

Complete Executive Summary

Telephone Interviews of
Seventh-day Adventist Pastors

Interview Dates:
April 30, 1998 –
August 5, 1998

*Conducted by Curtis Rittenour
Resource Development
AdventSource*

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Pastoral Interviews

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Interview Dates: **April 30, 1998 – August 5, 1998**
Number of Calls in this Report: **50**
Number of Conferences Represented: **18**

THE QUESTIONS

***Question 1.** What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?*

Two studies rise above all the rest: Discover (17) and Amazing Facts (15). The next highest lesson referred to was In His Steps (7). Here's the breakdown with number of times mentioned in parentheses:

- (5) -- La Fe Jesus (Spanish), Good News (Gray)
- (4) -- 20th Century, Historicals of Prophecy (Batchelor), It's My Choice (Case)
- (3) -- Prophecy Seminar (Burrill's), Encounter, Real Truth, Pastor's who created their own
- (2) -- Kenneth Cox videos, Revelation Seminar (and Daniel), 27 Fundamental Beliefs, Bible Says
- (1) -- Come Alive (It Is Written), Glad Tidings, Jack Sequiera's, Steps to Eternal Life, Marshall Grosball's, Bob Foss', Steven Moore's, Tony Cirigliano's

Suggestions for revisions or new series can be grouped into three areas: Target group, Theology, and Format. The most common response in the target group area is creating studies that appeal to younger generations, especially young adults. Other related ideas include: Creating an adult version of Steve Case's series (It's My Choice), reaching the unchurched, creating a multi-media CD-ROM that is interactive and used on computers,

appeal to social/personal needs in the studies, something created for adults but written at a 5th grade level.

Many comments were made along theological lines, and most focused over what might be called a “Christ-centered and grace oriented” emphasis (cross-centered, gospel-centered, etc.). Along the same lines, pastors spoke of less legalism and doctrine, and more of an emphasis on the relational aspects of our walk with Christ. Some also spoke of highlighting righteousness by faith, and a proper focus on the character of God. There were some who warned, “Whatever you do, don’t water down the truth” and “My members want ‘historic’ Adventism” and “Solid biblical truth.”

Lots of suggestions were made about the “format” (layout, design, approach, etc.) of lessons. Some spoke about length, usually to “shorten” them. Pastors felt people have a hard time focusing on long lessons, so make them do-able in 50 minutes. One pastor suggested a video lesson (30 minutes) combined with written/discussion (30 minutes). Other pastors spoke of needing more “practical application” questions in the lessons. Some said, “Encourage the study of the Word” or “Encourage church attendance” and “Less proof-texting”. Regarding artwork, “Use more contemporary artwork” and “Appeal to more diverse ethnic groups” and “Clean up the blurry artwork in the Discover series.” Along technological lines: “Create transparencies pastors can use when teaching (in the home or at church)”, “Create lessons that can be accessed on the Internet”, “Put studies on WordPerfect disks so I can personalize them”, “Create a video series that is not a sermon but more like the old Encounter series on Dukane projectors but updated”, and “Create Bible studies on PowerPoint.”

Question 2. *Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)*

Twenty of 50 pastors say their church(es) have a vision or mission statement. The interviewer changed the question after the first series and asked if it was “written”, which brought more “no” responses. Three or four spoke of an “unspoken” vision, one said, “It’s Matthew 28”, another said they use the conference’s mission statement, and another said, “Ours is more of a motto.” Many pastors (perhaps 10) specifically mentioned, “It was here when I came.”

The most common approach for creating a vision or mission statement was starting with small groups (church board, leadership, etc.) and then going to the church in a church business meeting and discussing/voting on a statement. Other variations and emphases mentioned include: stronger emphasis on a single committee (often leadership) creating one, use of surveys in the church and community, collect and choose from statements already written.

Resources that pastors mentioned in getting help in creating a statement are varied: Notes from a seminar class (Doug Kilcher) was mentioned twice, books (George Barna and

Rick Warren), and seminars (Don Reynolds, Ben Maxon, John Maxwell, and the conference president). Other miscellaneous comments: "I've tried but my congregation isn't interested", "We're working on one", "If it's not practically used, it's a waste of time", and "Please give lots of options we can choose from if you create a resource."

