

Pastoral Interviews
Report for Week of: 4-30-98
Number of Calls: 10
Number of Conferences: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In this new series of questions, pastors were asked what Bible study series they use to prepare people for baptism. Here is the spread with references in parenthesis: Amazing Facts (4); Discovery Series (Note: This was called several things: Discovery Lessons, Discover Lessons, VOP Lessons, etc. so I am assuming they are all the same and have grouped them together) (4); In His Steps (3); Glad Tidings (Ill. ABC sells) (1); Real Truth (1); Daniel/Revelation Seminar (1); Historicals of Prophecy Video/Lessons with Doug Batchelor (1); Come Alive/Stay Alive from It Is Written (1); 20th Century (1); Good News (1); Encounter (1); 27 Fundamental Beliefs book (1). One pastor created his own series as a take off Frank Berden's Pictorial Study Guide (someone from Australia).

About half the pastors specifically said they'd like to see something new and different. Most said, "Sure, I always like something new for a change." When asked what they didn't like or changes they'd like to see most comments focused on having more traditional theology. One pastor said, "The new In His Steps sounds like it was written by a stuffy theologian. The old one is more practical." Another pastor commented that his conservative members wanted something more along the historical lines of Adventism. And another likes less "emotional stories" and more solid, basic Biblical truth. Other miscellaneous comments include: Don't care for the artwork on the new Discover series, too blurry; Liked Mary Welch's old traditional, doctrinal series, especially the proper emphasis on standards; I'd like to see a broader representation of cultures in the artwork; I like brevity in whatever is created.

On the positive side, one pastor favors the more grace/gospel oriented lessons from It Is Written (Come Alive and Stay Alive series) and the practical application in them. Another said he appreciated the new Amazing Facts series being more Christ-centered and less law and standards oriented. And another has his elders and deacons conduct a Sabbath school class at church using Amazing Facts series.

2. Another new question, "Does your church have a mission or vision statement?" Three of ten pastors said, "Yes." A fourth pastor said, "No" but then proceeded to explain an "unspoken" vision that his church is catching onto (Their church sees themselves as becoming "The Center" for the community. They are relocating and have a vision of providing a plethora of ministries to reach the community. Want to build a facility to enhance outreach ministries, not just provide a place of worship and Sabbath school classes...).

Comments made by pastors who have vision/mission statements include: "We did a take off from Matthew 28 in developing our mission statement with specific reference to

reaching Detroit through certain ministries” and “I involved my entire church in the discussion and included reporting, demographics, discussions, etc.” and “I used notes from my seminary class on church administration to help me.” One pastor has tried several times to encourage his elderly congregation to write one, but they aren’t interested. Another pastor emphasized, “If its not practically used, I think it’s a waste of time. The value of a mission statement can go either way.”

3. Another new question, “What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches?” Though the interviewer didn’t ask about dishes or familiarity with A.C.N. Cross Training, the impression is that about 80% of these pastors are aware of them. Comments made about topics and presenters: Two pastors spoke of conversational witnessing and friendship evangelism; another spoke of helping his elders learn to preach; another stressed a program on how to practically apply the Bible to your everyday life. More general comments include: “Don’t be ‘lofty’, be very practical” and “Please present anything to convince my members that witnessing is easy”. Two pastors felt the programming was geared to larger churches and asked that we “remember the small country churches out here!”

Regarding length of programs: Two pastors said, “Shorten”, one said, “Make it 1 to 1 ½ hrs.”, and another said, “Why not do a two-part series?” Regularity of programming: “Do it once every other month” and “Once a month.” A couple pastors liked the phone-in interaction and a couple didn’t care, most didn’t comment. No comments were given about handouts except that most pastors (80-90%) never purchased any. And regarding how far ahead they would like announcement information for their bulletins? One pastors said 6 weeks and another said 4 weeks. Target groups mentioned were: Elders, seniors, singles, single parents, youth, Baby boomers, unchurched, general church member, small churches, deacons, deaconesses, and “any and all church officers.” On the latter, one pastor said, “I need all the help I can get in training officers.” Three or four pastors, by the way, specifically mentioned (without being asked) that they are pleased with Cross Training and appreciate the practical orientation of the programs.

4. New question, “Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?” Responses can be grouped by Personal, Strategy/Program, and Resources. Under the heading “personal”, pastors said things like: “I need to be excited myself. If I’m not, my members certainly will not be during worship” and “If my worship service were to change, it would have to start in the hearts of my members who do not want or care to change right now.”

