the key doctrines—the second coming of Christ, the perpetuity of the ten commandments, the Sabbath, and the state of the dead—were definitely believed by around 90% of the youth. Since these are basic to the essence of Adventism, it appears that the church will continue to survive, although the church of tomorrow may be somewhat different than the one of yesterday. Nearly as many (83%) also believed in the theological underpinnings of the health message.

The other five teachings received much less support, with at least a third not having been willing to say they

Adventist Beliefs

- The investigative or pre-Advent judgment in heaven began in 1844 (45%).
- Ellen G. White fulfilled Bible predictions that God would speak through the gift of prophecy in the last days (53%).
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ (61%).
- The wicked will not burn forever but will be totally destroyed (65%).
- God created the world in six 24-hour days (67%).
- The body is a temple of God, and we are responsible in every area of life for its care (83%).
- When people die, they remain in the grave until the resurrection (89%).
- Jesus will come back to earth again and take the righteous to heaven (91%).
- The Ten Commandments still apply to us today (91%).
- The true Sabbath is the seventh day—Saturday (91%).

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One reason why young children may not understand the doctrines of the church may be their inability to think abstractly. Think about this quotation.

“As their ability to think abstractly increases, young people begin to ponder the ‘reasonableness’ of things and to try to discover for themselves what is true. This change in abilities generally presents a challenge to the belief, often accepted uncritically in childhood, that a divine, unseen force acts in the world. Faith meets reason, and conflict occurs.”

The Quicksilver Years,
p. 117.

definitely believed. This is not to say that they disbelieved the doctrines. Most were simply uncertain. As pointed out in chapter 2 and alluded to above, it may be that some youth, especially the younger ones, simply did not understand the teachings enough to feel sure about their belief in them.

The doctrine that fared the best in this latter group was that of the creation of the world in one literal week as described in the first chapter of Genesis. Not only did two-thirds definitely believe, but an additional 18%, though uncertain, leaned toward believing. Less than 8% either definitely did not believe or leaned toward not believing. Still, this doctrine does not depend on complicated “proofs” or intricate prophetic interpretations. It rests upon the most-obvious reading of one Biblical chapter, and children much younger than sixth-graders are thoroughly instructed in it in both the Sabbath schools and the regular educational system. Thus the finding that one-third of the young people did not definitely believe in the six-day creation may indicate confusion resulting from the influence of adults who have come to question our historical stance. We might be tempted to conjecture that exposure to the teachings of evolution by those attending public schools could account for some of this uncertainty, except that the percentage of those who definitely believed was slightly (but not significantly) higher for those in public schools (68.4%) than for those in

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Adventist schools (66.7%).

The doctrine of the complete annihilation of the wicked was definitely believed by 65%, just slightly less than for a six-day creation. The pattern of uncertainty was also very similar. Why do 35% of Adventist youth question this doctrine and 4% disbelieve it altogether? This seems somewhat puzzling since no current denominational controversies have swirled around this issue.

Moving down the list, we come to the teaching on the true church where only 61% definitely believed. Certainly, modern North American Adventists have shown a tendency to shy away from exclusive claims to legitimacy believing that such claims sound pompous and that they are not in the spirit of tolerance and good will prized in pluralistic societies. However, 22%, the second largest category, leaned toward believing, and only 2% definitely did not believe. Adventist young people still have faith in the church, but a substantial minority seem to share the reluctance of their elders to assert that they are the sole possessors of the “truth.”

More uncertainty appeared concerning the role of Ellen White where only a little over half (53%) believed that she manifested the gift of prophecy in the last days. It’s important to note that only about 1% definitely did not believe in her gift, but uncertainty of various shades ran high at 46%. It seems fair to assume that the youth have been somewhat unsettled

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by the controversies of the last decade over the authority of Ellen White, her use of sources, and the fracturing of what had come to be, in the minds of many members, a type of verbal inspiration for her writings. The church needs to focus on new ways to present a defensible and positive view of Ellen White to the rising generation.

The doctrine that took the worst beating was the investigative judgment. It was the only teaching that was definitely believed by less than a majority (45%). Still only 3% definitely disbelieved, but about a fourth were completely uncertain, and 22% were uncertain but leaned toward believing.

Such confusion may reflect the sanctuary controversies which emerge within the denomination from time to time and which had their most recent airing in the early 1980s. It is certainly possible that many Adventist adults are confused in this area, and the confusion has been transmitted to their children. On the other hand, as already noted, the uncertainty may reflect lack of understanding. The doctrine is a complex one that requires the building of a line of proof using assorted passages from various parts of the Bible. Less-educated adult members and new converts probably would have a difficult time giving "a reason for their faith" on this teaching. It is highly likely that the youth, especially the younger ones, do not comprehend it. This may be seen by the fact that

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while only 36% of those in grade six definitely believed, the figure rose to 56% in grade twelve.

An Adventist Orthodoxy Scale

The ten doctrinal items were recoded into a five-point scale by dropping the response "I have never heard of this." Adventist youth scored quite high on orthodoxy with an average of 4.6 out of a possible high of 5.0. As noted in chapter 2, the commitment of our adolescents to the basic tenets of Adventism is one of the reasons for celebration uncovered by the *Valuegenesis* study. Furthermore, orthodoxy was one of the very few measures of commitment to increase with age groups. Averages rose from 4.44 in grade six to 4.62 in grade twelve.

Yet, reasons for concern remain. One is that not all doctrines were affirmed equally. While some were very high, others were only moderate. We need to ask if we are failing to transmit the historical Adventist understandings of creation, the punishment of the wicked, the true church, the gift of prophecy, and the pre-Advent judgment.

A second reason revolves around a comparison between the youth in Adventist schools and those in public schools. We would naturally expect, after all the instructional effort we have invested, that students in denominational schools would be much more cer-

How orthodox is orthodox?

"Young adolescents' religion must integrate new symbols with each new age. This is an established sociological fact. For faith to be real, the symbols that generate meaning and give excitement to one's religious life must be renewed and adapted to other meaningful symbols that are being learned and used. This means that early youth's religious life will be incorporating new symbols and new approaches, with new forms that will renew the old beliefs, forms, and symbols of the previous generation."

V. Bailey Gillespie, *The Experience of Faith* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988), p 136.

Regarding the Adventist Orthodoxy Scale:

For all practical purposes, students in Adventist schools and Adventist youth in public schools are the same.

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tain of their faith than those who have not had those advantages. It doesn't quite work that way. The average score on the Adventist Orthodoxy Scale for those in our system was 4.56; for those in public schools it was 4.52. While we usually round to one decimal place, here we give two so that the smallness of the difference can be seen. For all practical purposes, students in the two systems are the same.

On individual items, the students in Adventist schools had greater percentages who definitely believed in the Second Advent (91% to 84%), the Sabbath (91% to 86%), the state of the dead (89% to 83%), and the health message (83% to 76%). No significant differences were found between the Adventist school and the public school students on the ten commandments, creation, Ellen White, the true church, and the investigative judgment. While students in our schools fared well overall, it seems that they should have demonstrated a marked superiority. We must be somewhat cautious in making interpretations here, however, since it is likely that the public school sample may represent "the cream of the crop." This caution will be developed more fully in chapter 14.

In the same set as the ten doctrinal items and using the same response format, but not included as part of the Orthodoxy Scale, was the statement: "Only Seventh-day Adventists will be saved." Obviously, this is not official church doctrine, but one who had only a

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superficial exposure to Adventist teachings might conclude that we do believe it (and maybe some do). Could this be a trick question? If so, the youth did not fail the test. Less than 2% definitely believed it to be true, and only 3% even leaned that way. On the other hand, 81% definitely did not believe it. Even though some of these teenagers may lack complete understanding of all the ins and outs of church doctrine, they are not easily fooled on something like this. To me, this is encouraging.

The ten-item Adventist Orthodoxy Scale was found to be significantly correlated with a number of other attitudes. It was correlated between .20 and .29 with positive attitudes toward Adventist schools, frequency of devotional practices, endorsement of standards on substance abuse, belief in the inspiration of the Bible, frequency of worship attendance, maturity of faith, vertical faith, salience of religion, perceptions of their family as enforcing church standards strictly, tithing, and perceptions of their congregations as having an accepting climate. Negative correlations of the same strength were found with wanting to make one's own rules and live as one pleases and with at-risk behaviors.

Orthodoxy was correlated between .30 and .39 with holding Adventism as a life goal, overall endorsement of church standards, belief in the inspiration of Ellen White, a grace orientation to salvation,

Adventist orthodoxy is related to the following:

1. Positive attitude toward Adventist schools
2. Frequency of devotional practices
3. Endorsement of standards on substance abuse
4. Belief in the inspiration of the Bible
5. Frequency of worship attendance
6. Maturity of faith
7. Vertical Faith
8. Salience of religion
9. Perceptions of their family as enforcing church standards strictly
10. Tithing
11. Perceptions of their congregations as having an accepting climate

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Most important predictors of orthodoxy in grades six to eight:

- Extent to which the family enforces church standards,
- Perceptions of a warm climate in the congregation.

Most important predictors of orthodoxy in grades nine to twelve:

- Extent to which the family enforces church standards,
- Quality of the school religion program,
- Number of close friends who are Adventist,
- Quality of family worship,
- Perceptions of warmth and caring in congregational leaders and teachers,
- Frequency of church attendance.

and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was correlated .42 with denominational loyalty. Thus, the importance of right belief is amply demonstrated.

The multiple regression analyses reveal that the most important predictors of orthodoxy in grades six to eight were the extent to which the family enforces church standards and perceptions of a warm climate in the congregation. For grades nine to twelve the chief predictor was also the extent to which the family enforces church standards, followed by the quality of the school religion program, the number of close friends who are Adventists, the quality of family worship, perceptions of warmth and caring in congregational leaders and teachers, and frequency of church attendance. Orthodoxy is evidently not merely a question of proper knowledge. It is also mediated through relationships.

Beliefs about Biblical Inspiration

While not part of the Adventist Orthodoxy Scale and using a different format, two other items are important in understanding the belief system of Adventist youth. They attempt to elicit the perceptions the young people hold concerning the inspiration of the Bible and of Ellen G. White.

The first item gives five different descriptions of the Bible and requests respondents to indicate the one that

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is closest to their understanding of what the Bible is. Here are the descriptions with the percentages that chose each one.

- The Bible contains no more truth or wisdom than do the religious books of other world religions (1%).
- The Bible is the work of people who collected stories which had been created to explain the mysteries of life. It contains a great deal of wisdom about the human experience (3%).
- The Bible is the work of people who genuinely loved God and who wanted to share their understanding of God's activity in the world (14%).
- The Bible is the work of people who were inspired by God and who presented God's message in terms of their own place and time (65%).
- The Bible is the work of people who copied what God told them word for word and who wrote without being influenced by their own place and time (17%).

The fourth position seems to be the closest to mainstream Adventism for it acknowledges both divine inspiration and the integrity of the human authors. The classic statement is from Ellen White: "It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The

An interesting thing to consider regarding the claim of truth and authority.

"Adolescents experience a variety of consequences resulting from the 'faith and reason' conflict that occurs during adolescence. Some permanently abandon the faith. Some temporarily enter a period of doubt and questioning out of which eventually springs a deeper conviction. And some never allow the conflict to impinge upon the faith. No researcher has yet explored these evolutions far enough to define how the church and family environments influence the paths youth take as they struggle with the claim of truth and authority."

—Peter Benson, Ph.D.,
Search Institute

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A significant Ellen G. White quotation about authority:

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God"
(Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 21).

divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God" (Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 21).

Given the fact that theological sophistication is hardly expected in adolescents, we may be pleased (and perhaps a bit surprised) to find that nearly two-thirds chose the orthodox position. The first two statements discount divine intervention entirely, but only 4% selected either of them. The third position represents a more theologically liberal view of inspiration. In the divine-human tension it puts heavier weight on the human side. The 14% who chose it need a higher view of inspiration; they need to understand that in Scripture they are hearing the will of God Himself.

Perhaps most disturbing is the finding that 17%, the second largest proportion, selected the fifth position. It shifts the balance to the divine side and removes all human traces from the Book. The biggest problem here is that the Bible no longer contains timeless principles that can be applied to situations in any era or culture. Rather, it becomes locked in the culture in which it was given, inflexible, and unable to address contemporary situations and problems. The church faces the task of helping nearly a third of its youth understand what the Bible really is and how to use it in the time and place in which they live. Incidentally, students in Adventist schools were somewhat more

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likely to choose the fourth position than were those in public schools (65% to 60%) and somewhat less likely to select the dictation view (17% to 20%).

Understanding Ellen White

Considering the wide influence that Ellen White played in the founding and early growth of Adventism and the part she continues to play through her writings, it would seem important that the new generation should not only believe in her but also understand her place in the Advent movement. A question was prepared that largely paralleled the one on the inspiration of the Bible.

First of all, 180 respondents claimed that they did not know who Ellen White was, and another 370 failed to answer the question. These were dropped from the analysis, and the percentages that selected each of the five choices were based on the remaining 10,548 subjects.

- Ellen White's writings contain no more truth or wisdom than do the religious works written by leaders of other denominations (3%).
- Ellen White was an individual who created stories of supernatural guidance in order to explain the mysteries of life. Her writings contain a great deal of wisdom about the human experience (4%).
- Ellen White genuinely loved God and wrote in order

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How do you feel about Ellen G. White? Here are some *Valuegenesis* questions we did not have room on our questionnaire to ask.

Answer the following questions honestly. Give yourself a point for every time you answer positively.

___ Ellen G. White should have the status of a Bible prophet like Jonah, Paul, or Moses.

___ I think Adventists spend too much time quoting Ellen G. White.

___ Ellen G. White provides a devotional approach to understanding God.

___ I do not believe that Ellen G. White serves a useful purpose for the Adventist church any longer.

___ Ellen G. White provides insight into Biblical and theological concepts unlike anyone else I have ever read.

to share her understanding of God's activity in the world (19%).

- Ellen White was inspired by God and presented God's message in terms of her own place and time (61%).

- Ellen White copied what God told her word for word, and wrote without being influenced by her own place and time (13%).

It is easy to see the parallels with the previous question. Again, the fourth position is the one that informed Adventists have traditionally held. "Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 37).

The first two views discount any divine inspiration in Ellen White's work, the third is sympathetic but more humanistic, and the fifth accepts the dictation theory of inspiration. While the distribution of percentages resembles that of the Bible question, it reveals a somewhat more skeptical attitude. Fewer chose the orthodox position (61% to 65%) and the dictation view (13% to 17%) than they did on the inspiration of the Bible. These differences were transferred to the skeptical and the humanistic positions. However, though the youth were not quite as likely to accept the

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inspiration of Ellen White as of the Bible, the differences were not large. It is interesting to note that those in Adventist schools were significantly more likely to hold the orthodox view than those in public schools were (64% to 61%).

Holding the dictation concept makes it much more likely that one's faith in Ellen White as the messenger of God will collapse when evidence is uncovered that reveals how she used the writings of others as source material. The church needs to give attention to fresh methods of teaching the gift of prophecy to its youth that will allow its credibility to be sustained through the most vigorous research.

Indeed, on all our fundamental beliefs we cannot afford to take our young people for granted. These "pillars of the faith" were hammered out with much prayer and Bible study by our pioneers. They had burning relevance for those who had staked their lives on them. But generations pass, and the children have not had the personal experience of the fathers or mothers in the faith. The doctrines need to be created afresh in each new generation. It is not enough that we can assemble and organize the necessary "proof texts." The teachings must address the needs and problems of youth today in ways that respond to the contemporary situation. The church needs to give its attention to creative new ways to package and deliver the timeless principles embodied in its message. This process may

The doctrines need to be created afresh in each new generation. It is not enough that we can assemble and organize the necessary "proof texts." The teachings must address the needs and problems of youth today in ways that respond to the contemporary situation.

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be difficult and complex, but just beginning the process of relearning faith is crucial. One quality of faith-life is that of re-creating beliefs anew. This is a task that can be exciting and rewarding as together youth and adults begin with their personal experience trying to understand their faith.

Chapter 6

Split Personalities

I was in eighth grade in our small church school when the annual Ingathering field day rolled around. Our pastor drove some of us to our territory. Seated with two other pupils in the rear of his car, I listened as the pastor talked to his front-seat passenger, an elderly female member of our congregation. He was describing an encounter he had just had with a man who was not too sympathetic with our work and who, apparently, had been trying to put the pastor on the spot.

“So he said to me: ‘Tell me then, just what do we have to do to be saved?’” Sitting there, taking it all in, I immediately knew the answer. Oh, I didn’t speak out. This was adult conversation, and I was only thirteen years old. But before the pastor could continue, I gave

Goals of this chapter:

1. To reaffirm the Adventist theological position that salvation comes solely on the basis of grace through faith.
2. To identify the areas where youth are confused regarding grace and law.
3. To suggest ways in which the home, school, and church can assist in emphasizing a grace orientation in all that is done for and with youth.

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the answer mentally. "You've got to keep the ten commandments."

Imagine my surprise when the pastor continued: "I told him, 'You must put your faith in the blood of Jesus.'" I cannot remember anything else about that field trip—how much I raised, whether anyone was harsh with me, even whether the experience was pleasant or not. But I have often mused about that brief conversation. And I came to realize that in spite of all that my Sabbath-school teachers, my pastor, and my church-school teacher had done to direct me in the path of faith, I had entered adolescence as a legalist. When I thought of being saved, I thought of it in terms of behavior.

Four years later a most wonderful opportunity came my way. At our annual conference camp meeting, I was able to hear Taylor G. Bunch present the message of righteousness by grace through faith every morning and evening throughout the entire week. He made it so plain and practical. I didn't miss a meeting. That camp meeting remains one of the most memorable in my experience. I began the process of understanding salvation by grace through faith alone.

Something about Adventism seems to make it likely that young people growing up within its environs perceive salvation in terms of behaviors, good and bad. Don't misunderstand. We have a clear teaching on salvation by grace alone through faith. Obedience

*God always saves.
This salvation is
apart from human
contribution and
human manipulation.
Salvation by
grace alone
through faith
suggests that God
acts in behalf of
humankind.
Salvation comes
from God.*

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and responsibility, we teach, are the result of faith and not its source. And yet, with the emphasis on the significance of the law and with our concerns for the high standards of Christian living, Adventists have a very difficult time shaking the notion that we must somehow deserve our salvation. Accepting that salvation is a complete gift is often difficult to communicate to youth.

Historically, we could look at the struggle of the 1888 General Conference Session. Leaders of the denomination, good and faithful men, were afraid the new emphasis on righteousness by faith would blur the distinctiveness of the unique Adventist message. And in spite of Waggoner, Jones, Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, and a century of study, preaching, and publication, we haven't gotten it all straight yet. How do I know?

We recently did a survey of a national sample of adult Adventist members. One of the statements with which they could agree or disagree was: "A person's standing before God is based on his/her obedience to God's law." Nearly two-thirds of this representative sample (65%) agreed with this statement, and about half (51%) strongly agreed. Furthermore, those who agreed with traditional statements of Adventist teachings were most likely also to agree with this one. That is, the more orthodox a member, the more likely the same member was to endorse "works" righteous-

A useful statistic about the following statement regarding law orientation:

"A person's standing before God is based on his/her obedience to God's law."

- Nearly two-thirds of a national sample of adult Adventist members (65%) agreed with this statement, and about half (51%) strongly agreed.

Not surprisingly, our adolescents showed difficulties in resolving the perpetual tension between "saved by grace" and "judged by our works." Their general tendency was to support both law and grace as means of salvation. As they struggled to affirm both streams of thought imbibed from their Christian nurture, they exhibited split personalities, unable to harmonize logical opposites.

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ness. Or to take another example, note this letter from one of our young correspondents: "A few weeks ago I sat in an adult Sabbath school class and was shocked at some of the comments made by them. Their philosophies (or many of them, anyway) hinted at salvation by works—not faith. Thinking about that since then and recalling other incidents, I've come to the conclusion that most of those people don't even realize what they've been saying and doing. I can see how it would confuse new church members." Now, if the adults have not quite figured it out, what can we expect of the youth. Not surprisingly, our adolescents showed difficulties in resolving the perpetual tension between "saved by grace" and "judged by our works." Their general tendency was to support both law and grace as means of salvation. As they struggled to affirm both streams of thought imbibed from their Christian nurture, they exhibited split personalities, unable to harmonize logical opposites. Let us examine the details.

Saved by Grace

Several items probed an understanding of grace. For both grace and law, a five-point response format was employed ranging from "definitely disagree" to "definitely agree." For ease of interpretation we have combined the two "disagree" and the two "agree" categories. The extent to which the percentages fail to

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total 100% represents the group selecting, "I'm not sure."

- I know that God loves me no matter what I do. (1% disagree; 95% agree)
- I am loved by God even when I sin. (2% disagree; 94% agree)
- There is nothing I can do to earn salvation (58% disagree; 29% agree)

Notice what is happening in the above responses.

The young people were nearly unanimous in affirming their belief that God's love is unconditional. They believed that nothing they could do would change God's gracious intentions toward them. But when it comes to following through to the logical outcome of that belief—that their salvation is totally in God's hands—most could not make the steps. Twice as many felt that they must contribute something to the redemption process as felt that God would provide everything needed. Adventist schooling makes only minor differences in understanding. While those in our schools were four percentage points more likely to agree with the third statement (29% to 25%) than those in public schools, they were also one percentage point more likely to disagree with it. Greater proportions of the public-school students were uncertain.

Still, Adventist youth were more likely to adopt a grace orientation, which emphasizes the unconditional love of God and salvation as an unearned gift, than a

Young people are unanimous in affirming their belief that:

- God's love is unconditional.
- Nothing can change God's gracious intentions toward them.

BUT

Young people have trouble understanding what this means:

- Only 29% agree that there is nothing they can do to earn salvation.

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law orientation. On the five-point Grace Orientation Scale they averaged 4.8 (only the first two items were included) compared with only 3.6 on the Law Orientation Scale. Also, agreement with "grace" items tended to rise somewhat from the sixth to the eighth grade and then remain stable throughout academy. Thus, belief in the unconditional love of God—so basic to an understanding of the Christian faith—is one factor that does not decrease as the youth mature.

And grace keeps good company. The Grace Orientation Scale was correlated between .20 and .29 with holding Adventism as a life goal, frequency of devotional behaviors, endorsement of Adventist standards, frequency of personal prayer, importance of religion (salience), perceptions of their families as loving and accepting, perceptions of their church leaders and teachers as warm and caring, perceptions of an accepting climate in their congregations, perceptions of high quality in their family worships, and intentions to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was negatively correlated at -.20 with at-risk behavior.

A grace orientation was correlated between .30 and .39 with Adventist orthodoxy, denominational loyalty, vertical faith, and overall faith maturity. Obviously, it is an orientation that ought to be fostered.

Multiple regression analysis was employed to identify the most powerful predictors of a grace orientation to salvation. For grades six to eight they were

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perceptions of a climate of warmth in the local congregation and the presence of caring teachers in the school. It seems that we learn to understand and accept grace through interpersonal relationships with graceful people.

For grades nine through twelve a grace orientation to salvation was best predicted by perceptions that congregational teachers and leaders were caring, quality of family worship, number of close friends who are Adventists, and religiousness of peers. Three of these variables are relational on the face of it, and personal interaction might well be what makes family worship a quality experience. If we wish to communicate an understanding of God's grace, we will have to work at building warm and supportive relationships with our youth within the family, the congregation, and the school.

Prisoners under the Law

In spite of that good news, youth still struggle with legalism in a surprising way. Note the responses to items on the Law Orientation Scale noted in the sidebar at the right:

On each of these items, the more one agrees, the more one is oriented toward law. In every case more youth agreed than disagreed, and on two items a substantial majority of young people agreed. Adven-

Helpful Statistics

- I know that to be saved I have to live by God's rules. (9% disagree; 83% agree)
- The more I follow Adventist standards and practices, the more likely it is that I will be saved. (30% disagree; 47% agree)
- The way to be accepted by God is to try sincerely to live a good life. (22% disagree; 61% agree)
- The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living. (23% disagree; 44% agree)

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Unfortunately, not much difference exists on the Law Orientation Scale between those in our schools and those in public schools.

tist youth have grown up with a constant emphasis on the necessity of obedience to the law and with admonitions to hold up the standards ringing in their ears. The problem is that the youth—understandably—have a tendency to connect any call to holy living with their salvation so that being saved is the result of and the reward for right behavior. Thus, they averaged 3.6 on a five-point scale to measure orientation towards good works as the basis of salvation. This shows a clear lack of understanding of the complete work of salvation accomplished by Christ.

The youth may be slowly sorting it out, however. A law orientation tended to decrease over the grade groups. Those in sixth grade averaged 3.9 while those in twelfth grade had dropped to 3.4. Still high, but progress.

Unfortunately, not much difference exists on the Law Orientation Scale between those in our schools and those in public schools. The public school students were only .11 of a point higher.

Usually, no significant differences were found on the individual items either. On the four statements given above, students in the two systems were separated by only one percentage point on the first, two points on the second, and three points on the third. In each case the public school group was slightly more likely to agree. Only on the statement "The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right

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living," were the public school students significantly more likely to agree (51% to 44%). Adventist education may be beginning to make some impact. But our over emphasis on behavior may be clouding the otherwise clear skies of grace for the youth of the church.

Dangers of Law Orientation

The assertion that Adventist adolescents (and many adults) are likely to believe in "righteousness by works" does not rest simply on the *Valuegenesis* study. Parallel research, some of which has been mentioned, supports this finding. Teenagers seem obsessed with the thought that somehow they must merit their salvation, and it's almost impossible to dislodge the notion from their thinking.

The biggest problem is that such a concept often leads them to become discouraged and give up. "Look," they say, "I can't seem to measure up, no matter how hard I try. Why keep on struggling and suffering defeat when I'm only going to burn anyway? I might as well have a little fun in this life, at least." For these young people grace and love may be okay, but the bottom line is performance.

One young woman's story typifies this attitude. She was a student of mine in academy and I baptized her. She seemed dedicated and, following college, served on the staff of another academy. But various

What is a "Grace Orientation?"

"I'm speaking about a focus on the love, promise and presence of Jesus Christ that inspires youth to internalize the values and lifestyles associated with a Christian life."

"The overwhelming evidence of research is that attempts to control youth by rules and regulations, that is a restrictive approach, inclines some youth to reject the values being forced upon them."

— Merton Strommen,
Founder of Search Institute

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disappointments influenced her to leave the church in her mid-twenties. We continue to correspond. Here is how she put her feelings in one letter:

"It's Friday night, and I was just thinking how when God said the road was narrow, He really meant narrow. People who live what they preach and don't judge those who don't are almost nonexistent.

"He doesn't care, you know. He expects the impossible from us and then tells us we'll burn for not being obedient and loving Him. 'Faith,' He tells us, 'have faith.' Well, I know He's there. I know, but I have to wonder what kind of being He is. Oh, but of course, it's all our fault if we aren't saved. We didn't love Him enough; we weren't obedient enough; we didn't trust enough. Then the Adventist church will say, 'It's a free gift. You don't have to do anything; just give your life to Him.' Well, that's a whole h... of a lot, especially when it doesn't change who you are at all.

"And then, if you're an Adventist, you can get so caught up in the little details of jewelry and meat that you fail to see the bigger ones such as the fact that we're all the same, Adventist or not. They aren't above me or my family or the people I work with just because they're Adventists. They aren't any better, and from what I've seen, they're a whole lot worse because they're phony and two-faced and uncaring. You know that I'm not criticizing you. You are an exception."

In a recent Canadian Study the following facts were established:

"If a parent, teacher, pastor or adult uses excessive control, uses punitive measures, or is over-strict, the likelihood is greater that their youth will

- reject traditional moral standards,
- become involved in rebellious behavior,
- reject the faith of the church, and
- become more self-oriented.

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I included those last two sentences only to show that this letter was not a personal vendetta but represented a more general attitude. It is possible to conclude at least two things. This young woman has experienced deep pain over the failure of her Christian experience, and she has already heard the "right" words. Indeed, I'm sure that many readers would like to speak comfort to her; to give her the real Gospel; to share a picture of a God who is not like the one in her mental representations.

The point is, she is not alone—or even rare. Thousands of the young people in the *Valuegenesis* study may be heading in the same direction as can be inferred from the research findings. Unless we can find a way to break through; to make a change, the rate of discouragement and dropout could be staggering.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church today—and there are many—may well be to communicate a Gospel of hope to its members, especially the younger ones. As long as religion remains a frustrating, failure-ridden, self-defeating, unhappy experience, people are going to walk away from it. Somehow, we must alter that picture.

Not that we should throw out the law or lower true Biblical standards. We'll have more to say about the "fruits of faith" in subsequent chapters. But our appropriate emphasis on these things does predispose

Our data on this are conclusive. Youth of overly strict homes and schools tend to become moral rebels, rejecting the very values adults are trying to impose on them.

By way of contrast, adults who emphasize commitment to Christ, His love, His promise, His empowering presence and forgiveness will find a larger number of their youth

- accepting the faith of church,
- evidencing higher self-esteem,,
- showing a more caring spirit,
- becoming involved in service,
- being hopeful about the future, and
- excelling academically.

***Our challenge:
To make salva-
tion by grace
alone, by faith in
Jesus, without
“one thread
of human
devising.”***

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youth to regard them as the ground of salvation, and we will have to work extra hard to correct this misunderstanding.

Ellen White once wrote that the religion of Christ “in no way incapacitates you for the enjoyment of any real happiness; it is not designed to lessen your interest in life, or to make you indifferent to the claims of friends and society. It does not mantle the life in sackcloth; it is not expressed in deep-drawn sighs and groans. No, no; those who in everything make God first and last and best, are the happiest people in the world. Smiles and sunshine are not banished from their countenance” (*Messages to Young People*, p. 38).

Sound beautiful? It is. But many of our youth do not believe it. Oh, they may accept it in theory, but they cannot grasp it experientially. That’s our challenge. To make salvation by grace alone, by faith in Jesus, without “one thread of human devising” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 311), a reality in the lives of Adventist young people.

Chapter 7

Introspection Inspection

He sat in my office, telling me his story. At one time he had been a spiritual leader in the academy. I was his Bible teacher, and he often stopped by my office to discuss religious material he had been reading. We became fast friends.

After academy our ways separated. In college he became enamored with the teachings of a professor who presented righteousness by faith as composed of justification alone. The work of salvation was completely objective—removed from our experience. It had to do only with the cross; nothing with daily living.

He married an academy classmate, also a student of mine. I had not seen either of them for a half dozen

***“By their fruit you
will recognize
them.” (Matthew
7:16 NIV)***

***“Now it is time to
inspect the fruit.”***

Faith always responds. We have by-products of grace which are evidenced in our lives.

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years or so, but now, here they were in the community where I lived. She came to me first, seeking help.

It was a sad story. He had neglected her and been completely inattentive to her needs. Though their budget was tight, he spent freely for his personal wants even though she struggled to make her earnings cover the rapidly increasing bills. He had taken to drinking. To cap it all off, he and a buddy had been stopped by the police while driving "under the influence" and had been thrown in jail. She had had to bail him out the next morning.

