**STIMULATING SPIRITUAL, FAITH, RELIGIOUS, AND MORAL**

**DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS**

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**STIMULATING SPIRITUAL, FAITH, RELIGIOUS, AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

* Concerned adults “raising” children, adolescents, and young adults consider this topic as the most important developmental topic, surpassing cognitive, emotional/psychological, physical, or social development.
* Optimal development does not just happen, but has to be stimulated and nurtured.
* There is concern within the SDA Church about religiosity and keeping young people “in the church.” Following these principles should increase that probability.
* This presentation concentrates more on adolescents and young adults because they are in the independent-dependent stage of development, are starting to think independently., and make more individual decisions.
* Stress the most important things in life (love, hope, and charity), not making “mountains out of mole hills”, and emphasizing eternal over cultural values.
* Although most people believe that Christians have better behavior than Non-Christians, research does not necessarily support that conclusion.
* Based upon Biblical Principles, E. G. White’s writings, research, and best practices.

**CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

* All development is important from pre-natal to death; development in infancy and childhood set the foundation for development during adolescence and young adulthood.
* There are parenting and leadership styles that best promote optimal spiritual development.
* Parenting styles include authoritative (moderately high control, high warmth), authoritarian (high control, low warmth), permissive (low control, high warmth), indifferent (low control, low warmth.)
* Leadership styles include authoritative (sometimes called collaborative or cooperative), authoritarian, democratic, and laisse-faire.
* Be extremely aware of indoctrination (“pound it into them”, “don’t you question me”, “if you don’t like it, then leave”) identification (identify with a culture or sub-culture), and internalization (incorporate the values into your own personal life).
* Don’t relate other developmental concerns to spiritual development (you don’t hit your siblings because that is not how people should interrelate with others, not because “that is sinful and God won’t love you.)
* Being aware of certain psychological developmental principles like cooperation is much better than competition; work toward developing positive self-concepts, self-identity, and self-efficacy; being perfect is not a worthy goal; and “this developmental stage will also pass.”
* Negative or detrimental aspects of development can have lasting effects on personality, habits, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors.
* Most children, adolescents, and adults are basically good, but they do have inappropriate behavior at times.
* Most people **act inappropriately because of incompetence** and not because of defiance.

**SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

* There is the assumption that the basic principles of the Bible and of Ellen G. White are being taught.
* These would include love for and relationship with God, love for mankind, and the extensions of the commandments (“but I say unto you”), forgiveness, being nonjudgmental, serving others, altruistic, and so forth.
* This presentation also assumes that the basic principles of Ellen G. White are being taught and that would include cultural values, even though those might be interpreted differently by groups and individuals.

**SOME ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

* Spiritual development can be defined as the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred.
* Every educator or youth leader is well aware that “actions speak much louder than words” and that in order to be really successful a person needs good mentors and role models.
* Spiritual development propels the search for connected meaning, purpose, and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices.
* Spirituality often describes personal or experiential forms.
* Thriving youth show evidence of not only the absence of negative behaviors but also of indicators of positive development, such as school engagement, commitment to helping others, positive adult relationships, self-esteem overcoming adversity, and valuing diversity.
* Religious youth are more likely to take care of themselves through proper nutrition, exercise, and rest, and less likely to engage in health compromising behaviors such as carrying weapons, fighting, and drinking.
* Religious youth were more involved in community services (three times as much) than a student who did not believe that religion was important.
* According to research the most important stimulus to spiritual development is service orientation. However, service learning or service orientation must be structured, well planned and incorporated into cognitive thought and life behavior.
* Service orientation has a cognitive component so it is extremely important that individuals think about **why** they are doing something to help others. Leader lead discussions for younger adolescents and writing exercises (diaries, journals, essays, etc.) for older adolescents should be part of any service oriented program.
* Religious salience and religious attendance were correlated with altruism and empathy.
* Fidelity, an abiding commitment or loyalty to others, ideologies, and roles, enhances a sense of meaning and purpose among youth who have reached identity achievement.
* Research studies have found a **positive association** between meaning and purpose in life and religiosity.