Most comments focused on programs and strategies. Have good music. Use a choir. Involve the youth. Teach people to focus on God, not polarizing differences among themselves. Help members feel an ownership of the service. Teach the priesthood of all believers. Use a worship team. Help members listen for the Holy Spirit, not the pastor’s linguistic abilities. And one retired pastor said, “Spicer used to say, ‘Just stick to the message.’ That’s my strategy.”

Worship resources mentioned include: Communication Resources (out of Ohio, 1.800.992.2144); the Purpose-Driven Church; a journal from the Baptist church on worship (pastor couldn't remember the name of it, but subscribed to it a few years ago).

Pastor: CW
Conference: Lake Region
Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

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?

Glad Tidings. Illinois ABC sells it. I really would like to see some new things, but I'd like to see the doctrinal studies for the laymen brought back by Mary Welch. She was a Bible instructor. It was crystal clear and covered all the doctrines of the church, and was very good on church standards. She used to be a Catholic.

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.?)

No. Use the conference's.

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).

I would like to see an intensive training session for church elders. My elders preach every other week and they need help in this area. One hour to one and a half hours, every other month. I like telephoning in. Never saw handouts. Ad needed at least 6 weeks ahead.

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

The only thing I've found is that I need to be excited about what I'm about to do. When a pastor goes to Sabbath school, it starts him going and getting excited. If I show I'm interested in what I'm doing, then people are more inclined. A pastor also can't neglect prayer meeting.

Pastor: MJ
Conference: Lake Region
Church(es)/Position: 1 church

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?

We're using Amazing Facts (have 16 elders using these). Real Truth by William Scales, and some of the VOP lessons. No, we squawked over the Amazing Facts being more Christ-centered and not just focused on standards. I don't like the current VOP Bible lesson series, the artist work is blurry to me. Wish they could be shorter.

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.?)

Yes. We based it Matthew 28:19-20, but applied it more specifically to ministries. We manifest ours not only in a view to change Detroit, but how (presenting the claims of the everlasting gospel, and through touch ministries). Touches on small group ministries, training members.

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).

Doing well with topics, meeting felt needs... I wish you could make it into two parts. I realize detailed instruction doesn't fit well in 2 hours. Handouts for Ken Cox got a little expensive. Haven't bought them for A.C.N. but like the idea.

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

That's going to vary from situation to situation. We try to make sure we have good music, with choirs. I make sure and involve my youth in doing things like welcoming guests. I think a big thing is preparing people spiritually to worship. Its not supposed to be a spectator event, but something we bring to God. So, I give members a chance to share, to speak phrases to each other. John 4:24 also teaches us that truth is a part of the service. I'm now working on a sermon on "how to listen to a sermon". Not focusing on the pastor's linguistic abilities, but on the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart.

Pastor: DM

Conference: Lake Region

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

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?

Amazing Facts. No. Broader diversity in terms of cultures.

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.?)

Yes. Called church together. Discussion, why we here, where we at, where we going... Gospel commission. Discussion. Processing. Considered community, demographics, came up with mission statement. The Bible.

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).

Target groups: seniors often forgotten, singles, single parents, youth, Baby boomers, and the unchurched. Because I'm a visual learner, I tend to preach in a very visual way ... I'm discovering that the more sermons are brought alive ... people are responding in my church ... because sermons are practical and real as opposed to "transcendent and lofty" and "out of touch" with the people. So, if you go the route of Net... don't go for acting and Hollywood ... let's remember to be practical, very practical.

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

In terms of strategies, I occasionally move away from the traditional worship order of service, I will have members serving on the podium. I'll also have the elders come to the platform and invite three or four people to pray. People are taking ownership and feeling a part of the service. They are also buying into the priesthood of all believers, my members are being empowered to minister. I'm discovering that is really transforming worship service. Resources? The Holy Spirit.

I'm going through some material from NADEI, Worship styles, Lyle Schaller and all the other fellows, I occasionally refer to some of their books. Wagner.

Pastor: BU

Conference: Northern California

Church(es)/Position: 1 church

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?

At the point where they make a decision, I use "In His Steps." Otherwise, I use Daniel Seminar, Revelation Seminar, etc. I always like something new and different.

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.?)

Not per say. When I was in Carmichael they created one. But I felt like it was rather useless. I have 32 years in ministry, and I have a problem with nonproductive things. Mission statements can go either way depending on how you use it.

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).

To me what they are doing is very productive. What I do with those things, like Women's Ministries, I record it and give it to that leader. We primarily record and distribute. Some of them have been used more than others. I saw the one on communications and something with the Methodist church ... making a web page. It was OK. It was not that helpful to me personally. I have some members who are getting us online. I was a little disappointed, wasn't as productive as I would have liked. I'm sure glad to see things keep coming. I usually can find something. We have a fellow who records everything for us. He's in charge of that. And then we pass.