Now I was hearing his side of the story. He had made some mistakes but was positive about the future. He was particularly sustained by his religion. Remembering what his professor had told him about righteousness by faith, he recalled: "Not for a moment, even while drunk in that dismal jail cell, did I forget that I was in right standing with God."

Few of us understand righteousness by grace through faith in such a complete sense. One way we test the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives is by the presence of the fruits of God. We remember that Jesus said: "By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matthew 7:16 NIV). In the last chapter we explored understandings of grace as the sole means of salvation. Now it is time to inspect the fruit. Faith always responds. We have by-products of grace which are evidenced in our lives. We will look at things like

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church attendance and activity, devotional practices, and witnessing.

Going to Church

First of all, we might note that 82% of our sample were baptized members of the church. The other 18% counted themselves as Adventists but had not yet taken that formal step. The peak age for baptism was twelve years of age, with nearly 19% being immersed then, followed by those who were eleven with 14%. About 18% were younger than ten at the time of their baptism, and 9% were older than thirteen.

An important behavior which expresses religious commitment is the frequency with which one attends the worship service. Here is the pattern:

Never	2%
Less than once a month	4%
About once a month	3%
Two or three times a month	10%
About once a week	64%
Several times a week	17%

Attendance was high with over 80% going at least weekly. That's better than the average adult rate for the North American Division, but we can not be sure that all of this was voluntary since our sample was school-related and many were in boarding school situations.

A Summary Portrait of Adventist Youth and Baptism:

- 82% were baptized members.
- 18% saw themselves as Adventists.
- 12 years of age is the peak age for baptism.
- 19% baptized when they were 12 years old.
- 14% were 11 years of age when baptized.
- 18% were younger than 10 years old when baptized.
- 9% were older than 13 when baptized.

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What happens in church and during participation in congregational life is not clear. Ponder this quotation:

"Education is going on whenever the congregation meets or whenever some part of the congregation, such as a class or youth group, engages in some activity. Sorting out exactly what is happening is almost impossible, although we are more confident about teaching than about learning because the leaders prepare the worship, the committee agenda, or curriculum in advance with rather clear goals in mind. Exactly what people learn from the planned experience is far from certain."

C. Ellis Nelson, *How Faith matures* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), p. 163.

Frequency of church attendance was associated with some other positive variables. It was correlated between .20 and .29 with Adventism as a life goal, Adventist orthodoxy, frequency of private devotional practices, endorsement of church standards, denominational loyalty, vertical faith, overall maturity of faith, tithing, intergenerational church contact, perceptions of an accepting climate in their congregations, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was also correlated at .31 with time spent in church programming. Not that going to church necessarily causes all of this, but the package tends to go together.

Nearly 80% also attended Sabbath school on a weekly basis, and only 3% did not attend it at all. Incidentally, the young people were quite stable in their congregational affiliations. Nearly 70% had attended their present local church for more than three years.

Of course, Adventists have other meetings in addition to the worship service and Sabbath school. The youth were asked: "How many hours, if any, during an average month do you attend programs or events at a church other than worship services or Sabbath schools?" They responded:

0 hours	20%
1-2 hours	28%
3-5 hours	24%
6-10 hours	15%

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11-20 hours	8%
More than 20 hours	5%

So the youth do interact with the church. Four out of five attend some events other than worship and religious education, and over a fourth go at least an extra hour per week. These programs no doubt included things like youth meetings, vespers, Pathfinders, etc.

Young people not only attend church functions; they bear responsibilities for those functions. They were asked how many hours during an average month they gave volunteer time at church to teach, lead, serve on a committee, or help with some program or event. Here is how they answered:

0 hours	45%
1-2 hours	33%
3-5 hours	13%
6-10 hours	6%
11-20 hours	2%
More than 20 hours	1%

A majority were participating to some extent, but it is evident that many of those who regularly attended did not get actively involved. A comparison of these last two questions leads to the conclusion that the church needs to be much more intentional in involving the youth in the functions they attend. Commitment is always heightened by participation and involvement. Only in this way will young people feel a commitment

Involvement is important.

"There is no substitute for actual planning for involvement in the life and worship of the church. Just knowing the content of faith will not do. Involvement in those things that mediate God's presence are needed. Leaders must plan for this involvement."

— *The Experience of Faith*, p. 144.

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How would you answer this question?

“During a typical month, how many hours do you spend at your church in Sabbath School classes, Bible studies, youth programs or events, or other activities for youth your age?”

to these programs for the events become “theirs” rather than “the church’s.”

Involvement in the Church

What if we put it all together to get a total youth involvement picture? “During a typical month, how many hours do you spend at your church in Sabbath School classes, Bible studies, youth programs or events, or other activities for youth your age?”

0 hours	4%
1-2 hours	12%
3-5 hours	20%
6-10 hours	25%
11-20 hours	23%
21-40 hours	10%
More than 40 hours	6%

Very few spent no time in church activities, and nearly 40% invested more than ten hours per month in congregational programs specifically designed for their age group. Most adolescents had also participated, at some time or other, in specific learning events sponsored by their congregations. They were asked to estimate the amount of time, over their life spans, that they had spent in a church setting learning about various subjects. The percentages of those who had invested at least some such time were as follows:

- Learning about drugs and alcohol (89%).

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- Learning about or doing something about people who are poor and hungry (91%).
- Learning about or discussing sex (85%).
- Learning about or discussing Adventist standards (95%).
- Learning about how to witness (91%).

It is obvious that most Adventist teenagers do participate in educational programs in a congregational setting. The survey also probed the frequency with which the young people had participated in other religious experiences within the last few years.

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Sometime</i>	<i>Often</i>
• Participate in family projects to help other people.	38%	49%	13%
• Attend evangelistic meetings, youth rallies or federations.	36%	43%	21%
• Lead religious programs or events at church or school.	51%	35%	14%
• Talk to a teacher at school about God or faith.	47%	39%	14%
• Talk with my best friends about God or faith.	32%	47%	21%
• Sing in a choir or			

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On the items dealing with talking with teacher, mother, or father about faith, it is not clear whether the youth were seeking spiritual advice or sharing their faith.

musical group at church or school.	33%	25%	42%
• Participate in church programs or events that included youth and adults together.	26%	47%	27%
• Talk to my mother about faith.	36%	44%	20%
• Talk to my father about faith.	50%	36%	14%

From about a seventh to a fourth of the sample often participated in these experiences with the exception of group singing which was even more popular. On all but leading out in religious programs and discussing faith with a father, the majority had experienced the event at least occasionally, and even here about half had participated. Intergenerational religious contact may be determined from the item on participating in programs that included youth and adults together. It is a good sign that nearly three-fourths had been working together with the older generation.

On the items dealing with talking with teacher, mother, or father about faith, it is not clear whether the youth were seeking spiritual advice or sharing their faith. Perhaps a bit of both. Either way, we may be encouraged to note the half to three-quarters who had these faith conversations—at least on an occasional basis. Incidentally, talking about faith to one's father

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appears to be more difficult than talking to mother, or even to a teacher. Perhaps, this is because more fathers than mothers (16% to 6%) were perceived as not being very religious.

Most of our young people planned to keep on participating in the church also. Nearly two-thirds (65%) indicated that a quite important or extremely important goal for their lives was "to be active in the Adventist church." Only 7% felt that goal was not important at all.

Benefits of Church Involvement

Does all this involvement do any good? The youth were asked: "How much have each of the following helped you to develop your religious faith?" For each experience listed, we give the percentage of those who answered either "somewhat" or "very much." The others did not receive spiritual help from their involvement. Substantial numbers—running from a few hundred to more than 4000 for "Bible labs at school"—had never participated in various of these items. These surveys were dropped from the analyses, and the figures below are based only on those who actually evaluated the experiences.

It is clear that no one program met the spiritual needs of everyone. No program or activity was found helpful in developing faith by everyone. The most

There seems to be a number of educational and spiritual benefits to be derived from involvement in one's local congregation.

1. Involvement helps members understand the meaning of their faith in practical terms. When a congregation compares and contrasts itself with the larger world, a great quantity of information about Christianity is reviewed and absorbed.
2. A second educational possibility is the potential for congregational unity. When adults and older teenagers in a congregation go through the process of experiencing the faith-life together, they not only establish reasons for the distinction for their faith, they learn to experience a comradeship that brings them together.

Activities That Help Faith

- Sabbath school (68%)
- Week of prayer at school (68%)
- Church services (65%)
- Short-term mission projects (62%)
- Bible classes at school (62%)
- Student week of prayer at school (62%)
- Personal devotions (58%)
- Bible/leadership camps through school (52%)
- Church summer camp (51%)
- Baptismal class (50%)
- Dormitory or morning worship at school (48%)
- Weekly chapel at school (48%)
- Reading Insight (47%)

(Percent of youth that say these activities help their spiritual life)

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helpful activities were affirmed by no more than about two-thirds of the young people. Still, this list should give us some insights into where we have been having our greatest success and where we need to improve. Note too that finding a program helpful in developing faith is not the same as liking it. A boy or girl may really enjoy Pathfinders, for example, and yet not perceive that it is contributing to faith. But faith-building is often subtle. Perhaps years later some will realize a life-changing influence that they did not recognize at the time.

The best ratings were gathered by Sabbath school and school weeks of prayer, followed closely by church services, school Bible classes, and short-term mission projects. We need to make good use of these, packaging them as attractively as possible. At the lower end were school Bible labs and evangelistic outreach activities. Bible labs is a program of active community service involvement and is being utilized in only a few unions of the church. These seem vital to our process of Christian education, but, apparently, we are not realizing their potential. Can we find ways to improve?

Benefits come from giving as well as getting. The fruits of Christianity include faithful stewardship. To the question: "Do you faithfully pay tithe?" the youth gave the following responses:

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Never	11%
Seldom	16%
Sometimes	20%
Most times	25%
Always	28%

Young people do get money. To what extent have we transmitted the value of always putting God first; of taking out the tithe before spending on anything else? Not very well it would seem. Only a little over a fourth always tithed, and an equal number rarely did. The rest were sporadic. Apparently, we need some new creative ways of teaching Christian stewardship so that the rising generation make it part of their life-style.

If they have not accepted tithing, can we hope that they will go beyond the tithe to support their local congregation and conference as well as the world mission program? The survey also asked how often they gave other such offerings.

Never	15%
Seldom	27%
Sometimes	29%
Most times	18%
Always	11%

As might have been surmised, the situation was even worse here. The percentage who gave regularly was less than half than it was for tithing. Over 40% contributed little or nothing. If the picture is not

Activities That Help Faith

- Pathfinders (47%)
- Religious youth organizations such as AY (Adventist Youth) or MV (Missionary Volunteers) (45%)
- Reading Guide (44%)
- Reading the Sabbath school lesson (39%)
- Community outreach at school (38%)
- Participation in Ingathering (37%)
- Evangelistic outreach (e.g., giving Bible studies, distributing literature) (35%)
- Bible labs at school (33%)

(Percent of youth that say these activities help their spiritual life)

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changed, how will the church of the future support its global mission? One might explain this lack of financial involvement simply by the fact that youth do not have deep resources out of which to draw, but some work in this area could prove fruitful later in life.

Devotional Practices

Not all Christian "fruit" is revealed in church-related behaviors, however. Equally important are the private devotional behaviors that nourish Christian experience and what we call the horizontal dimension of faith development. *Valuegenesis* asked how often the youth engaged in each of five such practices. Eight possible responses ranged from "never" to "more than once a day." The list at the left shows the combined percentages of the last four choices; that is, those who practiced the devotion at least once a week.

Wide variation in frequency exists, and indeed, we would not expect the same from each of these. One might hope that devout Christians would pray and read the Bible on a daily basis, but substantial numbers fell short of practicing these devotional exercises even once a week. Only slightly over half (53%) said they prayed personally (not including blessing food) at least once a day. While only 5% never prayed on their own initiative, a large minority (42%) prayed with varying degrees of infrequency.

Those who practice devotion at least once a week.

- Pray or meditate, other than at church or before meals (78%).
- Read the Bible on your own (41%).
- Read religious magazines, newspapers, or books (41%).
- Watch religious programs on television or listen to religious radio programs (36%).
- Read the writings of Ellen White (15%).

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Reading the Bible devotionally (not as an assignment for Bible classes) fared even worse with only 13% of the youth doing it on a daily basis. The Bible was never read for spiritual development by 14%, and nearly three-fourths read it only sporadically. The largest single group (18%) studied the Scriptures less than once a month. Thus, on the two key devotional practices of prayer and Bible study, Adventist young people were weak. Such lack of spiritual nurturing may be a warning signal of fading interest in religion and eventual drop out from the church.

The other three practices might not be expected on a daily timetable and, in the case of religious media, perhaps not at all. For Adventists, however, who have been associated so closely with the work of Ellen White in the development of faith and practice, it is not a good sign that the proportion of youth that read her writings at least weekly was far less than for other religious publications or even religious radio and television listening and viewing. The highest percentage by far (42%) indicated that they never read her, and the next highest group (24%) did so less than once a month. With two-thirds of the young people having tuned her out and only a small proportion reading her writings daily, what will be the future of her place in the Adventist church? This would seem to call for careful attention.

A Piety Scale formed from these five items has a

Valuegenesis asked: "If you had a birthday party and invited your five best friends (excluding relatives), how many would be people who go to an Adventist church?" Over half (51%) indicated that all five would be associated with Adventism, and another 21% would have four Adventists out of the five.

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possible range of 1 to 8. The average score for the young people was slightly less than 4.0, which is equivalent overall to saying that the devotional practices had an average frequency of two or three times a month. Those in Adventist schools averaged only slightly above those in public schools (3.9 to 3.8), a difference too small to be significant. However, the argument that students in public education and with an active church life are often better Christians does not seem to be supported here.

Friendship Ties

Our spiritual life is certainly affected by our close friendships. *Valuegenesis* asked: "If you had a birthday party and invited your five best friends (excluding relatives), how many would be people who go to an Adventist church?" Over half (51%) indicated that all five would be associated with Adventism, and another 21% would have four Adventists out of the five. Less than 2% would include no Adventists. Not surprisingly, those in our schools were more likely to have their closest friends be Adventists. Those in church schools averaged four Adventist friends while for those in public schools the average was three.

This picture presents a basically ingrown climate. The situation might be interpreted as ominous because it suggests that our youth have little witnessing outreach

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to those not of our faith. Or it might be positive, implying that the teenagers are protected from the "world" and surrounded with Christian influences. But then, that might depend on how "spiritual" the Adventist friends were.

So the youth were asked: "How religious, on the average, are your three or four best friends?" About 8% replied that their friends were "not at all religious," 78% indicated that they were "somewhat religious," and 14% perceived them as "very religious." So while our adolescents are inclined to select Adventist friends, we cannot assume that these choices will preserve and nurture their spirituality. Few of these companions exert a strong religious influence.

Those responsible for the spiritual guidance of teenagers are naturally concerned over peer influence. What difference to the life of faith does the caliber of one's peers make? Having friends who were more religious was correlated between .20 and .29 with frequency of devotional behaviors, satisfaction with enforcement of church standards, endorsement of standards, perceptions of a thinking climate in their congregations, frequency of personal prayer, perceptions of leaders and teachers in their churches as being warm and caring, and denominational loyalty. It was correlated between .30 and .39 with Adventism as a life goal, vertical faith, overall maturity of faith, perceptions of their local congregations as being accept-

Youth were asked: "How religious, on the average, are your three or four best friends?" About 8% replied that their friends were "not at all religious," 78% indicated that they were "somewhat religious," and 14% perceived them as "very religious."

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ing, importance of religion, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40.

Sharing Faith

Next to personal prayer and Bible study the most important means of fostering one's own spiritual growth is to share one's faith—to bear witness to what Jesus has done for one personally.

Next to personal prayer and Bible study the most important means of fostering one's own spiritual growth is to share one's faith—to bear witness to what Jesus has done for one personally. An evangelism scale of three items was included in the survey instrument. The youth were asked: "How often have you done each of the following during the last year." Seven possible responses ranged from "never" to "40 or more times." The last answer we

might think of as approximately weekly with time off for vacations, etc. First, we will look at the percentages of those who witnessed by the following means even once during the past year.

- Tried directly to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ (79%).
- Told others about the work of God in your life (75%).
- Tried directly to encourage someone to join the Adventist church (56%).

Really quite impressive! More than three-fourths

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tried to share Jesus Christ and their own experience. The figure dropped somewhat when asked if they had tried to make others Adventists, but was probably as high as that of the adult members in the same congregations.

These figures, however, represent the bare minimum—once a year—not a life-style. On each of the three items the most frequent response was "1-2 times." Thus while only 21% had never tried to encourage belief in Jesus, 36% did so only once or twice in the year, and only 13% did so as often as ten times or more (once a month). To the 44% who never tried to win a convert to the church add 31% who did so once or twice. Only 8% had tried this as often as ten times in the past year.

Frequency of witnessing was correlated between .20 and .29 with denominational loyalty, frequency of personal prayer, intergenerational church contact, perceptions of their congregations as accepting, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was correlated between .30 and .39 with Adventism as a life goal, perceptions of a thinking climate in their congregations, value of service, and importance of religion. It was correlated between .40 and .49 with frequency of devotional practices, altruism, horizontal faith, and vertical faith. In an especially strong relationship, witnessing was correlated at .50 with overall maturity of faith. Where these qualities are

Valuegenesis research asked youth about the educational programing in Adventist churches. Learning more about the church was a concern for more than half of the youth questioned.

"What kinds of programs and events interest you? Listed below are some things a church could offer. For each one, mark an answer to show how interested you would be in learning at church.

- 1 = Not interested
- 2 = Slightly interested
- 3 = Somewhat interested
- 4 = Interested
- 5 = Very interested

Percentage of Adventist youth "interested" or "very interested" in learning more about each topic:

- Gaining a deeper relationship with God (77%)
- The Bible (66%)
- Adventism (55%)

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found, youth are more likely to witness to their faith.

Encouraging youth to share their faith has been a prime objective of youth ministries from their very beginnings. This objective was reflected in the original name of the department—Missionary Volunteers. Through programs like the Voice of Youth, Fireside Evangelism, Operation Friendship, and more recently Adventist Task Force, and Student Missionary program, young people have been inspired and instructed in the art of witnessing. New programs to train, inspire, and encourage personal involvement in the spiritual growth of others are needed. This is a clear call to become creative here. A great need still exists to make these programs exciting and appealing, to create new witnessing opportunities, and to involve all of our young people on a regular basis in some aspect of faith sharing.

Chapter 8

If I Had One Wish

Those of us who teach guidance or character development courses often employ various strategies that force our students to clarify and examine their basic values. One favorite method goes something like this: "If I had the power to grant any wish your heart desires, what would you choose?" A thoughtful answer to this question, which goes back at least to the time of Solomon (1 Kings 3:5), causes a person to think about what is really important to him or her.

One day I put this question to a class of academy seniors. One young woman waved her hand exuberantly. She was certain what she wanted. "I'd ask for it to be next May 27, that's graduation day and I'll be finished with school."

*Whether we value
rightly or not
determines our
success and
happiness here
and in the
hereafter.*

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When I heard this answer, I looked at her with some amazement. It was only October. She was a better-than-average student, not having trouble with her school work. She was also quite popular and involved in a number of extracurricular activities. "You mean you'd want to skip all the activities and fun of your senior year?" I queried.

"Yes, I would," she beamed gleefully. "I just want to be done and out of here."

"But look," I argued, "you're using this big opportunity to wish your life away. Graduation day will arrive in seven months without any magic formula. Time passes quickly enough without skipping it [more than a decade has passed since that experience.] Think of all the wonderful things you could wish for. You don't mean to tell me you are going to waste your one wish on something you'll have in a short time anyway."

"That's what I want," she said decisively.

Though I've used this strategy countless times, this case remains most firmly fixed in my mind. Only a fun activity, but it illustrates how capriciously many people approach life's crucial choices. No fairy godmother comes to give us magical wishes, but all of us have to decide on what we will set our hearts; what goals we will count as of the most worth. Whether we value rightly or not determines our success and happiness here and in the hereafter. With that in mind the *Valuegenesis* study included a number of items to

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gather information about important values. It attempted to sort out what was of crucial importance to youth.

Values of Service

The church "was organized for service. . . ." Ellen White wrote, "and through the church will eventually be made manifest . . . the final and full display of the love of God" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9). Adventists believe that we are placed in this world to be a blessing to our fellow human beings. If our homes, churches, and schools do not instill a passion for service in our young people, we have not succeeded in our mission of Christian nurture.

To explore the extent to which service for others constituted an important value among Adventist young people, the following question was posed: "Listed below are a number of goals that some people say are important to them. What are your goals? For each of these, indicate how important the goal is for you. Speak for yourself, according to what you want in life." Possible answers were: "not at all important," "somewhat important," "quite important," and "extremely important." Seven of the goals related to service. We list them on the next page in the sidebar with the percentages that chose either "quite important" or "extremely important."

The church "was organized for service. . . ."

Ellen White wrote, "and through the church will eventually be made manifest . . . the final and full display of the love of God"

Acts of the Apostles, p. 9

Goals of Young People

- To show love to other people (91%).
- To live my life as God wants me to (85%).
- To serve God in everything I do (82%).
- To help people who are poor or hungry (68%).
- To spend time helping people (65%).
- To tell other people about God (57%).
- To help promote social equality (53%).

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The majority considered all of these goals to be quite or extremely important, but a wide range of affirmation was found over the different items. Between 80% and 90% felt that general goals like loving, living, and serving are important, and about two-thirds had a goal of helping people, but only bare majorities were committed to telling others about God and promoting social equality (more on this last item later).

A Service Orientation Scale was created from the first four items. The youth averaged 3.0 (quite important) on a 4.0 scale so this is encouraging. However, virtually no difference was discovered between those in Adventist schools or those in public schools.

Furthermore, we might expect, as a result of our program of religious education, that these values might become increasingly important to our youth as they mature. It didn't quite work out that way. The high point on the Service Orientation Scale was in sixth grade (3.05) from where it descended to 2.91 in grade nine before climbing back up to 2.98 in the twelfth grade. Why the dip? is something that we need to discover.

We are naturally interested in what other attitudes and behaviors are associated with the value of service. We share some of the stronger correlations between the Service Orientation Scale and various other scales. All correlations given are highly statistically significant.

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Service was correlated between .20 and .29 with the tendency to endorse Adventist standards, denominational loyalty, frequency of personal prayer, positive attitudes toward women in ministry, desire to be an Adventist at age 40, involvement in intergenerational church contact, perceptions of teachers at church as warm and friendly, perceptions of an accepting church climate, and positive attitudes toward family worship.

Service was correlated between .30 and .39 with frequency of evangelistic activities (sharing one's faith), frequency of devotional practices, altruism, perceptions of a thinking church climate, and importance of religion. It was correlated between .40 and .49 with having a life goal to be active in the Adventist church and with vertical faith. Finally, service was correlated between .50 and .59 with higher faith type, horizontal faith, and overall faith maturity.

Multiple regression analyses were performed to discover which family, congregational, and school variables had the strongest unique predictive power for possessing a value of service. For grades six to eight they were: perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation, a quality school religion program, how often students talk with friends about God, extent to which the family enforces Adventist standards, and family projects to help other people. For grades nine to twelve the same five items were se-

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lected, with the first two reversed in position. A sixth significant predictor was time spent in intergenerational church contact.

Obviously the value of service is highly related to many other good qualities, though we cannot say which causes which or whether all are dependent on other unmeasured factors. We already noted in chapter four that the most important predictor of mature faith was the value of service. Certainly, we need to continue to foster this value.

Values of Materialism

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the value of service is the value of materialism. Contemporary young people have been accused of being part of the "me generation," a charge that might also apply to some of their elders. Working to dissuade our adolescents from following the god of materialism is the other side of the coin of attempting to transmit the value of service.

A number of items to measure this value were included in the same set, with the same response format, as the values of service. At the sidebar on the left are the percentages who chose "quite" or "extremely important."

Materialism did not rank as high as service, but nearly half thought money and material things to be

Valuegenesis and Materialism

- To have lots of nice things (47%).
- To have lots of money (47%).
- To be happy (98%).
- To have an exciting fun-filled life (79%).
- To make my own rules and live as I want to (22%).

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important goals. Nearly eight out of ten were motivated by excitement and fun, and almost all sought happiness. While Christians should be happy people, perhaps youth need to see the difference between happiness as a goal to be pursued or as a by-product of a life devoted to God and humankind.

On a four-point Materialism Scale composed of the first two items, the young people averaged 2.5. That seems far too high for Christian young people, and it would have been considerably higher if the items on happiness and fun had been included. Again, virtually no difference was found between those in the two school systems. The averages remained quite stable over the grade groups.

Significant correlations of .20 to .29 were found between the Materialism Scale and less frequency in devotional behaviors, rejection of standards—both Adventist and popular culture, dissatisfaction with enforcement of standards, lack of denominational loyalty, lack of mature faith, lack of vertical faith, less importance placed on religion, desire not to be an Adventist at age 40, at-risk behavior, perceptions of nonaccepting church climate, and perceptions of low quality of family worship. Materialism was correlated at .30 with rejection of Adventist standards overall and at .40 with desire to make one's own rules and live as one wants. Thus, in every relationship the correlation was negative with positive attitudes and positive with

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negative attitudes. While correlations for materialism were not generally as strong as those for service, they made a pattern which is at counterpurposes with our mission of Christian character development.

The multiple regression of family, congregational, and school variables revealed that, for grades six to eight, poor quality of family worship and low enforcement by the family of Adventist standards were the most powerful predictors of materialism. For grades nine to twelve, they were poor quality of the school religion program, low peer religiousness, poor quality of family worship, and low frequency of talking with friends about God. For each variable the regression coefficient was negative.

Values of Altruism

Closely related to the attitudes one holds is the behavior which results from those attitudes. Altruism is the selfless sharing of one's time, money, and effort for the benefit of others. We asked the young people: "How many volunteer hours (through church, other organizations, or on your own) do you spend on each of the following during a typical month? Give your best estimate. Don't count time you spend while in a paid job."

Six possible responses ranged from "0 hours" to "more than 20 hours." The figures below are the

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combined percentages of those who spent any time at all in altruistic activities.

- Helping people who are poor, hungry, sick, or unable to care for themselves (don't count family members) (52%).
- Helping friends or neighbors with problems they have (86%).
- Promoting social equality (for example, racial equality, women's rights, economic reform, or world peace) (36%).
- Making your own town or city a better place to live (e.g., by doing volunteer work in a school, being on a city committee or task force) (44%).

The youth were most likely to help friends and neighbors, perhaps because these opportunities presented themselves more readily. In most cases no more than half were involved even to the minimum extent of one hour per month. For those who were active in altruism, the largest proportion in each case spent an hour or two per month. The percentages of those spending more than ten hours a month on the above activities were respectively: 4%, 16%, 4%, and 5%.

On a six-point Altruism Scale, both those in Adventist schools and those in public schools averaged 2.1, equivalent to spending an hour or two a month in doing good. Time spent in altruistic activities tended to decrease with age. For example, 39% of the sixth-

Other research has suggested what is important for young adolescents.

"Percent saying want very much or at the top of my list."

- To get a good job (84%).
- To have a happy family life (82%).
- To do well in school (82%).
- To do something important (80%).
- To make my parents proud (80%).
- To have friends I can count on (80%).
- A world without war (77%).
- To feel good about myself (76%).
- A world without hunger (70%).
- Lots of fun and good times (69%).
- To have God at the center of my life (66%).

The Quicksilver Years, p. 92, Table 6.1

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graders spent no time helping the poor, hungry, and sick, but 53% of those in twelfth grade were not involved.

The Altruism Scale was correlated between .20 and .29 with frequency of devotional behaviors, vertical faith, and amount of intergenerational church contact. It was correlated between .30 and .39 with type of faith, value of service, and overall faith maturity. It was strongly correlated at .46 with both horizontal faith and frequency of sharing faith. The belief that religion has a strong ethical element seems to go along with the investment of time and effort to help others. Each of these components encourages development of the others.

The multiple regression analyses of family, congregational, and school variables revealed that the strongest predictors of altruistic activity in grades six to eight were: frequency of talking to one's friends about God, perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation, frequency of family projects to help other people, and time spent in intergenerational church contact. The same variables were important in grades nine to twelve, with family projects first. Additional significant predictors were quality of the school religion program, presence of caring teachers, and number of close friends who are Adventists. Warm relationships seem to be important in encouraging altruistic behavior, especially when a close-knit group

Strongest predictors of altruistic activity in grades six to eight were:

- Frequency of talking to one's friends about God.
- Perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation.
- Frequency of family projects to help other people.
- Time spent in intergenerational church contact.

Grades nine to twelve

- Family projects.
- Quality of the school religion program.
- Presence of caring teachers.
- Number of close friends who are Adventists.

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is working together on such tasks (as in the family projects).

Values concerning Women

Values are expressed not only in altruism and service but also in attitudes toward various contemporary issues, especially those involving social justice. One of the most widely-debated current issues in Adventism is the role of women in ministry. We have heard from the scholars and the world leaders on the subject, but how do the young people—the church of tomorrow—feel about it. Three items on a five-point “disagree-agree” format explored this question. The percentages shown are the combination of those that agree somewhat or strongly favor having women in various church positions.

The young people seem to be as badly split as their parents and church leaders. Not that they were necessarily against women in ministry. The percentages of those who actually disagreed were 14% for local elders, 20% for women pastors, and 21% for ordained women ministers—a fifth or less. But around a third are not sure about each item. How they finally decide may well determine the future of women in ministry in North America.

On an Attitude toward Women in Ministry Scale composed of the three items, students in Adventist

Women in ministry data

- I agree somewhat or strongly favor having women ordained as local church elders in the Adventist church (54%).
- I favor having women pastors in the Adventist church (47%).
- I favor having women ordained as pastors in the Adventist church (42%).

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schools averaged 3.5 out of a possible 5.0—halfway between uncertainty and a tendency to favor. Public school students at 3.4 were not significantly different. This scale showed low correlations with most other scales. The only two to reach at least .20 were the value of service and horizontal faith. Loving and serving our fellow humans is weakly related to favoring women in ministry, but other measures do not seem to be either positively or negatively associated.

Values of Social Justice

Other items in this same format dealt with other aspects of social justice. While they do not form a scale, seven of them seem particularly relevant to this chapter. Again, the percentages are the total of those who agreed. (See sidebar).

A majority affirmed all of these except the last two, where 42% were not sure. Two of the statements are negatively worded—that is, agreeing with them goes against generally held ideas of social justice. One is the fifth statement which reflects a withdrawal-from-the-world mentality that often keeps Adventists from getting involved in social issues. Apparently, a substantial number agreed with both the first and the fifth statement without seeing any logical contradiction between them. But then, adults do that too.

Aspects of Social Justice

- Young people should be taught how to be a successful and productive part of their society (84%).
- Young people should be taught how to help make society more kind and just (83%).
- I like being with people who are of a different race than I am (77%).
- I would favor a good plan to help the poor, even if it cost me money (63%).
- Young people should be taught to stand apart from society and its destructive influences (59%).
- I wish I had more friends who are of a different race than I am (40%).
- Part of God's plan is that some will be rich and some will be poor (31%).

