



NORTH CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE

RETENTION THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP

STRATEGIC PLAN



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Overview of the NCC's response to the Membership Audit and its Discipleship Model

The 2024 Membership Audit Report issued by the Caribbean Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for the North Caribbean Conference (NCC) of Seventh-day Adventists analyzed the membership and attendance trends of the conference. The audit was conducted in 2023 and completed in 2024. The report summarizes the results of the 2023 membership audit, which covered the 34 congregations of the conference. It also serves to better understand the status of members (active and inactive). The membership audit reviewed church records and categorized members into one of five attendance status categories: active members in church, inactive members in another SDA congregation, elderly or homebound members, irregularly attending members, and absent members. However, a key conclusion of the audit was the wide gap between the 15,484 members and only 6,210 (40%) active members, of whom 34% are not regular attenders and 24% are absentees. This finding points to a key challenge for the North Caribbean Conference, where many people are officially members but do not participate in the life and work of the church.

The findings of the membership audit also highlight the need for strategic action to address church membership issues. The report also highlighted issues around member participation, or lack thereof. While the challenges were clearly outlined, the audit serves as an essential tool for church administrators to make informed decisions to strengthen their memberships and recognize the need for a targeted and effective strategy to re-engage members and support their spiritual needs.

In response to the challenges identified in the Membership Auditing, and with the goal of realizing the vision and mission of the NCC, the NCC Retention through Discipleship Strategic Proposal aims to align the NCC Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 as a strategic blueprint that outlines the major goals of the conference and presents practical steps to achieve those goals. Recognizing the need to strengthen retention, the NCC Strategic Plan is organized into seven key strategic pillars, including Evangelism and Conservation. This pillar directly supports the concerns raised in the audit by focusing on both the proclamation of the gospel and the long-term retention of members. **(See PIA14 & PIA17 NCC Strategic Plan 2023-2027)* The

NCC Strategic Plan is a guiding framework for directing the work of the North Caribbean Conference, setting priorities, and allocating resources to further the Great Commission.

Within the broader framework of the NCC Strategic Plan, the NCC Retention through Discipleship Strategic Proposal document provides a more focused and detailed strategy to address the retention and disengagement issues highlighted by the Membership Audit. This strategy identifies targeted concerns such as barriers to member participation, ineffective outreach and the imbalance between middle age groups and young adults. To address these concerns, the NCC's proposed strategy for member retention through discipleship outlines several action plans, including mission trips for families, mentoring programs for Adventist professionals and youth, men's ministry initiatives, and strategies for improving unity among church members and effectively reaching new members. The emphasis on discipleship underscores the understanding that nurturing and supporting members in their spiritual growth is critical to long-term retention and a vibrant church community.

While the NCC Membership Audit has revealed the current state of church membership, it also serves as an important diagnostic tool. The NCC Strategic Plan, on the other hand, provides a comprehensive roadmap for addressing various challenges, including membership retention and engagement. Finally, the NCC Strategic Proposal "Retention through Discipleship" provides targeted and actionable plans within the framework of the NCC Strategic Plan to recapture lost members, retain current attenders, and provide a stronger sense of discipleship with the goal of mitigating the issues identified in the initial NCC membership review. Therefore, these three documents are linked, with the audit identifying the problem and the strategic plan detailing the steps to encourage an engaged and thriving church membership.