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

No I haven't. Our worship service, we have grown. I've looked at something from Ohio (not Adventist) that has been helpful for tips and suggestions (Communication Resource—1.800.992.2144). They have a series on pastoral letters, on homiletics, etc. I especially like the fact that every box has a return label for returning.

[This pastor's mom just died yesterday, 94 years old. He began reflecting on old age and pastoring, and he thought of the pastor-friends who retired early because of being abused a bit by their congregations. Feels like congregations can be hard on older pastors and not thoughtful of their personal needs. His wife is "gun shy" about helping out because she's been put down so many times by members for her performance, etc.]

Pastor: BM
Conference: Northern California
Church(es)/Position: 1 church, African American

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?

We do it differently. We use a series for a baptismal class. And we use a study to lead them to a decision for Christ. The study we use before they are baptized, called "In His

Steps.” Takes them through all the different basic steps. We use the Discovery Bible Lesson, Amazing Facts, have an Amazing Facts class that my elders and deacons lead out in.

Yes, I'd like something different. I think the most effective way of giving Bible studies ... update like years ago ... Bible studies on videos. We live in a video age, so I think something similar to the Dukane machines, but updated.

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.?)

No. Only been there two years. Church is 75 years old. The church kind of follows every pastor that comes breezing through. But we are trying to establish a more definite identify. We have an unspoken mission statement: The Center. Meaning, we are in the inner city and we just bought property across the street. We have a tutorial program and have led people to Christ through that program. Now we want to have a 'Bridge to Work' program to help young women get off welfare. We want to become "A Center in the Community to Reach the people riding on the foundation of Jesus Christ." An educational center, nutritional classes, aerobic classes, etc. Someone is giving us computers. So we need to change our church plant. Want a gym for young people's programs. Christ was a Center, that's what we want. Be like Christ.

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).

Never have seen A.C.N.

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

I have gleaned a few things out of Purpose-Driven Church. I have found that my church is polarized. Married, singles, old, young, liberal, conservative, etc. It makes things ambiguous. Identity problem. So, I've been looking for things to help the service be more vibrant, focusing on worship God, not polarized on music, or whatever. I'm finding out now, the church has to find its own identity, not just a slick resource.

Pastor: FD

Conference: Iowa/Missouri

Church(es)/Position: 5 churches

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?

Doug Batchelor's series called Historicals of Prophecy Lessons and use video and materials. I wanted to get into video so that's why I went this route. I'm pretty happy with this stuff. My only reservation is that it moves very fast.

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.?)

Not that I'm aware of. Only been in the district for 5 months.

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).

Anything to convince my members that witnessing can be easy. Simple things that work. What people don't want is something that requires them to "push" other people, and they don't want something complicated. [We talked about various ways to witness.]

One church of five has a dish. I know a guy Robert Pannekoek(?), student at Hartland. I think he now teaches there in the Bible Department. He does a lot of Bible studies. He uses blood pressure cuffs at the door. He explained to me what he does. He was a health major. He has a real burden for one on one evangelism. He has some pretty disarming ways of meeting people. He establishes friendship through showing care for people's health. That personal touch in just a few minutes opens people up. I've had some success following up cold It Is Written cards. [Gave him AIM number.]

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

Haven't done that much looking. My churches are small and quite traditional.

Pastor: MF

Conference: Iowa/Missouri

Church(es)/Position: 3 churches

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?

In His Steps from Ministerial Supply. I like the old In His Steps better. I think the new one ... (I like the loose leaf one). It feels like a stuffy theologian put together the new one, but a practitioner put together the old. Trinity is good example. One study is enough on this topic. I also think it would be really nice to have one study on "How to Apply the Bible—Life Applications." Best thing I've ever seen on this is by a nonAdventist named

Dave Veerman (he is the primary contributor to the Life Application Bible) and has a book called "How to Apply the Bible." He has two paradigms on application that are just superb, one is called the Pyramid and the other is called the Window.

Come Alive/Stay Alive ... from It Is Written. They don't do a bad job. Appreciate gospel orientation and practical application. One thing I don't like is the cost.

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.?)

No.

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).

Topic: How to Apply the Bible. Audience: general church member. Topic: Witnessing—Conversational Evangelism, etc. Would like to see someone who is doing it and is successful at it. Time is fine. Once a month. Interaction? We use tape delay so we haven't benefited. We think it's a good concept. I think the first time we ordered one is for the parenting one this coming weekend. One month ahead for announcements. Target audience: small churches. It seems like a lot of resources are geared toward larger churches. Application.