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The other negative statement is the last one. The youth were a bit sharper here, the majority not having been willing to lay the injustices of the world at God's door. Even so, nearly a third agreed with it, and almost as many were uncertain. While the responses for numbers one and two are encouraging, all in all, a lot of room exists for consciousness-raising on the Christian's obligations to the less fortunate.

Values on Morality

On a related area, but with a slightly different twist, the youth were asked: "In your opinion, how right or wrong are each of the following?" The dozen practices listed run the range from public to private morality. The percentages listed represent those who said that these behaviors were "often wrong" or "always wrong."

- Efforts by one racial group to keep people of another race from moving into their neighborhood (78%).
- Efforts by parents to keep children with AIDS from attending their schools (60%).
- A company paying women employees less than men employees for similar work (82%).
- The United States using nuclear weapons to win a war against the Soviet Union (50%).
- Taxing wealthy people to help raise the standard of living for poor people (24%).

Some Significant Values

The percentages listed represent those who said that these behaviors were "often wrong" or "always wrong."

- Homosexual relations between two adults of the same sex who love each other (87%).
- A company paying women employees less than men employees for similar work (82%).
- Efforts by one racial group to keep people of another race from moving into their neighborhood (78%).
- Sexual intercourse by two unmarried 17-year-olds who love each other (67%).
- Sexual intercourse by two unmarried adults who love each other (59%).

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- Sending U.S. military aid to Central America to fight communism (18%).
- Passing laws to make it illegal to discriminate against women and minorities (22%).
- The United States and other countries demanding that South Africa end its apartheid (racial segregation) policies (15%).
- Abortion when a doctor says the baby is likely to be born with a serious handicap (34%).
- Sexual intercourse by two unmarried adults who love each other (59%).
- Sexual intercourse by two unmarried 17-year-olds who love each other (67%).
- Homosexual relations between two adults of the same sex who love each other (87%).

Let us admit that morality is rarely simple and that some of these issues are very difficult to categorize as "always" right or wrong. This is reflected by the "not sure" choice which ran as high as 40% (military aid to Central America).

The first eight items deal with public morality; the last four with private. On the former group, three statements (taxing the wealthy, laws against discrimination, and ending apartheid) were reversed scored. That is, advocates of social justice are likely to consider them right rather than wrong. Less than a fourth of the young people also saw them as wrong, indicating a concern for fairness and a compassion for

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the unfortunate on the part of the majority. This concern and compassion found support in the large majorities that indicated that discrimination in housing and in remuneration is wrong.

The youth were much less likely to disavow war and military action. Only half believed nuclear war to be always wrong, and less than a fifth saw sending military aid to Central America as wrong, while 42% saw it as right. It would seem that historic Adventist pacifism has not been widely embraced by this new generation. It would be interesting to see how the youth of twenty years before would have responded to these items.

A wide difference of opinion prevailed on the four statements dealing with personal morality. Only about a third felt that abortion involving a defective fetus is wrong, while slightly more (36%) believed it to be right and the other 30% were uncertain. Some very important moral questions reside here which the church needs to explore with its young people. Perhaps, we have been somewhat lax in our instruction about the morality of choices in this area. The reason here given for making abortion acceptable may also have implications for euthanasia and for the rationing of medical care.

Majorities did condemn premarital sex, but 17% still saw it as right for unmarried teenagers, 22% for unmarried adults, and 17%-19% were not sure. The

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problem within Adventism may not be nearly as large as that in the "world," but it is still a serious problem needing attention. The most overwhelming condemnation came on the matter of homosexual practice even though promiscuity seemed to be ruled out of the definition. Only 5% believed that such a union could

If the church still holds to traditional family values, it will have to put a priority on ways to transmit them, or they may be slipping away in the next generation.

be right. Most of our youth, then, have not accepted the "gay" revolution, but increasing numbers are willing to accept the primacy of what they term "love" without the commitment of marriage between heterosexuals. If the church still holds to traditional family values, it will have to put a priority on ways to transmit them, or they may be slipping away in the next generation.

Values of Self-esteem

People who do not appreciate their own worth as unique human beings whom God created and loves and for whom Christ left heaven and died will not be able to formulate and live by values that affirm the worth and dignity of other humans. Thus, *Valuegenesis* included a short version of the standard Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (five items) and one item to measure Purpose in Life. Responses were on a four-point range

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from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with no "uncertain" category. The statements are listed with the combined percentages of those who agree or strongly agree.

- I feel good about myself (86%).
- I am able to do things as well as most other people (87%).
- On the whole, I am satisfied with myself (82%).
- At times I think I am no good at all (reversed scoring) (50%).
- I feel I do not have much to be proud of (reversed) (27%).
- I have discovered satisfying goals and a clear purpose in life (73%).

The young people revealed quite high self-esteem on the three items stated positively, but manifested erosion on the negatively stated or reversed scored items. This was particularly evident on the "I'm no good at all" statement where half were in agreement. On the five-item, four-point Self-esteem Scale the average score was 3.0 with no difference between the youth in the two school systems.

Our youth need a better appreciation of their worth. Ellen White has counseled: "The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them else He would not have sent

Ellen White and Self-Esteem

"The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them."

Desire of Ages, p. 668

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His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 668).

Also, self-esteem was significantly related to other positive virtues. It was correlated between .20 and .29 with perceptions of the teachers at their congregations as being friendly and caring, vertical faith, and overall faith maturity. It was also negatively correlated (.22) with the “At-risk” Index, indicating that youth who grasped their unique worth were not in as great a danger of slipping out of the church. Self-esteem was correlated at .33 with perceptions of their families as warm and loving and was correlated .44 with the Purpose in Life item.

On this latter item, note that nearly three-fourths indicated that they had discovered satisfying goals and a clear purpose in life. That means that more than a fourth of our young people had not—they were still looking for direction and meaning. And purpose in life correlated positively with a number of desirable attitudes. Correlations between .20 and .29 were found with wanting to make Adventism a life goal, perceptions of a thinking climate in their local congregations, higher faith type, importance of religion, perceptions of their families as warm and loving, perceptions of the teachers at their congregations as being friendly and caring, and feeling welcome and at home in their congregations. Purpose in life was correlated at .33 with vertical faith and at .34 with overall maturity of

Classic Observations

“There are six basic discoveries that focus the religious experience in the adolescent years. They include:

1. the need to find God;
2. the need to find themselves;
3. the need to focus on some sort of life goals;
4. the need to find intimacy and a mate;
5. the need to find society’s desire for their lives;
6. the need to discover the nature of Christian society, the church, and their relationship to it.”

— Nevin C. Harner, *The Educational Work of the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1939)

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faith. As mentioned above, the correlation with self-esteem was .44.

All of these relationships were positive. No negative effects were discovered for either self-esteem or purpose in life. We are aware that self-worth is directly related to feelings of purpose. All of this suggests that we have a mandate to foster true self-worth in our young people and to employ every possible means to help them to discover meaning in their existence and, on the basis of that meaning, to set worthwhile life goals.

One of the chief aims of religion in one’s life is to give people purpose and direction. One can only look at the Biblical characters who achieved great things for God and realize that their accomplishments were directly related to their commitment to God’s will. Youth today can be challenged to fulfill God’s purpose in their lives just like those in Biblical history. The church must find ways to provide both the challenge and the means for youth to find that purpose and meaning.

The *Risk and Promise Report* from Project Affirmation suggests that involvement in activities that support the mission of the church is a good way that youth can find purpose in their lives. Finding meaning, involving oneself in the purpose of the church, watching God’s will become clear are all challenges that the *Valuegenesis* data support and ones

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that we cannot ignore if there is to be faith in the world.

Chapter 9

The Stickiest Point

“I think the Adventist church is too legalistic. For example, it’s OK to wear wedding rings but not engagement rings. They serve the same basic purpose. Some people say you can’t go swimming on Sabbath, but you can wade in the water. Others say you can go in the water, but you can’t get wet above your knees. Why do there have to be such specific rules and fine lines on which one side is clearly wrong and the other side is clearly right? Doesn’t the church know that there are a *lot* of gray areas? All this law keeping reminds me of the Pharisees of Jesus’ time. You could walk only a certain distance on Sabbath. You couldn’t carry anything unless it was pinned to your clothes like a handkerchief. And so on.

Some vocabulary words which will assist you in this chapter:

Faith—Faith is both an affair of the heart and a commitment of the mind. It is the way we feel about God. Faith is a gift from God, and when we receive it, it opens our life to God’s guidance.

Grace Orientation—A belief that salvation is given to us only because of the goodness of Jesus, His atoning death, and the perfect life he lived on earth. It focuses completely on God’s goodness in offering us this gift, which we can never earn by ourselves, and on the wonderful promises of God.

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More Vocabulary Words

Works Orientation—A belief that salvation is given to us because we are good or have done good works. A works orientation focuses primarily on our behavior, on how we have obeyed the rules or followed the standards.

Value—A preferred quality or action. In a general sense, it refers to what is good, desirable, and worthwhile. In a religious sense, what we value indicates what we see as being in balance with, in harmony with, and central (core) to the expressed will of God. A value is a construct that might be illustrated by Sabbath-keeping, healthful living, honesty, and faithfulness.

“I would prefer to work on my personal relationship with God rather than sit through boring worship services that just turn me off more. I think the Adventist church has at least most of the correct beliefs so why can’t we just live our lives by those principles rather than legalistic rules?”

This letter from one of our youth is more typical than you would care to believe. I like several things about this young woman. She is obviously thoughtful, articulate, and she is still with us. But she might not be for long, for it is obvious that the writer struggles—as do thousands of other Adventist youth—with trying to make personal sense out of our church standards.

Make no mistake. How we handle church standards is the crucial issue in the determination of whether or not we will retain the rising generation in the church. Acceptance of Adventist standards was the second most important variable in the entire study in predicting whether or not the students intended to remain as Adventists by age 40 and the most important in predicting denominational loyalty. Rules and standards are the “stickiest” point in the whole youth value arena or, as I like to suggest, it is “the hinge of retention.” But it is not just how we will enforce these standards; the issue is much broader. It has to do with what we think of them and how we plan on relating to the youth regarding them. Since this is such a crucial area, let us take a closer look at the findings to see if

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Valuegenesis provides us with the help we need in both understanding the problem and finding a solution.

Endorsement of Standards

The *Valuegenesis* questionnaire asked youth how much they agreed or disagreed with sixteen specific Adventist standards. We list below the standards in the rank order of acceptance with the percentages that agreed and disagreed with them. The extent to which the two numbers fail to total 100% represents the group that replied, “I’m not sure.”

Standard	Agree	Disagree
Not use illegal drugs	92%	5%
Not use tobacco	91%	6%
Observe the Sabbath	89%	5%
Not drink beer or liquor	88%	8%
Exercise daily	85%	8%
Not drink wine	74%	16%
Not eat “unclean” meats	73%	16%
Sex should only occur in marriage	68%	18%
Wear modest clothes	65%	19%
Not wear jewelry	39%	42%
Not use drinks with caffeine	31%	51%
Not listen to rock music	26%	55%
Not dance	23%	57%
Not watch movies in movie theaters	19%	64%
Wearing a wedding ring	14%	64%

More Vocabulary Words

Principle—A fundamental guideline that flows from our values. It does not deal with specific applications (“should this dress end one or two inches above my knee?”), but with general understandings of behavior (“I choose to dress modestly.”).

Standard—A practical application of a principle. A standard provides specific direction and clear goals for Christian behavior. One might say, “I think I should not lie.” While “honesty” is the value, “not lying” is the standard that demonstrates the value.

Rule—A specific interpretation of a standard for a local setting. A rule is established as an aid in organizing behavior. One might say, “At this academy we have decided not to stand on the bleachers.”

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While agreement that the Sabbath should be observed was among the highest percentages reported, differences may well exist over just how it should be observed.

Not engage in competitive sports 10% 78%

The majority accepted nine of the sixteen standards with support ranging from two-thirds to more than 90%. "Health related" ideals came out best; the youth overwhelmingly endorsed the prohibition of tobacco, beer, liquor, and illegal drugs and the need for daily exercise. The fact that in a world drowning in drug problems these guidelines are still seen as relevant and sensible by most Adventist youth is, no doubt, one of the most positive outcomes of the study. The endorsement of the standard on wine, though still affirmed by three-fourths, showed a significant drop from the acceptance of other substance standards. This may indicate what some other studies have revealed: wine is becoming more acceptable as a social drink among Adventists in North America. This area will need additional attention in our instructional system if it is to be long maintained and faithfully followed.

Other than healthful living items, majority support was found for Sabbath observance, sexual standards, and modesty. While agreement that the Sabbath should be observed was among the highest percentages reported, differences may well exist over just how it should be observed. Although two-thirds accepted the moral teaching that sex is only for marriage, it is an ominous sign that nearly a third either disagreed with this stand or else were not sure. Perhaps the church is

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being unduly influenced by modern society in this area.

At any rate, the drop in endorsement from the nine standards with majority support to the seven with only minority support was precipitous. In each of the latter more youth rejected than accepted them, and in all but the case of jewelry (which was fairly evenly divided), the majority actually rejected the standards. We might say that the wedding ring is no longer a concern for youth (except in certain localities) and that caffeine and competitive sports have never been major issues for young people. But jewelry, dancing, music, and movies are long-time areas of Adventist social emphasis. Less than one-fourth of the youth supported the last three in this area.

The standard on movies seems especially a lost cause with less than a fifth in support and nearly two-thirds in opposition. In the light of television and VCRs (which, by the way, only 8% believed shouldn't be watched), the church must consider whether its historic stand is still desirable or even realistic. If it is, then it must mount a massive selling campaign in order to convince the youth to reverse their beliefs here. Given the lack of support from those who will be running the church tomorrow and the anecdotal evidence that most Adventists attend the theatre, the present standard seems to be but a joke. When any church "rule" becomes that disregarded, it seems it has

It seems that the *Value-genes* research invites a clear call to begin to discuss a "theology of viewing." This theology could include direction regarding movies, VCR, and television viewing practices.

What two things would you include as "principles" for viewing for Christians? *Write them below:*

1. _____

2. _____

While our schools have not proved to be a detriment to acceptance of church standards, they haven't always been a positive influence either according to Valuegenesis.

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a very cloudy future as having much significance in impacting youth's lives.

When an Overall Endorsement of Standards Scale was created from these sixteen items with a range of 1 to 5, youth in Adventist schools averaged 3.5 (midway between "I'm not sure" and "I tend to agree") and those in public schools averaged 3.4, a difference too small to be meaningful. While our schools have not proved to be a detriment to acceptance of church standards, they haven't always been a positive influence either according to *Valuegenesis*.

The Endorsement of Standards Scale had a number of important relationships with other attitudes and behaviors. It was correlated between .20 and .29 with the following: positive attitudes toward Adventist schools, having more Adventist friends, church attendance, perceptions of their local congregations as possessing a thinking climate, belief in the inspiration of Ellen White, a grace orientation to salvation, frequency of personal prayer, values of service, time spent in church programming, frequency of family worship, intergenerational church contact, family limits on youth behavior, perceived teacher quality, perceptions of church leaders as warm and caring, and religiousness of peers. It was negatively correlated at the same strength with the belief that our elementary schools, academies, and churches need to modernize. This is a moderate correlation.

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Endorsement of Standards scores were correlated between .30 and .39 with Adventist orthodoxy, overall maturity of faith, importance of religion, tithing, perceptions that their congregations have an accepting climate, and perceptions of a high quality of family worship. Negative correlations of the same strength were with dissatisfaction with the way standards are enforced, wanting to make their own rules and live as they please, materialism, and at-risk behavior. Endorsement of standards was also correlated between .40 and .49 with degree to which standards were enforced within the family, having Adventism as a life goal, frequency of devotional behaviors, denominational loyalty, vertical faith (personal devotional faith), and intentions to remain an Adventist at age 40.

It is certainly clear that believing church standards to be reasonable and right constitutes part of a package of beliefs and behaviors which indicate that youth will stay with the church and become strong, supporting members. In every case the correlations and relationships are positive with desirable attitudes and negative with undesirable ones. Of course, we cannot say which attitudes cause which ones. But the tight relationships suggest areas in which we should be working. And acceptance of Adventist life-style standards seems to relate to loyalty to the church.

It is also clear that standards are not monolithic. There is no clear pattern here. Youth do not reject or

One finds it difficult to establish school standards in such a way that students see only the "grace" orientation rather than one of "law."

Here is a sample of a school policy which represents this unique perspective.

Because of our belief in the worth of every student the board, administration, and faculty of Grace Adventist Academy resolve to provide the climate that will enable students to grow academically, spiritually, physically, and socially. Students can expect school personnel to encourage self-respect, to promote dignity, and to provide quality instruction in a loving, caring, supportive manner that will challenge them to involvement in dynamic service for God and humanity.

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Enforcement of Standards

- Adventist rules and standards serve a useful purpose (66%).
- Non-Adventists laugh when they hear what Adventists are forbidden to do (50%).
- Some adults insist on certain rules or standards for younger Adventists that they do not observe themselves (47%).
- The feeling is conveyed in the Adventist Church that *how* one behaves is more important than *what* one believes (45%).
- Emphasis on Adventist rules and standards is so strong that the message of Christianity gets lost (41%).
- Adventists are loaded down with too many restrictions (27%).
- Students breaking a school standard or rule in Adventist schools are punished too harshly (26%).
- Adventist rules and standards just don't make sense (17%).

accept standards as a whole. Rather, most accept some and most reject some. This finding provides a rich occasion for a dialogue—among adults and among youth—about the meaning, purpose, and importance of standards. And it provides the opportunity to make sure that any standards that the church promotes have a clear Biblical basis. Those standards which seem to have social, cultural, and historical basis need to be revised, updated, and discussed clearly if they are to be understood and provide a meaningful relationship with church life.

Enforcement of Standards

Acceptance or rejection of specific standards is one thing. We can be discouraged that the youth of today do not see things the same way as their parents or pastors. But a more crucial issue is that of enforcement. How the process of teaching and enforcing standards is perceived is very crucial because it is here that attitudes about the church and religion in general are formed. Here we see what could be a growing source of tension among our youth. The students were presented with eight statements concerning standards to which they could respond on a seven-point format ranging from “never true” to “always true.” (See sidebar on left). The statements are all worded in a negative way (dissatisfaction with enforcement gets

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the high score) except the first one. The percentages following each statement are the combination of those who answered “often true,” “almost always true,” and “always true.”

Majorities felt that the standards are important and make sense, and only slightly more than a fourth believed that the rules are too many or that their violations are punished too severely. But close to half indicated that we are so preoccupied with behavior that we tend to lose sight of the essential message of the Gospel. This is cause for alarm. Nearly half perceived hypocrisy in the church with adults proclaiming: “Do as I say, not as I do.” The adult data indicates that many parents reject these same standards themselves.

A Dissatisfaction with Standards Scale was created from the first seven items. Scores range from 1 to 7 with high scores indicating a negative attitude toward the way we deal with standards. The average score was 3.8, just a little below “sometimes true” and definitely mediocre. No differences existed between those in Adventist and public schools. What is more, the dissatisfaction increased as the students grew older. The average score for those in sixth grade was 3.2, but it rose gradually to 4.0 in the twelfth grade. What is going on here? Do we really do that bad a job in enforcing standards?

Dissatisfaction with standards was also related to

Nearly half of the youth perceived hypocrisy in the church with adults proclaiming: “Do as I say, not as I do.” The adult data indicates that many parents reject these same standards themselves.

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Because of this concern, the *Risk and Promise Report of Project Affirmation* recommended that families, congregations, and schools:

Periodically evaluate current standards and lifestyle practices. Such evaluation would seek to:

- Identify the relationship between core values and the specific practices that stem from them.
- Establish those practices that are central to the purpose and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the local community.
- Agree on those practices that are useful and central in promoting faith in Christ and encouraging a life of service.
- Establish governance practices in accordance with good educational policy, positive effective discipline, and efficient human organization.
- Eliminate those rules and life-style practices that are not consistent with the four previous goals.

a number of other variables. It was correlated between .20 and .29 positively with materialism, wanting to live one's own life and make one's own rules, and at-risk behavior and negatively with frequency of devotional practices, perceptions of their congregations as possessing a warm and caring climate, overall maturity of faith, vertical faith, frequency of personal prayer, importance of religion, perceptions of a loving family environment, perceptions of caring church leaders, religiousness of peers, and perceptions of the quality of family worship.

Dissatisfaction with standards was negatively correlated between .30 and .39 with Adventism as a life goal, overall endorsement of church standards, denominational loyalty, perceptions of their congregations as having an accepting climate, and intentions to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was correlated positively between .45 and .47 with opinions that both churches and academies need to modernize.

Here we have a negative package. It is evident that even if the youth support some of our standards (and they certainly don't all of them), extensive negative feelings exist concerning how Adventists use, emphasize, and enforce standards, and this alienation is closely related to a number of undesirable attitudes and behaviors that may signal the eventual abandonment of the church and the faith. Any church that wishes to begin discussions with their youth on a

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relevant topic could start here.

The most important predictors of dissatisfaction with enforcement of standards, according to the multiple regressions, for grades six to eight were quality of family worship and the presence of caring teachers in the school. For grades nine to twelve, the same two variables, in reverse order, were the most important, followed by perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation, number of close friends who are Adventists, perceptions that leaders and teachers in the congregation are caring, family enforcement of church standards, and religiousness of peers. In every case the regression coefficient was negative, meaning, for example, that as the quality of family worship declines or teachers are less caring, dissatisfaction with the enforcement of church standards tends to increase. Once again, this points up the close connection between standards and personal relationships.

Enforcement in Family, Church, and School

To be more specific, how do Adventist young people view the enforcement of particular standards in the family, in the church, and in the school? Respondents were presented with a list of the same sixteen standards discussed in an earlier section of this chapter and asked to indicate how strictly each is or was

Summary of the most important predictors of dissatisfaction with enforcement of standards:

Grades six to eight

- Quality of family worship
- Presence of caring teachers in the school.

Grades nine to twelve

- Presence of caring teachers in the school.
- Quality of family worship
- Perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation.
- Number of close friends who are Adventists
- Perceptions that leaders and teachers in the congregation are caring.
- Family enforcement of church standards.
- Religiousness of peers.

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enforced in the families in which they grew up and in the local churches they now attend. The four-point format ran from "not at all strictly enforced" to "very strictly enforced."

They were also asked how strictly the rules about each of these things are enforced in the school they now attend. Here, one other answer option was supplied: "We have no rule about this at my school." The following list is given in the same order as that of the earlier one on their personal endorsement of standards. For comparison purposes percentages for family, church, and school are given in parallel columns. All percentages represent the combined responses of "quite strictly enforced" and "very strictly enforced."

	Family	Church	School
Using illegal drugs	94%	93%	94%
Smoking tobacco	88%	88%	90%
Observing the Sabbath	83%	92%	72%
Drinking beer and liquor	87%	90%	91%
Exercising daily	30%	34%	27%
Drinking wine	83%	89%	87%
Eating "unclean" meats	72%	85%	64%
Having sex only in marriage	84%	90%	64%
Wearing modest clothes	62%	79%	76%
Wearing jewelry	53%	73%	78%
Drinks that contain caffeine	30%	57%	46%
Listening to rock music	32%	69%	55%
Dancing	46%	78%	61%

Another recommendation from the Risk and Promise Report was:

- Periodically measure faith maturity, values shifts, and attitudes regarding Adventist standards and life-style practices.
- Seek out and use methods and resources that directly contribute to focusing on core values.

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Attending movie theatres	39%	71%	47%
Wearing a wedding ring	32%	50%	44%
Competitive sports	16%	34%	21%

Several interesting conclusions may be drawn from a study of these lists.

(1) *Strictness of enforcement in the family tends to follow the same rank order as personal endorsement of the standards.* The major exception is "daily exercise," a teaching with which nearly everybody agreed, but which few agencies tended to enforce. You can break this one and still be in "good standing." Otherwise, the rank order is not more than a position or two off from that of personal endorsement. This implies that, in general, the standards about which parents are the most serious (that is, the ones they enforce most strictly) turn out to be the ones the young people endorse most strongly. The parents are strict about substance abuse, Sabbath observance, and premarital sex, so the children believe in these standards (with some erosion on the latter one). Most parents don't really care about standards on rock music or movies, and the youth don't see their importance either.

(2) *Except for a few top substance-abuse issues, the church enforces the standards more strictly than the family does.* This is particularly evident toward the bottom of the list where those standards rejected by the majority of teenagers (music, dancing, and movies, e.g.) were not strictly enforced by the majority of their

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Summary of what the list of behavioral practices suggests:

1. Strictness of enforcement in the family tends to follow the same rank order as personal endorsement of the standards.
2. Except for a few top substance-abuse issues, the church enforces the standards more strictly than the family does.
3. Strictness of enforcement in Adventist schools shows no clear pattern.

families but were strictly enforced by the majority of congregations. In other words, families and churches do not seem to be agreed on some of these standards. No wonder, then, that the young people may be confused and uncertain. It would seem that we adults need to get our act together.

(3) *Strictness of enforcement in Adventist schools shows no clear pattern.* In several areas the schools apparently had no rule at all. This probably makes sense on eating unclean foods and exercising daily. But 12% had no rule on music, 14% on dancing, 15% on premarital sex, and 23% on movie theaters. Often, the school is found between the family and the church, trying to enforce church standards but hampered by lack of parental support. But the schools are not as strict in enforcing either Sabbath observance or premarital sex (although many of these schools are boarding academies) as are either the families or the churches, and they are stricter about wearing jewelry than either of the other two institutions. All of this suggests the need for continual dialogue and understanding among family, church, and school.

The Need for Clarity

In view of all this, we can understand if the young people might be a bit confused. The following is a fairly typical response:

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"I worked at an Adventist youth camp this summer, and I saw that a large group of the campers didn't know why they shouldn't wear jewelry, swear, or do other things that are against church standards and Biblical Christianity. I was shocked at some of the kids, but I guess I shouldn't be because I myself don't know all the reasons behind our standards. I know that there are reasons, good ones, and I abide by the standards, but I need to know why we have them. We as youth need to understand them and be convinced of their worth."

This response illustrates that it isn't only the rebellious youth about whom we have to worry. Conscientious adolescents like this young man are also at risk. If they haven't internalized a set of values, but only follow behaviors that they have been taught, they will most likely give up these standards when faced with the challenges to their faith that come with leaving the protective environment we have placed around them. Many of our young adults are finding that the value system they thought they believed in is only a shell without substance. They do not possess, in the words of Ellen White, "a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved" (MS 173, 1902). The church must not merely preach standards but must help youth discover for themselves to what standards they should commit and why these standards are worth their allegiance. This is a call for

Many of our young adults are finding that the value system they thought they believed in is only a shell without substance. They do not possess, in the words of Ellen White, "a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved" (MS 173, 1902).

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renewed effort to make the standards that the church promotes clearly Christ-centered, Biblically based, and culturally relevant. This is not an easy task. The implications are that the church just might make a few changes in the areas of standards. If this is the case, the church will be better for it because the youth will

The enforcement of standards is also an issue among Seventh-day Adventists. Some press for strong enforcement, while others prefer a more moderate approach. Some want the school to be the enforcer. Others believe that the home is the proper place.

clearly understand just what they do and why they want to do it. Parents will find it easier to enforce standards that are clear to them and their youth, and schools will not be the "fall guys" in this scenario. They will assist parents in understanding these standards and help youth dialogue about them in informal situations. This is ideal, we know, but all the same, it would be a start to make standards sensible and more universally held.

But, changing what we have always done is painful and slow. The process, however, must begin somewhere.

The enforcement of standards is also an issue among Seventh-day Adventists. Some press for strong enforcement, while others prefer a more moderate approach. Some want the school to be the enforcer. Others believe that the home is the proper place. The church should be accepting and loving and this may presuppose a lax of enforcement there. This study

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provides an opportunity to look at the impact of strong enforcement on the faith and value development of youth.

Does strong enforcement help or hinder youth religious commitment? By correlating the strength of enforcement in families, churches, and schools with students' faith and values, it appears that the answer depends upon just who is doing the enforcing. Strong enforcement in schools and churches appears to be unproductive. It does not increase faith maturity, denominational loyalty, or the value attached to Adventism. And in one way, strong enforcement in schools and churches may be counterproductive; as enforcement increases, so does a law orientation to salvation. That is to say, a rule emphasis in schools and churches is matched by a kind of rule orientation in understanding how to be saved.

On the contrary, enforcement in families seems to be more productive. As enforcement increases, so does faith maturity, denominational loyalty, and other measures of commitment to Adventism. And it does not increase a law orientation.

Strong enforcement does not help, then, in schools and congregations. But it does in families. What makes for this difference? One possible explanation has to do with the way in which enforcement is done. We learn from this study that youth rate their families high on warmth but rate their congregations low on

Key things to remember:

- Enforcement of lifestyle or "popular culture" standards seems to be most significant when enforced in the home situation.
- Faith maturity is impacted negatively when strict enforcement of these standards is done in the church or school.

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The whole area of standards then—the “stickiest” point in our ministry for youth—calls out for the top attention of denominational leaders, educators, pastors, and parents.

What is needed?

1. Extensive interactive dialogue to clarify how timeless Biblical principles should be translated into specific guidelines in our time and place.
2. Explore and probe if changes need to be made in these standards.
3. Clear Biblical arguments and examples should be identified.
4. Clarify all standards and practices to see their relationship to the “core” Adventist beliefs.

warmth. Furthermore, youth in Adventist schools are more likely than youth in public schools to feel “put down” (to be discussed in a later chapter) by the teachers. What this suggests—and it is consistent with other research—is that rules taught in a loving, accepting environment have positive benefits, but rules taught in a less accepting environment often lead to less positive or even destructive consequences. It has been said that you can take a lot from somebody whom you know loves you. The issue of how standards are taught is particularly important in the case of Adventist schools, for we also learn in this study that parents who were educated solely in Adventist schools are more likely than parents educated only partially or not at all in Adventist institutions to reject Adventist standards.

The whole area of standards then—the “stickiest” point in our ministry for youth—calls out for the top attention of denominational leaders, educators, pastors, and parents. We need extensive interactive dialogue to clarify how timeless Biblical principles should be translated into specific guidelines in our time and place. We need to explore and probe if changes need to be made in these standards. We have seen that some are just not followed or believed anymore. If the reasons are sound, perhaps change should come. If clear Biblical argument and example can be seen, clearer understanding and response is indicated. We have quite a task here.

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Just clarifying the standards is one task that is important. Another is that of finding ways to have youth become committed to upholding them. We also need ways to guide youth in discovering and internalizing the principles and in applying them to contemporary situations. Nothing less than the future of the church depends upon it. This is an important issue for youth. As we have seen, forty percent of the youth surveyed in *Valuegenesis* agree that “the emphasis on Adventist rules and standards is so strong that the message of Christianity gets lost.” And the Task Force on Faith, Values, and Commitment has taken this assignment seriously as well.