**PROBLEM SOLVING:** Why do Christians act the same as non-Christians? How could I improve my own spiritual development?

**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** How will you change the “church culture” so Adventists are more Christian (kind, caring, loving, etc.)?

Stage 1

Recognition of God

Stage 2

Life of Discipleship

Stage 3

Productive Life

Stage 6

Life of Love

Stage 5

Jour outward

WALL

Stage 4

Journey Inward

Halberg’s and Guelich’s Theory of Faith Development

**FAITH DEVELOPMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

* There is not as much **research** information on faith development as there is on moral or spiritual development; although there is much theory about faith development.
* Therefore, some conclusions on faith development are based more on case studies, individual experiences and theological speculations so have to be taken more on “faith” than on fact.
* However, there are still basic concepts and principles that can serve as guidelines that allow us to create programs, models, and instructions that help us in an endeavor to have adolescents and young adults develop a greater faith.

**HAGBERG’S & GUELICH’S THEORY:**

* Stage one: discovery and accepting the fact of the reality of God in our lives.
* Stage two: time of learning and belonging; frees us to explore, to learn, to quest, to absorb, to put into place our set of beliefs or faith principles; this is the taking stage, a filling stage that feels very much like a one-way street.
* Stage three: “doing” stage or a period of time when we most consciously find ourselves working for God. This can be an unsettling period also, since some people feel pushed into it before they are ready or before they are grounded securely in the previous stage. Others feel pulled into this stage and then do not ever want to leave its magnetic power. Some women, however, find this stage to be a very painful stage, if their church discourages them from using their gifts and skills.
* Stage four: deep and very personal inward journey which almost always comes as an unsettling experience yet results in healing for those who continue through it. At this stage, we face an abrupt change or a time of questioning, exploring, falling apart, doubting, dancing around the real issues, sinking in uncertainty, and indulging in self-centeredness. It can be thought of as being a “vertical person” or a time when the issues go primarily up and down between you and God. Others are involved, but the focus is on the issues, battle, healing, and resolution in your relationship with God.
* The “Wall”: a face-to-face experience with God and with our own will. We decide anew whether we are willing to surrender and let God direct our lives. Once we enter this part of stage four, either through crisis, spiritual boredom, or a deep longing, we can easily become perplexed. Although we deeply desire to give our will over to God, and even believe we are doing so, in truth, we are trying to deal with the Wall in the same way we have gotten through life – on the strength of our own will or gifts. We try everything we can to scale it, circumvent it, furrow under it, leap over it, or simply ignore it. But the Wall remains!
* Stage five: the journey outward where we surrender to God’s will to fully direct our lives, but with our eyes wide open, aware but unafraid of the consequences. We endure suffering gracefully, because our confidence is in God. Our primary motivation in life becomes the desire to love honestly and live according to God’s purposes.
* Stage six: a life of love where we let our lights shine in such a way that God is given the credit and the thanks. We are selfless, at peace with ourselves, fully conscious of being the person God has created us to be.

**FOWLER’S THEORY**

* The *intuitive-projective faith stage*: (3-7 years old) is largely based on fantasy and imitation, and influenced by examples and stories heard.
* The *mythic-literal faith*:a child can narrate experiences, not just recite stories. The risk is an over-controlling perfectionism or sense of badness.
* The *synthetic-conventional faith*: transition between adolescence and adulthood where individuals are capable for the first time of taking full responsibility for their religious beliefs.
* The *conjunctive fait*h: develops during middle adulthood and Fowler believes that only a small number of adults ever move on to this stage. This stage involves being more open to paradox and opposing viewpoints.
* The *universalizing faith*: transcends ego and lives in the reality of a God, which “intends the fulfillment of creation and the unity of being.”