CORRESPONDING NCC RETENTION STRATEGIES FROM NCC STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2027

NCC MEMBERSHIP AUDIT CONCERNS	NCC STRATEGIC PILLAR	CORRESPONDING NCC RETENTION STRATEGIES FROM NCC STRATEGIC PLAN
The disconnect between the total registered members and active attendees	Evangelism and Conservation	Aim to involve every church member, from pastor to layperson, in evangelism work, using methods such as building relationships and responding to people's needs.
		Improve conservation and retention of new members through conservation plans and training.
Barriers inhibiting members from feeling welcome, valued and invested in the church's mission and activities	Church Development and Leadership	Implement support systems for ministers across the conference to improve member well-being and satisfaction.
		Create and implement advocacy programs for mental health care to engage members and use their skills for Kingdom building.
		Implement a reconciliation of the membership framework to improve conflict resolution and enhance harmony
		Develop and implement the Guest Relations Strategy.
Inadequate discipleship efforts	Church Development and Leadership	Implement mentorship and coaching programs for leadership skills and spiritual growth
	Education and Youth	Implement programs that encourage devotional reading and discussions to increase youth understanding of Biblical principles
Church's programming and outreach strategies are not effectively meeting the needs and interests of the local population.	Family Life	Improve family relations in the church and community by implementing more structured family-based messages from the pulpit.
		Implement Family Team Building Challenges activities to improve working relationships among families.
	Community Relations and ADRA	Create centers of influence ministries to promote nutrition and holistic health.
		Create reporting structures to increase stakeholders' accountability and responsibility to the community.
	Stewardship and Finance	Implement the faithfulness and gratitude framework
		Develop and implement job preparation and placement programs.
		Develop and implement strategic planned-giving educational programs
High Adventist middle-aged population. An imbalance created by a shortage of young.	Education and Youth	Implement Youth Relationship Building Programs to increase positive and lasting relationships.
		Implement Youth Evangelism clubs
		Create platforms for youth to share testimonies about their faithfulness

TARGETED CONCERNS: (1) The barriers that prevent members (men, women, youth, children) from feeling welcomed, valued, and participating in the mission and activities of the church. (2) Outreach strategies do not effectively meet the needs and interests of the local community. (3) Imbalance between middle-aged and young adults in our congregations.

1. FAMILY MISSION TRIPS Target Group(s): Families & Adventist Friends							
Goal(s)	Objectives	Action Plans	Projected Dates	NCC Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
To provide opportunities for families to serve and grow together	Conduct two family mission trips per island territory, per quadrennium (one within NCC territory, one outside) engaging at least 10% of families & friends. (DMKey#1 Imitate Jesus DMKey#3 Equip Believers: Min of Compassion DMKey#5: Multigenerational Discipleship) Organize one family mission trip per quadrennium at the conference level engaging 25 families & friends in NCC.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify target communities, needs, length of trip (on a different island than your own) 2. Determine cost per person, church, coordinating council, etc. 3. Recruit families to participate. 4. Train & Prepare participants in the community's needs, cultural sensitivities, service instructions, etc. 5. Execute the plan! 	July 2025	\$25,000 per quarter as follows: Ground Transportation \$2,000.00 Meals (25 families of 4 = 100 persons x 3 meals per day = 300 meals per day x 5 days = 1500 meals x \$5.00 per meal = \$7,500.00 Accommodation School or campsite setup \$5,000.00 Supplies \$10,500.00 Participants pay airfare.	FM Leaders & Director	Number of families participating Feedback surveys evaluating the trip impact on families & the community. Documentation of service provided (hours worked, results achieved, etc.)	Strengthened family bonds through shared service experiences Increased awareness and commitment to community needs among participants Creation of lasting relationships between the church and communities served.

2. SPORTS MINISTRY
Target Group(s): Children, Adolescents, Youth


Goal(S)	Objective(s)	Action Plans	Projected Dates	NCC Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
<p>To build a strong sense of community & fellowship through sports</p> <p>To create opportunities for youth evangelism and outreach through sporting events and programs</p>	<p>Establish 1 Sports Ministry Club on each NCC island or zone.</p> <p>(DMKey#1 Imitating Jesus: Mingling)</p>	<p>Advertise the plan to organize the Sports Ministry Club along with its goals and objectives.</p> <p>Recruit volunteer coaches or instructors & sign-up youth (church & community members) interested in participating for the first year.</p> <p>Provide necessary equipment and designate locations for activities (church parking lot, community gym, etc.)</p> <p>Train our youth on how a positive attitude & behavior at events can impact others for Christ.</p> <p>Collaborate with local organizations (schools, other churches) to participate and promote events.</p> <p>Execute.</p>	<p>July 2025</p>	<p>\$7,000.00</p> <p>Allocation or \$1,000.00 per established Club to assist with their own budget which may include:</p> <p>Equipment & Supplies</p> <p>Marketing & Promotional materials</p> <p>Trophies</p> <p>Refreshments</p> <p>T-shirts</p>	<p>Youth Leaders & Director</p>	<p>Number of participants at each event.</p> <p>Participant feedback regarding community building and fellowship.</p> <p>Follow-up attendance in church services or programs after events.</p>	<p>Increased visibility of the church in the local community.</p> <p>Greater opportunities for spiritual conversations and ministry.</p> <p>Growth in new relationships with community members, leading to potential church attendance.</p>

3. MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS BETWEEN ADVENTIST PROFESSIONALS & YOUTH

Target Group: Youth Male & Female

Goal(S)	Objective(s)	Action Plans	Projected Dates	NCC Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
<p>To connect youth with mentors who can guide their personal, academic, and spiritual growth.</p> <p>To inspire youth to pursue their goals through professional guidance</p> <p>To give youth a model of giving back and ministering as professionals</p>	<p>Establish a one-year mentorship pilot program between Adventist Professionals & youth within the NCC.</p> <p>DMKey#2 Mentorship: Follow me as I follow Christ)</p>	<p>Identify & invite principled Adventist professionals (male & female) from various zones to serve as mentors.</p> <p>Invite youth to island-wide movie night: The Forge (Struggling to find his calling, 19-year-old Isaiah is mentored by a principled business owner).</p> <p>Following the movie, promote the mentorship program and give youth the opportunity to sign up.</p> <p>Organize an orientation for mentors and mentees to set expectations and establish goals.</p> <p>Schedule monthly one-on-one meetings and quarterly workshops that include topics such as career planning, life skills, & spiritual development.</p> <p>Celebrate achievements of mentees after one year.</p>	July 2025	0.00	<p>Men & Women's Ministries Leaders & Directors</p> <p>Youth Leaders & Directors</p>	<p>Number of mentor-mentee pairs.</p> <p>Feedback from participants regarding the effectiveness of the mentorship.</p> <p>Tracking progress of mentees (e.g. Academic achievements or job placements)</p>	<p>Enhanced life skills among youth.</p> <p>Creation of supportive relationships that foster personal and spiritual growth.</p> <p>Increased engagement of youth in church activities and community service.</p>

4. THE AI ART OF DISCIPLESHIP CAMPAIGN
Target Group: Children, Adolescents (SDA & Non-SDA)

Goal(s)	Objective(s)	Action Plans	Projected Dates	NCC Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
<p>To encourage & celebrate creativity in youth while instilling the value of service to others.</p> <p>To provide a space for youth to use AI Art as a means of encouraging other youth to serve.</p>	<p>Organize one annual art exhibition per island focusing on service-themed artwork.</p> <p>(DMKey#1 Imitate Jesus: Focus on Service)</p>	<p>Organize quarterly art workshops led by local artists or volunteers.</p> <p>Provide guidance for the use of digital media.</p> <p>Announce annual art exhibition with themes related to serving others. The invitation would be to choose or create power quotes about what it meant to be a true disciple of Christ.</p> <p>Set submission guidelines and due dates for artworks. There would be two categories: Self-created art and AI Created Art.</p>  <p>Host a public exhibition to showcase the submitted artwork along with a recognition ribbon for all participants.</p>	<p>July 2025</p>	<p>\$7,000.00</p> <p>Art Supplies subsidy of \$1,000 per participating island.</p>	<p>CM Leaders and Director</p>	<p>Number of participants in workshops & submissions to the exhibition.</p> <p>Community engagement metrics (attendance at the exhibition).</p> <p>Feedback from attendees on the impact of the showcased art.</p>	<p>Fostered creativity and artistic expression among kids and adolescents.</p> <p>Increased awareness of community service values through art.</p> <p>Strengthened community engagement through the art exhibition.</p>

MALE RETENTION STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2027

TARGETED CONCERN: The absence and lack of spirituality of the male gender in worship and the need for young men in the church to be inclined toward purity of thought and socially educated, developing into a mature disciple of Christ

THE FOCUS IS ON RETENTION AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH: Spiritual growth for men and boys