For example, in response to the need to emphasize core values, the task force recommended that the church should periodically evaluate current standards and life-style practices. Such evaluation would seek to: identify the relationships between core values and the specific practices that stem from them; establish those practices that are central to the purpose and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the local community; agree on those practices that are useful and central in promoting faith in Christ and encouraging a life of service; establish governance practices in accordance with good educational policy, positive effective discipline, and efficient human organization; and eliminate those rules and life-style practices that are not consistent with the four previous

One way to evaluate and periodically measure faith maturity, values shifts, and attitudes regarding Adventist standards and lifestyle practices is by using the new *Valuegenesis: The Short Form* survey. More information regarding it is included at the end of this volume.

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goals. This task is both difficult and challenging but a priority if youth are to understand what choices they should learn to make.

Chapter 10

Any Room For The Church In My Life?

Have you ever seen Alexander the Remarkable Doberman? This pooch with the fancy yellow collar is simply unbelievable. He can walk a high narrow board, move backwards through a maze, jump a series of chest-high hurdles, leap through a hoop only about twelve inches in diameter and held shoulder high, and scale a wall ten feet tall. The trick with the greatest audience appeal involves feigning a lack of courage. Presented with a difficult task, he will run to a wooden chest labeled "Alex's Box," lift the hinged cover with his nose, hop in, let the lid bang down, and then slowly raise it a couple of inches and peek out to see if the danger is still present. Alex is a remarkable animal!

Will the perceptions that young people have of the church and the quality of the experiences they have in connection with it determine whether or not they decide to remain in its fellowship as they pass out of adolescence? Will youth continue to do only that for which they are reinforced? Is this criteria for behavior useful?

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Now how do they get a dog to do things like that? By careful work in which the trainer rewards (usually with food) every desired move and ignores every deviation from the proscribed routine. This process of reinforcement takes much patience, but the teachers know that eventually the animals will repeat the behaviors that prove satisfying and eliminate those that do not pay off.

Human beings are often just as predictable as was Alex. We learn the same way. Pioneer educational psychologist, E. L. Thorndike, first set forth several "laws of learning." His "Law of Effect" states that a response is strengthened if it is followed by pleasure and weakened if followed by displeasure. Humans continue to do things that meet basic needs; they discontinue behaviors that do not meet needs in some way.

Now what about the church? Will the perceptions that young people have of the church and the quality of the experiences they have in connection with it determine whether or not they decide to remain in its fellowship as they pass out of adolescence? Will youth continue to do only that for which they are reinforced? Is this criteria for behavior useful? Consider this response from a youth:

"I have been disappointed by the lack of religion in my church. Every Sabbath the services are more like business meetings. I think that if there were more spirit

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in the church, if people would not set double standards, if the sermons would be worth hearing (and be the highlight of people's weekly experiences), we might not be having the problems (\$) we have in the church. From what I have seen, Adventists, in their effort to be Christlike and spread His word, have become more like the very people who killed him—the pharisees. The legalism and constant concern about the almighty dollar disgust me. Fortunately, not every Adventist is like this; many are my best friends, and I have great memories from academy about Christian experiences with good friends. I love them, God, the truth, and also the church. But I think it should change. It's turning evil. I guess it won't get better, though. This has been predicted—Laodicea."

Now here is a young man who believes in the church and wants to be loyal to it. But his religious experience is turning sour. If this trend continues, he is at risk and may eventually drop out. Remember, people will not continue in something that no longer proves satisfying. Attitudes toward the local congregation are of vital importance in determining what happens to the religious experience of a person a few years down the road. What one thinks "now" impacts what one will think "then." How the church teaches religion seems to be directly related to how the youth "feels" his or her church is. Climate issues loom important to our church and need discussion and

Creating Climate

Gail Rice, Ed.D., Tells this story.

I was particularly anxious to meet Isabel, one of my walking partners, this morning. Last night her teenage son attended his senior prom. The entire Sunday congregation had been concerned about what might happen to her son and the three other young people from their church who attended the local high school and would be going to the prom. Her particular church did not frown on dancing, but drinking and promiscuous sex were considered most inappropriate, and the congregation was determined to do everything they could to reduce the temptations to engage in the customary post-prom drinking and carousing. *(Continued on the next page)*

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resolution if change is to happen.

Congregational Climate

With this in mind, *Valuegenesis* asked the youth to think about the local church that they attend and indicate how true of that church were each of fifteen statements. A five-point response format ranged from "not at all true" to "very true." The list below shows the combined percentages of those who answered either "quite true" or "very true."

It feels warm	44%
It accepts people who are different	60%
It is friendly	61%
Strangers feel welcome	49%
I learn a lot	34%
Most members want to be challenged to think about religious issues and ideas	35%
It challenges my thinking	31%
It encourages me to ask questions	28%
It expects people to learn and think	40%
It is boring	28%
It is open to new ideas	37%
It is caring	60%
It emphasizes rules and regulations	43%
It emphasizes grace and forgiveness	58%
It accepts me as I am	66%

The first four statements have been combined into

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a scale called "Warm Church Climate." It measures the extent to which the young perceive their congregations as warm, friendly places where people, even those who are different, feel at home. Unfortunately, from a third to more than a half could not give a wholehearted endorsement to the individual items. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average for the scale was 3.5 with essentially no difference between the way students in Adventist schools and those in public schools saw their congregations. When this information is contrasted with youth of five major denominations and the Southern Baptist Convention the data is even more stark.

Also, the older the students were, the less warmth they perceived. Seventh-graders averaged 3.89 while seniors averaged only 3.24. On individual items from 15% to 27% fewer seniors than sixth-graders believed these qualities to be quite or very true of their congregations.

Yet this sense of a warm and friendly climate is important. The Warm Church Climate Scale was correlated between .20 and .29 with frequency of devotional behaviors, satisfaction with Adventist standards, overall maturity of faith, vertical faith, importance of religion, perceptions of their families as being warm and loving, perceptions of a high quality of family worship, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was also correlated at .36 with having

(Story Continued)

I listened in amazement as she described what the church members had done for the four students. A number of adults (none of them parents of the young people) planned a special evening. The young people were picked up by a beautiful white limousine and driven to one of their member's homes on the hillside overlooking the city lights. There they were treated to a 9-course dinner, prepared and elegantly served on the formally decorated patio by tuxedo-clad church member waiters.

What a caring church!

Gail Taylor Rice, Ed. D. is a member of the *Valuegenesis* Project Team

Evidence of Warmth

In the Adventist Church in Romania large percentages of Adventist congregations consist of young people. Warmth, belonging and involvement are major themes there. The church collectively plans for activities that will interest the younger congregation and "involves the youth in activities that go on in the churches most of the day on Sabbaths."

Roger Dudley, *Passing on the Torch* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), p. 133.

Young people are looking for warmth and acceptance.

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Adventism as a life goal and with denominational loyalty. Church climate seems important to one's life goal and loyalty.

Young people are looking for warmth and acceptance. One young woman wrote us: "I have attended the Adventist church all my life, but I have not gone for about three months now. I stopped going for many different reasons. Our particular church is filled with hypocrites and two-faced people. Instead of working things out about problems, they dwell on prolonging the problems.

"Sometimes I go with my boyfriend to the Grace Baptist Church. The pastor always speaks a great sermon. The people are friendly and really caring."

Of course, she is a bit judgmental. But like the baseball umpire, she "calls 'em like she sees 'em," and that is what will determine her future behavior. Incidentally, when Adventist youth were compared with the young people of five mainline Protestant denominations on this same scale, the Adventists averaged lower at every grade level, especially in the upper grades.

Another scale was formed from the fifth through the ninth statements given above. These five items were labeled the "Thinking Church Climate Scale." As can be seen from a study of the content, it seeks perceptions as to whether the church climate encourages reasoning and exploring new ideas rather than

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mindless conformity. In other words, Do you have to park your brains to be a good Adventist?

The Thinking Church Climate Scale is strongly correlated with the Warm Church Climate Scale (.62) but is an even more important predictor of values and commitment. It was correlated between .20 and .29 with satisfaction with Adventist standards, endorsement of standards, horizontal faith, frequency of prayer, perceptions of their families as warm and caring, and time spent in intergenerational church contact. It was correlated between .30 and .39 with witnessing behaviors, frequency of devotional behaviors, importance of religion, value of service, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. Finally, it was correlated between .40 and .49 with Adventism as a life goal, denominational loyalty, vertical faith, and overall faith maturity.

Unfortunately, important as it is to any system of nurture and development, such a climate seems to be scarce. Note that only about a third of the youth saw their congregations as places that respect and foster thinking. The average on this scale, with a high of 5, was only 3.0, and public school students rated their congregations slightly—but not significantly—higher than students in our schools.

Furthermore, the older students were more likely to find the thinking component missing. The scale average declined from 3.3 in the seventh grade to 2.75 in the twelfth. Once again, youth from the five mainline

Congregational Climate: Thinking

How true of your church are each of these statements? (% "quite" or "very" true)

Question	Grade 6	12
I learn a lot	64%	24%
Most members want to be challenged to think about religious issues and ideas	42%	31%
It challenges my thinking	49%	22%
It encourages me to ask questions	45%	23%
It expects people to learn and think	56%	33%

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Learning to think for oneself is an important part of achieving responsible adulthood. If our young people come to feel that the climate of the congregation is antagonistic to that purpose, we will likely lose them.

Protestant denominations averaged higher on perceptions of a thinking climate in their congregations at every grade level than did Adventist young people.

Learning to think for oneself is an important part of achieving responsible adulthood. If our young people come to feel that the climate of the congregation is antagonistic to that purpose, we will likely lose them. One young man put it this way:

“Church has become very boring, and I attend only because if I don’t, my parents get all upset. The religion is fine, but the whole atmosphere of the church will just kill it every time.”

The last six statements in the above list consist of two that are negative and four that are positive. The perceived high emphasis on rules and regulations has been noted in the last chapter. It seems particularly alarming that only a little more than a third saw the church as open to new ideas and that no more than two-thirds believed that their congregations emphasized grace and forgiveness, were caring, or accepted them as they were.

Adventist Churches in General

We move for a space from the particular to the general. The respondents were told: “We would like to learn your personal opinion about Adventist churches. . . . Try to answer each question based on what you

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think, even if your knowledge is limited.” Five choices ranged from “I definitely disagree” to “I definitely agree.” For each of the nine statements the percentages are the combined choices of those who answered, “I tend to agree” or “I definitely agree.” (See sidebar on the right).

The first five statements were formed into a scale entitled “Churches Need to Modernize.” To make high scores favor the need for modernization, reverse scoring was employed for statements two and three. Note that only minorities believed that churches are exciting and interesting or that they are okay the way they are now. More than a third felt that churches were turning youth off to Adventism, nearly a half saw them in need of a great deal of change, and over 60% called for them to become more modern in their thinking.

On the Churches Need to Modernize Scale of 1 to 5, the youth averaged 3.3—part way between “I’m not sure” and “I tend to agree.” The difference is slight, but at 3.2 the students in public schools were a little less likely to call for modernization.

As to the last four items, only about a fourth wanted to see more emphasis on traditional Adventist values. The word “traditional” frightens off most adolescents. About six out of ten believed that our churches were healthy (not too good), and nearly a fourth saw them as dying (not too good either). Whether or not the young people are correct in their observa-

Churches Need to Modernize

- Need to become more modern in their thinking (61%).
- Are exciting and interesting (36%).
- Should stay just as they are (21%).
- Are turning young people off to Adventism (38%).
- Are in need of a great deal of change (46%).
- Need to put more emphasis on traditional Adventist values (27%).
- Are healthy (60%).
- Are dying (24%).
- Are helping young people accept and appreciate Adventism (46%).

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tions is not the point. They will act on their perceptions, and these findings make it clear that with far too many of our younger generation, we have an image problem. We need to fix it.

Religious Education Programs

Now back to the particular. The instructions ran: "Think about your experience with religious education at your church. Religious education includes Sabbath School, Bible studies, youth groups, camping, projects, choir, retreats, AY or MV, and other such programs. For each of these statements, tell how true it is for you." The five-point response format ranged from "not at all true" to "very true." In the list that follows, the percentages represent the combined responses of those who answered "true" or "very true."

- I can be myself when at church. 45%
- I look forward to going to things at my church. 36%
- I go to things at my church because I want to. 50%
- My teachers or adult leaders know me very well. 40%
- My teachers or adult leaders are warm and friendly. 56%
- My teachers or adult leaders care about me. 57%

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- Programs at my church are interesting. 31%
- Programs at my church make me think.. 27%
- My church offers enough things for kids my age. 29%
- My church feels like a prison. 13%

The first three statements comprise the Accepting Church Climate Scale. It seeks to measure how welcome and "at home" the youth feel in their churches. The answer seems to be: "not very." Less than half (average 44%) attended functions with desire or enthusiasm or felt accepted as they were. Out of a possible 5, the average score on the scale was 3.1, equivalent to "somewhat true." A lukewarm endorsement at best.

Comparisons with non-Adventist youth are not good either. For example, while only 45% of our youth felt it was true that "I can be myself when at church," 77% of the mainline Protestant youth and 82% of the Southern Baptists felt that way. Here is how one of our teenagers put it:

"I used to be an active member of my church, but not any more. I hardly go to church anymore. What for? Every time people criticize the way I dress, the way I talk, the way I walk. It seems like everything I do someone from the church has to be there criticizing. They have even taken my father to meetings because of me.

"But don't get me wrong. I'm not the kind of

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person that parties all the time. I'm more of a quiet and conservative person. But I like to be in style! And I don't know what is so wrong about that. My parents agree with me. They don't see anything wrong with the way I dress. It's only the people from church that see it."

Now, of course, I don't know whether or not this young lady's behavior can be accommodated under the umbrella of Adventism. But it seems evident that her fellow members have not handled the matter in a way that allowed her to feel accepted and cherished in that congregation. And perceiving one's church as an accepting, welcoming place is an important part of the package of spiritual nurture and growth.

For example, the Accepting Church Climate Scale was correlated between .20 and .29 with witnessing activities, Adventist orthodoxy, church attendance, horizontal faith, a grace orientation to salvation, frequency of personal prayer, value of service, tithing, perceptions of their families as warm and loving, and purpose in life. Negative correlations of the same strength were found with wanting to make one's own rules and live as one wants, materialism, and at-risk behaviors.

The scale was correlated between .30 and .39 with satisfaction with Adventist standards, overall endorsement of standards, intergenerational church contact, religiousness of peers, and importance of

Perceiving one's church as an accepting, welcoming place is an important part of the package of spiritual nurture and growth.

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religion. It was correlated between .40 and .49 with Adventism as a life goal, frequency of devotional behaviors, denominational loyalty, vertical faith, overall maturity of faith, perceptions of high quality in their family worships, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was also correlated at .53 with perceptions of a thinking church climate and at .64 with the Attitudes toward Teachers at the Church Scale.

This latter scale was composed of the fourth, fifth, and sixth statements in the above list and seeks to measure the extent to which youth perceived that their teachers and leaders in the church religious education programs were personally interested in them and were warm, friendly, and caring. Only about half of the youth (average 51%) perceived their leaders and teachers this way. On the five-point scale, the average score was 3.4. Furthermore, as the youth became older, they perceived their leaders as less warm and friendly. For example, 72% of those in grade six indicated that "My teachers or adult leaders care about me." This proportion suffered a steady decline to 52% in grade twelve.

We don't compare very well here with other denominations either. While 57% of the Adventist teenagers felt that "My teachers or adult leaders care about me," 79% of the mainline youth and 82% of the Southern Baptists so indicated.

What are we learning?

We have established that a caring, supportive environment is essential to Christian nurture. Adventist youth with high faith maturity and denominational loyalty are those who perceive they are surrounded with several caring environments—home, school, and church. *Valuegenesis* research has shown that one is not enough. The chances for maturity and loyalty increase dramatically as the number of positive environments improve.

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Powerful unique predictors of the Accepting Church Climate

Grades six to eight

- Perceptions that leaders and teachers in the congregation were warm and caring.
- Perceptions of a thinking climate in the congregation.
- Quality of family worship.
- Time spent in intergenerational church.
- Contact, and quality of the school religion program.

Grades nine to twelve

All five of those above in descending order were important predictors, plus:

- Peer religiousness.
- Perceptions of a warm congregational climate.
- Number of close friends who are Adventists.

The most powerful unique predictors of the Accepting Church Climate Scale were determined by the multiple regressions. For grades six to eight, they were the perceptions that leaders and teachers in the congregation were warm and caring, perceptions of a thinking climate in the congregation, quality of family worship, time spent in intergenerational church contact, and quality of the school religion program. For grades nine to twelve, all five of these variables, in the same order, were important predictors, but three others also made significant contributions: peer religiousness, perceptions of a warm congregational climate, and number of close friends who are Adventists. Here we see that caring people in the congregation, meaningful religious education, and associations with spiritual friends all combine to influence a positive attitude toward the church. Youth want to know that they will be well-received, have something worthwhile to do, and have friends with whom to share these experiences. Then they will warm up to the church.

The last four statements on the above list are not included in any scale, but are interesting in their own right. Only about a third of the youth saw religious education programs at their churches as interesting, thoughtful, or complete. Here again, we stack up poorly vis-a-vis other religious communities. While only 31% of the Adventists found the programs interesting, 66% of the mainline youth and 74% of the

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southern Baptists found their programs interesting. Concerning programs that “make me think,” it was Adventists, 27%; mainline denominations, 62%; and Southern Baptists, 64%. We are *not* doing something right.

Learning at the Church

Well, what would be appealing? The youth were asked: “What kinds of programs and events interest you? Listed below are some things a . . . church could offer. For each one, mark an answer to show how interested you would be in learning about it at . . . church.” The percentages of those who indicated they would be “interested” or “very interested” are shown on the right in the sidebar.

As we noted in chapter 2, it is certainly a cause for celebration that so many wanted to learn more about a deeper relationship with God. A majority were ready to take on Adventism and the Bible also. Given the universal human interest in sex, we may wonder why less than a fourth would like to learn more. If it is because the young people don't think the church is the proper place to go for their sex education, we have a big problem. Youth need to see that religion speaks relevantly to every area of human life and especially to issues of such core importance. And of course, all of these subjects will have to be planned and presented in

What would you like to see happen in the church?

- Gaining a deeper relationship with God 77%
- The Bible 67%
- Study Adventism 55%
- How to talk with my parents 44%
- Other races and ethnic groups 43%
- Drugs and alcohol education 28%
- Sexuality education 22%

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“Which ONE of the following best describes the reason you were baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist?”

- I have not yet been baptized as an SDA (18%).
- I automatically accepted my parents' religion (11%).
- I was part of a baptismal class, and everyone was expected to be baptized (9%).
- I decided to be baptized in order to keep peace in the family (3%).
- I made a personal choice and requested baptism (50%).
- None of these apply to me (9%).

a way that makes them exciting and meaningful to adolescents.

A Continuing Commitment

What we really want to know is: How likely is it that these young people will make Seventh-day Adventist Christianity a core of their life-style as they proceed through adulthood? We asked: “Which ONE of the following best describes the reason you were baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist?” (See sidebar on the left for their answers).

It's encouraging that half have been baptized as a result of personal choice and that only about a fourth were influenced by some type of pressure. Those who enter with eyes open are more likely to stay by “the stuff.” But the follow-up question is even more important: “If you have been baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist, how do you feel about it now?” Five potential responses were listed. Young people were told to mark all that applied. Since many checked more than one answer, the percentages in the list at the right total more than 100%.

Here is something very interesting. Even though only half of the youth were baptized as a result of personal choice, better than two-thirds were glad they had taken the step. In a number of cases, an action taken without deliberate choice eventually grew into a

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meaningful commitment. Furthermore, in spite of all the nonvalid reasons for being baptized that many offered, at the time of the survey only 6% wished that they hadn't undergone this experience.

And that brings us to the big question—perhaps the most important question of the study—the question that lies at the bottom line: “When you are 40 years old, do you think you will be active in the Adventist Church?”

No chance	2%
Small chance	7%
Fair chance	19%
Good chance	45%
Excellent chance	27%

So nearly three-fourths (72%) believed that the chances of their staying in the church are good or excellent. Of course, things may not turn out that way. Some of these may later give up. But the likelihood of retaining the last two groups is far greater than if they had already made up their minds that they were going to leave. On the other hand, let's not “write off” the youth in the first two groups. We can't afford to give up on 10% of our adolescents—or on any percent, for that matter. We need to do everything possible to keep them positive toward the church. And let's not quote that undocumented statistic that argues that 75% of the youth of the church are leaving it. *Valuegenesis* does not support this kind of conclusion.

Feelings about baptism

- I feel I was too young to have made such a decision (31%).
- I wish I hadn't been baptized (6%).
- It's no big deal; it's just one of those things you do (11%).
- It was the beginning of my adult faith commitment (27%).
- I am glad I was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist (68%).

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The mean score on this five-point item was 3.9 for those in Adventist schools and 3.8 for those in public schools. Our students are slightly more likely to see themselves in the church at age 40, but the difference is not nearly what it should be, given our immense outlay of money and personnel in Christian education.

If this question is so vital, what factors predict a favorable reply on it? Many desirable variables combine to make up a package which relates to probable retention. For example, the Intention to Remain an Adventist scores were correlated between .20 and .29 with positive attitudes toward Adventist schools, witnessing activities, having Adventist friends, church attendance, perceptions of their congregations as having a warm and caring climate, horizontal faith, value of service, tithe paying, time spent in church programming, intergenerational church contact, perceptions of their families as warm and loving, and a grace orientation to salvation. Negative correlations of the same strength were found with wanting to make one's own rules and live as one pleases, materialism, and at-risk behaviors.

Intention to remain an Adventist was correlated between .30 and .39 with Adventist orthodoxy, satisfaction with Adventist standards, perceptions of their congregations as having a thinking climate, frequency of personal prayer, perceptions of leaders and teachers at the church as being warm and caring, religiousness

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of peers, and perceptions of a high quality of their family worships. Correlations of between .40 and .49 were discovered with perceptions of an accepting climate in their congregations, frequency of devotional behaviors, overall endorsement of standards, vertical faith, overall maturity of faith, and importance of religion. Intention to remain an Adventist was correlated .53 with Adventism as a life goal and .57 with denominational loyalty.

A multiple regression analysis employing selected important variables indicated that the most powerful unique predictors of those who plan to make Adventism a lifelong commitment were a value of service, agreement with church standards, orthodoxy, peer religiousness, church youth activity, a supportive family environment, frequency of devotional practices, a grace orientation to salvation, and perceptions of a warm climate in the local congregation.

In summary, the *Valuegenesis* study identified twelve congregational effectiveness factors that promote both faith maturity and loyalty to Adventism. The first four have to do with the congregational climate and are listed on the left.

All of this reveals that many things can influence this important decision. But a very important component, over which we have a measure of control, is the climate in our local congregations. If youth find an atmosphere which is warm, caring, accepting, and

The Valuegenesis study identified twelve congregational effectiveness factors that promote both faith maturity and loyalty to Adventism.

Factor	Grades 6-8	9-12
1. Has a warm climate	58%	35%
2. Often experiences caring peers	33%	35%
3. Often experience caring adults	33%	27%
4. Has thinking climate	24%	13%
5. Teaches Adventist standards	63%	81%
6. Teachers are caring and supportive	49%	33%

FAITH IN THE BALANCE

Factor	Grades 6-8	9-12
7. Programs are interesting	43%	27%
8. Emphasizes drug/alcohol education	41%	59%
9. Programs are thought-provoking	38%	23%
10. Emphasizes sexuality education	34%	58%
11. Frequent intergenerational programing	29%	25%
12. Emphasizes giving help to poor and hungry	18%	24%

which, at the same time, invokes intellectual challenge—treating them as thinking adults-to-be—the probability will be greatly enhanced that they will want to make a lifetime commitment to the church. As one young man expressed it:

“I like the Adventist church, but it seems as though it is not very stable. We all need to unite with our common love for God. But instead it seems as though some people are ultraconservative, and some are too liberal, and it seems to be dividing the church. Some like Celebration churches; some don’t like them. We can worship differently and still love the same God and even be in the same denomination. I pray that our church will grow strong in the love of God.”

The data point to a significant need in the church. Local congregations must find ways to foster the Christlikeness that models acceptance of everyone, love to all, and significant caring for others. These climate issues seem crucial to explore. This non-judgmental, loving, accepting climate which typifies a grace environment is desperately needed in local congregations. If we fail to help the churches develop concern for climate issues, more youth may vote with their feet and find other places which nurture their need for love and care. What better place to experience the love of Christ than in our churches. Here is a challenge.

Chapter 11

From Inside Out

Keith Miller once wrote that his first attempts to live a Christian life in his own home were almost disastrous. He decided to rise early in the morning to pray and study the Bible. His three small children were very curious about their Daddy’s new regimen. They would tiptoe into the room, crawl into his lap, and whisper loudly: “What are you doing, Daddy, and why are you reading that book?”

Attempts to explain used up his devotional time and left him late and irritable. One morning he told the children to “be quiet and get out of here. Daddy’s busy!” From the next room he heard his five-year-old daughter, sniffing back tears, ask her mother: “What’s

One goal of this chapter is to enrich the devotional lives of families in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and increase dialogue among family members regarding faith.

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the matter with Daddy?" Her reply: "Oh, he's learning how to be a good Christian so that he can love the people downtown." Personal piety misplaced family concern.

In character development the family is foundational. Our mission to assist our young people to develop faith, values, and commitment begins here. Not only is the home the most important influence in acquiring a value system, but what happens here impacts on how the youth will relate to the other two major sources of influence: the church and the school. This mission field must be primary both in sequence and in emphasis.

For an update on the Keith Miller story consider this letter which just arrived from a young man. "Something else that has made me get away from the church is my father." At this point we are prepared to hear what a hypocrite the dad is, and how he has negated Christianity by his compromising life-style. Or maybe he displays a rigid legalism and lack of love that turns his children off to his religion. The youth continued to my surprise.

"He is always into church. He has meetings almost every Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday. He never dedicates any time for us, his family. He is out there bringing lives to God while he's losing the ones at home."

Tragedy occurs when home and church work at

See Keith Miller, *A Second Touch* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1967), pp. 37-39.

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cross purposes. In this chapter we will consider the home backgrounds of our sample of young people and how these backgrounds have influenced the development of the faith and values possessed by these youth.

Family Structures

Previous research has shown that homes that are religiously united provide the best environment for the development of a mature value system. "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3 NKJV) We found that 81% of the fathers and 94% of the mothers of our youth sample were presently members of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Using this information and two other questions which asked how old the young person was when each parent joined the church, a rather complicated scale was constructed, called Biological Adventist Scale. Higher scores on this scale indicate more likelihood that both parents were baptized before the respondents' birth—in other words, a tendency to be "biological Adventists"—while low scores are given when only one parent is a member and that parent joined sometime after the birth of the young person.

Scores can range between 1 and 5. While mean scores are difficult to interpret, it is interesting to note that the average score for those in Adventist schools was 4.0, while the average for those in public schools

Biological Adventists are those whose parents were baptized into the Adventist church before the birth of their children.

Biological Adventists are more likely to be in the Adventist school system.

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- 44% of the Valuegenesis youth sample were of ethnic background.

- 86% usually spoke English.

- 7% usually spoke Spanish.

- 2% usually spoke Korean.

- 5% usually spoke other languages at home.

"These second generation Adventist may have religious needs that are different from other youth raised in the church."

was only 3.5. Not surprisingly, biological Adventists are more likely to be in the Adventist school system. We can assume that when both parents are long-time members, they are more likely to agree on providing a Christian education for their children. The correlation between being a biological Adventist and the percentage of education obtained in denominational schools was .34. Being a biological Adventist also was correlated .22 with the number of close friends who were Adventists.

Other helpful background information dealt with languages spoken in the home and country of origin for the parents. Most of the youth usually spoke English (96.5%). Nearly 2% usually spoke Spanish, and fractions of a percentage spoke French, Korean, or another language. When asked, "What language do most of the people in your home usually speak?" however, the response was somewhat different. Only 86% usually spoke English, about 7% Spanish, nearly 2% Korean, and 5% some other language. A cultural shift from one generation to another is occurring in at least 10% of the homes represented. These second generation Adventists may have religious needs that are different as well.

The survey asked the young people where their parents were born. Approximately three-fourths were native to the North American Division with the others distributed as follows:

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Country of Origin	Mother	Father
• United States or Canada	74.0%	73.7%
• Another English-speaking country	4.8%	5.0%
• A Spanish-speaking country	9.4%	8.8%
• A country where neither English or Spanish is the primary language	11.8%	12.5%

Perhaps the most important component of family structure is the intactness of the parents' marriage. While 81.5% indicated that they lived all or most of the time in a family with two parents, evidence indicates that in some of those cases the family is a blended one. Nearly 77% said that their parents were not divorced or separated, 20% said that they were, nearly 2% indicated that their parents were never married, and a final 1% checked that they were not sure.

The divorce rate may be a bit higher than 20%. Some of the young people who said their parents were not divorced or separated may have referred to their present family rather than to their biological parents. Several other recent studies of large samples of Adventist youth have indicated that 23% to 27% have parents who have undergone a divorce.

Religiousness of Parents

Parents are a first and important continuing source of the values acquired and maintained by young people.

See Roger L. Dudley and Margaret G. Dudley, "Religion and Family Life among Seventh-day Adventists," *Family Science Review* 2 (November 1989), pp. 359-372.

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We asked: "Which of the following best describes, in your opinion, the way your father is religious?" (Answers are on the left in the sidebar.)

Students in Adventist schools perceived their Dads as somewhat more religious than did those in public schools: 4.0% versus 3.7% on a five-point scale. The obvious explanation is that more religious fathers are more likely to provide a Christian education for their children.

Religiousness of father did not correlate strongly (.20 or greater) with many variables, but it was close (.19) on intention to remain an Adventist at age 40 and correlated .25 with perceptions of the family as warm and caring and .28 with the overall enforcement of church standards by the family. It was also correlated at .33 with frequency of family worship.

When the same question was asked concerning the mothers, the results were as follows:

- She is not religious at all. 2%
- She is not very religious. 4%
- She does religious things, but it doesn't seem to matter much in how she leads her life. 6%
- Although she is religious, it is not easy to tell how it influences her life. 32%
- She is deeply religious. It is evident that her faith has a big impact on how she lives her life. 56%

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Mothers were somewhat more religious than fathers. Again, students in our school system perceived their mothers as slightly more religious than did those in public schools: 4.4 versus 4.2 on a five-point scale. But note that even public school mothers were seen as more religious than church school fathers.

The religiousness of mothers was also correlated between .20 and .29 with several important variables: denominational loyalty, enforcement of church standards, perceptions of a warm and caring family, frequency of family worship, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40.

But a parent needs to do more than just be religious. He/she needs to communicate that faith. The youth were asked: "How often does your father or mother talk with you about their faith or religious experiences they have had?"

	Father	Mother
• Never	31%	17%
• Less than once a month	24%	23%
• About once a month	11%	14%
• About 2-3 times a month	12%	16%
• About once a week	8%	11%
• Several times a week	9%	11%
• Once a day	2%	4%
• More than once a day	3%	4%

It would appear that a great opportunity for the transmission of faith and values is being missed. Only

Father's Religiousness

- He is not religious at all (8%).
- He is not very religious (8%).
- He does religious things, but it doesn't seem to matter much in how he leads his life (7%).
- Although he is religious, it is not easy to tell how it influences his life (33%).
- He is deeply religious. It is evident that his faith has a big impact on how he lives his life (44%).

