



# INTER AMERICAN DIVISION SeLD Conference

## The Elder-A Retention Visionary

PRESENTED VIA ZOOM

BY  
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**Source:**

**The concepts presented in this seminar had been drawn from my Doctoral thesis defended July 1, 2019 at Inter American Adventist Theological Seminary (IATS), on the campus of Northern Caribbean University (NCU), Mandeville, Jamaica, under the supervision of Dr. Balvin B. Braham**

## Quotation

**“It is tragic to bring new converts into the church only to see them ‘die’ shortly thereafter because we have neglected them. God has called these new members to His family, and as a spiritual family we need to welcome, nurture, and support them”.**

Richard L. Halversen, “Nurturing and Preserving new Converts,” *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, 73, no. 4 (2000): 14.



**Jesus said:**

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you”.

John 15:16, NKJV.



The way that the fruit should remain until  
the return of Christ is to retain them within  
the Church.



## **Definition of *retention*:**

The act of retaining : the state of being retained

To retain is to keep, to conserve, to maintain

Retaining the members is the process of conserving or keeping members within the body of believers.

[Https://. Wwww.Merriam-webster.Com/Dictionary/Retention](https://www.Merriam-webster.Com/Dictionary/Retention)

## **Retention within the Church is mandatory**

“There is no way the Church will retain its newly baptized members if it does not feed them with spiritual food”.

Javan Kamanutsi Harelimana : Membership Retention In A Growing Church: The Case In The Seventh-day Adventist Church, AAMM, Vol 10, 54.



## **Retention: A Church Leadership Responsibility**

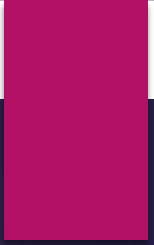
This task is the responsibility of the Church  
Leadership





## **The Elder, the most stable leader**

**Since the Elder is the one who remains in one congregation all the time, he is the best one to cast the vision or to share the vision of the pastor on behalf of the Church members.**

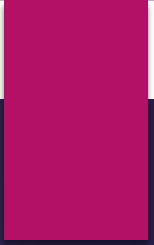


**One of the best way to retain the  
members is to nurture them.**



**Nurturing is feeding, assisting, giving support to others.**

**Nurturing the members is** the process or approach utilized by a pastor or an elder to provide care and support to the members designed to ground, grow and mature them within the faith.

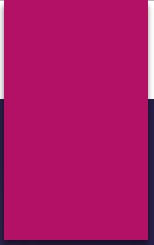


Nurture is indispensable to member retention and is one of the first responsibilities of the pastor who is called to shepherd the Lord's flock. It is also a shared responsibility with church leaders, particularly the Elders, who must be trained to effectively fulfil the role of shepherding.



**“Churches that would enjoy high member retention must first invest significant energies and resources into the assimilation process in order to become healthy churches”.**

WALDO J. WERNING, (2001). *12 PILLARS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH* (ST. CHARLES; IL: CHURCH SMART RESOURCES, 2001), 73.

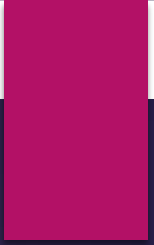


**“Churches that nurture their members provide an atmosphere that is highly conducive to spiritual growth, addressing practical issues such as relationships, conflict resolution, and temptation, and making the Bible relevant to the daily lives of their congregants.”**

DAVID W. KALE AND MEL MCCULLOUGH, *MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH*. (KANSAS CITY, MO: BEACON, 2003), 9.



**Nurturing the members is not only for them to stay in the church but to get ready to be with Jesus at the Second Advent and help others do similarly.**



# **HOW CAN THE ELDER NURTURE THE MEMBERS TO RETAIN THEM WITHIN THE CHURCH?**

## **BIBLICAL MODELS**



# Examples in the Old Testament

**GOD AND MOSES**

# A God who Cares

## God Nurtured His People with Love

Love is foundational to the process that God used to nurture His Chosen people whom He raised up based on promise. How He applied that love as a part of His nature to care and a means of securing their loyalty is noticeable in the scriptures. Malachi 1:2.

God demonstrated His love for Israel in numerous ways:

Elders have much to learn from God's method as they nurture church members.

## God Nurtured His People by Providing for their Physiological Needs

God provided clothing for His people, (Genesis 3:7, NRSV).

Departing Egypt, the liberated people carried dough in their kneading troughs (Exodus 12:34).