**PECK’S THEORY**

* Individuals are unique and do not always fit neatly into any psychological or spiritual pigeonhole.
* There are many gradations within and between stages of spiritual development.
* There exists a sense of threat among people in the different stages of religious development – most of us are threatened by people in the stages above us.
* Much of the art of being a good teacher or minister consist largely in staying just one step ahead of your patients, clients, or pupils.
* If you are not ahead, it is unlikely that you will be able to lead them anywhere. But if you are two steps ahead, it is likely that you will lose or confuse them.

**WHITE’S THOUGHTS:**

* Faith is seeing God as your creator, interested in and promoting our well-being.
* Faith is seeing God as a positive Father figure who is personally interested in you.
* Faith is perceiving mankind in a brother and sister relationship.
* Bible study is most important to see who God is and His purpose in our life.
* Prayer that includes praise, prayer requests made of God especially when requests are for others, asking God for forgiveness, and requests to keep us from temptation, increases faith.
* A sequence of perceiving, becoming, and behaving of God’s love for us increases faith.
* Service to others diminishes selfishness and can make us less egocentric and egotistical.

**PROBLEM SOLVING:** What are two different “walls” in faith development that you have faced during your lifetime? Identify three different walls that late adolescents or young adults might have to go through.

**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Develop a program that would stimulate adolescents in faith development (moving early adolescents from stage two to stage three and middle adolescents from stage three to stage four). Write your own faith development journey – concentrating on stage four, going through the wall, and the journey outward.

**RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

* Volumes have been writing about the family, the church, and the spiritual community and how each relates to religious development.
* There is also considerable research on how the family, church, and spiritual community can stimulate religious development.
* Religious development is often the outward appearance or how our spirituality is evaluated rather than the inward development of spiritual maturation (how we obey the church/school rules rather that our personal relationship with God).

**FAMILY**

* Parental religiosity (relating to or devoted to religious beliefs or observances) is associated positively with various desirable child outcomes and inversely with negative outcomes and protects adolescents.
* Empirical studies report positive connections between parents’ religiosity and higher parental warmth, closer parent-child relationships, and different aspect of parent functioning.
* It is likely that parents influence their children’s Religious and Spiritual Development (RSD) as they do in other realms, that is, through verbal communication and induction and indoctrination of beliefs, disciplinary tactics, rewards and punishment, and behavioral modeling.
* “Spiritual modeling” and spiritual observational learning are important mechanisms.
* Examples of activities that can promote RSD are saying rote mealtime prayers, engaging in devotions at home, performing religiously motivated charity for others, and having “religious rituals.”
* Religious families have a framework that suggests the contests, processes, and outcomes at work in highly religious families as they strive to fulfill the sacred purposes suggested by their faith - chief among them passing on religious and spiritual meaning and practice to their children.
* Ten central processes families used to facilitate RSD among family members, include:
	+ relying on God or God’s word for support and guidance.
	+ sanctifying the family by living religion at home, including religious traditions.
	+ resolving conflict with prayer, repentance, and forgiveness.
	+ loving and serving others in the family, faith community, and wider community. overcoming challenges and trials through shared faith.
	+ abstaining from proscribed activities and substances.
	+ sacrificingtime, money comfort, and convenience for religious/spiritual reasons.
	+ nurturing spiritual observance and growth in family members through teaching, example, and discussion.
	+ obeying God, prophets, parents, or commandments.
	+ putting faith of family ahead of personal or secular interests.

**CHURCH**

* Spiritual experiences such as conversion or answers to prayer often legitimate or reinforce their religious moral order for adolescents. Research suggests that within adult populations, converts appear to be better adjusted than non-converts.
* Religion may offer a spiritual context in which a young person can explore issues related to identity development.
* Religions are generally concerned with the transcendent and address ultimate questions about life’s meaning, with the assumption that there is more to life than what we can see or fully understand.
* Engaging in the spiritual provides connectedness with live, human, or natural other, giving a young person an opportunity to experience him-or-herself in relationship to God, a community of believers, or nature.
* Moving beyond the self provides the opportunity for the search for meaning and belonging that is central to the task of identity exploration.