A parent needs to do more than just be religious.

He/she needs to communicate that faith.

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22% of the fathers and 30% of the mothers were communicating personal religion even as often as once a week. Large percentages did so seldom or never.

Yet the oversight seems not to have resulted generally from embarrassment or discomfort on the part of the parents. (See sidebar on left.)

Over three-fourths of the fathers and nearly nine out of ten mothers were seen as being comfortable or very comfortable in discussing their faith. This suggests that the lack of sharing within the family results from oversight or busyness. Parents might well decide to be more intentional (but still natural and spontaneous) in talking about faith to their adolescents.

Family Climate

While conversation about faith may be important in helping youth to develop a value system, the climate or atmosphere of the home is even more vital. No matter how noble our profession if our children do not experience our families as happy and fulfilling, they will not want our values. Thus the young people were asked to respond to the following statements on a five-point scale from "definitely disagree" to "definitely agree." The percentages in the sidebar on the next page represent the combined responses of those who answered either "I tend to agree" or "I definitely agree."

The youth were asked how comfortable their parents were in talking with others about their faith and what God means to them.

	Father	Mother
• Not comfortable	23%	12%
• Comfortable	40%	46%
• Very comfortable	37%	42%

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The situation is better than we might have expected, given the upheavals and rebellions of adolescence. Around three-fourths of the homes had a positive, supportive climate. (See right sidebar.) Of course, that still leaves many homes in trouble so we must not spend too long in congratulating ourselves. Plenty of work remains to build happy Christian homes that will send forth well-integrated, principled children.

All the items but the last were combined into a Family Climate Scale with an average score of 4.0 on a five-point continuum. Less than a tenth of a point separated the average scores of students in the two school systems. This scale was correlated between .20 and .29 with Adventism as a life goal, perceptions of a thinking climate in the local congregation, perceptions of a warm and supportive climate in the local congregation, denominational loyalty, faith maturity, a grace orientation to salvation, salience of religion, frequency of family worship, a positive attitude toward one's teachers, purpose in life, perceptions of an accepting church climate, frequency of personal talks with parents, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was correlated at the same strength but negatively with dissatisfaction with Adventist standards, belief that the church needs to modernize, and at-risk behaviors.

The Family Climate Scale was correlated between .30 and .39 with vertical faith, perceptions that congre-

- My parents give me help and support when I need it (80%).
- There is a lot of love in my family (77%).
- My parents often tell me they love me (76%).
- I get along well with my parents (73%).
- My family life is happy (72%).
- If I break one of the rules set by my parents, I usually get punished (62%).

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Thus, homes that feature frequent and meaningful discussions between parents and children and that share in interesting family-worship experiences are likely to possess an atmosphere that will be perceived positively by the youth.

“How many times in the last month have you had a good conversation with one of your parents that lasted 10 minutes or more?”

Never	10%
Once	14%
Twice	15%
Three times	14%
Four or more	47%

gational leaders and teachers are warm and caring, and self-esteem. Correlations of over .40 were found with frequency of personal talks with parents and with quality of family worship. Thus, homes that feature frequent and meaningful discussions between parents and children and that share in interesting family-worship experiences are likely to possess an atmosphere that will be perceived positively by the youth. Family climate is certainly an important factor in determining how young people will view religion and to what extent they will be willing to commit to it.

As noted, time spent in youth-parent interaction is an important component of climate. The students were asked: “How many times in the last month have you had a good conversation with one of your parents that lasted 10 minutes or more?” Their answers are in the sidebar at the left.

Nearly half were talking regularly, but about a fourth were communicating rarely or never. Making and taking time together can be an important consideration in influencing the development of faith and commitment. Only a tenth of a point separates the average scores of students in the two school systems.

As to the frequency with which parents talk to their offspring about what they are doing in school, only 2% said “never,” 9% said “rarely,” 30% said “sometimes,” and 59% said “often.” So nearly 90% of the parents display some interest in the scholastic progress of their

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children. We cannot tell from these data whether such talk is positive and helpful or whether it takes the form of scolding and nagging. We can only hope the former is true.

When it comes to school, assistance in difficult situations may be perceived as even more helpful than just inquiry. Nearly half of the students (49%) indicated that their parents helped them with their homework either sometimes or often, but 23% of the parents never did. Half of the parents also checked on whether or not the students have done their homework. When these two items were combined into a scale, public school students were slightly more likely to receive help than were students in Adventist schools. However, this may be because some of the parochial students were in boarding academies and, presumably, could not access their parents for help and support.

Family Limits

In a good family support is balanced with control. Character development takes place best in a climate where reasonable limits are firmly but lovingly enforced. Thus the question: “If you came home from a party and your parents found out that you had been drinking, how upset do you think they would be?” The results are at the top of the next page.

Most of these homes were not overly permissive.

Family climate is certainly an important factor in determining how young people will view religion and to what extent they will be willing to commit to it.

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“If you came home from a party and your parents found out that you had been drinking, how upset do you think they would be?”

Not at all upset	1%
A little upset	4%
Somewhat upset	11%
Very upset	32%
Extremely upset	52%

Only 1% would not be bothered at all, and 84% would be very or extremely upset. If we score these responses on a 1 to 5 scale, the average score for students in Adventist schools was only one tenth of a point higher than the average for those in public schools. In other words, parents are about as likely to be upset over such behavior regardless of where the student attends.

Concerning a milder situation the youth were asked: “How much of the time do your parents ask you where you are going or with whom you will be?” Parental involvement was still very evident—three-fourths inquiring as to whereabouts at least most of the time—even though parents are somewhat more permissive in this area than on the drinking issue.

Along this line, the youth were asked about five areas where the parents might place limits. Possible answers to the question: “How often do your parents do the following?” were: “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” or “often.” The percentages of those responding “often” are displayed below.

- Limit the amount of time for going out with friends on school nights. 35%
- Limit the amount of time you can spend watching TV. 22%
- Limit the amount of time for going out with friends on weekends. 20%
- Limit where you can listen to your choice of music. 20%

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- Limit the types of music you listen to. 16%

Fewer than one fourth of the parents often imposed these limits except in the area of going out on school nights where the figure rose to slightly greater than a third. On three of the items the most frequent response was “never”: time watching TV, 31%; type of music, 41%; and where to listen to music, 35%. In view of the fact that our respondents included those as young as sixth-graders, the limits seem fairly elastic.

On a four-point scale formed from these five items, the average score was 2.4—somewhere between “rarely” and “sometimes.” The averages were exactly the same for students in both school systems so Adventist parents of public school students were just as likely to limit (or not to limit) the activities of the young people as were those in denominational schools.

Family Worship

As we shall see, worshipping together as a family is one of the principal ways to transmit religious values. The survey asked: “How often does your family have family worship?” This was defined as “prayers or religious devotions you have together as a family, away from church.” The frequencies are listed in the sidebar at the top of the next page.

The church has promoted an ideal of daily morning and evening worship, but few (only 8%) were

“How much of the time do your parents ask you where you are going or with whom you will be?”

Never	3%
Seldom	7%
Sometimes	14%
Most times	30%
Always	46%

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following this practice. Less than a fourth practiced even daily family worship, and about half did not have it even on a weekly basis. On an eight-point scale the average score was only 4.1—several times a month but not quite weekly. Homes where students attended Adventist schools were significantly higher than those where they attended public schools (4.1 versus 3.8), but neither group gave a very good showing.

Yet frequency of worship is important. It was found to be correlated between .20 and .29 with such variables as a warm family climate, Adventism as a life goal, overall endorsement of church standards, church attendance, denominational loyalty, vertical faith, frequency of personal prayer, tithe paying, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was correlated at .32 with family limits on behavior and at .33 with frequency of private devotional practices. Of course, just conducting family worship could have a negative as well as a positive influence. What actually happens during worship time is of crucial importance. The youth were asked: "When you have family worship, how often does each of these happen?" Five answers ranging from "never" to "always" were possible. The percentages below represent the combined answers of those who said "most times" or "always."

- My father says a prayer. 61%
- My mother says a prayer. 47%
- I say a prayer. 34%

"How often does your family have family worship?" This was defined as "prayers or religious devotions you have together as a family, away from church."

Frequencies were:

- Never (26%)
- Less than once a month (11%)
- About once a month (6%)
- About 2-3 times a month (8%)
- About once a week (15%)
- Several times a week (11%)
- Once a day (15%)
- More than once a day (8%)

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- My father reads something to us. 46%
- My mother reads something to us. 42%
- I read something. 23%
- My father talks about the place of God in his life . 20%
- My mother talks about the place of God in her life. 26%
- I talk about the place of God in my life. 13%
- We talk together about some issue or idea. 45%

Two observations seem appropriate. (1) the ranking of worship components is prayer, followed by reading and discussion, with application in last place. (2) worship leaders tend to be father, mother, and youth, in that order except on personalizing the concepts being shared where the place of father and mother is reversed.

To further explore this topic the youth were asked to rate the quality of the family worship experience. Approximately 71% indicated it was interesting, and 79% that it was meaningful. Only 35% said it was the same every time, and just 13% claimed that family worship was a waste of time. The average score on a two-point scale formed from these items was 1.8 with students in the two school systems scoring exactly the same. So family worship received high marks when it happens. One could wish a higher percentage of participation however.

Two things are significant to remember regarding family worship:

1. The ranking of worship components is prayer, followed by reading and discussion, with application in last place.
2. Worship leaders tend to be father, mother, and youth in that order.

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20 Family Effectiveness Factors

1. Mother comfortable with faith talk.
2. Enforces drug standards.
3. Parents strongly oppose adolescent alcohol use.
4. Family worship is interesting and meaningful.
5. Father comfortable with faith talk.
6. Loving, caring family.
7. Punish wrong behavior.
8. Mother is highly religious.
9. Enforces standards about SDA way of life.
10. Father is highly religious.
11. Frequent parent/child communication.
12. Frequent family worship.
13. Parents set limits.
14. Parents often help with homework.
15. Mother often talks to child about her faith.
16. Father often talks to child about his faith.
17. Enforces popular cultural standards.
18. Mother and child often talk faith together.
19. Frequent family helping projects.
20. Father and child often talk faith together.

The fact that frequency and quality are not necessarily the same is revealed by noting that the correlation between the two was only .12. Yet the Quality of Family Worship Scale is an important predictor of desirable attitudes. It was correlated between .20 and .29 with evangelistic outreach (sharing faith), perceptions of the church climate as warm, horizontal faith, grace orientation to salvation, frequency of personal prayer, and value of service. It was correlated negatively at the same strength with dissatisfaction with enforcement of church standards and at-risk behaviors.

Quality of worship was correlated between .30 and .39 with Adventism as a life goal, frequency of devotional behaviors, endorsement of church standards, perceptions of a thinking climate in one's local congregation, denominational loyalty, faith maturity, importance of religion, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. Finally, it was correlated at .40 with positive attitudes toward the local church and at .42 with vertical faith. What an important influence!

The Impact of Family

We have seen that the family is the crucial laboratory in which the faith and values of young people are developed. In this chapter we have discussed a number of factors that are related to faith maturity and

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denominational loyalty, which includes the intention to remain an Adventist when one reaches forty years of age. We might call them "effectiveness factors" and group them under five headings.

1. *Mother.* When the mother is highly religious, is comfortable talking about her faith, often shares her faith with her children, and has discussions about faith with the young people, youth are more likely to mature in faith and develop commitment to the church.

2. *Father.* When the father is highly religious, is comfortable talking about his faith, often shares his faith with his children, and has discussions about faith with the young people, youth are also more likely to reveal faith maturity and denominational loyalty.

3. *Support.* When parent-child communication is frequent and positive, when family life is experienced as loving, caring, and supportive, and when parents frequently help their children with school work, youth are more likely to possess mature faith and loyalty to the denomination.

4. *Control.* When parents have strong standards, enforce them fairly, firmly, and lovingly, punish wrong behavior, and set limits on the child's use of time, the young people tend to grow in mature faith and manifest commitment and loyalty to the church. Though control factors have the least impact of any of the five groupings, that effect is positive for the home even though it is not for the school and church. This again

The strongest family-related predictor of faith and commitment in the whole study is the quality of family worship (experienced by the young person as interesting and meaningful). The second most important family predictor is the degree of family caring and support given to the adolescent.

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emphasizes the point that discipline and control can be positive when it comes from people whom the recipient knows loves him/her but usually has negative or no effects when the loving intention is in doubt.

5. *Spiritual togetherness.* When the family frequently engages in worship together, and that worship is interesting and meaningful, and when the family engages in projects to help other people, the youth are more likely to manifest mature faith and denominational loyalty. In fact, the strongest family-related predictor of faith and commitment in the whole study is the quality of family worship (experienced by the young person as interesting and meaningful). The second most important family predictor is the degree of family caring and support given to the adolescent.

So then, all the good things we want to see in the rising generation come from the inside out. They start in the nurturing family and grow out into other areas. These include not only faith maturity, denominational loyalty, and a lifetime commitment to the church, but also the importance of Adventism, the value of service to others, and the lessening of at-risk behaviors. Helping to build effective Christian homes among the membership is no doubt the single most important thing that the church can do for its youth. Family concern is a first priority in the next decades of the life of the church.

Family worship seems to a significant factor in helping youth develop a deep, rich, life-changing faith. It is interesting that something as simple to do as regular family devotions could be so helpful. Think what might happen if this family activity were reinstated in each household.

Chapter 12

The Apple And The Tree

“The education of Johnny O. Muddle, or the evolution of a young man who cheated at a service academy:

“When he was 6 years old, he was with his father when they were caught speeding. His father handed the officer a \$5 bill with his driver’s license. ‘It’s okay, son,’ his father said as they drove off, ‘everybody does it.’

“When he was 8, he was permitted at a family council, presided over by Uncle George, on the surest means to shave points off the income tax return. ‘It’s okay, kid,’ his uncle said, ‘everybody does it.’

“When he was 9, his mother took him to his first theatre production. The box office man couldn’t find

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any seats until his mother discovered an extra five dollars in her purse. 'It's okay, son,' she said, 'everybody does it.'

"When he was 12, he broke his glasses on the way to school. His Aunt Francine persuaded the insurance company they had been stolen and they collected \$27. 'It's okay, kid,' she said, 'everybody does it.'

"When he was 15, he made right guard on the high school football team. His coach showed him how to block and at the same time grab the opposing end by the shirt so the official couldn't see it. 'It's okay, kid,' the coach said, 'everybody does it.'

"When he was 16, he took his first summer job, at the big market. His assignment was to put the over-ripe tomatoes in the bottom of the boxes and the good ones on top where they would show. 'It's okay, kid,' the manager said, 'everybody does it.'

"When he was 17, his older brother, Lance, who was just under 7 feet tall, studied offers from 21 universities who needed a tall center. He selected the one that offered the biggest down payment on a new car and gave a scholarship to his girl friend, Gertrude. 'It's okay, kid,' the recruiter said, 'everybody does it.'

"When he was 18, he and a neighbor applied for the opening at the service academy. Johnny was a marginal student. His neighbor was in the upper 3 percent of his class, but he couldn't play right guard. Johnny got the assignment. 'It's okay, kid,' they told

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him, 'everybody does it.'

"When he was 19, he was approached by an upper classman who offered the test answers for \$3. 'It's okay, kid,' he said, 'everybody does it.'

"Johnny was caught and sent home in disgrace.

"How could you do this to your mother and me?' his father said. 'You never learned anything like this at home.' His brother, aunt and uncle also were shocked.

"The youth of today are failing,' said the psychiatrist. 'They refuse to determine between right and wrong.'

"More than 50 percent of our students are cheats,' said the educator. 'It's shameful the way young people carry on today.'

"The youth of today are setting a pattern that is alarming,' said the sociologist.

"What a shame,' said the moralist.

"We got those bums cleaned out,' said the commandant of the academy, 'and now we can walk tall.'

"If there's one thing the adult world can't stand, it's a kid who cheats."

Like Parent, Like Child

This classic portrayal is no doubt exaggerated. However, the central point is unmistakable and timeless. Parents—and to a lesser extent, other significant adults—have a tremendous influence on the

Jack R. Griffin, Clipping from the *Chicago Sun-Times-Evening Times Special*, Sometime before 1965.

The column followed on the heels of a widely-reported incident of cheating at a nationally famous service academy. The clipping carries no date.

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The purpose of this chapter is not to peddle guilt but to bring hope.

- Parents do have a greater influence on their off-spring than many realize.
- Parental religiousness predicts the religiousness of their children.
- Parents who attend church more frequently and who convey the message that religion is important in their lives tend to rear children with stronger religious values.
- Harmony and agreement between the father and the mother on their spiritual principles and moral behaviors are also crucial to effective transmission of values.

developing characters of young people. As the old saying goes: "The apple doesn't fall very far from the tree."

Not that parents should go around weighted with guilt and give in to despair if their children turn out to be less (perhaps considerably less) than perfect. The roots of human behavior are complex indeed, and other outside influences can counteract the work of the best parents. Even if they are convicted that they made numerous mistakes in the rearing process and that their grown children suffer the consequences of those mistakes, parents may take comfort in the fact that God offers full forgiveness for every confessed sin—even the sin of being an imperfect parent.

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is not to peddle guilt but to bring hope. Parents do have a greater influence on their offspring than many realize, and by God's grace they may make a positive contribution to the development of their characters and value systems. Considerable research has been conducted on the similarities of values between parents and children. It generally indicates that parental religiousness predicts the religiousness of their children. Parents who attend church more frequently and who convey the message that religion is important in their lives tend to rear children with stronger religious values. Harmony and agreement between the father and the mother on their spiritual principles and moral behaviors are also cru-

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cial to effective transmission of values.

Much prior research has revealed that children tend to resemble their parents in attitudes and behaviors. Even though the youth may be less traditional, they are still likely to follow along a similar pathway. The general conclusion seems to be that members of the same family resemble each other more than do people who are not related. While both father and mother have great influence on the value systems of adolescents, the weight of evidence seems to favor the mother as having the greatest impact.

What about Seventh-day Adventists? A national study of 712 individuals from 247 Adventist families found that the teenagers were significantly correlated with both their fathers and their mothers on a twenty-two item Value Attitude Scale. In addition, the youth and the fathers were significantly related on fifteen of the twenty-two individual items, and the youth and the mothers were significantly related on sixteen of the items.

In spite of the adolescents as a group being somewhat less traditional than the parents as a group, the teenagers tended to resemble their parents on the important religious values that they affirmed. While the teenagers leaned toward the nontraditional end of the scale, they tended to vary with their parents on the traditional-to-nontraditional continuum. That is, more traditional parents tended to have children who were

For a review of some of the most important research on the transmission of values from parent to child see Roger L. Dudley, *Passing on the Torch: How to Convey Religious Values to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1986), chapter 14; Roger L. Dudley and Margaret G. Dudley, "Transmission of Religious Values from Parents to Adolescents, *Review of Religious Research* 28 (September 1986), pp. 3-15.

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See Dudley, chapter 15;
Dudley and Dudley, *op cit*.

*What does
Valuegenesis
suggest as to the
impact of par-
ents on the faith,
values, and
commitment of
Adventist youth?*

more traditional than their peers, although less traditional than their parents. And less traditional parents tended to have children who were less traditional than their peers and also even less traditional than their parents.

What does *Valuegenesis* suggest as to the impact of parents on the faith, values, and commitment of Adventist youth?

Matching up the Families

The *Valuegenesis* study surveyed both students in Adventist schools and Adventist parents of those students. Although all questionnaires were anonymous and confidential, certain information on them made it possible to match those of parents with those of their children—at least some of the time.

The matching is far from complete, however. Surveys were received from 10,641 students and only 1567 parents. Remember that the students were administered the survey at school as part of their regular class work while the parents had to make the effort to come to the school on an evening or a Sunday to take it. Many of the students were from senior boarding academies where most parents did not live in the community. Other parents were, no doubt, too busy or not sufficiently motivated to make the effort. We felt we did well to get 1567 to participate in the parental

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section of *Valuegenesis*.

In addition to this limitation, the survey information was not always sufficient to make a correct match. Even where surveys could be positively matched, correlations on every scale were not possible because people often omit an item, and any omission results in having to drop that particular case out of the correlation analysis. Therefore, the number of pairs varies with each correlation ranging from a maximum of 418 pairs to a minimum of 286 pairs for the correlations we will report. Most of the cases are within 15, plus or minus, of 400, and only two fall below 300. Ideally, we desired a better match, but 400 parent-child dyads still provide a strong base for drawing conclusions as to the extent of parental influence in value formation. And the trends that the research suggest are helpful in formulating an action plan for both families and churches in regards to the nurture of their youth.

Two sets of analyses were performed—one for students in grades six to eight with their parents and the other for academy students with their parents. We will report only correlations significant at the .05 level (only five chances out of one hundred that no relationship exists). Most are also significant at the .01 level (only one chance in a hundred that the two are not related). Correlations run from .12 to .45, but most are between .15 and .30.

Here is a list of the areas where students in grades

“And the trends that the research suggest are helpful in formulating an action plan for both families and churches in regards to the nurture of their youth.”

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six to eight were correlated with their parents.

1. Frequency of sharing one's faith; witnessing activities.
2. Altruism; helping others.
3. The belief that our churches need to modernize.
4. Horizontal faith; religion is relations with fellow humans.
5. Overall maturity of faith.
6. Vertical faith; religion is relations with God.
7. Grace orientation to salvation.
8. Frequency of personal prayer.
9. The belief that our grade schools need to modernize
10. Service to others as a high value.

Certainly, an impressive list! Next, we present the areas in which students in grades nine to twelve were correlated with their parents:

1. Attitudes toward Adventist schools.
2. Adventist orthodoxy.
3. Denominational loyalty.
4. Rejection of housing segregation.

The largest group of variables had significant correlations for both groups of students (grade school and academy) with their parents. The following areas are doubly significant in understanding the influence of family nurture on value systems:

1. The belief that our academies need to modernize.
2. Number of close friends who are Adventists.
3. Holding Adventism as a life goal.

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4. Frequency of devotional behaviors.
5. Dissatisfaction with the enforcement of church standards.
6. Agreement with church standards.
7. Percentage of education obtained in Adventist schools.
8. Biological Adventist—born into home where both parents are church members.
9. Frequency of church attendance.
10. Perception of thinking climate in local congregation.
11. Perception of climate of warmth in local congregation.
12. Law orientation as a means of salvation.
13. Frequency of paying tithe.
14. Attitudes toward women pastors.

Twenty-eight areas in which significant correlations between parents and their children occurred certainly gives ample demonstration of the truth that parents are crucial shapers of the faith, commitment, and values of their children. Of course, only areas in which the adults and the youth were asked the same questions could be correlated. Many of the subjects that we explored in early chapters could not be analyzed here because the questions were unique to the youth.

While the evidence is strong, a few gaps remain. No significant relationships were found in the areas shown on the following page in the left sidebar.

A truth:

- Parents are crucial shapers of faith commitment and values of their children.

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No significant relationships were found in the following areas:

1. Agreement with church standards on substance abuse.
2. Understanding of the nature of Ellen White's writings.
3. Desire to make one's own rules and live as one pleases.
4. Materialism as a value.
5. Importance of religion.

All of these on the left are somewhat perplexing, but, perhaps, the last one is the most so. More similarity might be expected here. This last list does not say anything, however, as to the extent to which parents or youth hold to materialism or regard religion as important in their lives. It means only that the views of the young people on these subjects do not resemble those of their mothers and fathers more than they do those of other Adventist adults. In general, however, the areas of similarity far outweigh those where no significant relationships were discovered.

Fostering the Relationship

While this information may seem complex, the implications of these comparisons are both frightening and encouraging. They are frightening because they lay so much responsibility upon the shoulders of parents. Those lists above show that youth and adults have a unique relationship. As a parent, I realize that my attitudes, actions, and faults are likely to be reproduced in the lives of my offspring. Everything I do, say, and am may have eternal consequences. I cannot escape this position of influence. Just how well we model Jesus and His love has a profound influence.

Often youth look only at their parents as the model for the church. Parents who are quick to judge, argumentative, frustrated, partial in the way they love

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provide an interesting model of the love of God for their children. In our frustration as parents we are tempted to assert, "Who is sufficient for these things?" That is why reliance on the grace of God through Jesus is so important. Jesus is able to carry this load in a way that will help us produce positive outcomes.

But the results are also encouraging. Just so we can model negatively to our youth, we also know that parents can make a difference for good in the lives of their children. In view of this, what kind of life-style can we lead that will maximize our influence on the character development of the younger generation?

You will remember that there are significant things that you and I can do for our youth to enrich their lives and to provide strong values orientation. What follows is a list which reviews those factors which are most influential in assisting a values orientation in our young people.

1. Parents themselves have strong religious values.
2. Parents agree with each other on the content of those values.
3. Parents live in harmony with their stated values.
4. Parents get along well with each other. They do not often argue and fight but live in an atmosphere of marital harmony.
5. Parents operate a democratic family government, allowing input from the children and being willing to explain the reasons for necessary rules.

In our frustration as parents we are tempted to assert, "Who is sufficient for these things?" That is why reliance on the grace of God through Jesus is so important. Jesus is able to carry this load in a way that will help us produce positive outcomes.

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6. Parents are warm and loving toward their children and accepting of them.
7. Parents mingle firm control with high support. Discipline is love-oriented.
8. Parents and children get along well together, rarely arguing and fighting.
9. Parents actively teach their religious principles to their children.

What is important here is the precise interaction between parent and child. *Valuegenesis* suggests that this dialogical relationship is crucial in the development of a maturing faith. Interesting as well is the importance of educating in the popular cultural standards of the Adventist church. Parents are key here. Parents cannot consider their work done when they send their youth to Adventist schools or even when they are supporters of Adventist congregational life. The home is central. Enforcement works best here. Youth don't seem to attach the same religious significance to these behaviors when they stem from familial control. When the church or school is the center of enforcement, the church and the Gospel seem to be the losers. When we consider the subject of faith, values, and commitment, the church and the school have a very important role to play. We would not diminish that role. But it is well to remember that it all starts in the home. Family influences are paramount. Families are perhaps the most significant fac-

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tor in helping youth develop a life-giving faith and deep religious commitment. The attempt to revitalize our schools and congregations must begin here.

A Quote to Consider

"Parents must recognize that the way they are and the way they reflect the basic values of religion constitute the basic teaching methodology for the faith experience of young people. The job of the home is to provide as large a variety of faith-rich experiences as possible. The home provides the roots for faith to birth."

The Experience of Faith,
p. 102.

Some questions regarding Adventist schools emerged in Valuegenesis.

1. What impressions do Adventist school children carry with them?
2. What programs are the strongest in building faith?
3. If we could change anything, what would it be?

Chapter 13

Dear Old Golden Rule Days

*School days, school days,
Dear old Golden Rule days.
Reading and 'riting and 'rithmetic,
Taught to the tune of a hickory stick.*

*You were my queen in calico.
I was your bashful, barefoot beau.
You wrote on my slate,
I love you, Joe.
When we were a couple of kids.*

Everyone always remembers how good it was "way back when." 'You might say that long ago the emphasis was on the basics (three Rs), but character

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education was well in place (the Golden Rule), and discipline was firm (that old hickory stick). Still, the most memorable happenings of that far-off time seem to revolve around a relationship. School was the place where one found a first love, even if it was puppy-like in quality. A walk around the campus of any college or university in the springtime suggests that things haven't changed all that much.

We have examined many youth attitudes and behaviors as well as the homes and congregations that have nurtured them. But it is the schools that originally created the need for this *Valuegenesis* study. What impressions have Adventist students in the denominational educational system carried away? And how will these impressions affect their loyalty to the church? Unlike the simpler days recalled in that sentimental song, students of today are more likely to reflect on the qualities of the teachers, the administration, the academic program, the policies, and the educational climate than on the ambiance of memories.

A wide variety of attitudes toward Adventist education exists. For example, one student wrote: "Personally, I think that our boarding school system is a failure. I spent three years at a boarding Academy. I came out with a far worse opinion of Christ and religion than when I went in. They shove religion down your throat and tell you to choke on it. Boarding school is so unrealistic that by the time we graduate

Some areas of school quality have been identified in Valuegenesis Report #3:

School Quality Indicator

Commitment to Adventism

One of the primary purposes of schools is to nourish a lifelong loyalty to Adventism. This aim is partially accomplished by surrounding the young with teachers and peers who value Adventism. Another key strategy to encourage loyalty to Adventism is teaching and modeling Adventist standards.

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and move out to the real world the shock either makes us stay in the SDA system or drop the church completely. Since I have graduated, I have not attended church and neither have any of my friends.”

Contrast that response, however, with this declaration: “Christian education gave me a personal relationship with Christ. If and when I have children, I will spend every last dime I have to send them to a Christian school, at least for eight years. Even though I fought my parents on it every step of the way, it is very important that the church should support more children to go. Everyone who wants to go should be there.”

Both the positive and the negative express themselves in attitudes about schools in the Adventist system. Which are more numerous and prominent?

Attitudes toward Adventist Education

We asked the students in Adventist schools: “In your family, who chose the school you now attend?” They answered in a most interesting fashion. We have shown their responses in the sidebar at the right.

In 60% of the cases, the student made the choice, either unilaterally or with the parents, and in another 18% the student was at least consulted. It is hard to believe that 22% of the students had no input into the choice of school. This lack of participation may create problems.

Who chooses your school?

- My parents chose it without discussing it with me. (22%)
- My parents chose it after discussing it with me. (18%)
- We chose it together. (32%)
- I chose it after discussing it with my parents. 13%
- I chose it. 15%

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But suppose the student could make the choice. We asked: “If you could choose your school, what kind of school would you choose?” (See responses to the right.)

Support for the Adventist educational system was generally strong. Yet, if they had their way, a fourth of the students in our schools would not be there. That must be cause for concern and implies the need for some change in the image our schools present to their patrons. Of course, some youth will eventually be glad for their Adventist school experience even though they didn’t choose it initially, but others will be hardened against not only the school but also the church which it represents because they were not a part of the decision-making process.

To probe these attitudes further, the young people were asked to respond to five statements on a five-point scale ranging from “definitely disagree” to “definitely agree.” The percentages given represent the combined responses of those who definitely agreed or who tended to agree.

- A way must be found to provide financial aid so that any Adventist student can afford to attend an Adventist school or college (85%).
- Adventist schools provide a better academic program than do public schools (49%).
- Without Adventist schools, Adventism would decline and perhaps die (49%).

What kind of school would you choose?

- An Adventist school (75%).
- A non-Adventist religiously-related school (3%).
- A private school, not religiously related (6%).
- A public school (16%).

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- Adventist schools should be a top priority among Adventist leaders (70%).
- I'd be willing to have more money spent on Adventist schools and colleges, even if it meant other programs of the Church might suffer (39%).

Strong support was found for providing financial aid to put an Adventist education within reach of all who desire it, and nearly three-fourths believed that church leaders should make the schools a top priority. But only half were convinced that our educational system is indispensable or that it is superior to the public system, and even fewer were ready to see cuts in other areas to make the financial support possible.