When their food depleted on the journey, God miraculously fed them with manna (Exodus 16:32) and provided water to quench their thirst (Exodus 17:5-6).

He provided food for the widow of Zarephath and her son (1 Kings 17:16, NKJV). He even used ravens to feed the Prophet Elijah, "The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6 (NKJV)).

## **God nurtured His people by providing counsels to overcome their enemies (Judges 20:18; 7:2 4 NKJV )**

In many circumstances, God provided counsel to the people of Israel to avoid the snares of their enemies and build relationship with Him. When the Israelites faced 400,000 men of Benjamin in a civil war, they inquired of God (Judges 20:18). He counseled them, "Judah shall go up first..." (verse 19). Their disobedience to His counsel was catastrophic.

To conquer the land of Canaan with its fortified cities and giants, God gave them the strategy (Joshua 6:1-27). The result was phenomenal, "The wall collapsed and the warriors captured the city.

## **God Nurtured His People Through His Compassion (Exodus 1:11,14)**

God exercised compassion for His people in many ways. He considered their enslavement in Egypt (Exodus 1:11, 14) and sent the deliverance (Exodus 12-14).

Further, He commanded the Israelites not to harvest the edges of their fields completely or pick up any leftovers. Such gleanings were for disadvantaged ones (Leviticus 23:22; Ruth 2:2-7).

## Moses, Israel's Caregiver

He nurtured them by associating with them, forgiving and seeking forgiveness on their behalf, affirming them, and utilizing effective leadership skills to guide them.

Moses nurtured God's people by personal association with them(Exodus 2:11-15; Acts 7:22, NRSV)

Moses nurtured God's People by Forgiving and Seeking Forgiveness for Them(Numbers 16:44, 45).

## Moses, Israel's Caregiver

Moses Nurtured God's People through Affirmation (Exodus 14:12).

Moses Nurtured God's People through Effective Leadership Principles (Exodus 18:14-18). He took counsel from others; was transparent.

# Examples in the New Testament

**JESUS AND APOSTLE PAUL**



# Nurturing in the life and ministry of Jesus

Jesus nurtured His people by personal acts, social mingling and verbal instructions

# Nurturing in the life and ministry of Jesus

## Jesus Nurtured through Personal Acts of Love

Love is the most profound emotion human beings experience. “No one showed the depths of true love more than our Lord Jesus Christ. He set the example for believers to show love to each other and to the world by what He did”.

Crystal McDowell, 2017: “7 Different Ways Jesus Showed Love,”  
<http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/7-different-ways-jesus-showed-love/#ixzz4hveXgFpx> (accessed May 23, 2017).

## Jesus nurtured through social mingling

Social mingling is the process of meeting new people, forming friendships and interacting with other human beings. Jesus mingled socially by spending time with people without an agenda for business or work. Just by being with them on a social level.

“Mingle,” *Urban Dictionary online*, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?Term=mingling> (accessed June 27, 2017).

## Jesus Nurtured through Verbal Instructions

Much of Jesus' nurturing activities were done through verbal instructions and counsels that He offered. He spoke to people about social and spiritual issues. He did not need a special environment or control over circumstances to discuss things of earthly and eternal significance Matthew 4:21,22; John 4:7-42.

As a result, Jesus nurtured by providing the ultimate sacrifice, giving His life for His sheep (John 10:11).



**In conclusion,**

**Jesus nurtured by providing the ultimate sacrifice,  
giving His life for His sheep (John 10:11).**

## Nurturing in the Writings of the Apostle Paul

While Jesus' nurturing activities focused primarily on those who followed Him among the Israelites, God's chosen people, the Apostle Paul spent many years growing and nurturing the early church (Acts 19:8-10). Some of his nurturing activities were accomplished through visits, letters, preaching, and teaching.

## Paul nurtured through Personal visits

Through his personal visits, Paul fortified the believers and helped them consolidate their faith. His third missionary journey was to strengthen the churches in Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23), and to considerably expand the church in Ephesus, which was established before He arrived in that city (Acts 18:24; 19:1, 7)

## Paul nurtured through letters

Paul communicated significantly to the believers in the New Testament Church by writing. He did so to have them prepare for his visits as well as to encourage them in the faith especially as they faced severe opposition and persecution.

Valantasis, Bleyle, and Haugh postulated; “In the process of planting his churches and nurturing the Christian communities in this vast region of the world, Paul wrote letters addressing issues that arose after planting his church”.

Richard Valantasis, Douglas K. Bleyle, and Dennis C. Haugh, *The Letters Sent by Paul to Nurture the Christians* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 6.