Target Group Assigned to Focus on: Men & Boys (Husbands, Father, Uncles, Elders, Mentors)							
Goals	Objectives	Action Plans	Projected Dates	Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
To develop strategic men's ministry initiatives that foster spiritual growth and demonstrate Christ's love through community engagement."	Each Pastoral district will convene a monthly men’s council to pray, plan and implement effective strategies and ministries for men.	Church Pastor convene Initial meeting and share objective.	April 2025	\$2,000.00	Family Life Leader	Number of Men organize for Ministry.	Men and boys in the Church creating a bond in mentoring.
	NCC Family Life department will conduct four outreaches ministry per quarter each year. e.g. - to help the widows and single moms of our church.	Family Life Dept. Promotes Mem focused spiritual activities.	March 2025			Number of Widows and single Moms being helped.	Men taking the lead on their own spiritual life.
	-	Ensure that the church, its leaders, its services and its ministry promote an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere where all men (young, old, & in-between) feel valued and accepted.				Community response to Quarterly Breakfast	Men find a climate etc. to share and discuss issues
	Each Church will host a bi-monthly men’s breakfast focusing on discipleship training and mentoring	Identify male leaders for various men’s ministry.				Percentage increase of men involvement in the Ministry after 12 months	
	Leadership of each church should make it a priority to strive to raise a generation of young mem who are rooted in Christ-like character so that they will be able to lead with integrity in their homes, workplaces, and communities embodying the transformative power of a disciplined life.		September 2025				

<p>To promote personal purity and ethical decision-making among the unmarried young men of the church.</p>	<p>Create a focused young men's ministry with a clear vision and mission Appoint dedicated and enthusiastic leaders who can serve as positive role models and mentors. Ensure the ministry fosters an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere where all young men feel valued and accepted.</p> <p>(DMK#3: Equip all believers through fellowship & nurture)</p>	<p>Create a robust curriculum that teaches biblical sexual ethics.</p> <p>Partner with credible church institutions/ organizations to help men in our conference with addictions (alcohol, pornography, drugs) through an anonymous program.</p> <p>AY & FL organize engaging and age-appropriate activities such as Bible studies, prayer groups, retreats, and social events.</p> <p>Incorporate contemporary worship experiences that resonate with young men.</p> <p>FL will Implement mentorship programs pairing older, mature men with younger participants for guidance and support</p>	<p>August 2025</p>	<p>\$3,000.00</p>	<p>FL, AY, Elder, Pastor</p>	<p>Number of men join the group.</p> <p>Conduct sheets responses to program</p> <p>Number of young men identified as budding leaders.</p> <p>Response from young men of then impact of the program on their present dating experience.</p>	<p>Increase of young men in Church life and involve in Church leadership role.</p>
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Male Retention Plan cont'd

RETENTION STRATEGIC PLAN

To develop strategic themes to be incorporated into the NCC 2023-2027 Strategic Plan to outline an intentional process that integrates the laity into a fulfilling fellowship within the church body and a purposeful commitment to the mission of the church.

Target Group Assigned to Focus on: Lay Members & Church Operation							
Goals	Objectives	Action Plans	Projected Dates	Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
Goals #1 To Improve Unity Among Church Membership	Strengthen Communication Channels among members (Disciple making key #5)	Train members in interpersonal communication	May 3, 2025 During Evg. Soft Skills Seminar	0.00	-Evangelism Teams -Professionals	Increased participation in meetings and feedback from members on communication effectiveness.	Members who connect, communicate & relate to each other better
	Create a stronger connection among members (Disciple making key #6)	Carve out 15 minutes section at the end of the church service for fellowship to take place	April 5, 2025 Personal Ministries Day	0.00	Pastors, PM Leaders, Greeters, Youth leaders	No. of persons staying at the 15-minute section.	
	Collaboration among ministries (Ride the Wave) (Disciple making key #5)	Conduct Ministry Leaders' Collaboration Round Table in which directors discuss how they collaborate at the Conference level and how it can be done in the local church	Wed, Mar 26, 2025 Before Combined Ministries Baptism Day	0.00	-NCC President -PM leader	No. of ministry collaborations that take place during the year.	Greater collaboration among ministry leaders