These five items comprise an Attitudes toward Adventist Schools Scale. The average score on the five-point scale was 3.7, somewhere between uncertainty and a tendency to agree. As might be expected, students in public schools were a bit lower at 3.5. It would seem that much room exists for bolstering the commitment of our youth to our educational system. They are the parents of tomorrow.

The Attitudes toward Adventist Schools Scale was found to be positively correlated between .20 and .24 with Adventism as a life goal, Adventist orthodoxy, agreement with Adventist standards, perceptions of teachers as being warm and caring, mature faith, vertical faith, denominational loyalty, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. While causal

School Quality Indicator

Religious Education Program

A quality religious education program is an essential ingredient in an effective Adventist school. Other research has demonstrated that in religious schools, faith deepens when all teachers share responsibility for religious education and play an active role in religious education through modeling, using religious language, talking with students about their faith, and witnessing to their own faith.

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direction cannot be determined from correlations, it seems logical to assume that people with these qualities are more likely to assess the schools favorably.

When multiple regression analyses were used to determine the most important predictors of favorable attitudes toward Adventist schools, the following results were obtained. The strongest family variables for grades 6-8 were family enforcement of Adventist standards and quality of family worship. For grades 9-12, they were family enforcement of Adventist standards, number of close friends who are Adventists, frequency of talking with best friends about God or faith, and perceptions of the family as warm and supportive. Strong Christian homes seem to produce youth who are positive toward our educational system.

The strongest congregational variables for grades 6-8 were the feeling that the adults in the local church care about the youth and perceptions that the teachers and leaders at the local church are warm and accepting. The latter was also the most important in predicting attitudes toward the school among those in grades 9-12, followed by time spent in intergenerational church contact. It is evident that relational experiences in the congregation impact powerfully on influencing school attitudes. Students seem to transfer their congregational experiences to the school arena.

The strongest school variables for grades 6-8 were:

School Quality Indicator

Academic Program

This area of quality is very difficult to assess. In most school research, the evaluation of this area includes a rigorous study of curriculum and classroom practices.

Climate: Effective Discipline

When a caring environment is complemented by an orderly climate, students thrive. The combination of care and order is much more powerful than either one alone.

Climate: Enthusiasm

Another climate dimension important for assisting schools in achieving their purposes is an attitude of enthusiasm as measured by teacher satisfaction and school spirit. Both of them are instrumental for building and maintaining an interest in learning.

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(1) the presence of caring teachers and (2) a quality school religion program. For grades 9-12, they were: (1) competent teachers, (2) a quality school religion program, and (3) the presence of school spirit. Relationships remained vital, undergirded with quality work.

The Need for Change

In an earlier chapter we reported on the extent to which Adventist churches need to change, in the opinion of the young people. The same questions were asked concerning our elementary schools, academies, and colleges or universities. The percentages listed are the combined responses of those who indicated either "I tend to agree" or "I definitely agree."

Elementary Academy College

• Need to become more modern in their thinking.	48%	62%	34%
• Are exciting/interesting.	46%	57%	36%
• Should stay just as they are.	26%	22%	17%
• Are turning young people off to Adventism.	21%	35%	15%
• Are in need of a great deal of change.	32%	45%	23%
• Need to put more emphasis on traditional Adventist			

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values.	25%	26%	20%
• Are healthy.	62%	60%	44%
• Are dying.	18%	22%	11%
• Are helping young people accept and appreciate Adventism.	48%	47%	33%

A very interesting set of data. For elementary schools about a fourth thought the schools should stay the way they are, about half would have liked to see them modernize, and the other fourth called for a return to tradition. In general the youth called for more change for the academies than for the elementary schools and less change for the colleges.

It is well to remember that these are perceptions of the teenagers and may not correspond to reality. Most of these youth were in academy at the time of the survey and thus may have tended to judge this level more severely, although academies were rated the highest as exciting and interesting places. On the other hand, none of these students had yet studied in college so it would have been easier to have a distorted view of this level and color it rosier. The matter of most concern is that in no case on any level did a strong majority give a positive affirmation.

The first five items above were combined into scales (reversed scoring on items 2 and 3) measuring the need of schools and academies to modernize (no scale was created for colleges). On these five-point

The significant predictors from the family, congregation, and school models obtained by multiple regression were all entered into a grand model to see which variables still retained unique power to predict attitudes toward Adventist schools. *For grades 6-8, the predictors were:*

1. Family enforcement of Adventist standards,
2. A quality school religion program.

For grades 9-12, they were:

1. The presence of caring teachers in the school .
2. The number of close friends who are Adventists,
3. Family enforcement of Adventist standards,
4. A quality school religion program.

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scales, the average score for grade schools was 3.1 and for academies 3.2. This reveals a great deal of uncertainty generally and suggests that we must either provide a better product or else we must market what we have more effectively. Students from Adventist and public school systems were about the same on these evaluations.

Problems in Schools

Confidence in the system may be related to the extent to which schools are perceived to have serious problems. The survey asked: "Indicate the degree to which each of the following are a problem in your school." The choices were: "not a problem," "minor," "moderate," or "serious." The listing shows the percentages who felt that the problems were serious.

Most students did not see these problems as serious in their schools. This is not to say that the problems do not exist. The moderate category was higher than the serious one in every case but that of the physical abuse of teachers (where 86% said it was no problem at all) and went as high as 37% on the subject of tardiness of students (only 18% said this was no problem). But in general, seriousness was confined to 10% or less—still more than we would like to see.

The first three items measure what might be called truancy. On a four-point scale, where the high score

Do you have problems in your school?

- Student tardiness (11%)
- Student absenteeism (8%)
- Students cutting class (10%)
- Physical conflicts (6%)
- Vandalism (9%)
- Student possession of weapons (6%)
- Physical abuse of teachers (5%)
- Verbal abuse of teachers (7%)
- Student use of alcohol (13%)

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indicates a more serious problem, the average score was 2.3—somewhere between "minor" and "moderate." The next five items measure some form of violence. Here the moderate category never exceeded 16% and was as low as 2%. The average score was 1.7. Items 9 to 11 measure drug usage. The moderate category ranged from 11% to 18%, and the average score was 1.9—more serious than violence but not as serious as truancy.

In another view of school problems, students were asked to what extent they agreed with several statements. The four-point scale ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with no "uncertain" response in the middle. The percentages listed combine those who chose "agree" or "strongly agree."

- Students often disrupt class (58%).
- Misbehaving students often get away with it (45%).
- Many students act as if they don't care about school or learning (61%).
- Students don't feel safe at this school (11%).

The first three statements address discipline problems which appear to be much more frequent than the other types listed above. The average score on the four-point scale was 2.6. Roughly half of the students agreed that serious problems exist in this area. Interestingly, the average scores for those in Adventist schools were not significantly different from those in public schools.

Do you have problems in your school?

- Student drug abuse (8%).
- Students smoking cigarettes (10%).
- Robbery or theft (12%).
- Lack of emphasis on religion (5%).
- Overemphasis on religion (10%).

Resources

The effectiveness of schools is enhanced by adequate financial, material, and people resources. Downturns in financial health and student enrollment tend to create a climate of negativity which interferes with learning.

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Teachers and School Climate

Physical plant, libraries, laboratories, computers, and financial aid are all important to a school system, but none can compare with the influence of the teacher in creating a supportive and learning-facilitative climate. Using the same scale as above, we present the percentages of those who agreed with certain key statements about the "heart of the school."

- There is real school spirit (64%).
- Rules for behavior are strict (67%).
- Discipline is fair (67%).
- Students have a say in how this school is run (47%).
- I like my school (79%).
- Students often feel "put down" by teachers (38%).
- Students get along well with teachers (77%).
- The teaching is good (81%).
- Teachers are interested in students (82%).
- When students work hard on schoolwork, teachers praise their efforts (66%).
- Teachers listen to what their students say (73%).

These data seem quite encouraging for the most part. Eight out of ten liked their schools, and on many key items the support was more than 70%. Perhaps the greatest concern should be that nearly 40% said that students often feel put down by their teachers. For those in seventh and eighth grades the figure was 42% which compares rather unfavorably with a national

Climate: Caring Community

One of the most dominant findings in the school effectiveness literature is the importance of a caring climate for promoting students achievement.

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study of public school students in the eighth grade. Only 22% of these students agreed with this statement. This could be a crucial element in the success of our transmission of values and has implications for our teacher-education programs as well as for in-service training.

The last five items were combined into a scale which measures student attitudes toward teachers. The average score on the four-point scale was 2.9—quite favorable. However, students in the Adventist and public systems had identical average scores. It seems that we might have expected a bit more favorable rating of Adventist teachers with our Christian message of love and acceptance.

This Attitudes toward Teachers Scale was found to be correlated between .20 and .29 with Adventism as a life goal, agreement with church standards, perceptions of the local congregational climate as being both warm and thinking, denominational loyalty, mature faith, vertical faith, perceptions of the family as supportive and caring, quality of family worship, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. It was correlated at the same strength, but negatively with dissatisfaction with the enforcement of Adventist standards, belief that our churches and schools need to modernize, and at-risk behaviors. It was correlated at .32 with positive attitudes toward the church and at .41 with perceptions of church leaders as warm and car-

Eight out of ten students liked their schools, and on many key items the support was more than 70%.

The image that teachers communicate to their students is a vital factor in the process of Christian education.

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ing. The image that teachers communicate to their students is a vital factor in the process of Christian education.

Learning at School

The youth were presented with several topics and asked how interested they would be in learning about each at school. The percentages represent the combined responses of those who replied "interested" or "very interested."

- Sexuality 36%
- Drugs and alcohol 36%
- Adventism 49%
- The Bible 62%
- Gaining a deeper relationship with God 74%
- Other races and ethnic groups 47%
- How to talk with my parents 48%

In an earlier chapter data were presented dealing with the same items, but at church. The results were similar. The great hunger of our young people seems to be for a deeper relationship with God. The challenge for Adventist religious education, whether in church or school, is to meet this need and help our youth establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Success here will make all the effort and expense worth while.

Attitudes toward our schools may well influence

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future educational plans. We asked: "As things stand now, how far in school do you think you will go?" The aspirations are listed on the left.

Aspirations were high. Over 90% wanted to attend college at the least, and 85% planned a minimum of college graduation. The heavy emphasis Adventists have historically placed on education shines through. On a six-point scale, the average score was 5.2. Those in Adventist schools had slightly higher aspirations than those in public schools (5.22 to 4.97).

What about the Adults?

Thus far in this book we have discussed only the responses from the young people in grades six to twelve. But *Valuegenesis* also collected data from 1567 Adventist parents of students in our schools, 383 teachers who served the schools which our sample students attended, and 155 pastors of churches that sponsored these schools. While an analysis of these data must wait for a later publication, some comparison data at this point may be useful.

Near the beginning of this chapter we listed the responses of the students to five items which make up the Attitudes toward Adventist Schools Scale. Below is given the percentages of parents, teachers, and pastors who agreed with these statements. To save space only the core idea of the statement is given. The

Aspirations and future educational plans.

- I won't finish high school (1%).
- I will graduate from high school but won't go any further (2%).
- I will go to vocational, trade, or business school after high school (4%).
- I will attend college (8%).
- I will graduate from college (37%).
- I will attend a higher level of school after college (48%).

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full wording can be found earlier in the chapter.

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Parents</i>	<i>Pastors</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
• Financial aid for any who want to attend an Adventist school.	93%	91%	94%
• Adventist schools have better academic program than public.	55%	60%	56%
• Without schools Adventism would decline and perhaps die.	65%	73%	75%
• Make schools a top priority.	95%	91%	97%
• Spend more on schools; cut other programs.	74%	59%	81%

Very strong support existed among all three groups for making the educational system a top priority and for making financial provision so that any Adventist young person will be able to attend a Christian school. On the other hand, only small majorities believed that our schools are superior academically, even among the teachers themselves. This area obviously needs some strengthening. The one place where the three groups departed significantly was on allocating more money for Christian education even if other church programs suffer. Pastor support was the lowest as might be expected because pastors have to balance a number of needs. Teacher support was understandably the high-

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est since they have a vested interest here. But the fact that three-fourths of the parents agreed with this statement indicates strong support for Christian education.

The above, of course, reflects attitudes toward Adventist education in general. But how did parents feel about the specific schools their children attended? The survey asked: "Overall, what influence has your child's current school had on your child?" Responses were given on a five-point scale from "very negative influence" to "very positive influence." The percentages represent the combined responses of those who answered "some positive influence" or "very positive influence."

• Religious faith	87%
• Vocabulary	87%
• Beliefs about what is right and wrong	86%
• Math skills and knowledge	86%
• Reading ability	84%
• Writing skills	83%
• Science skills and knowledge	83%
• Ability to make independent decisions	78%
• View of authority	77%
• Ability to relate to the world	75%
• Ability to qualify for a job	67%

The Adventist educational system is a top priority for church members and for making financial provision so that any Adventist young person will be able to attend a Christian School.

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The first three items have to do with the school's influence on religion, morality, and authority—its very reason for existence. Support here was very strong. The middle five items deal with the school's influence on various areas of academic ability. Here again, parents were very affirmative of the educational program. The last three items have to do with the influence of the school on various life skills. Support was still strong though not as great as for the earlier items. This does not necessarily mean that more parents were dissatisfied, however. Impact on the future is harder to gauge, and on these items 9% to 18% of the parents answered that they did not know.

And Now—the Teachers

Any assessment of how our schools are doing needs to consider the teachers' point of view. The teachers in the Adventist schools from which the student sample was drawn were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with several statements. Those statements are listed on the sidebar.

These seven items addressed teacher satisfaction in a variety of aspects. In general, teachers were satisfied, averaging 3.1 on a combined 4.0 scale (satisfied but not jumping up and down). A rather wide range in the different aspects existed, however. The

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teachers seemed to love the teaching aspects of their work but were only lukewarm on compensation. (Some might say: "No wonder.") Perhaps the most ominous sign is the fact that nearly four out of ten did not feel respected by their fellow members. If we want to foster viable Christian education, we will have to elevate the status of the teaching profession.

Another four items dealt with the clarity of school goals.

- My school has very clear expectations of the teacher's role in religious and value education (88%).
- Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be (86%).
- The school head knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff (84%).
- Goals and priorities for the school are clear (85%).

Agreement was strong. When these items were combined into a four-point scale, the average score was 3.3. Teachers in Adventist schools seem to know where they are going. The clear sense of mission is an encouraging sign.

A final four items explored the extent to which teachers feel supported by the school administration.

- The administration cares how I feel on important school issues (84%).
- Teachers in this school are evaluated fairly (82%).
- The school administration's behavior toward the

How do teachers feel about teaching?

The percentages represent the combined responses of those who somewhat or strongly agree.

- I love to teach (95%).
- I would advise a young person to pursue a career in teaching (86%).
- As a teacher, I feel respected in today's society (67%).
- As a teacher, I do not feel respected by Adventists (39%).
- Teachers in this school are evaluated fairly (83%).
- I am satisfied with my teaching salary (51%).
- I am satisfied with my class sizes (80%).

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Mission and Governance

A recent book published by the Brookings Institution has established that one of the primary reasons private schools tend to outperform public schools in academic achievement has to do with mission and governance. Private schools tend to experience fewer bureaucratic constraints than public schools, freeing school staff to exercise control over mission and policy. Both mission clarity and support and teacher influence in governance are found to be essential elements in school effectiveness, and these are more likely to be found in private schools than in public schools.

Chubb, J. and Moe, T. *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution, 1990).

staff is supportive and encouraging (85%).

- The school head enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it (92%).

For the most part the teachers felt strongly supported (3.4 on a 4.0 scale). Since such support is a major component of job satisfaction, this is also an encouraging finding.

Schools and Teachers in National Context

It is interesting to compare these data—where possible—with national studies of public high and junior high schools sponsored by the United States Department of Education and with Search Institute's national studies of Catholic high schools.

Our academies do very well in encouraging youth to pursue further education. About 66% of the graduates enter a four-year college or university compared to 51% from Catholic schools and only 30% from public high schools. Adventist schools also have far fewer discipline problems than public schools in areas like absenteeism, verbal abuse of teachers, vandalism of school property, and alcohol and drug usage; and in most areas they are below the Catholic schools, especially in drug problems. These data are based on the percentage of head administrators citing the problem as "serious" or "moderate" in their schools. Several areas will serve to illustrate:

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Problem	Public	Catholic	Adventist
• Student absenteeism	57%	15%	13%
• Students cutting class	37%	5%	4%
• Verbal abuse of teachers	10%	5%	4%
• Vandalism/school property	25%	14%	9%
• Alcohol/drug usage	49%	26%	13%

Of course, we would prefer that the above behaviors not be problems in any Adventist school, but that is probably not realistic. Our schools are doing much better than other systems, and parents can have confidence that they are doing the best for their children by providing them with a Christian education.

Teachers in Adventist schools were somewhat less likely to have an advanced degree than those in public schools, but the difference was not large (45% versus 50%). But Adventist schools were more likely to employ teachers of minority ethnic backgrounds (17%) than were public (10%) or Catholic (5%) schools.

Even though a substantial minority of teachers in Adventist schools did not feel respected by their fellow members (39%), they were more likely to feel respected in today's society (67%) than those in public (49%) or Catholic (51%) schools and were more likely to advise a young person to pursue a career in teaching (86% versus 46% and 60%). A sad point, however, was that more than a fourth (27%) did not feel supported by local Adventist pastors.

Public school teachers do not have the opportunity

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to bring religious faith into the classroom, but our teachers compared very well in this area to those in the Catholic system, the largest parochial education system in the world. Note the percentage of agreement with the following statements.

Statement	Catholic	Adventist
• I feel an obligation to promote the religious faith of my students.	76%	96%
• I talk with individual students about matters of faith/values often.	46%	67%
• I talk in the classroom about my own religious faith often.	41%	67%
I often integrate religious concepts into subject matter.	60%	72%

Our teachers still have room for improvement, but, overall, they are doing a better job than any other group that has been sampled. The teachers in our schools gave as their number-one motive for entering the profession that it was "God's choice for my life." In second place was the view that teaching is a ministry. Finally, when asked how satisfied, overall, they were with their current teaching jobs, 76% said they were satisfied or very satisfied. This is a strong rating, although not as high as that of teachers in public (80%) or Catholic (85%) schools. Nevertheless, it is somewhat disconcerting to think of about a fourth of the teachers in our schools not being satisfied with their work. A happy teacher is more likely to produce a

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motivated student. It is evident that the rather stable salaries of Adventist teachers may be the problem here. Adventist teachers start out with a livable wage, but throughout their term of service promotion and increase salary does not keep pace with the cost of living. We need to consider new ways to build teacher morale, for in so doing we will make one of the most important contributions to a vital and effective school system.

One purpose of this chapter is to understand students in the Adventist and nonAdventist school systems. Some of the questions often asked include:

- Are SDA students any different than those Adventist students in the public school system?
- Do youth who attend church, but not the local Adventist school, have a deeper spirituality?
- What happens the longer one is in an Adventist school?

Chapter 14

The Bottom Line

Recently, a representative from an investment firm of which I had never heard called me on the phone. Seems he wanted to sell me some tax-exempt bonds. This fantastic opportunity had just developed. The income was equivalent to 11.5% interest on a taxable investment.

I told him that I would study his printed material. He replied that he had already sent it, but if it were as he represented, Would I agree to invest? "No," I explained, "I wouldn't agree to anything without carefully studying the situation." At this, he became what I would describe as quite pushy. "If I offered you a certificate of deposit that was guaranteed by the government, that you could liquidate without penalty

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at any time, and that paid 11.5% interest, wouldn't you be interested?" "Yes," I admitted.

"Well, there isn't any CD like that," he admitted, "but what I am offering you is the equivalent of it. Now are you ready to go ahead?" "Absolutely not!" I finally had to hang up to get rid of him. The printed material never did arrive.

Maybe I missed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but I wasn't even tempted. My general suspicion of telephone salespersons and his aggressive techniques were, of course, part of the reason. But beyond that was the realization that he had given me no definite information. "Equivalent to 11.5%" means nothing for equivalence is based upon one's tax bracket. Furthermore, he never mentioned any charges his firm might make. When cautious investors want to park their few extra coins somewhere, they want to know exactly how much interest they will receive (no equivalents) and exactly how much it will cost them. They want the "bottom line."

Likewise, when Adventists decide whether or not to send their children to our schools and whether or not to continue and even increase the tremendous investment of denomination resources in our educational system, they want to know the bottom line. They want to know what payoff will result from this investment.

In the last chapter, we examined attitudes of our students, parents, and teachers toward Adventist edu-

Interesting Facts:

In five comparisons, Adventist schools outperform other school networks.

- 66% of students graduating from Adventist senior academies enroll in four-year colleges and universities. This exceeds the public school rate of 30% and the Catholic school rate of 51%—particularly impressive since Catholic schools are often cited as exemplary in offering a rigorous and challenging academic program.

- Amount of home work done by students is often considered a measure of academic excellence. Students in Adventist schools do more homework than public school students at every grade from 6th to 12th.

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cation. Now it is time to look at some of the results. What can *Valuegenesis* tell us about the bottom line?

Comparing School Systems

The value of Adventist Christian education may be assessed from several different perspectives. One is to compare the average scores on a number of important items of students in the denominational system with students in the public system. If Christian education pays off, youth in our schools ought to be higher on the desirable traits and lower on the undesirable ones.

Actually, it isn't quite that simple. In the first place, we do not know if the only difference between the two groups is their placement in a particular school system. Other differences might exist. For example, it could be that parents from strong Christian homes are more likely to make the necessary sacrifices to send their children to church schools, and one might suppose that more nominal Adventist parents are not as likely to have that commitment. In that case a superior showing by the parochial pupils might result from the Christian influences of their homes rather than from anything the schools did. The schools would not be the important variable here; the home would be.

In the second place, the numbers in each group are far from equal. Surveys were completed by 10,641 Adventist students in Adventist schools but by only

Interesting Facts Continued:

- On every indicator, Adventist schools, like all private schools in general, are less prone to discipline problems than are public schools.
- The percentage of teachers in Adventist schools with a Master's or higher degree is larger than is found in public schools or in all private schools combined.
- Adventist schools serve a relatively high percentage of minority students and Adventist schools have a higher percentage of minority principals and teachers than is true in the public school sector.

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457 Adventist students in non-Adventist schools. Part of the reason for this discrepancy is an oversampling of students in Adventist senior academies. But students in grades six to eight in Adventist schools completed 2634 surveys, and an additional number came from our day academies. Thus from any given school with its supporting churches we received far more responses from those enrolled in our schools than from those in public schools. Yet many studies indicate that around half of Adventist youth are not in our school system.

The answer lies in the way the information was gathered. For Adventist schools the survey was administered at the school where the students were already attending and where they completed it as part of their class work. The Adventists in grades six to twelve who were public school students in that same district were invited to come to the church on their off time to take the survey. The figures suggest that many of them did not show up—a problem that often exists when a sample is given from congregations rather than from formal school settings.

The crucial question is: To what extent are those public school students who completed the survey representative of all Adventist students in public schools who were members of the sample churches? We cannot know the answer. However, it is certainly possible that those most dedicated and loyal to the church gave up their free time on an evening or a

Adventist students in public education compared with Adventist students in Adventist schools.

Some observations to remember:

1. The numbers of students surveyed is significantly different.
2. The home may be as significant a variable as the school in which the student attends.
3. The public school group may not be representative of the Adventist youth sample at large.

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It is very possible that if all Adventist public school students had been included, the differences between the two systems would have been more marked, and our schools would have stood out in a stronger way.

Sunday to come to the church and participate. If that is true, then the public school group are not really representative of all students from Adventist homes attending public schools. They are the “cream of the crop.” Thus, differences between students in the two systems might be understated or “washed out.” It is very possible that if all Adventist public school students had been included, the differences between the two systems would have been more marked, and our schools would have stood out in a stronger way. These suggestions have been pointed out in many *Value-Genesis* presentations throughout the North American Division in the past year. We believe that this concern is valid.

In spite of these caveats, however, it will still be useful to make the comparisons. After all, these data are all we have, and any information is crucial for us to better understand both the Adventist system and the contribution of public education to the lives of our youth. Throughout this book we have often reported scale scores in which the possible range is from 1 to N, where N is the number of available responses. At this point we will compare the average scale scores of students in the two school systems. It has been determined that to be statistically significant a difference must be at least .2 of a scale point. While a number of such differences exist, in most cases they are only .2 or .3 different, and therefore, they should not be given

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undue importance. (Interesting details of this comparison are provided to the right in the sidebar).

On none of the scales to be examined did the average score of the public school students significantly exceed that of those in the church schools. On a number of important variables, however, the students in our schools were significantly higher (except in two cases indicated below where lower is the better response). Following is a list of these variables:

1. Favorable attitudes toward Adventist schools.
2. Number of close friends who are Adventists.
3. Endorse church standards on substance abuse.
4. Born into a home with two Adventist parents.
5. Denominational loyalty.
6. Condemn efforts to prevent neighborhood racial integration.
7. Frequency of personal prayer.
8. Frequency of tithe paying.
9. Index of at-risk behaviors (lower on this variable).
10. Father more religious.
11. Mother more religious.
12. Educational aspirations.
13. Frequency of family worship.
14. Time spent on homework each week.
15. Time spent watching TV each week (less time).
16. School enforces Adventist standards (.5 to .7 points higher).

In some of the areas listed, the variable probably

There are some interesting details to report, however.

□ *Those in Adventist schools were more likely to have had a greater percentage of their education in our schools over the years. This is logical.*

□ *They are also more likely to come from homes with higher household incomes. Considering the cost of attending an Adventist school, this also makes sense.*

□ *They also tend to come from more urban areas—presumably where access to an Adventist school is more likely.*

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influenced the fact that the students are in Adventist schools (e.g., mother and father being more religious). In others, being in a Christian school has doubtless had an impact on the variable (e.g., favorable attitudes toward Adventist schools or number of close friends who are Adventists). In still others (e.g., denominational loyalty) the direction of influence is not so obvious. It probably flows both ways.

Any one of these differences taken by itself would not be particularly noteworthy. But the sum of the sixteen, plus the fact that no significant difference favored the public system, adds up to a substantial endorsement for our educational system. This may come as a surprise to those particularly critical of the Adventist system.

To be fair though, we must note that for a large number of important variables no significant differences were discovered between students in the two systems. Some of the more important ones were as follows:

1. Frequency of sharing faith with others.
2. Adventism as a life goal.
3. Adventist orthodoxy.
4. Frequency of devotional practices.
5. Dissatisfaction with the way standards are enforced.
6. Altruism.
7. Perceptions of congregational climate as thinking

For a large number of important variables no significant differences were discovered between students in the two systems.

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and warm.

8. Wanting to make one's own rules and live as one pleases.
9. Maturity of faith.
10. Horizontal faith.
11. Vertical faith.
12. Grace orientation to salvation.
13. Law orientation to salvation.
14. Importance of religion.
15. Materialism.
16. Extent to which family enforces church standards.
17. Value of service.
18. Positive attitude toward women pastors.
19. Hours each month in church programming.
20. Perceived supportive family environment.
21. Perceived warm and caring leaders and teachers at church.
22. Peer religiousness.
23. Quality of family worship.
24. Purpose in life.
25. Self-esteem.
26. Intention to remain an Adventist at age 40.

Parents and educators will not be happy about this list. They rightfully expect to see differences. But it must be balanced against those positive qualities listed earlier where differences do exist. It also must be interpreted in the light of what has been said about the selected sample of public school students. So we

The results call upon the whole church—leaders, educators, parents, and children—to dedicate themselves to improving Adventist education, and they point to specific areas in which to begin.

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should not be discouraged by these findings. We should not be complacent either. The results call upon the whole church—leaders, educators, parents, and children—to dedicate themselves to improving Adventist education, and they point to specific areas in which to begin.

The Cumulative Effect of Adventist Education

A second way to measure the impact of our educational system is to look at time spent in our schools rather than simply the current location of each student. Perhaps the proportion of one's schooling gained in church schools is more important than the particular situation of the student at the time the survey was administered.

In the ideal, this would call for an experiment in which young people are randomly assigned to none, some, or all of their education in Adventist schools but who are equal in all other aspects of their lives. Then, differences between groups could be attributed to the effects of the education. Obviously, this method is not practical. But we can approximate this experiment by comparing the faith and values of those who have never attended Adventist schools with those who have attended for varying lengths of time.

Four categories were created: (1) those who have

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never attended; (2) those who have attended some of the time but less than one-half of their total schooling in grades one through twelve; (3) those who have attended half or more but not all of their total schooling; (4) and those who have received all of their education through grade twelve (if they had progressed that far) in Adventist schools. By comparing these four groups on faith, values, and commitment, we can gain some insight into the impact of Adventist education. However, the cautions given earlier in the chapter apply here as well. We cannot say for sure that differences are due solely to schooling, since groups differing in the percentages of their education obtained in Adventist institutions may also differ in other life experiences such as family income, parental commitment to Adventism, and geographical access to Adventist schools. Thus, conclusions must be treated tentatively.

On this basis the comparison of the four groups on a number of faith, values, and commitment variables presents an inconsistent picture. Six important variables increased with percentage of time in our schools.

1. A grace orientation to salvation.
2. Denominational loyalty.
3. Adventist orthodoxy.
4. Positive attitudes toward Adventist schools.
5. Acceptance of Adventist standards on alcohol and drugs.
6. Acceptance of specific Adventist life-style stan-

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5. Acceptance of Adventist standards on alcohol and drugs.
6. Acceptance of specific Adventist lifestyle standards.

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In addition, time in Adventist schools seems to have mixed impact on three other variables. For both "the importance of Adventism" and "intention to remain an Adventist at age 40," a drop occurred from those who had had no Adventist education to those who had received part of their education in our schools. But for those who had received all of their education in an Adventist setting, the average rose again to its highest point. In the same vein, "at-risk behavior" rose for those with partial Adventist schooling but dropped to its lowest point for those who had received all of their education in our system.

While these findings are encouraging, they must be balanced by more negative results. The following four variables actually decreased with increased Adventist education:

1. Horizontal faith.
2. Evangelistic activity (sharing one's faith).
3. Value of service to others.
4. Prosocial behavior.

A common theme in these four variables is concern for others and service to them. Is there something about Adventist education that leads its recipients to become self-centered and fail to develop a love for humanity? The answer is not conclusive, but the question needs to be carefully considered. Whatever else they may do, our schools should be high on

Four variables actually decreased with increased Adventist education:

1. Horizontal faith.
2. Evangelistic activity (sharing one's faith).
3. Value of service to others..
4. Prosocial behavior.

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developing a vision for service.

On eight other variables, no differences were found for the differing proportions of time spent in our schools. They were:

1. Maturity of faith.
2. Vertical faith.
3. Importance of religious faith.
4. Law orientation to salvation.
5. Positive attitudes toward the local congregation.
6. Overall acceptance of Adventist standards.
7. Dissatisfaction with the enforcement of standards
8. Materialism.

These represent important attitudes and behaviors. An Adventist Christian education ought to make a difference. It is logical to assume that Christian education contributes to the spiritual growth and values formation of those students to whom it ministers. These findings suggest the need to analyze our educational program, both curricular and extra-curricular, to find ways to inculcate these values more successfully.

