12. Practices of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality (Including Tithing) among Teachers in Adventist Schools in North America

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What is Spirituality?

A search for peer-reviewed articles in the Proquest Central database that have the word "spirituality" in their title returned 6,573 results. If nothing else, this reveals that the concept of spirituality is one that can be invoked in a number of research contexts, and that it is a word flexible enough to encompass a wide range of diverse phenomena. For example, typical of many health-related studies, Büssing and Koenig (2018) compared the impact of spirituality on health outcomes by using a SpREUK scale. The SpREUK scale includes questions that ask patients if they plan to seek spiritual/religious resources in coping with their illness, if they have a conception that they are connected with a higher source, and if they have the ability to reflect on what is essential in life (Büssing, 2015). This understanding of spirituality includes the concept of a higher power outside of the mundane world that can be a source of strength and comfort in difficult times. Makkar and Singh (2018) included meditation, yoga, reading books about self-development, spiritual singing, chanting mantras and attending spiritual workshops as part of a spirituality scale that they were developing for measuring spirituality in India (see Makkar & Singh, 2018, Table 2). Otaye-Ebede, Shaffakat and Foster (2019) went so

far as to speak of a "workplace spirituality" for which they use the following pre-existing definition: "a framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy" (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, p. 13; Otaye-Ebede, Shaffakat & Foster, 2019). Their view of spirituality highlights the inner emotional response employees may have to an organizational culture.

As reported by the Pew Research Center, many Americans distinguish between being spiritual and being religious. A report published on the internet in 2017 recounts the results obtained from asking American participants if they considered themselves to be (i) religious and spiritual; (ii) spiritual but not religious; (iii) religious but not spiritual; (iv) neither religious nor spiritual. The results showed that 27% considered themselves to be spiritual but not religious (Pew, 2017). Though not necessarily tied to religious commitment, spirituality is viewed by researchers as an attitude or belief that reaches beyond the mundane, and one that often involves a higher power or God. For example, the Spiritual Openness Scale (2018), developed by Eyer, Kapoor, Coombs, Jay and Thorn, includes such items as "I often feel strongly related to a power greater than myself," and "My relationship to God is experienced as unconditional love" (Eyer, et al., 2018, p. 893–94, Table 3).

Steensland, Wang, and Schmidt (2018) reported that the American public considered a deity or higher being to be an important aspect of spirituality. They asked 1,038 adults aged 18 years and over residing in the United States the open-ended question, "In a sentence or two, please describe what the term spirituality means to you." In the responses the four most common referent elements of spirituality were: (i) a monotheistic deity (41%); (ii) a higher being (22%); (iii) reference to organized religions (8%); and (iv) transcendence (7%) (Steensland, Wang, & Schmidt, 2018, p. 458, Table 2). In conservative Christian circles, such as in the Seventh-day Advent Church, it is only to be expected that in addition to incorporating the idea of God, concepts of spirituality will involve attitudes or beliefs associated with the religious practices associated with Christianity. This is borne

out by the research of the Australian writer, academic and Adventist church pastor, Bruce Manners.

Seventh-day Adventist Understandings of Spirituality

Manners (2008) asked 78 Seventh-day Adventists in Australia and New Zealand, either in face-to-face interviews or in focus groups, "How would you define a spiritual person?" He discovered that respondents conceived spirituality in terms of a connection or relationship with Jesus, a devotional life that was a result of a spiritual connection with God, and of their relationships with others (Manners, 2008, p. 16, 18). None of this was unexpected, but he then made a very insightful and useful observation:

> So, what could an Adventist model of spirituality look like? From the research there is a strong emphasis on what could be called "practical spirituality," or defined as spirituality demonstrated in action, in doing—a part of our heritage. We have tended to promote and applaud action. (Manners, 2008, p. 19)

From the results of Manners' sample it appears that spirituality for SDAs involves actions such as praying actively, reading the Bible, sharing their faith with others, or helping others less fortunate.

