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“Personal Ministries Through The Sabbath School Class: A Relational Approach”

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Back when “Hector was a Pup,” and I first learned that we have names for things that people do in/through Church, they were calling it “Home Missionary.” Then it transitioned to “Lay Activities.” Now we call it “Personal Ministries.” The name transitions were attempts to accent the description, the same operation, and objective—member involvement in Outreach and Nurture, with an eye toward Growth of The Kingdom of God, and Finishing of The Work, from a personal or group perspective.

As a matter of fact, this is the fundamental objective of *all* of the Departmental functions of the Church, as they operate to Minister to their multiple Target Audiences.

The Sabbath School Small Group Family (known in some places as the *Sabbath School Class*), is a super-excellent “platform” from which these objectives of Outreach and Nurture (not to mention Biblical Spiritual Growth) can be successfully accomplished. The tremendous benefits of individual personal, and numerical growth for the Congregation are possible. Particularly, when fundamental principles are applied and practiced in a kind, loving, respectful, affirmative, appreciative, fellowship oriented, fun-filled, spiritual, and mission-driven *Relational Environment*.

It is not necessary at this point, to brandish quotations from the Pen Of Inspiration to support and verify the fact that Sabbath School, even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has its origin in The Divine Mindset. The thousands I have visited around the North American Division, who are joyfully participating in, and having balanced spiritual experiences in physically growing Sabbath Schools (which also add members to the Congregation), will testify of the same!

Many of the persons who find their Sabbath School experience satisfying and beneficial, will share that they have a comfort level that motivates them to attend and participate, because they can *relate to* (they find their needs met in) the Atmosphere that is set, and the Leadership—particularly of The Sabbath School Small Group Family (“Class”).

Prior to the discussion of the tremendous power of The Sabbath School Small Group Family (“Class”) to assist in growing the Congregation from a Nurture and Numerical Growth perspective (a Personal Ministries perspective), there is the need for us to acknowledge that people joyfully, excitedly, and willingly come into atmospheres and settings that they can enjoy, and can *relate to*—settings that meet their needs. No one has to be prodded, shamed, “over-notified,” or begged to enter these kinds of settings. They just like to come! All they need to know is *when* they should be there!

Another fundamental here is the basic concept that people will not tend to invest the time to come and benefit from the absolute finest of offerings, if they are not “drawn to” (a fancy way of saying, “Do not like the ‘way of’”) the persons that are facilitating them. Hence, the emphasis above, regarding some attributes of leaders that function in the *Relational Environment*, where needs are met, and where there is mutual respect and pleasantness expressed to all. Contrary effects can be observed in atmospheres that are not driven by these values.

Now, to the Sabbath School Small Group Family (“Class”) that attempts to model the principles that are promoted here. Please understand our very complete acceptance of the Four Goals of Sabbath School of Bible Study, Fellowship, World Mission, and Outreach, as stated by the General Conference Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department. The author posits that a fifth Goal, that of Nurture, should be added to the list.

As we consider the foregoing, just imagine the positive possibilities, if more “Classes” transitioned into Sabbath School Small Group Families, “Facilitated By”, not “Taught By,” *Relationally Sensitive* Leaders that are driven by the objective of assisting the Group in seeing itself as a Holistic Study, Nurture, Fellowship, Prayer, Reclamation, Outreach “Family” that meets the needs of people. All of us realize that people *Relate To* environments that meet their needs!

Dear Reader, please place a comma in your thoughts at this time, as Part Two of this discussion will continue in the next issue with the “How To” emphasis. For now, remember that when the atmosphere is positively *Relational*, and the content is *Needs Oriented*, they will come—and they will bring their friends! MARANATHA!