**COMMUNITY**

* During adolescence **personal integration** is facilitated by the embodiment of ideologically based principals and behavioral norms. Religions often provide opportunities for young people to interact with peers and role models as well as build intergenerational relationships.
* Religion potentially offers an ideologically, sociologically, psychologically, and spiritually rich context for identity formation.
* Religion is seen as affording a potent milieu for identity development through providing explicitly pro-social worldviews, values, and moral, fellow participants and environments that help youth internalize and integrate a sense of belonging and meaning. Identity consolidation is sent to adolescent well-being and thriving – giving young people a sense of self and a sense of fidelity that motivate them to contribute to the greater good.
* Integrated into this other aware identity is a spiritual sensitivity. In this regard, spirituality nurtures thriving in young people by providing the awareness of responsibility and the passion to initiate and sustain commitment to the agency.
* Students who believe that religion is important in their lives were almost three times more likely to participate in service that those who do not believe that religion is important.
* Tracking religious development from the sophomore year to the senior year found that civic integration, measured by participation in civic activities such as working on a political campaign and demonstrating for a cause, and willingness to perform volunteer service was positively associated with stable or upward religious developmental trajectories among a sample of predominately white, mi-to upper-class student.

**PROBLEM SOLVING:** Suppose there is very little adolescent social development in your church (no weekday or weekend activities, little interaction among adolescent sub-groups, little social interaction between adolescents and adults, little involvement with the at-large community. What three things would you do to improve the situation?

**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Develop a program for each of the influences, family, church, and community, that would stimulate witnessing to the Non-Adventist community.

**MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

* There is much research and detailed writing on moral development, starting from the 1930’s and continuing to the present.
* As research and writings have progressed there have been some modifications of the theories of moral development; however, the main premises of the theories still remain.
* It is important to remember some other life influences (tragedies, stresses, strains, etc.) affect our moral and spiritual development.
* Most Christians struggle with Kohlberg’s stage five and stage six (judicial interpretations that protect the individual from the group and universalism or treating everyone fairly).
* Most Christians struggle with “social justice” or individually standing up the group or authority when they are wrong.

**SOME ASPECTS OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

* Heteronomous morality is when justice and rules are unchanageable properties, where immanent justice is if a rule is broken punishment is immediate, and punishment and reward are central and most important concepts.
* Autonomous morality is when judging an action an individual considers the **motives** as well as the results or consequences.

**LAWRENCE KOHLBERG’S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

* Kohlberg’s first two stages are based on punishments and rewards (pre-conventional level), the middle two stages are based on social conformity (conventional level), and the last two stages are based on moral principles (post-conventional).
* Kohlberg’s stage one is where the individual obeys rules in order to avoid punishment.
* Kohlberg’s stage two is where the individual obeys rules to obtain rewards or to have favors returned (“you scratch my back and I will scratch yours”.)
* Kohlberg’s stage three is where the individual conforms to win the approval of others (“good boy-good girl”, “good Adventist”, stage).
* Kohlberg’s stage four is where the individual conforms to avoid disapproval or dislike of others (the Ten Commandment).
* Kohlberg’s stage five is where the individual abides by the laws of the land for the community’s welfare (judicial interpretation of the law).
* Kohlberg’s stage six is where the individual abides by universal ethical principles, which may or may not conform to society’s laws or expectations (Golden Rule, state versus federal laws during the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King’s indication “that it is moral to break immoral laws” and the recent Supreme Court ruling that you can’t incarcerate an adolescent for life with no chance for parole.)
* Cognitive disequilibrium theory is moving the individual to a higher level of moral reasoning by presenting real or hypothetical dilemmas so he or she has to reconstruct thinking (accommodation) rather than simply relate to the issue (assimilation).