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

No. I'm such a new pastor ... didn't come in the 'normal route.' I'm just trying to learn how to function as a pastor. Worship is a future goal for strengthening. I'm simply working on how to preach. Being involved in personal evangelism, etc. In my current churches, they are NOT interested in ANY change in worship, even the doxology. I feel like the only thing that would make a big difference there is having every leader individually turned on with a living belief in Jesus ... not status quo Adventism living. I know the beliefs, I'm just waiting for Jesus to come. I think changes in worship wouldn't even be worth fighting for in this environment.

Pastor: DL

Conference: Iowa/Missouri

Church(es)/Position: 3 churches

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?

Several years ago I created my own as a take off from the Pictorial Study Guide out of Australia. Longer study, 42 lessons. The person who created it was Frank Berden. That was my base. In the years of study, I adapted it as people came along. 20th Century, Encounter, Good News, etc. I think my recommendation would be not to lean so heavily upon the contemporary pictures, but get back to simple, biblical graphs. Bible basics. Many of our studies we want to tell the stories of “emotional” type of experiences, when I think the real “thinking” person serious about Bible study is going to be impressed with content more than emotional stuff.

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.?)

No. You mean something in addition to the church manual. No, haven't heard much along that line.

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).

We have followed some of the training seminars. We usually record them. The consensus out here in the country region is that the agenda is primarily for the larger church. I have small churches where there are only a dozen active people. For instance, the visitation plans recommended are different. Many of my little churches are on the brink of despair. I have had some good experiences in some of my small churches, building a new church building. Sparked an ember. Now it's a bright little place. My other church has a lot older people. I think emphasizing witnessing as an “individual” activity rather than a group thing is a good program approach.

Program length (2 hours, 3 hours) little too long. Interaction? I think most of my members are in a listening mode. Handouts? No, I think maybe once... I ordered Connections. Not A.C.N. handouts.

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

No. Its rather interesting that something I learned... I'm an older pastor... years ago in my younger pastoring, I had an elder from Collegedale, TN come to my church... he was quite elderly and had trained under Spicer. On one occasion, Elder Spicer gave the young men advice on how to preach. Elder Spicer said, “Young men, just stick to the message.” We hear lots of innovative ideas that don't go very far, and I think we need to stick with the Adventist message. [Reflected for a little while on the “good old days.”]

Pastor: KH
Conference: Northern California

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

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?

For planting seeds, the Discover Bible Study series. For baptism, I use the 27 Fundamental Beliefs book. I used to use a series 3 years ago that isn't published anymore, don't remember the name. What I like the most is a little more brevity in the series that are out there. Too long winded and worded.

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.?)

One of my churches does. It isn't all that unique. Took about 6 months. We just went for it. I had a few notes from administration classes at seminary.

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).

I haven't used A.C.N. much, but recently (January) I haven't taken advantage. I've used a number of programs recently. I appreciate the practical training on there for elders, women's ministries, etc. As a pastor of two churches, I don't have time to set up training for each of my different local leaders. It's really helped. So, keep doing the practical programs on training leaders. Would like something for deacons or deaconesses. Any local church positions would be good.

Length. It would be helpful if there was a way to cut it down. Its difficult to get members to commit to a lot of time. Maybe 1 hour instead of two. Never used the interaction aspect. Not that a big deal to me. Never ordered handouts. Six weeks ahead of time for announcements would be good for us.

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

Haven't used that many materials. In one of my churches we have a worship team and I have some creative types. That's helped a lot. Just their own creative thoughts and ideas. It's a great relief to me.

Pastor: HR
Conference: Northern California
Church(es)/Position: 1 church (retired)

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?

I'm retired, my members are giving the studies. We have used the Discover series with VOP. We use the more conservative studies. Amazing Facts. My members feel that many of the more "modern series" have neglected what they consider to be "historic" Adventism. They feel like the Mark of the Beast and things like that are not being presented. It's more than just love and forgiveness. I had a couple once tell me (who weren't attending church), "Oh we just became Christians and go to a Sunday church." So, we can't neglect why we are Adventist.

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.?)

I tried for several years to try this, been here nine years. Nothing happened.

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).

We have a dish. Cross training ... once in awhile. If I'm aware of certain programs, they will flip on and record it. John Osborn lectureship at La Sierra has been going on for a long time. They've brought in a lot of interesting speakers. Contact the Religion Department and they might have some good ideas. I'm of the opinion that the mind can only absorb as much as the seat of the pants can endure. So, shorter is better on the average.

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

The church where I am currently at is quite conservative. Their big concern is over "trends" in the denomination. I'm afraid our young people are in gospel rock and I don't think they understand what they are getting into. It's going to cause problems. I'm not saying we shouldn't have vibrant worship services, but I think it's an area we are playing with fire. I used to subscribe to materials from the Baptist church on worship and found some good things, but that was a few years ago.