Question 3. *What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience.)*

Around half the pastors say they have sat down and watched a Cross Training program. Many more of have dishes. Several said, "I don't promote it like a should." Lots of pastors were positive about A.C.N. and said things like, "Tell them they are doing a great job" and "I don't know why more pastors in my conference don't tap into this." Very few (Hispanic pastor for one) have never heard of Cross Training. Many spoke of recording and distributing tapes. And most Hispanic pastors wished for programming in Spanish.

Most comments centered on ideas for topics and presenters. Names of presenters that came up: Ron Gladden (Church Planting), Ben Schoun, Stoy Proctor, John Nixon, and "pioneering pastors who have measurable results, not just titles behind their name." Topics/targets include: Conflict management, effective decision-making, friendship evangelism, programs for every church officer, help for prayer meeting, training for Sabbath school leaders, etc. One pastor said, "Remind the speakers of the diverse audience (especially small churches) they speak to." Another suggested A.C.N. tap into speakers used by 3ABN. Another would like more "outreach programs" that he can use in his community since he has no local professionals to tap into for cooking schools, etc.

Along the lines of "handouts" a few comments were made: "I was disappointed in them (content)" and "Speaker didn't follow it" and "I wish they were available on the web for downloading." On program length, the most common response was to shorten them. And on equipment, there were pastors who struggled to find someone with technical help to run the equipment. Others spoke of technical problems, unhappy about the switch to digital, and being too far north (Alaska) to get the signal.

Miscellaneous suggestions: Use a live audience whenever possible, consider an Oprah Winfrey approach, use a news/magazine program approach, invite people to send you snippets (from camcorder recording) of things happening in their churches and show them, have more "how to" aspects of the teaching, encourage/explain how every church needs a tape lending library based on these programs, less lecture and more interactive learning on the set, and collaborate more with 3ABN in broadcasting or rebroadcasting.

Question 4. *Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?*

The most common response to this question centered around "interaction/involvement" of the church members in the service. And the most common way to do this mentioned

was through a “sharing time” sometime during the service. Some pastors focused on having “prayer requests” shared during this time. Others spoke of a “testimony” time. Some separated these two and others combined them. One pastor from Canada called the time “Open Church” and it lasts for 10 minutes. Another pastor from Florida has “Open Discussion” services once a month where he preaches for 10 minutes and then opens the floor. He says visitors especially like this format.

The suggestions made to this question can be grouped into three areas: General philosophy of worship comments, program/tactics comments, and references to resources. Besides people involvement, the other frequently mentioned ideas include using a worship team, and the centrality of preaching in worship. Several pastors see preaching as central (“Spirit-filled” and “Biblical” and “Christ-centered”, etc.). They see the pastor as more central to creating the atmosphere of worship. Other thoughts on a philosophy include using variety, changing service elements gradually, having an evangelistic focus on Sabbath morning worship, having a relaxed and relational atmosphere, raising the quality more than focusing on change, and reaching the hearts of members first. On the latter one pastor stressed that worship is a frame of mind, not an activity. He said we need to see worship more as what you are, not so much what you do.

Program strategies mentioned are quite varied, although several can be clumped together regarding the involvement of youth and children (have them on the platform, include music to appeal to them, provide a children’s story, etc.). Several relate to music: Use contemporary music, use blended music preferences, project music lyrics, use a choir, have “thematic song services”, etc. Other ideas: Use drama and skits before the sermon to introduce the theme, use PowerPoint during the sermon, have church in the park on occasion, have extended Scripture readings.

Resources mentioned: Willow Creek videos, Permission to Worship resource, Interactive Readings for Church Worship (Zackrison & Campbell), Body Building (K. Johnson), Purpose-Drive Church (Warren), Natural Church Development (C. Schwarz), a Baptist magazine on worship, Communication Resources, Inc. One pastor requested more satellite programs that could be used in his smaller churches during worship when a preacher isn’t available. He suggested something in the 45 minute time range. Another pastor mentioned he visited the Hamilton Road Community Adventist Church to get ideas. Felt the program was generally good, but could have been more “integrated” (it didn’t seem to thematically hold together and flow as much as it might have...).