**PROBLEM-SOLVING:** Someone bumps into your truck and there is damage what would you do? Name three areas where adolescents conform to avoid disapproval or dislike of others. Name three Supreme Court Cases that relate to stage five of Kohlberg’s Moral Development Theory.

**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Develop a program of leading adolescents through “hypothetical moral dilemmas” where you progressively change the circumstances of the original presentation.

Develop a program of leading adolescents through “real life moral dilemmas” where you progressively change the circumstances of the original presentation.

**QUOTATIONS FROM MRS. E. G. WHITE**

**Introduction:** I read most of the material that Mrs. Ellen G. White wrote on spiritual, faith, religious, and moral development, but used just a few quotes that are relevant to this presentation. According to her counsel these quotations should not be “forced upon” people, but used as a stimulus for discussion and individual thinking.

**Spiritual Development:**

**Supreme love** to God, and love to your neighbor equal to that which you bear to yourself, **is the basis of** **true religion** (Testimony for the Church, Volume 4, p. 353).

Trustworthiness in your place and calling, **a willingness to deny self for the purpose of benefiting others,** will bring peace of mind and the favor of God (Testimony for the Church, Volume 4, p. 353).

They can bring a ray of hope into the lives of the defeated and disheartened. Their **unselfish love,** manifested in acts of disinterested kindness, **will make it easier for these suffering ones to believe in the** **love of Christ** (The Ministry of Healing, p. 145).

Many have not faith in God and have lost confidence in man. But they appreciate acts of sympathy and helpfulness. **As they see one with no inducement of earthly praise or compensation come into their** **homes,** ministering to the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sad, and tenderly pointing all to Him of whose love and pity the human worker is but the messenger - as they see this, **their hearts are touched.** Gratitude springs up. Faith is kindled. They see that God cares for them, and they are prepared to listen as His word is opened (The Ministry of Healing, p. 145).

**Faith Development:**

Religion does not consist merely in a system of dry doctrines, **but in practical faith, which sanctifies the life and corrects the conduct in the family circle and in the church.** Many may tithe mint and rue, but neglect the weightier matters, mercy and the love of God. To walk humbly with God is essential to the perfection of Christian character (Testimony for the Church, Volume 4, p. 337).

**Faith is not feeling.** “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). True faith is in no sense allied to presumption (Gospel Workers, p. 260).

To talk of religion in a casual way, **to pray without soul hunger and living faith, avails nothing.** A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Savior of the world, can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. **He who waits for** **entire knowledge before he will exercise faith cannot receive blessing from God** (Gospel Workers, p. 260).

**Faith takes God at His word,** not asking to understand the meaning of the trying experiences that come (Gospel Workers, p. 261).

Faith looks beyond the difficulties, and lays hold of the unseen, even Omnipotence, therefore it cannot be baffled. **Faith is the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency** (Gospel Workers, p. 262).

If we surrender our lives to His service**, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not** made **provision** (Gospel Workers, p. 263).

**Religious Development:**

**They act as though they had not an individuality. Their identity is submerged in others.** Men, women, and youth, God requires you to possess moral courage, steadiness of purpose, fortitude, and perseverance, minds that cannot take the assertions of another, but which will investigate for themselves before receiving or rejecting, that will study and weigh evidence, and take it to the Lord in prayer (Testimonies for the Church, p. 130).

**A religious experience is gained only through conflict, through disappointment, through severe discipline of self, through earnest prayer.** Living faith must grasp the promises unflinchingly, and then many may come from close communion with God (Testimony for the Church, Volume 4, p. 444).

The **steps to heaven must be taken one at a time;** and every advance step gives strength for the next (Messages to Young People, p. 182).

**Moral Development:**

One earnest, conscientious, **faithful young man** in a school **is an inestimable treasure** (Messages to Young People, p. 181).