Barry Oliver, an Australian Adventist academic and administrator, explored the various times in life when one could experience personal spirituality. He noted that it was found, rightly enough, in moments when one was removed from the hurly-burly of everyday life (the spirituality of the desert), yet he also insisted that spirituality "must influence the journey of life and faith that we are walking day by day," something Oliver describes as "spirituality in the modern world" (Oliver, 2005). Marek Jantos, another Australian Adventist academic, insists that "A meaningful spiritual existence is possible only in the context of a close and restored relationship with God, and in knowing our Creator, 'the only true God, and Jesus Christ' (John 17:3)" (Jantos, 2017). He also pointed out that "another distinctive quality of Christian spirituality is that it stands out as a dynamic spirituality, manifesting itself in service to others, in healing the sick, clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry (Matt. 25:31–46)" (Jantos, 2017).

Marcos de Benedicto began his exploration of spirituality by observing that "Spirituality may be described as the search for the

ultimate meaning of life and a quest for finding a pleasant place for the self in the cosmos" (de Benedicto, 2006, p. 19). He went on to describe the metaphors by which Christians understand spirituality. They include "rescue, redemption, justification, … healing, restoration, … journeying, … battle … connecting … contemplation discipleship … silence … rest … thirst … feast" (de Benedicto, 2006, p. 19–20). The tools of Christian spirituality are prayer, study of the Bible, meditation, celebration, church attendance, and Sabbath rest (de Benedicto, 2006, p. 21–22).

John Dybdahl responded to criticism of his book, *Hunger: satisfying the longing of your soul* (Dybdahl, 2007), in two articles which summarize and clarify his understanding of spirituality in a Seventh-day Adventist context (Dybdahl, Oct. & Dec. 2015). He begins by making two observations: half of adult Americans think that Christianity is but "one option among many"; and "the influence of New Age is clearly widespread." He then observes that in the area of "… spiritual life, or spirituality … many voices speak, inviting people to practice various methods of experiencing the Divine" (Dybdahl, Oct 2015, p. 19–20). Dybdahl then outlines what he considers to be the "four basic concepts underlying biblical spirituality": (1) there is a unique, personal Creator God who is active in the world; (2) humans are wholistic, created beings who have sinned and disrupted their relationship with God; (3) the world was created 'good' by God, but has been devastated by human sin; (4) Jesus is the culmination and center of God's healing and restoring relationship with His people and His world (Dybdahl, Oct 2015, p. 20–21). He then says, "Since God is loving, gracious, and saving, He approaches humans with the offer of fellowship. The best response humans can make to this approach is admission of need and then worship" (Dybdahl, Oct 2015, p. 21). In Part 2 of his article he notes that SDAs have the Sabbath, a symbol of "spiritual rest and salvation," and because of their wholistic view of humans, they consider that "nourishing and caring for the body is caring for the soul. Properly cared for, the body is an ally supporting the spiritual life, not an enemy. Care for the body is part of spiritual life" (Dybdahl, Dec 2015, p. 21). His concluding prayer "is that the day will come when the truth and clarity of our doctrine will be vitally connected to the depth and fervor of our religious experience" (Dybdahl, Dec 2015, p. 23). For Dybdahl, spirituality is an internal

experience of our religion, whereby we accept the gift of salvation from God and respond by worshipping him. The writings of Ellen White encourage him to listen for the will of God in quiet contemplation of the Bible (Dybdahl, Dec 2015, p. 22–23). Following the lead of Dybdahl we now turn to the writings of Ellen White to discover what she says about spirituality.

Spiritual Practices Advocated by Ellen White

Pioneer, visionary and prime mover in the establishment of many SDA schools and hospitals during the early years of the SDA Church, Ellen G. White had a very intense personal spiritual life. Her autobiographical writings such as *Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White 1880* (White, 1880) and "Experience and Views" in *Early Writings* (White, 1882) include frequent accounts of meaningful worship services, intense sessions of prayer, and of her own visionary experiences. She recounts, for example, that after returning home after hearing the ideas of William Miller, " … I spent most of the long hours of darkness in prayer and tears" (White, 1880, p. 10 [139]). She describes her state of mind as she began to understand the forgiveness of God: "My mind constantly dwelt upon the subject of holiness of heart. I longed above all things to obtain this great blessing, and feel that I was entirely accepted of God" (White, 1880, p. 18 [150]). She often experienced visions during times of prayer, often in times of communal prayer (e.g. White, 1882, p. 39 [23], 48 [32]).