## Paul nurtured through letters

“Paul, through his letters, guided and strengthened an unfolding Church, helping believers keep their new faith growing, alive, and true”.

Theresa Doyle-Nelson, “Sincerely Yours, Paul”, 2017,  
<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/sincerely-yours-paul/> (accessed July 6, 2017).

# Paul nurtured through preaching

The apostle Paul nurtured through preaching. To establish believers in the faith was among the objectives of his preaching .

Schnabel said, Paul's preaching objectives, as a pastor of a local church was to consolidate Jewish and Gentile believers in their faith and in the transformation of their lives as believers who live in a pagan society. Additionally, he was preaching the gospel for the edification of the Christians and for evangelism.

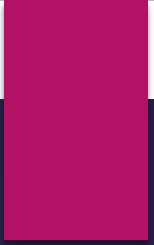
Eckhard J. Schnabel, "The Objectives of Change, Factors of Transformation, and the Causes of Results: The Evidence of Paul's Corinthian Correspondence," *Trinity Journal*, 26 (2005): 179-204.

## Paul nurtured through teaching

Paul spent time in teaching the word of God to the believers as he made his missionary voyages, listeners reacted positively (Acts 13:42–44), though some opposed (verses 48-49) yet he experienced great successes.

He spent one year and six months teaching the word of God in Corinth (Acts 18:11, NKJV). According to Chaffey, “When he had an opportunity to remain in a city, he stayed for a while to make sure the believers were properly trained”.

Tim Chaffey, “What Was the Content of Paul’s Teaching?,” *Answer in Genesis*, 2011, <https://answersingenesis.org/answers/biblical-authority-devotional/what-was-the-content-of-pauls-teaching/> (accessed July 11, 2017).



**As a result,** God the creator, Moses, Jesus, the Apostle Paul have all actively engaged in nurturing activities. From the available chronicles on their acts, teachings and leadership, relevant insights can be gleaned and adopted to the needs of Church members today by the pastors and the elders.

## Retention activities to envision

- (a) Fellowship and discipleship activities,
- (b) Establishing small groups within the church to create enthusiasm and a climate that enhances spiritual growth and establishment of social relationships.

# Fellowship

Acts 2:42 (KJV) states, “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”. *Koinonia*, the Greek word used in this text, appears many times in the New Testament. Vine defines it as “fellowship, communion, sharing in common”.

WILLIAM E. VINE, *COMPLETE EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL WORDS* (NASHVILLE, TN: THOMAS NELSON, 1997), 430.

## Fellowship

Sharing is a principal aspect of fellowship that Christians share which helps develop relationship and bonding. Adams postulated:

## Discipleship

The primary responsibility given to the Church by Jesus is to make disciples. Shirley further stated that they love and obey their masters.

Discipleship training leads to assimilation and participation in the life of the church. The pastor and his team will endeavor to disciple the new converts by all appropriate means.

Shirley, 207-234.



## Small Groups

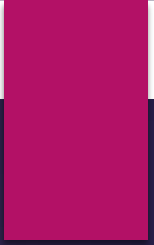
Small Groups is one of the most important strategies to nurture and retain the church members. Harelimana stated: “To supplement the work of the pastor, small groups can be formed according to the size and character of the church”.

Harelimana, 55.

## SMALL GROUP

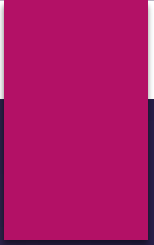
Small groups are proven to be one of the best means of conserving members. Warren suggested, "Small groups are the most effective way of closing the back door of your church."

RICK WARREN, "RELATIONSHIPS: THE GLUE THAT HOLDS THE CHURCH TOGETHER," *BP NEWS*, 2005, [HTTP://WWW. BPNEWS.NET/21031](http://www.bpnews.net/21031) (ACCESSED OCTOBER 29, 2017), 2005, 4.



According to Warren, relationships and friendships developed in small groups constitute the glue that holds the church together and fosters permanence in members' connection to the organization

MCNAMARA AND DAVIS



Following the examples of God, Moses in the Old Testament, Jesus and the Apostle Paul in the New Testament; utilizing a multi-dimensional approach composed of fellowship, discipleship, small groups activities, the church leadership, particularly the Elder, can help the members to remain within the Church.



Question?



**Do you want the members to stay  
within the Church?**



**Decide today to work to nurture  
the church members.**

**God will bless your efforts.**