When the above procedure was followed for the Adventist parents in our study, a new concern surfaced. On all the variables listed, desirable outcomes decreased with the increase of proportion of education in Adventist schools. Of course, the Christian education that these parents received was in the past—sometimes many years ago—and does not necessarily re-

It is logical to assume that Christian education contributes to the spiritual growth and values formation of those students to whom it ministers. These findings suggest the need to analyze our educational program, both curricular and extra-curricular, to find ways to inculcate these values more successfully.

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Percent of students reporting presence of school effectiveness factors:

	6-8 grades	9-12 grades
1. Good, competent teachers.	(81%)	(81%)
2. Discipline is fair.	(63%)	(68%)
3. Teachers are caring and supportive.	(61%)	(57%)
4. School spirit is high.	(59%)	(66%)
5. Teachers don't put down students.	(58%)	(63%)
6. School enforces standards, Adventist way of life.	(42%)	(52%)
7. Students have voice in school policy.	(44%)	(48%)
8. High-quality religious education programs.	(36%)	(31%)
9. Students talk to teachers about faith.	(17%)	(12%)

flect on the schools of today. But why are adults who were educated in the Adventist system less likely to be high on faith, values, and commitment today than those who did not have this advantage? This question begs for an answer. Perhaps a separate investigation needs to be conducted. If this represents a pattern, the pattern needs to be broken. The very reason for Christian education is to increase faith and commitment.

School Effectiveness Factors

In a third and final look at the "bottom line" we will report on those factors associated with the school system which promote mature faith and denominational loyalty. Some of the youth exhibited a more mature faith than others and some were more committed to the church. Using the statistical technique of multiple regression, we have been able to determine the most important factors from the family, congregational, and school backgrounds that are associated with such faith and commitment. Here we deal with the school effectiveness factors.

Nine school factors have been identified. Six of them predicted both faith maturity and denominational loyalty. They were:

1. Teachers are caring and supportive.
2. Students perceive teachers as good, competent in structors.

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3. School spirit is high.
 4. Students have a voice in school policy.
 5. Students frequently talk to teachers about God and faith.
 6. School religious education program is of high quality.
- Two other factors were related to denominational loyalty but not to faith maturity:
7. Teachers refrain from "putting down" students.
 8. School enforces standards important to Adventist way of life.

A final factor was related to faith maturity but not to denominational loyalty:

9. Discipline of students is perceived as fair.

These nine factors suggest a program for the revitalization of our schools. They may be grouped under the three headings of: (1) characteristics of teachers, (2) school climate, and (3) religious programming and faith-talk. While each of the nine was important, the highest relationship was with the quality of the school religious education program.

A dominant theme running through the effectiveness factors is one about the nature or "feel" of schools. What seems to be important is a supportive, encouraging, open community marked by school spirit, treating students with respect (teachers refraining from "putting down" students and giving them a voice in school policy), fair discipline, and caring teachers.

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Ultimately then, student growth in faith maturity and denominational loyalty seems to be best promoted by offering high quality religious education programming within a supportive and caring school environment.

Each of these experiences was associated with greater growth in mature faith and denominational loyalty. This kind of warm, supporting culture stands in contrast to one premised more on rules, authority, and obedience. Although factors on this latter theme were also investigated in *Valuegenesis*, they did not, for the most part, seem to be related to the development of faith and loyalty. Only one of the factors associated with a more-structured, rule-oriented climate emerged as an effectiveness factor. This was the enforcement by the school of standards important to the Adventist way of life. It seemed to function to promote denominational loyalty but not faith maturity.

Ultimately then, student growth in faith maturity and denominational loyalty seems to be best promoted by offering high quality religious education programming within a supportive and caring school environment. Adventist schools can make a difference. They can be worth all the effort and expense. But we have some work to do in order to make them and keep them that way.

Chapter 15

A Generation At Risk

If you ever run out of things to worry about, try this one. Will the rising generation be capable of running the nation and the world of tomorrow? Is the future of the church in the North American Division safe in the hands of those who are now preparing for adulthood? The young people of today have more exposure to information and more acquaintance with technology than any previous generation. But how are they at critical thinking, applied wisdom, and self-discipline?

I am fully aware that throughout history it has been customary for adults to declare their perception that the youth are "going to the dogs." But consider some facts. In study after study, academic achievement

One purpose for this chapter is to provide a basis for understanding at-risk behavior in the youth of the Adventist church.

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among youth in the United States lags far behind that of youth in other industrialized countries. American students, it is said, do not read, can not write, are dismal at history, and have almost no sense of geography at all. Perhaps a similar state of affairs exists in Canada and Bermuda.

Character deficits match those in the academic arena. Idealism seems to be in short supply. Rates for alcohol abuse, illegal drug usage, and teenage pregnancy in the United States are near the top of the world's industrialized nations. But what about Seventh-day Adventist young people?

We have already seen that students in Adventist schools are, in general, better off academically than the national population. Adventist schools send a higher proportion (66%) of their high school seniors on to higher education than do either public (30%) or Catholic (51%) schools. Our schools also enroll minority students (those at greatest academic risk) at a rate higher than other systems, and these youth succeed to a much higher degree than minority students in public schools. This is reflected in a variety of effectiveness criteria, including dropout prevention, enrollment in college preparatory curricula, and enrollment in higher education. But what about the character issue? And to what extent are Adventist youth involved in behaviors that place them at great risk? *Valuegenesis* provides significant comparisons.

We have already seen that students in Adventist schools are, in general, better off academically than the national population.

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A Look at Behaviors

In earlier chapters we have explored behaviorally related areas like attitudes toward church standards, dissatisfaction with the enforcement of standards, and the degree to which standards were enforced in family, school, and congregation. But this is not the same as investigating the behaviors themselves. For example, I might believe that smoking is wrong and that the church standard forbidding it is right, and yet I might still smoke. It is quite clear that what one believes may or may not impact what one actually elects to do.

So two sets of questions were asked that dealt directly with behaviors that might put the youth at risk as to their remaining in the church and as to their personal well-being. The first set presented a dozen items and asked: "How often, if ever, did you do each of the following during the last year? Eight possible responses ranged from "never" to "more than once a day." In order to reduce this information to manageable proportions, the data have been combined into two categories.

The second lowest frequency (after "never") was "less than once a month." We will consider this to be experimental behavior and not regular use. All other categories depict a regular usage—from "about once a month" to "more than once a day." They have been combined in the list given below. Those who are not

Two types of questions were asked about Adventist student behavior:

- What are Seventh-day Adventist students doing?
- What are Seventh-day Adventist student's attitudes toward what they are doing?

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represented in either column said that they had never engaged in the practices during the last year.

<i>Practice</i>	<i>Experimental</i>	<i>Regular</i>
• Smoke tobacco.	5%	6%
• Drink beer or liquor.	14%	9%
• Wear jewelry.	16%	36%
• Listen to rock music.	6%	83%
• See a movie at a theatre.	26%	47%
• Use an illegal drug. (marijuana, cocaine)	3%	2%
• Eat "unclean" meats.	16%	18%
• Watch TV.	3%	96%
• Watch a movie on a VCR in your home.	10%	80%
• Participate in competitive sports.	11%	79%
• Drink caffeinated drinks (Coke, Pepsi, coffee).	10%	77%
• Drink wine.	10%	6%

For this set the reported usage of illegal drugs was low, and on most temperance issues the large majority of the youth were abstainers. An exception to this occurred in the reported use of caffeine where nearly all were involved to some extent. Still, given the strong stand of the church on these issues, it is troubling that some use of tobacco was reported by 11%, wine by 16%, beer or liquor by 23%, and unclean meats by 34%.

More youth have experimented with drinking beer or liquor than report regular use.

- 14% report experimental use.
- 9% report regular use.

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Over half wore jewelry, three-fourths attended movie theatres, and about nine-tenths listened to rock music. Most watched television, played VCRs, and engaged in competitive sports, but the church has no official stand on these matters. In general, it would seem that an erosion in behavioral standards is occurring; to some degree regarding chemical substances and to an overwhelming degree regarding entertainment choices. Incidentally, 58% reported that they listen to rock music at least daily, most of them (48%) more often than once a day, and a fourth used caffeine on at least a daily basis.

A second set of questions was quite similar except that rather than asking how often the youth engaged in the behaviors, they asked: "How many times, if ever, during the last 12 months did you do each of the following?" Seven choices ranged from "0 times" to "40 or more times." The percentages below combine all the choices except "0 times." In other words, they give the proportions of those who engaged in the practices at all, whatever the frequency.

- Drink alcohol (beer, wine, or liquor) while alone or with friends (26%).
- Use marijuana (grass, pot) (7%).
- Use cocaine (coke, snow, crack) (4%).
- Go to a party where kids your age were drinking (27%).
- Cheat on a test at school (45%).

What are the CORE behaviors, those central to Adventist belief. They seem to be:

- Health-related behaviors
- Morality related behaviors

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- Have five drinks or more in a row (a drink is a glass of wine, a can of beer, a shot of liquor, or a mixed drink) (13%).
- Hit or beat up someone (35%).
- Take something from a store without paying for it (15%).
- Get into trouble at school (47%).
- Look at sexually explicit videos or magazines (63%).

Marijuana and cocaine usage was relatively low, but all other percentages were in the double digits. We should note that in every case the most often reported frequency for the practice was only one or two times in the past year. Those reporting forty or more times represented only a tiny fraction, never more than 3%. So the youth do not appear to be habitual practitioners of these at-risk behaviors, but they are involved to some extent. And certainly, enough of them are involved to cause the church real concern.

Following this list, the question was asked: "Have you ever had sexual intercourse ("gone all the way," "made love")?" Most of the youth declared themselves to be virgins, but of those who were sexually active, the greatest number had multiple experiences. For this behavior as in each of the others listed above, the survey was dependent on self-report. It is certainly possible—perhaps, even likely—that some youth were hesitant to reveal such intimate information, fearing a breach of confidentiality. Thus, to the extent that these

"Have you ever had sexual intercourse ("gone all the way," "made love")?"

Answers were:

- | | |
|----------------|-----|
| • No | 83% |
| • Once | 4% |
| • Twice | 2% |
| • Three times | 2% |
| • Four or more | 9% |

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data are inaccurate, they likely underestimate the behaviors involved. Nevertheless, most Adventists with a deep sense of morality might wish this statistic to be at 0 percent rather than at the level indicated. But the reality is that there is involvement to some extent in sexual experiences.

On other items, 47% said they had felt very sad or depressed during the last month, at least some of the time. Another 42% had felt this way once in a while, and only 11% had not experienced these feelings at all during the past month. About 1300 young people (13%) admitted that they had tried to kill themselves sometime in the past, and 5% had made multiple attempts. Finally, 16% had been physically abused by an adult to the extent that they sustained scars, black-and-blue marks, welts, bleeding, or broken bones. While this was a one-time experience for 7% of the young people, 9% had suffered on more than one occasion.

National Comparisons

The information given above is disturbing. One way to put it into perspective, however, is to compare it with United States adolescents in general. Data on some of the same areas are available from a national study of public school students conducted by Search Institute.

Troubling Statistics

47% felt sad or depressed during the last month.

16% have been physically abused by an adult to the extent that they sustained scars, black and blue marks, etc.

13% admitted that they had tried to kill themselves in the past.

9% had suffered on more than one occasion broken bones through abuse.

5% had made multiple attempts at suicide.

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One possible comparison is the percentage of those who have drunk alcohol six or more times in the last year. For the nation at large, this ranged from 4% in the sixth grade to 54% in the twelfth grade. The same range for students in Adventist schools was 3% to 15%. While the two groups were virtually the same at the upper elementary level, usage by public school students escalated much more rapidly as the youth progressed through high school.

Another measure is the percentage of those who have used marijuana one or more times in the last year. The public school range was 2% in sixth grade to 20% in twelfth grade. Comparable figures for Adventist students were 5% to 11%. Surprisingly, the students in our system had a higher incidence of usage in both grades six and seven (although percentages were small in both systems), but by the senior year their rate was only about half that of the public school youth.

Finally, we might look at those who have ever had sexual intercourse. For the public schools, 15% of the sixth-graders admitted to this experience, and this figure rose sharply to 63% by the senior year of high school. The same figures for the students in Adventist schools were 8% and 27%.

We certainly cannot be complacent about these figures. Far too many of our youth are engaging in behaviors that are self-destructive and that will put them at risk for dropping out of the church. Yet it is

At-Risk Indicator for 6th and 12th graders

Alcohol use: 6 or more times in the last year

	6th	12th
NAD youth	3%	15%
U. S. youth	4%	54%

Marijuana use: once or more in the last year

NAD youth	5%	11%
U. S. youth	2%	20%

Sexual Intercourse: once or more in a lifetime

NAD youth	8%	27%
U. S. youth	15%	63%

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clear that compared to public school students, youth in Adventist schools are far less likely to be involved in these practices. Something is providing a protective environment for Adventist young people. It may be our educational system, dedicated homes, caring congregations, or Adventist life-style beliefs. It is probably a combination of all of these.

An Index for Risk

By employing a number of the behavioral questions described earlier in this chapter, an At-Risk Index was created. This index attempts to address whether a young person has been engaging in deviant behavior of a sufficient intensity to raise concern. Ten areas were utilized, and in each area students received a score of 1 or 0. A score of 1 was given for each of the following conditions:

1. Had drunk alcohol six or more times in the last year.
2. Had used marijuana more than twice in the last year.
3. Had used cocaine more than twice in the last year.
4. Had engaged in binge drinking at least once in the last year (five or more drinks in a row).
5. Had hit or beat up someone more than twice in the last year.
6. Had engaged in shoplifting more than twice in the last year.

Something is providing a protective environment for Adventist young people. It may be our educational system, dedicated homes, caring congregations, or Adventist life-style beliefs. It is probably a combination of all of these.

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7. Had gotten into trouble at school more than twice in the last year.
8. Had ever engaged in sexual intercourse.
9. Had felt "very sad or depressed" more often than "once in a while" during the last month.
10. Had ever attempted to commit suicide.

The score for the index could range from 0 (for those who did not meet any of these criteria) to 10 (for those who qualified in every category). Those in Adventist schools had an average index score of 1.5, meaning that they were involved in one and a half risk situations on the average. Adventist youth in public schools were slightly higher at 1.7.

It is alarming to find that 60% of our youth in grade six had at least one at-risk indicator and that this rose to 73% by grade twelve. Also 14% of the sixth-graders had at least three at-risk indicators. This figure increased over the grades to 23% for high school seniors. In the lower grades the most frequent indicators were getting into trouble at school and hitting or beating up someone. By the senior year the leaders were sexual intercourse (27%) and binge drinking (20%). Marijuana and cocaine usage was below 10% for every grade level, but depression and attempted suicide ran consistently in the 10%-18% range at all grade levels. Of course, Adventists would like all of these figures to be 0 percent, but that is not realistic. What we would hope, however, would be that our youth would have a

It is alarming to find that 60% of our youth in grade six had at least one at-risk indicator and that this rose to 73% by grade twelve. Also 14% of the sixth-graders had at least three at-risk indicators. This figure increased over the grades to 23% for high school seniors.

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decreasing involvement in those at-risk factors. This does not seem to be the case. Most at-risk behaviors seem to increase slightly throughout the high school years. But even this increase is not nearly what the public school sector experiences.

At-risk Correlates

It is interesting to note what other variables were found to be significantly correlated with the At-Risk Index. Presumably, these other attitudes and behaviors may influence, to some extent, whether or not a young person engages in such practices.

Positive correlations of between .20 and .29 were found with the belief that our academies need to modernize, wanting to make one's own rules and live life as one pleases, dissatisfaction with the enforcement of church standards, and materialism as a value. But correlations with desirable variables were uniformly negative. As the desirable variable increased, the At-Risk Index went down.

Negative correlations between .20 and .29 were found then for the At-Risk Index and the following other variables: number of close friends who are Adventists, Adventism as a life goal, Adventist orthodoxy, frequency of devotional behaviors, maturity of faith, vertical faith, a grace orientation to salvation, importance of religion, tithe paying, perceptions of

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The strongest family variables for grades six to eight were:

- A caring and supportive family.
- Parental reaction if youth was caught drinking.
- Quality of family worship.

For grades nine to twelve, they were:

- Number of close friends who are Adventists.
- Perceptions of the family as warm and supportive.
- Parental reaction if youth was caught drinking.
- Quality of family worship.
- Religiousness of peers.
- Family enforcement of Adventist standards.
- Comfortableness of mother in discussing faith.
- Religiousness of mother.
- Frequency of talking to father about faith.

one's family as warm and supportive, perceptions of teachers and leaders in the congregation as being caring, perceptions of teachers in the school as being caring and supportive, positive attitudes toward the church, perceptions of the quality of family worship, self-esteem, and intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. A correlation of $-.30$ was found with denominational loyalty and of $-.35$ with overall agreement with church standards.

By means of multiple regression analysis, all variables that were significantly correlated with the At-Risk Index were used to form family, congregation, and school models, as well as a grand model in order to reveal which were the most important predictors when overlap in their explanatory power had been removed. That is to say: How important a predictor of risk is any particular variable when controlling for all the other variables?

The strongest family variables for grades six to eight were: (1) a caring and supportive family, (2) parental reaction if youth was caught drinking, and (3) quality of family worship. For grades nine to twelve, they were: (1) number of close friends who are Adventists, (2) perceptions of the family as warm and supportive, (3) parental reaction if youth was caught drinking, (4) quality of family worship, (5) religiousness of peers, (6) family enforcement of Adventist standards, (7) comfortableness of mother in discuss-

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ing faith, (8) religiousness of mother, and (9) frequency of talking to father about faith. All of these relationships were negative to at-risk behaviors. Strong and supportive Christian homes seem to produce youth who tend to avoid self-destructive behaviors.

The strongest congregational variables for grades six to eight were: (1) perceptions that the teachers and leaders at the local church are warm and accepting and (2) frequency of church attendance. The former was also the most important in predicting avoidance of at-risk behaviors among those in grades nine to twelve, followed by: (2) time spent in intergenerational church contact. It is evident that relational experiences in the congregation impact powerfully on Christian lifestyle.

The strongest school variables for grades six to eight were: (1) the presence of caring teachers and (2) the perception of fair discipline. For grades nine to twelve, they were: (1) a quality school religion program, (2) the perception of fair discipline, and (3) the presence of caring teachers. Relationships remained vital, undergirded with quality work.

The significant predictors from the family, congregation, and school models obtained by multiple regression were all entered into a grand model to see which variables still retained unique power to predict avoidance of at-risk behaviors. For grades six to eight, the predictors were: (1) the quality of family worship,

The strongest school variables for grades six to eight were:

- Presence of caring teachers.
- Perception of fair discipline.

For grades nine to twelve, they were:

- Quality school religion program.
- Perception of fair discipline.
- Presence of caring teachers. Relationships remained vital, undergirded with quality work.

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The significant predictors from the family, congregation, and school—a composite model:

For grades six to eight, the predictors were:

- Quality of family worship.
- Presence of caring teachers.
- Parental reaction if the young person were caught drinking (a proxy for high standards).

For grades nine to twelve, they were:

- Number of close friends who are Adventists.
- Quality of family worship.
- Parental reaction if the young person were caught drinking.
- Presence of caring teachers in the school.
- Perceptions of congregational leaders as warm and caring.
- Family enforcement of Adventist standards.

(2) the presence of caring teachers, and (3) parental reaction if the young person were caught drinking (a proxy for high standards). For grades nine to twelve, they were: (1) the number of close friends who are Adventists, (2) the quality of family worship, (3) parental reaction if the young person were caught drinking, (4) the presence of caring teachers in the school, (5) perceptions of congregational leaders as warm and caring, and (6) family enforcement of Adventist standards.

Several themes stand out from all of this as we seek to help our youth to avoid those behaviors that will harm them physically, mentally, and spiritually.

(1) The home, the congregation, and the school all play an important role. Success can come only as a result of a concerted effort. Some concentrated effort must begin to interface all three arenas in discussions and action in this area.

(2) Being close to friends, parents, congregational leaders, and teachers who hold spiritual values provides protection for youth, as these relationships are warm, supportive, and caring. The issue of modeling is important. Assisting dynamic people become leaders in ministry with youth will make a considerable impact.

(3) A quality religious program, including family worship, and competent teachers in the classroom are important factors in helping Adventist young people

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make wise decisions. Parent programs which instruct families in creative worship and teacher training opportunities are important agenda items in the next few years.

(4) Finally, the holding of high standards in the home has a protective influence, but only as those standards are lovingly enforced by people who are perceived to really care. Reducing at-risk behavior must become a high priority for the church, but it cannot be done by “clamping down,” or by “judging.” If we would succeed in this task, we must set out to win hearts, not battles.

How to help youth avoid at-risk behaviors:

- The home, the congregation, and the school all play an important role.

- Being close to friends, parents, congregational leaders, and teachers who hold spiritual values provides protection for youth, as these relationships are warm, supportive, and caring.

- A quality religious program, including family worship, and competent teachers in the classroom are important factors in helping Adventist young people make wise decisions.

- Finally, the holding of high standards in the home has a protective influence, but only as those standards are lovingly enforced by people who are perceived to really care.

Valuegenesis has also revealed great perplexities, concerns, and unique challenges. The research has indicated that even with these positive conclusions, the church could still be on the brink of losing a whole generation.

Chapter 16

Which Way To The Future?

Dicken's begins his classic work with, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." I think this sentence pretty well sums up the results of the *Valuegenesis* study. For Adventist education and for the entire value system of the new generation of Adventist youth, *Valuegenesis* has revealed a golden age, bright with promise. Our young people are intelligent, articulate, and visionary, and our schools have undergirded the Adventist subculture and served the church well. We have much to celebrate.

But *Valuegenesis* has also revealed great perplexities, concerns, and unique challenges. The research has indicated that even with these positive conclusions, the church could still be on the brink of

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losing a whole generation. The golden age might easily turn into the darkest nightmare. Concerted and deliberate action is demanded. In the light of all this, What should we now do? Which way to the future?

Throughout the book, as the various topics have been discussed, I have attempted to point out implications for action that arise from the findings. In this final chapter I will try to pull all of these together in eleven themes that outline a program of planned change for the future. The data from this study speak to us very clearly. They say that if we pursue these directions, it will make a difference in the faith, values, and commitment of our Seventh-day Adventist young people.

Foster a Personal Relationship with God

Youth want a deeper personal relationship with God. When given an opportunity to select topics that they would most like to study in both the church and the school, more youth (fully three-fourths) selected this topic than any other. Our adolescents feel that we tend to place undue importance on the peripherals of religion; they want to know how to get to the heart of it.

To follow this direction we will need to do three very important things:

(1) We need to preach and teach that religion is basically a matter of relationships, with both God and

What can we do? Faith in the Balance makes these suggestions:

Suggestion #1

We need to preach and teach that religion is basically a matter of relationships, with both God and fellow humans, rather than a system of beliefs or a code of behavior.

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Suggestion #2

We need pastors, teachers, congregational leaders, and parents who will consistently model what it means to live life in relationship with God and with those whom God has placed in their life space.

Suggestion #3

We will need to give new emphasis to the practices that make for a rich devotional life.

fellow humans, rather than a system of beliefs or a code of behavior.

(2) We need pastors, teachers, congregational leaders, and parents who will consistently model what it means to live life in relationship with God and with those whom God has placed in their life space.

(3) We will need to give new emphasis to the practices that make for a rich devotional life. Valuegenesis has shown that many of our youth do not pray and read the Bible on a consistent basis. We will have to teach them how to pray conversationally rather than formally and how to use the Bible in a manner that provides spiritual nourishment. Our past experience has shown that youth revival has always been accompanied by groups who study, sing, pray, and share together. We need to foster more of this today.

This plan of action cannot wait much longer if the youth of the church are to be found believing. The North American Division Church Ministry Department is responding to the challenges in *Valuegenesis* in this area of personal devotional life.. They have decided on four content areas in their "curriculum" for change: (1) Grace—a focus on the action of God in our behalf. (2) Community—a centering in on all that makes for relationships in the family and community at large. (3) Service—a redirecting of our energy at the home, school, and church level to involve everyone in outreach; and (4) Worship—personal devotional life,

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and renewal in the life of the church. New worship materials, new opportunities, and new training in peer leadership, renewed personal religious activities will all provide the ferment to make change happen.

Clarify the Gospel

We have seen that though our youth have heard the words of the Gospel of righteousness by grace through faith, the Adventist emphasis on behavioral standards has led the majority to believe that they must somehow do something to merit salvation. It is very difficult for an Adventist adolescent to emotionally accept the fact that his or her salvation rests entirely on the merits of Jesus Christ and that he or she cannot contribute to it in any way.

In view of this tendency, I think we will have to bend over backwards, in our homes, our congregations, and our schools, to get across a grace orientation to salvation. To be honest, we are a little nervous about going all out for righteousness by grace through faith alone for fear we will push our members into an antinomianism that will undermine obedience. But the evidence indicates that for the vast majority disobedience results not from a grace orientation to the Gospel but from a law orientation. Young people find that they cannot measure up to the demands of the law, become discouraged, and quit trying because the task

Suggestion #4

We will have to bend over backwards, in our homes, our congregations, and our schools, to get across a grace orientation to salvation.

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Suggestion #5

Through precept and example, we must do everything possible to clarify grace and to break the hold of legalism.

is hopeless; they are going to be lost anyway. We have erred so long in the direction of law, we need to begin to focus on grace completely.

Through precept and example, we must do everything possible to clarify grace and to break the hold of legalism. We must communicate a gospel of hope. Without this effort we will never retain our youth. They will not continue to struggle in a contest that they cannot possibly win.

Valuegenesis has shown us that we most effectively transmit a grace orientation to our youth by providing a climate of warmth and acceptance in our local congregations and by the presence of caring teachers in our school system. We best learn and accept grace through warm, supportive interpersonal relationships with graceful people. A major task in the coming years is to instruct our teachers and congregational leaders in how to be that kind of people.

Personalize Basic Doctrines

Nearly all Adventist youth believe in the truth of basic doctrines that define the faith, such as the Second Coming of Jesus, the Sabbath, and the state of the dead. But on some other important teachings such as the pre-Advent judgment, the remnant church, inspiration, and Ellen White they are a bit fuzzy with regard to their belief.

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I believe that we need to enlist the best minds of the theologians and communication experts among us to find new ways of explaining these doctrines to our youth so that they will be clear, simple, and yet intellectually and spiritually satisfying. We need especially to show how the happenings of 1844 (ancient history to current teenagers) have relevance to life in the 1990s.

We also need to search for new ways to explain inspiration and revelation in connection with the Bible. The verbal, in-a-vacuum view of inspiration held by a fair-sized minority allows for no flexibility. How does the Bible, written in a totally different time and culture from our own, relate to life in the modern Western world? What is the proper way to extract timeless principles from the ancient stories and teachings and apply them in contemporary societies?

Similar study needs to be given to the best methods of communicating an understanding of the work of Ellen White. Adult members, and even ministers, have had to reevaluate their understanding of how the prophetic gift functioned in her ministry, so we should not be surprised if the youth are confused. The church needs to develop new ways to present an honest, defensible, and positive view of the life and ministry of its prophet.

Along with this comes the need for new ways of encouraging youth to read her writings. *Valuegenesis*

Suggestion #6

We need to enlist the best minds of the theologians and communication experts among us to find new ways of explaining these doctrines to our youth so that they will be clear, simple, and yet intellectually and spiritually satisfying.

Suggestion #7

We need to search for new ways to explain inspiration and revelation in connection with the Bible.

Suggestion #8

Study needs to be given to the best methods of communicating an understanding of the work of Ellen White. Along with this comes the need for new ways of encouraging youth to read her writings.

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shows that most youth rarely explore her counsel. Perhaps short selections of the most important material need to be prepared and graphically illustrated. Perhaps some of her key counsel needs to be “translated” into current language patterns. If serious steps are not taken soon, the next generation of adults will have no familiarity with her work whatsoever.

Make Standards Relevant

Without doubt, the whole question of church standards is the greatest barrier to the retention of our youth within the Adventist church. If we are serious about saving the next generation, we must give special attention to this area.

We need to decide which behavioral standards are really essential to the heart of Adventism. Historically, we have taught and enforced certain behaviors. Which of these are timeless expressions of Christian commitment, and which are only the preservation of the cultural context in which the Adventist church was born?

I don't believe this can be decided solely by a subcommittee of the General Conference. If the process does not involve the church as a whole, it will be useless; for the church is—in the final analysis—what the church lives and not simply resolutions voted by some official group. Though it will be extremely

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difficult, we must find a way to engage the church in dialogue, and this dialogue should include the youth.

If we find that many of our traditional standards (especially on jewelry, dancing, music, and movies) are still important and desirable, we must develop new ways of engaging the youth in their support. We will have to deal with the sticky issue of consistency. For example, why is a movie shown in the college auditorium right while the same movie shown in the theatre is wrong? Or why is a pin or brooch on a dress acceptable but the same design in the ear or on the hand unacceptable?

Rings now come in different forms. You can purchase a finger watch. Now some Adventists have traditionally believed that wearing rings is somehow wrong (except *perhaps* the wedding ring). But if the ring had a utilitarian purpose, like keeping time, would that make it okay? After all, nobody complains when we wear bracelets—as long as they have a watch in them. I'm not arguing for a liberalizing of the jewelry standards. Personally I have chosen not to wear a wedding ring, tie clasps, or cuff links. (But you could get me on my Timex and some of the knickknacks on the coffee table. I might even be convicted of wearing a completely ornamental, nonutilitarian decoration known as a necktie.) I'm just trying to illustrate how very difficult it is to find a completely consistent pathway to follow on the question of standards and to

Suggestion #9

We need to decide which behavioral standards are really essential to the heart of Adventism. Historically, we have taught and enforced certain behaviors. Which of these are timeless expressions of Christian commitment, and which are only the preservation of the cultural context in which the Adventist church was born?

Suggestion #10

If we find that many of our traditional standards (especially on jewelry, dancing, music, and movies) are still important and desirable, we must develop new ways of engaging the youth in their support. We will have to deal with the sticky issue of consistency.

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Suggestion #11

When we treat as important what the youth have come to see as trivial, we erode respect for all church standards. When the church teaches what only a few members believe or practice, the whole system becomes a joke. We need to find fresh ways to lead the youth into exploring the principles behind these standards.

remind you of how quick the young people are to find those inconsistencies. Neckties, watches, cufflinks, and the like have been historically accepted by conservative churches. Much of what we do has a totally cultural or historical base, rather than a Biblical imperative indicating its necessity.

I confess that I don't have the wisdom to always distinguish between the vital and the peripheral, but I believe that the united church in a series of discussions could at least begin to sort it out. Why take precious time on such an endeavor? Because when we treat as important what the youth have come to see as trivial, we erode respect for all church standards. When the church teaches what only a few members believe or practice, the whole system becomes a joke. We would be ahead not to try to defend the indefensible.