Ellen White, like others who had looked for the return of Jesus on October 22, 1844, had been bitterly disappointed when he did not arrive. This shaped her religious life, and the lives of those around her. Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood describe the experience of early Adventists in the following terms:

> They abandoned social approval in pursuit of a life anchored by faith in the reliability of Scripture and prophecy, encouraged by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and characterized by a deep and constant longing for union with God. Perceiving a radical separation between themselves and other Christians that they saw as having a system of beliefs without an accompanying zeal they pictured themselves as pilgrims headed for "Glory." (Beem & Harwood, 2006, p. 171)

Throughout her writing career, Ellen G. White urged her readers to lead a life of regular prayer, Bible study and attendance at Church worships and other religious meetings. For example, she says, "If we would develop a character which God can accept, we must form correct habits in our religious life. Daily prayer is as essential to growth in grace, and even to spiritual life itself, as is temporal food to physical well-being" (White, 1889, p. 64 [93]). A whole chapter in her book, *Steps to Christ*, is written on the topic "The Privilege of Prayer" (White, 1892, p. 60–67 [93–104]).

In her book, *Education*, White writes of Bible study and morning and evening worship:

> In arousing and strengthening a love for Bible study, much depends on the use of the hour of worship. The hours of morning and evening worship should be the sweetest and most helpful of the day. Let it be understood that into these hours no troubled, unkind thoughts are to intrude; that parents and children assemble to meet with Jesus, and to invite into the home the presence of holy angels. Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time. Let all join in the Bible reading and learn and often repeat God's law. It will add to the interest of the children if they are sometimes permitted to select the reading. Question them upon it, and let them ask questions. Mention anything that will serve to illustrate its meaning. When the service is not thus made too lengthy, let the little ones take part in prayer, and let them join in song, if it be but a single verse. (White, 1903, p. 145-46 [186])

Nor does White restrict her exhortations to prayer and Bible study. She writes,

> … everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. (White, 1898, p. 313 [363])
>
> It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. (White, 1898, p. 59 [83])

As well as recommending contemplating the life of Jesus each day, White was moved to comment on the way that contemplating the beauties of nature draws her mind to adore and reverence "the God of nature":

> As we beheld the wonderful works of the Master Architect, feelings of reverence and awe were awakened in our souls, and we could but wonder how anyone can look upon such scenes and say, "There is no God." I fail to comprehend how it is possible for any to be so bound about with narrow ideas as to look upon the works of God in nature, and not adore and reverence the God of nature. My heart was lifted up in praise to him as I viewed scenes which seemed calculated to bind the mind of the beholder to the infinite Creator. (White, 1886, p. 1)

As well as being intensely emotional, Ellen White's spirituality was also robust and active. "Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity" (White, 1892, p. 50 [77–78]).

> So those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. This spirit is the sure outgrowth of a soul truly converted. No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. (White, 1898, p. 51 [78])

Here in the very influential writings of Ellen White are many of the features that characterize SDA spirituality: prayer, Bible study, regular attendance at meetings, active sharing of the good news of salvation with others, and a burning desire to assist others and leave the world a better place.

SDA Practices of Spirituality: Regular Church Attendance

Several of the questions asked in the survey related to matters of spirituality (see Chapters 6 and 7 for information about the survey and those that participated in it). As well as the expected items such frequency of prayer (Question 56a), Bible study (Q. 56c), attendance at meetings (Q. 18, Q 56b), and outreach to those of other beliefs

(Q. 56e), additional items were used that also appeared in the Pew Religious Landscape Survey. These included a question on meditation (Q. 56d), feeling a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being (Q. 56f), and feeling a deep sense of wonder about the universe (Q. 56g).