He will prepare men for the times. They will be humble, God-fearing men, not conservative, **not policy** **men; but men who have moral independence and will move forward in the fear of the Lord.** They will be kind, noble, courteous; yet they will not be swayed from the right path, but will proclaim the truth in righteousness whether men will hear or whether they will forbear (Testimony for the Church, Volume 5, p. 263).

**EXAMPLES FOR STIMULATING SPIRITUALITY**

**Introduction:** The following are placed in categories; however, there is an interrelationship between the categories so something that might be listed as religious might also strengthen social relationships. For example, an adolescent involved in helping the homeless notices a teenage mother holding a baby who doesn’t have proper clothing/blankets. When she mentioned this to an older church member they developed and implemented an “intergenerational knitting club” that meets weekly to knit items for those inside and outside of the local church. Although this fills a religious purpose it also develops much better positive relationships among the two age groups.

Concentrate on the most important things and minimize the cultural concerns that don’t matter as much. Examples include ethic churches on marriage; churches on professions; anti-intellectualism or lessor interpretation of rules and regulations. Most of these could be related to Adventist Community Services where the church structured the activity or could be individual members belonging to a community organization that supports an activity like Children’s Home Society, Hospice, and so forth.

**SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Introduction:** Primarily related to developing a positive, growth-producing relationship with God and mankind, to adhere to keeping Biblical principles, and to incorporate faith, religious, and moral development**.**

* Spiritual development is primarily involved with developing a positive relationship with God and with man. It often includes doing “works” to assist those in need, to treat others like we would want to be treated, and letting God provide guidance in our lives.
* Doing retribution for “sins” or mistakes.
* Some middle-aged parents were concerned about the church youth and started a Wednesday night prayer meeting that included testimonials, prayer, light refreshments and inter-gender volleyball. Both religiosity and social interaction increased within the church.
* Parents and church members meeting one morning a week to pray for administrators, teachers, staff, and students at the school.
* Implement a program to recognize certain groups on a regular basis such as private and **public** school teachers in August before school starts, veterans during appropriate holidays, and volunteers to community service organizations. These often can be done in Youth Sabbath School, other youth related activities, or in the church service with some emphasis on youth participation.
* Having a short prayer meeting before or after Sabbath School where the concentration is on national or international disasters, local concerns, and people going through adversity. Select four to six people to pray and rotate selection on a regular basis.
* Teach students how to pray. Emphasize principles of an acceptable prayer using the Bible and Mrs. White’s writings.
* Email communications for those homebound, recovering from illness or injury, for spiritual encouragement, or social engagement.

**FAITH DEVELOPMENT**

**Introduction:** Faith development is associated with a trust and faith in God and in mankind who have proved to be trustworthy.

* Since losing a significant person (parent, spouse, or child are the most psychologically difficult losses to adjust to) meet the person weekly just to listen and encourage him or her. Participating in grief recovery group meeting also produces empathy, which is a major component of faith development.
* Teach an accepted institutional culture, where barriers are eliminated (class status, special ability status, etc.) and where a supportive family environment is developed.
* Implement a supportive developmental environment by having juniors and seniors assist freshmen and sophomores. Structure it according to gender, such as an “older sister” or “older brother” program.
* Join a community “young life” interdenominational program where adults help interdenominational youth develop a strong positive self-concept and religious orientation.
* According to the research, becoming a mentor or spiritual coach improves one’s faith, religiosity, and spiritual development.
* Conducting local church summer camp activities in areas of music, drama, athletics, and academics are a major stimulus to spiritual activities.
* Giving spontaneous offerings for natural disasters such as tornado damage, volcano eruptions, forest fires, flooding, or local programs for the needy or disadvantaged stimulates faith development.

**RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT**

**Introduction:** Religious development is associated with the church, the family, and the community. It is often perceived as church services and activities, social interactions, family rituals or traditions, and community events.