When we have agreed on what is crucial, we need to find fresh ways to lead the youth into exploring the principles behind these standards. Unless young people see their importance and make a personal commitment to them, standards will serve only as a barrier to full identification with the church and its mission. The *Valuegenesis* study has demonstrated that agreement with church standards is the second most important factor in predicting whether or not a youth intends to remain an Adventist in adulthood and the most important factor in predicting denominational loyalty. What *Valuegenesis* argues is that the process by which

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these standards are enforced, understood, and maintained is more crucial than the standard itself. This does not argue for a liberal church either. What it does argue for is a complete approach which tries to get to the basis for each belief and practice. This process of involvement and dialogue will reap rich rewards.

We need to explore how better to transmit our standards of health in view of the fact that 20% of the academy seniors had engaged in binge drinking during the past year and in view of the increasing acceptance of wine as a social drink. With the sexual revolution continuing to exert its influence, with large minorities not in support of our standards of sexual purity, and with over a fourth of our twelfth-grade students already sexually active, we desperately need fresh and meaningful ways to communicate compelling reasons for chastity and sexual responsibility. If our families and churches are to survive, we must clarify and transmit traditional family values such as respect for fetal life, sex within the sanctity of marriage, and lifetime commitments.

We have also learned that how standards are enforced is just as important as what they are. They must be seen and presented as the "fruits of faith" and not the heart of the Gospel. They cannot be enforced by an external authority or obeyed as a set of regulations but must be internalized so that correct behavior flows outward from the heart. Most of all, we must

Suggestion #12

We need to explore how better to transmit our standards of health.

Suggestion #13

We have also learned that how standards are enforced is just as important as what they are.

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remember that an important connection exists between behavior and close personal relationships. Only as standards are transmitted and enforced in a climate of warmth and caring will they have any lasting beneficial effect on faith, values, and commitment.

To effect the needed transformation of our youth vis-a-vis church standards will take all the creativity and energy the church possesses, but nothing less will suffice. We cannot afford the consequences of letting events take their natural course.

Raise Social Consciousness

As good as Adventist youth are in many respects, they have a serious blind spot. *Valuegenesis* shows that, typical of conservative religionists who emphasize individual salvation, they are not committed to placing a high priority on service to others. Yet service is both an important faith expression as well as an essential experiential process through which faith can deepen. A value of service to others proved to be the most important predictor of a mature faith in this study. *All* three systems—schools, congregations, families—can play a more constructive role in developing this helping instinct.

We need to provide opportunities for altruistic activities like giving to the poor, treating the sick, and feeding the hungry. We need to encourage our youth

Suggestion #14

We need to provide opportunities for altruistic activities like giving to the poor, treating the sick, and feeding the hungry.

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to work for social equality and fairness and to engage in volunteer activities designed to make their communities better places to live.

We also need to intensify an educational program of consciousness raising which focuses on the obligations of Christians to those less fortunate and which amplifies the oft-repeated Biblical theme of social justice and fair treatment for all. We need to help young people to realize that a vibrant, mature faith not only prepares for a world to come but also assumes a responsibility for making this one better. Our schools need to accept this challenge in a special way and examine both their curricular and extracurricular programs with an eye to incorporating elements that would result in developing a vision of service to others.

Build Happy Christian Homes

If Project Affirmation is to succeed in bringing about the changes that will usher in a bright new future for the Adventist church, it cannot limit itself to remolding our schools or even our congregations. In fact the most important arena to tackle may well be the Christian home. Building happy, Christ-filled families is foundational to all that Project Affirmation seeks to accomplish. This will call for a massive program of parent education. We will need special sermon series,

Suggestion #15

We need to intensify an educational program of consciousness raising which focuses on the obligations of Christians to those less fortunate and which amplifies the oft-repeated Biblical theme of social justice and fair treatment for all. We need to help young people to realize that a vibrant, mature faith not only prepares for a world to come but also assumes a responsibility for making this one better.

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marriage and family seminars, and family retreats to teach parents how to lead homes that will revitalize the church.

This educational program should seek several outcomes: (1) We need to build harmony and agreement between parents on spiritual principles. (2) Parents need to become comfortable and much more intentional in discussing their personal faith pilgrimage with their children. (3) Parents need to know how to set limits and apply discipline in a manner that is firm and yet loving and redemptive. (4) Parents need to know how to involve their children in the decisions and operation of the home. (5) Parents and children need to work together on family projects aimed at helping other people. All of this comes together to build a family climate of love and acceptance that will make the religion and the values of the parents attractive to the youth.

A special focus within this instruction should be teaching parents how to prepare and conduct meaningful and satisfying family worships. Worships should not be mere excursions to ancient times and cultures but should be rich in application to everyday life. They should actively involve the young people and not relegate them to the role of passive listeners. Youth should be encouraged to lead out in worship experiences and should be given coaching in how to prepare for and conduct such family religious celebrations.

Suggestion #16

We need to teach parents how to prepare and conduct meaningful and satisfying family worships.

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While regular and frequent family worship is important, parents should be instructed that the quality of the experience is even more vital. In fact, interesting and meaningful family worship has been shown in this study to be the most effective family factor in predicting faith maturity and denominational loyalty.

Educate Congregations to Be User-Friendly

When a young Adventist thinks of "church," he or she thinks of the local congregation. For better or for worse, the Adventist church everywhere is typified by the congregation in which the teenager holds membership. Therefore, if we hope to retain our youth and empower them to be the future leaders of the cause, we had better make sure that our local churches are exciting, interesting, and up-to-date places to attend. Through *Valuegenesis* we have learned that positive attitudes toward the church stem from (1) the presence of warm, caring members, especially teachers and leaders, (2) a meaningful program of religious education, and (3) association with spiritual friends. We need to overhaul our congregations to make sure these elements are present.

First of all, we need to create a warm, accepting, nonjudgmental climate in each congregation. Our people need to learn that we should not criticize those whose dress, music, or habits are different from ours.

Suggestion #17

We need to create a warm, accepting, nonjudgmental climate in each congregation.

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We do not foster growth in people—young or old—through criticism, nor do we build a purer church. People grow only as they feel loved and accepted. Everyone who steps into one of our churches should feel welcome and wanted—a part of the family.

Suggestion #18

We need to help create a thinking climate in our families, churches, and schools.

Equally important is the creation of a thinking climate. Youth need to be not only allowed but encouraged to raise questions, to probe doctrinal issues, and to debate the relevancy of standards. Many youth are not comfortable in our congregations and schools because they feel they are being told what to believe and how to behave and not encouraged to think for themselves. If what we have is the truth, it can bear the most stringent investigation, and it is only through such process that young people mature into principled and committed adults.

This openness is closely related to the methodology of religious education. Traditional lecture-type methods present the “truth” as something already formulated to be learned and followed. While this approach will continue to be used in passing on a world view that is based on certain basic and non-negotiable beliefs and values, it needs to be augmented by methods that allow the student to discover truth and apply it to his or her daily life. Only as the student is deeply involved in the investigative process can a climate of thinking—and thus, personal integrity—be generated and maintained. We need constant study

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and training as to state-of-the-art congregational religious education programs, including the preparation of fresh and relevant materials and the equipping of congregational teachers with dialectic skills. The presence of a “thinking climate” in the local congregation is one of the most important factors in predicting maturity of faith and denominational loyalty.

Perhaps all of this can be illustrated by contrasting the experience of two young women in two different congregations. First, a teenager who has not found a “user-friendly” church home:

“I believe in my religion strongly, but in the past few years I haven’t attended my church. It’s not the religion that keeps me from going, but, sad to say, it’s the people. There is only one SDA church here in my community so I don’t have much of a choice, but I try to stick with what I believe and live my days according to what I know to be right. The Lord is always in my heart and in my prayers, and He is what gets me by from day to day.”

Sad, isn’t it? Now note the difference a quality religious education program can make:

“Today I attend the [local] Adventist Church, and this church has really brought me closer to God and has helped build my religion immensely.

“I attend the youth group, which ranges from ages 14 to 20, and we spend a lot of time getting to know God in our own special ways. Such as we try to get

Suggestion #19

We need constant study and training as to state-of-the-art congregational religious education programs, including the preparation of fresh and relevant materials and the equipping of congregational teachers with dialectic skills.

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everyone involved in doing the lesson for that week—this way we all learn something about the lesson and about God. We also do a lot of outside activities together: we go out into nature and we go to the beach, and wherever we go, we try to find God in that certain nature.

“Our young people have also become very much involved with the main church. We feel, as the younger generation, that the older people don’t understand us and don’t want to get to know us. A lot of it has to do with our physical appearance. But we have worked hard for three years and have accomplished tremendous feats! We’ve even done a whole church service! I think kids today need to have a little fun in their religion, and we have and will continue to do that very thing.”

Involve Youth in the Church

In his Sabbath sermon at the 1990 General Conference Session in Indianapolis, newly elected world president, Robert Folkenberg, proclaimed that “if we give our young people a piece of the pie, they will stay for dinner.” The *Valuegenesis* study supports this statement. If we would retain our youth, we must be intentional about involving them in the lives of our congregations. Every youth should sense that he or she is indispensable to the body of Christ and that the life of that body depends upon his or her carrying out those

Suggestion #20

We must be intentional about involving them (the youth) in the lives of our congregations.

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tasks for which he or she is uniquely gifted.

It is important to send some signals to the youth of the church that they are all important. Ask your local congregation these questions. (1) Do you have youth on every committee in the local church? (2) Do youth participate in all aspects of the worship service? (3) Are the youth of the church active in mission outreach and have opportunity to share their activity with the other members of the church? (4) Are there areas of church life where the youth are totally in charge?

The newly established John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry at La Sierra University supported by the North American Division is an example of just such a symbol of youth concern. It will focus on educational activities which will influence both the home and church as its concern. Other union centers should be established. The Project Affirmation report suggests that North American Youth Ministry Resource and Research Centers be established and that the North American Division actively support the networking of campus ministry programs for Adventist secondary school, college, and postgraduate students on Adventist and secular campuses.

We need to make youth witnessing programs exciting and appealing. We need to create new witnessing opportunities, and that we should seek to involve all of our youth in some aspect of faith sharing. Programs such as Adventist Youth Service, whether

Suggestion # 21

We need to make youth witnessing programs exciting and appealing.

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in overseas or homeland locations, seem to tap excitement, idealism, and commitment and should be expanded and promoted vigorously. At the same time, our young people need to be incorporated into the operating structures of their local congregations. Youth should hold important offices and sit on the church board and key committees. Project Affirmation's report, *Risk and Promise* argues that, "if faith is to grow, greater involvement in service and outreach activities needs to be fostered."

We also need to find new and creative ways of teaching stewardship. Youth need the sense of ownership that comes from investing in an enterprise. They need to feel that this is their church. They are not passive onlookers in an organization that belongs to the adults. They contribute to its support, and they have a responsibility for its direction. Incidentally, this involvement will help build the sense of self-esteem and purpose in life that we found missing in so many of these teenagers.

A young woman, who displays a certain eloquence, explains the need for youth involvement in the church this way:

"Over the last two years I've had increasingly growing and alarming concerns about the SDA church. I still strongly believe our doctrines are correct, but I disagree strongly with the message we are giving to those *inside* and *outside* our doors.

Suggestion #22

We need to find new and creative ways of teaching stewardship.

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"In my opinion, and the opinion of *every* young person I know who is within five years of my age in either direction (I am 19), the youth who are to be the leaders of tomorrow will never be such unless someone starts allowing us to be the leaders of today.

"We are fast leaving the church, not because of doctrinal disagreement, but because of a lack of love, acceptance, and openness to our new and creative ideas.

"I am so sad to see friends I love leaving the church. But I am even sadder to see and feel the rejection both they and I have felt from many older members who refuse to see and utilize our talents.

"We want to celebrate our love for Jesus, but we have been told that celebration is evil, and the clear message is being given that we have nothing to celebrate. The whole purpose of the Gospel, to seek and save and love the lost, is gone when we are not allowed to express openly our love and loyalty to the God we know.

"I realize that some churches have been very bravely going against the flow and reaching out. These 'celebration' churches are growing by leaps and bounds. If it is so wrong, why are these churches growing? Why are so many people turning back to God after being so far away and learning the joy of His service?

"Jesus said: 'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men

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Is His face so blocked by our prejudices and traditions that we can't see the tears in His eyes because of our hypocrisy? He said to love the lost and the unlovely. If the church isn't for those who need Him most—those whom society calls bad—then whom is it for?

unto me.' Most of our churches are not drawing people but turning them away. What does that say about the way we are lifting Him up? Is His face so blocked by our prejudices and traditions that we can't see the tears in His eyes because of our hypocrisy? He said to love the lost and the unlovely. If the church isn't for those who need Him most—those whom society calls bad—then whom is it for?

"In my opinion, the growth of those few 'celebration' churches proves that their practical celebration of God's unconditional and all-accepting love for anyone and their service to the world are inspired.

"I pray daily for our church. I beg God to help those of us who are so blind to wake up and see the harvest, get up from our warm pews of unchanging and cold traditionalism, go out, and love our young people, their friends, and all the lonely world back to Jesus.

"I long for others to see our church and say: 'I see Jesus in them.' My heart cries for this change before it is too late. It was almost too late for me, and I can't bear to see any more of my loved ones lost because we can't find Jesus in our church. This is my soul desire—for the flame to burn again in the hearts of all the young people who need to be the leaders of TODAY!"

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Promote Superior Schools

In my younger days a common slogan was: "The worst Adventist school is better than the best public school." Today, most Adventists will not buy that. Our members are demanding an education which is academically equal or superior to that of society's schools, and if we are to remain viable, we will have to meet those expectations.

This means that we must be prepared to offer a rich variety in the curriculum, including music, art, languages, computer science, and—on the secondary level—advanced mathematics and science. We will have to consider programs for the exceptional student. Such programming will require a constant upgrading of facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and computer equipment.

It also means that we will need to advance the educational qualifications of our teachers. The master's degree should be the goal for our elementary and secondary levels. Such upgrading obviously will be expensive. If the church really wishes to revitalize its educational system, it must be prepared to continue to make major financial commitments. Ways must be found to finance the endeavor without putting too large a share on tuition income and thus placing our schools beyond the reach of the average member. One of the Project Affirmation task forces is dealing with

Suggestion #23

We must be prepared to offer a rich variety in the curriculum, including music, art, languages, computer science, and—on the secondary level—advanced mathematics and science. We will have to consider programs for the exceptional student.

Suggestion #24

We will need to advance the educational qualifications of our teachers.

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Suggestion #25

New approaches call for the purposeful creation of caring environments, the encouragement of debate, discussion, and self-discovery, the development of service opportunities, and occasions to understand the giving and receiving of love in theological terms.

alternative financial strategies. These are challenges for every Adventist school and those churches which make them successful.

Yet it is not enough that our schools be of top quality academically. With all the investment of church resources, we must also demand that they nurture the spiritual life of the students. We may remember that the perceived quality of the school religious education program was the most important school predictor of faith maturity and denominational loyalty.

However, the Valuegenesis data tell us that current religious education programs in our schools do not seem to inspire most students. Some restructuring is needed. New approaches call for the purposeful creation of caring environments, the encouragement of debate, discussion, and self-discovery, the development of service opportunities, and occasions to understand the giving and receiving of love in theological terms.

Insist on Caring Schools

Many of our directions for the future revolve around the building of personal relationships for, as we have seen, such relationships play a vital role in the development of faith, values, and commitment. This is as true in the school as it is in the family and the congregation. We need to bend all our efforts toward establishing and maintaining a warm and accepting

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climate in each of our schools.

Such a climate will be created by caring teachers who do not "put down" difficult and obnoxious students but who love and treat with respect each young person in their charge. In such an atmosphere, students have a voice in the school policy, and discipline is seen by all as fair and redemptive. The spirit of Christ rules each classroom, and the entire institution forms an open, supportive, encouraging community where every member is valuable to the rest of the family.

Since such a climate is the function of the personal qualities of principals and teachers, we must give great attention to the selection of those we choose to staff our schools. Furthermore, we must prepare our teachers for such a life-style by incorporating material into our teacher-education program that will foster such characteristics. Such learnings take place through precept, example, and guided interpersonal experiences. Because such education is never completed, we must also incorporate it into an ongoing, inservice educational program.

Support Adventist Teachers

Even in a day of mind-boggling modern equipment, James Garfield's definition of an education as "Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other" is still central. The teacher is still the most crucial

Suggestion #26

We need to bend all our efforts toward establishing and maintaining a warm and accepting climate in each of our schools.

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element in the educational process. No other component comes even close.

Therefore, we need to treat our teachers as valuable treasures. An unhappy and dissatisfied teacher spells poor education for students. We can make no better investment in the revitalization of our schools than to ensure the welfare of our educators.

Of course, this will cost something. Our teachers need sufficient salaries to live comfortably, and a good teacher is well worth it. But Valuegenesis has revealed that much more than money is involved. We need to provide psychological support; to build the morale of our teaching force.

This means that parents and other members of the church need to show respect for our teachers. Pastors must lend them full support. All of us must cooperate to lighten their burdens. We should cherish our teachers as ministers of the Gospel—ambassadors for Christ—which in fact they are. In fact, Adventist teachers make up to a large extent our army of “youth pastors.” Their charge includes nurturing our children and youth. Reinforcing this mission and task in every teacher in the denomination is the responsibility of the whole church. Ask yourself what you are doing to encourage our teachers to take this aspect of their teaching seriously. Even teachers who do not specifically teach Bible classes are called to this unique task. Also, teachers should not feel that they are struggling with

Suggestion #27

We need to treat our teachers as valuable treasures. We should cherish our teachers as ministers of the Gospel—ambassadors for Christ—which in fact they are.

Suggestion #28

Parents and other members of the church need to show respect for our teachers.

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maintaining discipline and upholding standards alone. If we all pitch in and work together, we can make their task a delightful one, and we will be rewarded by receiving a quality education for our young people.

The Three-Fold Impact

Seventh-day Adventists can draw on three environments in their attempt to nurture faith, values, and commitment in the young generation: family, congregation, and school. When all three are working together in harmony the effect on faith maturity and denominational loyalty is maximized.

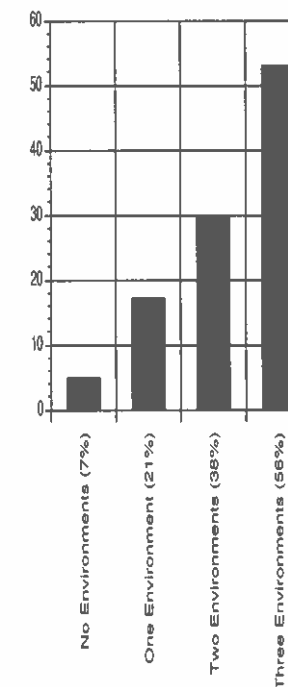
Using some of the scales discussed in this book, we constructed a measure of “effective environment” for each of the three locales. An effective environment is one that combines support and warmth with high-quality religious instruction. We then determined whether each student reported being involved in none, one, two, or three such effective environments. Finally, we compared these students as to their faith maturity and denominational loyalty. The results were amazing.

If students in grades six to eight were involved in no effective environments, only 7% of them displayed high faith maturity and denominational loyalty. If they were experiencing one effective environment, the figure rose to 21%; at two environments, it was 38%; and if all three environments were effective, 56% had

Suggestion #29

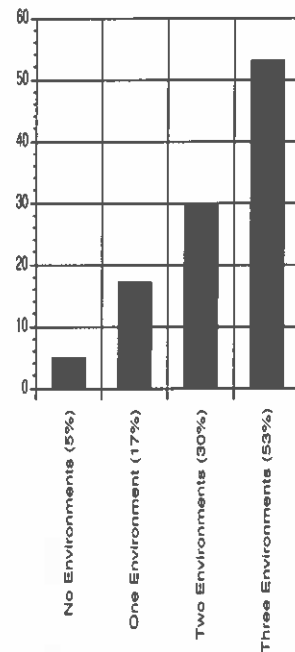
We can draw on three environments in our attempt to nurture faith, values, and commitment in the young generation: family, congregation, and school.

Students in grades 6 to 8



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Students in grades 9-12



high faith and loyalty. Thus mature faith and loyalty were eight times more frequent among students involved in all three effective environments than among those involved in none.

The pattern was similar for those in grades nine to twelve. Only 5% for those with no effective environments; 17% for those with one; 30% for those with two; and 53% for those with all three—a tenfold increase from those with none.

Here we see the additive power of families, congregations, and schools working together. The renewal of each environment in a cooperative framework of nurture and mission is the way to a bright future for Adventism. If we act wholeheartedly, the next generation can belong to the church, and the question that Jesus asked in Luke about the coming of Christ and the notion of whether or not there would be faith in the earth will have a clear, positive answer.

Appendix

Methodology

The information given in this book is based on the findings of a massive field study. Throughout the book reference is often made to this field study, but to avoid cluttering the flow of thought, specific details are not given. Some readers, however, will want more information as to how these data were secured. For their benefit we include this methodological appendix.

To produce this research picture of Adventist youth and the Adventist primary and secondary educational system, a stratified random sample was drawn from the entire North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (United States, Canada, and Bermuda). Specifically, the opinions and concerns of six groups

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Who participated in Valuegenesis?

1. Adventist youth in Adventist schools, grades six to twelve.
2. Adventist youth in non-Adventist schools (usually public), grades six to twelve.
3. Parents of these youth in grades six to twelve.
4. Teachers in Adventist schools, grades six to twelve.
5. Head administrators in Adventist schools, grades six to twelve.
6. Adventist pastors of churches that support Adventist schools, grades six to twelve.

were sought: The groups are listed in the sidebar on the left. To survey these six groups, three samples were drawn.

The Primary Sample

A sample of 20% of all Adventist schools in the Division was chosen. In order to ensure its representativeness, this sample was stratified by two categories. First, schools were grouped according to the nine union conferences of the Division, and then within each union conference they were divided into four school types: (1) elementary schools (up to grade eight), (2) junior academies (having grades nine or ten), (3) senior boarding academies, and (4) senior day academies.

This procedure resulted in thirty-six "cells"—four school types in each of nine union conferences—each containing the names of the schools that were described by that category. One-fifth of the schools in each category were then chosen by a computer-generated random-numbers program with the sole restriction that one senior boarding academy was selected within each union conference. This selection produced an initial sample of 271 schools.

Each of these schools was asked to designate a survey administrator who would oversee the survey process, and each administrator was sent a detailed

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survey manual containing instructions for administering the questionnaires as well as a supply of the instruments. The administrator made arrangements for the administration of the survey to the principal, four randomly selected teachers (all teachers if the school employed four or fewer), and all students in grades six through twelve.

Due to the length of the questionnaire (over 500 responses), the administrators were asked to allocate two class periods for the students to complete the survey. In these sessions the administrators gave standardized directions and provided special code numbers which were used to classify the respondents by union conference. When students had completed their questionnaires, they were collected by the administrators and mailed in bulk to Search Institute in Minneapolis for computer data processing. In order to gain the parental perspective, one of the parents of each student in the sample was invited to come to the school at a designated time to complete the survey. These questionnaires were also returned in bulk to Search Institute. In the case of boarding schools, where parents might live many miles away, or if the administrator judged that parent turnout was likely to be particularly low, the questionnaires were mailed to the parents, who completed them and returned them directly to Search Institute.

When students had completed their questionnaires, they were collected by the administrators and mailed in bulk to Search Institute in Minneapolis for computer data processing.

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The Church-based Sample

In order to obtain a sample of sixth-to-twelfth-grade Adventist youth who were not enrolled in Adventist schools and their parents, the survey administrators were instructed to contact the churches that support their schools and request the help of the pastors. At each of these churches the pastor was asked to invite all youth who were affiliated with the church and who were currently enrolled in grades six through twelve in a non-Adventist school to complete the survey. One parent of each of these young people was also invited to participate. The pastor was also given a questionnaire to complete. An abbreviated version of the administration manual was developed for use by the survey administrator in these church settings.

In most cases, a relatively small number of churches (three or fewer) were involved with each school, and all were invited to participate. In the case of boarding academies or large day schools, however, the administrator, rather than attempting to obtain participation from all of the supporting churches, contacted only those that were the source of the majority of the students attending the school. The research team realized, however, that at any given time there were many more youth available to survey. In order to broaden our sample as much as possible a "population" sample was drawn.

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The Senior Academy Oversample

The academy years seem to be especially crucial for the crystallization of what will become adult value systems. In light of the opportunity to obtain information from several thousand Adventist young people in the midst of the important period of adolescence and to allow more valid analyses of the data by union conferences, it was decided to request that all Adventist senior academies participate in the study on an "in-school only" basis. Those senior academies that had not been selected in the primary sample were now requested to survey their principal, up to four teachers, and all of their students in grades nine through twelve.

Research Instruments

In order to collect all of these data, five different questionnaires were constructed—for the youth, parents, teachers, school principals, and pastors of supporting churches. Each was lengthy. For example the youth instrument occupied 24 pages and consisted of 465 questions with over 500 responses (since some questions had multiple parts). The average completion time was between an hour and an hour and a half.

Somewhat over half of the questions were the same on each form—the core items. This allows for comparison of answers among the five groups. The

Five different questionnaires were constructed:

1. Youth
2. Parents
3. Teachers
4. School principals
5. Pastors of supporting churches

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The development of the five questionnaires was a process in which wide consultation was sought and which occupied many months.

remaining questions were unique to each form. Many of the questions were those that Search Institute had developed earlier for a study of adolescents and adults in six major Protestant denominations or for the study of a national sample of 50,000 public school students in grades six to twelve. This commonality allows for comparison of Adventist youth with these other groups. This was viewed as a plus for this research. While an Adventist faith scale would have had some advantages, it was felt that in order to draw some kinds of significant relationships to youth in other denominations use of Search's instruments was necessary. Other questions were unique to this study—developed with particular challenges and concerns of Seventh-day Adventists in mind. The development of the five questionnaires was a process in which wide consultation was sought and which occupied many months.

Participation Rates

Out of the 271 schools invited to participate in the primary sample, 152 returned completed survey instruments for a participation rate of 56%. This would generally be considered as acceptable but only moderate. Of the 73 academies invited to participate in the senior academy oversample, 58 (79%) returned questionnaires. This is a highly respectable response rate. National participation rates for this type of study

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currently stand at about 60%.

It is more difficult to calculate the rate of return on the church-based sample since several links separated the research office from the actual youth or parent who completed the questionnaire. First, the survey administrator had to contact the pastor. Second, the pastor had to agree for the church to participate and actually arrange for the survey. Third, the student and parent had to give up personal time and make the effort to come to the church to complete the survey. Break-down could have occurred at any of these points. Since the number of returns from the church-based sample is only a tiny fraction of those from the primary sample, it seems evident that such break-down did, in fact, occur. Thus, while the findings concerning youth in Adventist schools can be accepted with a high level of confidence, the findings concerning those in public schools must be viewed with caution. It is very likely that they are biased toward the more "core" members as pointed out in chapter 14.

When the questionnaires were received at Search Institute, the information was entered into the computer. The data were then "cleaned," eliminating surveys which had excessive amounts of missing or incongruous data. This resulted in the rejection of 1866 questionnaires (1665 of them from the youth) out of a total of 16,614 received. The remaining 14,748 instruments were computer-analyzed using various sta-

When the questionnaires were received at Search Institute, the information was entered into the computer. The data were then "cleaned," eliminating surveys which had excessive amounts of missing or incongruous data.

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Youth	12,142
Parents	1,892
Teachers	383
Principals	176
Pastors	155
Total	14,748

tistical procedures such as frequencies, percentages, correlations, and multiple regressions.

Sample Sizes

The 14,748 usable questionnaires were distributed among the various groups cited in the left sidebar.

The 12,142 youth may be further subdivided into these categories: (1) Adventists in Adventist schools, grades 6-8 (2,634); (2) Adventists in non-Adventist schools, grades 6-8 (145); (3) Adventists in Adventist schools, grades 9-12 (8,007); (4) Adventists in non-Adventist schools, grades 9-12 (312); (5) Non-Adventists in Adventist schools, grades 6-8 (392); (6) Non-Adventists in Adventist schools, grades 9-12 (652).

By far, the largest group is Adventists in Adventist schools (10,641). The Adventist students enrolled in non-Adventist schools (mostly public) total only 457.

Most of the parents (1567) who completed the survey were Adventists who had children in our system. Only 186 Adventist parents whose children attended other schools participated. The remaining 139 parents were non-Adventists themselves.

This book has dealt almost entirely with the information obtained from the 11,098 Adventist students, with occasional references to the data from the Adventist parents, the teachers, the principals, and the

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pastors. Often, it has concentrated on just the 10,641 students enrolled in the Adventist educational system. These findings were chosen because they seemed most relevant to a study of the faith, values, and commitment of the next generation and because they constituted the bulk of the responses. Time and space have limited the number of findings that have been explored. In no way has this data bank been exhausted, and the plan is for additional reports to be created as other findings and new connections are explored.

Valuegenesis: The Short Form can now be administered to youth in grades 6-12 and in Adventist colleges. This service provides a 150-item survey instrument, an administration manual, and a 20-page report which provides Adventist schools, colleges or congregations with an in-depth portrait of faith, beliefs, and values. The report also provides national norms for comparison purposes.

An essential tool for planning and institutional renewal, *Valuegenesis: The Short Form* can be used each year to document change and to evaluate how well new program efforts are working.

This service is designed for schools or congregations with at least 30 youth. It can also be utilized at the conference or union level. The cost is \$300 per report, plus \$1.25 per respondent.

To order this service, call or write:

John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry
La Sierra University, Riverside,
CA 92515 (714/785-2041 or Fax
714/785-2199).
Or contact
Search Institute, 122 West
Franklin Ave., Minneapolis, MN
55404 (1-800/888-7828)

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A Project Affirmation Book

Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance

This volume is the first in a series of Project Affirmation publications jointly sponsored by the Department of Education of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, the John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry, La Sierra University, and the La Sierra University Press. It provides a complete analysis of the *Valuegenesis* data.

“As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, Adventist education faces serious risks, yet offers great promise. . . . In a fragmented world, we serve society by raising our children in a healthy, cooperative community. Where home, church, and school work together to provide a consistent voice, children can grow into balanced, mature adults able to love God and care about others. Their religion is not just words and talk. It shows itself in constructive, loving action.” — *Risk and Promise Report*

“For those in families, congregations, and schools who are earnestly seeking ways of developing the faith maturity and commitment to service of the church’s rising generation, this book is a MUST! Dudley and Gillespie present the most pertinent of the *Valuegenesis* data from the perspective of their own significant research and experience, and the implications are clear—very clear. Fortunately, so is the planned change program they present for the future.”
— *Gordon Madgwick, Director for Higher Education, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists*

“From the perspective of Search Institute, the *Valuegenesis* data continues to provide insight into the significance and role of the family, local congregation and parochial school in the life of a maturing Christian. This monumental study places the Adventist church at the center of research on faith development with a data base that can continue to provide valuable information for the change process.” — *Peter Benson, President, Search Institute*

“I appreciate the careful attention to examining the rich cultural diversity of the Adventist church exhibited by Project Affirmation and especially *Valuegenesis*. What we have learned is very positive and provides the opportunity to grow together into a more mature faith. This research will continue to give us great reason to dialogue about our roles in the complex issues of developing faith.” — *Melvin Davis, Vice President for Planning and Development, Oakwood College*