Goals	Objectives	Action Plans	Projected Dates	Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
Goal #2 To engage and empower members, fostering greater participation and active involvement within the church.	Have each member be a part of at least one ministry including the Possibility Ministry (Disciple making keys #7, #6)	Have a ministry fair in each church twice a year by districts so members can understand and sign up for a ministry. Locate and print information sheets about each ministry and put in welcome package for new members. Create sub-ministries that appeal to younger persons like: Parking lot attendant, youth usher, etc. Ensure that both the physical plant and programs of the church are accommodating to the disabled.	Feb. 2026 April 2025 April 2025	Districts \$500.00 Local churches \$100.00 Local churches \$300 for pins, neon aprons, etc. \$\$\$ varies	Local ministry leaders Safety Officers & Possibility Ministry Leaders	No. of persons signing up for and participating in the different ministries. No. of churches with the right accommodations. Number of attendees	Less members taking their membership for granted and more members saying and doing "I WILL GO!"
	Secure the return of missing members (Disciple making keys #2, #7)	Create a missing members taskforce. Ask members to give contact information of missing members in their circle (friends, family, neighbors) Plan a Homecoming Celebration once a quarter (beautiful singing, powerful preaching, special lunch, etc.). Send out personalize invitations to the missing members. Place the names of missing members on the Sabbath	April 2025 Oct. 2025	Local churches \$1000.00 Potlucks	-S.S. superintendent -Elder Pastors & PM Leaders	No. of missing members returning to church or at least being accounted for. No. of missing members returning to church or at least being accounted for	Missing members coming back into the fold on a regular basis. Missing members coming back into the fold on a regular basis

		School attendance cards and have a tactful person call to invite them once a month.			Sabbath School Superintendents		
Goal #2 continued	Actively involve members in the soul-winning process (Disciple making key #3)	Encourage members to make monthly deposits (acts of kindness) to their non-Adventists Friends) Train volunteers in giving bible studies	April 2025 Jan. 2026	\$0.00	SS Class Facilitators Sis. M. Peters	Members report of deposits made during SS Increase in no. of bible studies given each quarter	More soul-winning among the laity
Goal #2 continued	Support the personal growth of members & the community (Disciple making key #2)	Offer opportunities for skill development, such as sewing, cooking, tax, personal care, and other enrichment classes.	As each church determines	Local churches to assess	Person skilled in area chosen by local church	No. of persons reporting the ability to accomplish the new skill	Empowered members.

Retention strategic plan cont'd

Goals	Objectives	Action Plans	Projected Dates	Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
Goal #3 To convince online visitors to become in-person guests	Highlight church community & fellowship on the virtual platform (Disciple making keys #6, #7)	Share videos or posts that showcase the welcoming atmosphere, events, and activities happening at the church. Offering time posts.	July 2025	0.00	Communications Leaders in each church.	No. of online visitors that become guests at the in-person church.	More visitors leaving the online platform and coming in person
		Feature testimonies from in-person members about their positive experiences, inviting online visitors to join in person to experience the same. Make sure there is a place in the visitor sign-in book for them to indicate if they were once an online visitor.	April 2025	0.00	Greeters	No. of guests that ticked off "I was an online visitor."	
Goal #4 To minister effectively to new converts	Tutor new converts in areas of spiritual growth & Adventist culture (Disciple making key #2)	Execute an orientation program for new believers at least once per quarter.	July 2025	0.00	Pastors	No. of new believers attending	New believes continually growing in the faith
		Conduct a new believers bible class weekly	Some on-going already			No. of new believers attending the weekly bible class.	
Goal #3 Continued	Make sure new members feel like they belong (Disciple making key #2)	Train members in what adopting new believers entails, then have them sign up to adopt new members. Encourage individuals to befriend new converts.	July 2025	0.00	Evangelism Director & Local Ministry Leaders Personal Min. Leaders	No. of new believers that testify that they feel like they belong.	Better conservation of new converts.

		Conduct Friday night fellowship with new believers.			Pastors-Elder		
		Have fellowship lunch & social activities at least once a month		\$500	Local church Social Committee		
		Partner with employers to host a job fair once a year. This can be island wide.	June 2026	\$2,000	Person best suited for this in local churches	No. of new believers attending job fair	

Retention strategic plan cont'd

Target Group Assigned to Focus on: Pastoral Leadership's Contribution to Retention