* In a city with a large Adventist population churches and individuals purchased a vacant nursing home /rehabilitation center in order to create an Adventist Community Center. They have built a relatively large warehouse to accept and resell goods (furniture, clothing, books, household items, and miscellaneous.) Since only an office manager is paid and the rest of staffing is by volunteers the money made goes into offering classes, group self-improvementmeetings, simple car maintenance and repair, free simple dental and medical care, and limited financial assistance for those in desperate need. **(There is a need for much volunteer work that young people could do.)**
* Every month fifteen to twenty local churches provide lunch or dinner at the local Christian Aid Center for those who are homeless and for families temporarily living there because of domestic violence and abuse.
* A local Presbyterian Church purchased and renovated a house so that people coming 120 miles for cancer treatment could stay for the week and not have to travel back and forth each day or have the expense of lodging and food.
* Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Adventists have worked together to build housing for those who have experienced disaster through FEMA programs.
* Develop a program to assist (financially, psychologically, and spiritually) young adult members attending post-secondary educational institutions such as vocational training institutes, community college, or a four-year college.
* Plant and harvest a church sponsored community garden to grow produce for the community.
* Have mid-week non-competitive recreational activities that include the church and community.
* Have a summer Sunday picnic and invite all owners and company personnel who do business with the church as guests.
* Develop and implement different types of nature or environmental events or activities. Churches can and do have quarterly community clean-up or improvement days: planting trees, cleaning waterways or roadside ditches around “Earth Day”.
* Implement an assistance program for those going through difficult times, such as psychological stresses of divorce, depression, death of a loved one or significant other, job loss, injury or disability, or financial crisis. This could include providing meals, taking care of children or adolescents, doing household or yard duties, and anything that the person deems helpful.
* Develop and conduct skill development courses, such as raising children, interrelating with adolescents, financial planning, income tax assistance, food preparation instruction, and any reasonable course that meets the needs of a significant number of the congregation or community. .
* Commit faculty, staff, and students to do one hour of volunteer work per week and give one dollar to community charity per week. **Professionals encouraging religious development often ask that adults contribute five hours of volunteer work and give five percent of their salary to community charity per week.**

**MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Introduction:** Moral development is dealing with social justice, equality, equity, respect, and other values that relate to human rights. Because it incorporates attitudes and beliefs usually before behavior it necessitates thinking and cognitive processing so often requires group discussion and debate.

* Do an Individual and collective weekly study guide from a Sabbath or Sunday School Study Guide on a topic of spiritual importance. Many of these topics will includes practical application of Biblical principles and moral justice.
* Conduct special weekend study seminars on topics that are pertinent to public discussion and are in current news reports such as state initiatives on death and dying, life incarceration for adolescents, or specific Supreme Court verdicts. These focus groups work well for Friday or Saturday night Vesper programs or Sabbath afternoon discussion groups.
* Calmly participate in a Christian manner in public discussions on such pertinent topics as immigration, the Affordable Health Care Act, state and federal legislation (same-sex marriages in our state), and other important topics.
* Calmly participate in a Christian manner in denominational discussions on **such pertinent topics** **as women within the church, creation and evolution, and spiritual formation.**
* Since this is the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and the 70th anniversary of World War Two discuss the immorality or morality of war. **When and how is it “right to fight back? (Generalize to domestic violence, all types of abuse, and bullying.)**

* Have historians and theologians present the horrors of human marketing of young children for adoption and young adolescents for prostitutes (this was very successful as part of Black History Month or an extension of the study of slavery).
* Respond to local concerns of social injustice, such as the improper treatment of those with mental illness and/or homelessness.
* Become involved in preventing negative behaviors among people, such as gang membership, gang violence, elitism within the church, and so forth.
* Develop and implement conflict management skill seminars to teach people how to solve problems or conflicts in a logical and responsible manner. One purpose of such programs is to avoid anger, psychological or physical abuse, and violence.
* Special seminars, forums, or panel discussions involving theologians, economists, business leaders, and other professionals on such topics as the immorality of certain economic practices, on the inequality or inequity between the “haves and have-nots” or “rich and poor”.

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