It has already been reported in Chapter 3 that 89.7% of the teachers who participated in the survey reported that, "aside from weddings and funerals," they attend religious services once a week or more (See Table 7.8 in Chapter 7, and Table B.87 in Appendix B). This rate of attendance is comparable to that reported by those in the American population who identified themselves as Christian in the U.S. Religious Landscape Study conducted for the Pew Research Center in 2007 and again in 2014. In 2014, more than 35,000 adults across the United States of America were interviewed. The researchers reported that 47% of those who identified themselves as Christians attended religious services weekly or more often (Pew, 2015, p. 13). This is comparable to the church-attendance patterns of Seventh-day Adventists in North America, as revealed in the Global Members Survey of 2013 (Gillespie et al., 2013) and in a follow-up survey in 2017–2018 conducted for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Činčala et al., 2018). A total of 1,495 individuals from the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD) participated in the Global Members Survey in 2013. These individuals were contacted by means of a systematic method which chose specific congregations at random from each of the 27 conferences within the NAD. In that survey 76% of members in the NAD reported that they attended church 4 or more times per month (Gillespie, 2013, p. 8). The NAD section of the 2017–2018 Global Members Survey was based on a representative sample that was constructed by selecting churches from each Conference in the Division and arranging for a certain number of surveys to be collected from each church according to the size of congregation. To the surveys collected in this manner was added a convenience sample of 540 surveys, making up a total of 1,923 surveys from church members in the NAD. A total of 58% of members who responded to the survey reported attending church once a week or more, and an additional 32% said they attended almost every week, giving a total of 90% who attended church weekly or almost weekly (Činčala et al., 2018, p. 36). One might conclude, therefore, that the great majority of teachers in SDA schools and of

SDA members in the NAD attend worship services weekly. That 32% of NAD members attended almost every week probably indicates that the teachers attend church slightly more frequently than the "average" church member.

SDA Practices of Spirituality: Prayer, Prayer Groups, Read Bible, Share Faith

Branch B of the survey included 7 questions designed to explore the spiritual practices of participants. The wording of the questions was modelled on that used in the U.S. Religious Landscape Study of the Pew Research Center. This was done for two reasons: first, to enable the spiritual practices of teachers in Adventist schools to be compared with those typical of the wider population in which they work; and second, because the wording of the Religious Landscape Study was deliberately designed to be applicable to as wide a range of American Christian traditions as possible, the language would be accessible to Christians who could be, but may not be SDAs (Branch B of the survey). It was reported in Chapter 7 that almost every teacher in Adventist schools in the NAD that participated in the survey identified themselves as a Seventh-day Adventist, but the survey was designed also to be taken into institutions such as the larger Adventist hospitals where SDAs are in the minority in the workforce so the wording was also chosen with these people in mind.

The questions on spirituality were introduced by observation and request, e.g. "C56: People practice their religion in different ways. Please indicate how often you do or experience each of the following:" Participants were then asked to state whether they did or participated 0 = Never; 1 = Seldom; 2 = A few times a month; 3 = A few times a week; 4 = Once or more a day.

Four of the activities included in the questions on spirituality relate to practices that have been identified earlier in this chapter as traditional practices of spirituality among SDAs. The wording which participants were asked to rate was as follows: "… how often do you …"

- 56a. Pray outside of attending religious services
- 56b. Participate in prayer groups, Scripture study groups or religious education programs
- 56c. Read Scripture outside of religious services
- 56e. Share your faith / beliefs with non-believers or people from other religious backgrounds

Table 12.1 displays frequencies and percentages of the responses to these four questions (see also Tables B.88, B.89, B.90, B92 in Appendix B). It provides data from three data sets: the frequency of responses from the teachers of schools in the NAD who participated in the survey (the first five rows of data in Table 12.1), as well as two other sets of data for comparative purposes (the bottom three rows). The row described as "Pew 2015, ≥ weekly" reports percentage data from the 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey of those who declared themselves to be Christians that prayed, read their Bible, joined prayer groups and shared their faith at least once a week (Pew, 2015, p. 13–14).

Note that the Pew data are reported in terms of greater than or equal to weekly ("≥ weekly") because that was the way that reading Scripture, participation in prayer groups, and sharing of faith was reported. To make comparisons with the responses from the NAD teachers, an extra row was added to Table 12.1 ("NAD Teachers, ≥ weekly"), which added the percentages of NAD teachers that prayed, etc., "a few times a week" and "once or more a day." These two numbers added together should approximate the frequencies "weekly or more" in the Pew Research Center data. The report from the Pew Research Center also noted that 68% of those who identified themselves as Christians prayed at least once each day (Pew, 2015, p. 13). The bottom row of Table 12.1 is labelled, "Member Survey 2018, ≥ weekly." The percentages in this row are derived from the "North American Division Report" of the 2017–2018 Global Church Member Survey (Činčala et al., 2018, p. 40, 41, 73).