Goals	Objectives	Action Plans	Projected Dates	Financial Costs	Led by	Assessment Criteria	Expected Outcome
Identify members who are vulnerable and at risk of drifting or being drawn away from the church.	Profile factors which may contribute to making a member vulnerable or at risk of leaving or being drawn away from the church. KDM: #6 -Disciples Making Through Community; #7-DiscipleMaking Through Holistic Small Groups	Employ the ACMS and Every Elder Involved discipleship plan to accurately account for each member and minister to their growth and development in the faith.	By April 19, 2025 earliest elements of this plan (formation of discipleship groups) should be in place.	Already within the context of church operations	Pastor and Elders, in collaboration with Sabbath School, through the action units.	The percentage (%) of the church's membership accounted for and actively engaged through the discipleship care groups.	All members assigned to ministry care units for discipleship mentoring and care.
Assimilation and integration of new believers into full fellowship and discipleship within the church	To intentionally and systematically foster the assimilation and integration of new believers (up to 2 yrs. in membership) into the church's culture, fellowship and ministry. KDM: #2 – Mentorship; KDM#6 - Disciples Making Through Community	Enlist and engage a core group of more mature members in the faith, assigning to their attention, care and mentorship new believers for a period of one year. They would be responsible to pray with and for these new believers, facilitate their being welcomed among other members in the church, inviting them to Sabbath fellowship meals and welcoming and closing of Sabbath worships in their homes.					

Grounding our Youth in the faith that they may remain steadfast in Christ and ardent disciples in the church.	<p>To inculcate in our children and youth the love for God, holiness, and right principles which will anchor them in the faith and retain them in the life and mission of the church.</p> <p>KDM: #2 – Mentorship;</p> <p>KDM#5- Multigenerational or Multi-level Discipleship</p>	<p>3.Emphasizing through teaching, life examples and testimonies the need to return to regular, meaningful family worship times.</p> <p>4.Encouraging and assisting parents to enroll their children in our schools, where available to lend them support in raising their children in the “fear and admonition of the LORD,” and the cherishing and practice of the Adventist faith.</p>	March 1, 2025	4. Tuition assistance as specific to school on each island.	Pastors, Family Ministries Leaders, Parents, Education Secretaries in the congregations	<p>Number of families reporting three or more times per week of family worship sessions, checked quarterly.</p> <p>Number of children from our congregations becoming enrolled in our schools (where available) who were not previously enrolled.</p>	<p>More noticeable family harmony, increased church attendance and enjoyable engagement in services and the embrace of the church’s mission.</p> <p>Increased enrolled of our children in our schools, thereby increasing their exposure to SDA beliefs, values and mission.</p>
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The Seven Keys to Disciple Making

1. Imitate Jesus

When Jesus made the call for His disciples to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-19), He was calling them to imitate His life (Matthew 20:28; John 13:14). “A disciple, then, is simply an imitator of Jesus, which means that discipleship is the process by which people are formed by imitating Jesus. Imitating Jesus means to be formed and informed by his whole incarnation, imitating him in the way of his life, death and resurrection of self-giving love” (www.faithlead.org). All believers are therefore called to be imitators of Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2).

2. Mentorship

Disciple-making needs a mentor-mentee relationship. Church attendance does not translate to discipleship by itself. It’s difficult for someone to grow holistically as a disciple without some connection to a local church, but attending church doesn’t guarantee growth and maturity in Christ. Christian growth and maturity require mentorship—a hands-on approach. Paul often says, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” The Bible is replete with examples of mentorship. Elijah mentored Elisha. Paul mentored other disciples of Christ to help them be mature and effective at making disciples.

Mentorship that creates disciples is different. In a discipleship context, the mentor has an agenda. A disciple-making mentor intentionally shapes someone’s understanding, attitudes, and behavior. They’re modeling what a disciple looks like in word and deed. Like Paul, the mentor can say, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV). This doesn’t mean they are perfect, but what it does mean is that they are trying to follow God with their whole life. Part of that includes God’s command to share Jesus with other people and to also teach the things they’ve learned about Him to others. Mentors have often been mentored by someone else. Any serious discipleship plan must include, at the heart of it a mentorship plan.

3. Equip all Believers (Ephesians 4)

A key component of discipleship is the equipping of all believers to do the work of witnessing. The apostle Paul speaks about this in Ephesians 4. In Jesus’ discipleship model, Jesus equipped His disciples by modeling before them what the life of a disciple is like:

- *Fellowship* - Love for each other (John 13:31-35)
- Love for neighbors (Luke 10:25-37)
- *Evangelism* without prejudice (John 4:1-42)
- *Ministries* of compassion (Matthew 9:31-10:1-6; Acts 2:1-11)
- *Worship* – Constant in prayer (Luke 5:16; 6:12-13; 11:1)
- *Spiritual Nurture* – Spending time in the Word of God and practicing spiritual disciplines (Luke 24:44-47).

Ellen White counsels, “When He sent forth the twelve and afterwards the seventy, to proclaim the kingdom of God, He was teaching them their duty to impart to others what He had made known to them. In all His work, He was training them for *individual labor*, to be extended as their numbers increased, and eventually to reach to the uttermost parts of the earth” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 32). Hence, she stated in her book, *The Desire of Ages*, “Every true disciple is born into the

kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life” (*The Desire of Ages*, 195.). She also adds: “Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost” (Christ’s Object Lessons, 191)?

4. The Centrality of the Holy Spirit

Modeling, instruction, and mentorship are integral to disciple-making, but you can’t ignore the centrality of spiritual empowerment. Jesus didn’t immediately send the disciples to the mission field after issuing the Great Commission. He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8). Why? Because discipleship isn’t just a matter of human effort or intellectual belief; it’s a Spirit-led journey. If you are a follower of Jesus, it is the Holy Spirit that indwells you who leads the charge—who fills and enables you to live out and grow as a disciple and disciple-maker. Paul explains, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Romans 8:7-9 NKJV).

The Holy Spirit is the key to discipleship. Any discipleship journey that does not begin, sustain, and end with the Holy Spirit will be filled with frustration. Discipleship plans are deserted everywhere because of this lack. Impatience in evangelism has too often strewn our landscape. We focus too much on the product and anticipated outcome, that we forget the process.

5. Multigenerational or Multi-level Discipleship

The idea of multi-generational and multi-level discipleship exists throughout Scripture. Moses [tells us](#) in Exodus 3:1-12 tells us that God revealed Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It took God three generations to reveal His redemptive character, plan, and nature. Each generation was responsible to God to carry forward the plan successfully to the next one or two generations after them. Similarly, in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, God commanded His covenant people to diligently teach their children and their grandchildren the ways of the Lord. Multigenerational leadership is a great way to ensure that the next generation is disciplined effectively.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul encourages Timothy to teach leaders within the church he was pastoring, who would be able to teach others the things that Paul had taught him. Here we see a multilevel way of discipleship. In fact, in 2 Timothy 1:5, the apostle Paul reminded Timothy of the multi-generational discipling that he received in the faith. He said: “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.”

Making disciples through a multi-generational or multi-level system within families and the congregation is a key approach to discipleship. In this way, mentorship and leadership development are constantly taking place. If the church approached disciple making in this way with the congregations or groups, there would be no lack of leaders within the congregation. This is because one generation or leadership level is responsible for the next one or two that comes after them.

On the other hand, the Bible describes the challenge that Israel faced when they did not instruct the next generation adequately. Psalm 78:1-8 makes it clear that it was because Israel failed to keep the covenant through their children that they were rejected by God and failed to obtain the promises. Here is the reason: “⁶*That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, ⁷That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments” (vv.6-7). This psalm shows the history of Israel for four generations and is the strongest passage in the Bible regarding the need to keep our children in the faith to fulfill the plan of God on the earth. Discipleship is about leading the next generation. It is about saving the next generation for Christ.*

Benefits of multigenerational structures

1. *Provides a purpose*
2. *Preserves a heritage*
3. *Protects a promise*
4. *Prepares a future*
5. *Prevents a disaster*

6. Disciples Making Through Community

In Acts 2:47, we learn that Christ “adds daily to the church such as should be saved.” This is critical because the church community plays a major role in disciple formation. Paul explains that God has equipped His people, the church, with specific gifts and skills. These gifts “equip God’s people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the complete standard of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12–13, NLT). The large community plays a very important role in discipleship. However, within the big plan, there is a very important role that **small groups** play in the ministry of the church. Small groups are best at implementing and accounting for everything that takes place in a large group.

7. Disciple Making Through Holistic Small Groups

The Small Group is God’s appointed means for bringing people to realize their obligation and to act their part in His work. God calls them to work for Him, and the ministers should guide them in their effort” (5 *Testimonies*, p. 256). The work will never be finished until the membership unites in the work (*Gospel Workers*, p. 352). Every church should be a training school for Christian workers (*Ministry of Healing* p. 149). The greatest help that can be given to our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the minister (7 *Testimonies*, p. 19). The Sabbath School should be one of the greatest instrumentalities and the most effectual in bringing souls to Christ (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 10). “One who cannot err” has advised the formation of small groups “as a basis of Christian effort” (7 *Testimonies*, p. 21, 22