Table 12.1 Practices of Traditional SDA Piety

	Pray		Read Bible		Prayer Groups		Share Faith	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
0 Never	0	0	0	0	6	3.1	1	0.5
1 Seldom	1	0.5	6	3.1	39	20.3	61	31.9
2 A few times a month	1	0.5	18	9.4	69	35.9	67	35.1
3 A few times a week	9	4.7	58	30.2	44	22.9	29	15.2
4 Once or more a day	181	94.3	110	57.3	34	17.7	33	17.3
Total	**192**	**100.0**	**192**	**100.0**	**192**	**100.0**	**191**	**100.0**
Pew 2015, ≥ weekly		90		43		32		26
NAD Teachers, ≥ weekly		99.0		87.5		30.6		32.5
Member Survey 2018, ≥ daily		65		48		35		25

The results recorded in Table 12.1 reveal that the overwhelming percentage of teachers in SDA schools in the NAD pray daily (94.3%), and read their Bibles at least a few times a week (87.5%). Less than half of them participate in weekly prayer groups (40.6%) or share their faith (32.5%) at least once a week. But from the comparative data provided, it is also clear that they participate in these four traditional practices of Adventist spirituality markedly more often than Christians in the United States, and more often than the members attending SDA Churches in the NAD.

Other Spiritual Practices: Meditation, Sense of Peace and Wonder

Branch B of the survey included three additional questions relating to spiritual practices which are not so regularly promoted to church members. They included asking participants to rate, "… how often you do or experience each of the following:"

- 56d. Meditate
- 56f. Feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being
- 56g. Feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe

While meditation and feeling spiritual peace and wonder may not be promoted regularly to church members, it is possible to find echoes

of approval for such practices and experiences in the writings of Ellen G. White. For example, she gives the following advice for family members (emphasis supplied to this and subsequent citations):

> At home I must guard my spirit, my actions, my words. I must give time to personal culture, to training and educating myself in right principles. I must be an example to others. I must *meditate upon the word of God night and day* and bring it into my practical life. (White, 1952, p. 138 [180])

She also says of self-supporting Gospel workers,

> It is God's design that such workers shall be freed from unnecessary anxiety, that they may have full opportunity to obey the injunction of Paul to Timothy, "*Meditate* upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." 1 Timothy 4:15. (White, 1911, p. 240 [356])

She also says in approval of John the Revelator,

> In his isolated home John was able to study more closely than ever before the manifestations of divine power as recorded in the book of nature and in the pages of inspiration. To him it was a delight to *meditate on the work of creation* and to adore the divine Architect. (White, 1911, p. 385 [571])

White identifies the Bible as the focus of Christian meditation, and in doing so uses the concept of meditation in a manner slightly different from that of practitioners of Eastern religions. Meditation, when understood as meditating on Scripture, is clearly something with which she was comfortable.

While White may not use the specific phrases "sense of spiritual peace and well-being," and "feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe," in her writings she mentions achieving peace and seeing God in creation. For example:

> If you would meet God in *peace*, feed His flock now with *spiritual food*; for every child has the possibility of attaining unto eternal life. Children and youth are God's peculiar treasure. (White, 1952, p. 219 [280])

> In the beginning, *God was revealed in all the works of creation*. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains." "The sea is His, and He made it." Psalm 65:6; 95:5.

> It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love. (White, 1898, p. 9 [20])
>
> Divine wisdom, infinite grace, were made plain by the things of God's creation. Through nature and the experiences of life, men were taught of God. "The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world," were "perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." Romans 1:20, R. V. (White, 1900, p. 10 [22])

In Table 12.2 there are six rows that report the frequencies with which NAD teachers say they meditated, or experienced "a sense of spiritual peace and well-being," or felt "a deep sense of wonder about the universe." The Table also has two more rows. The first, labelled, "Pew 2015, ≥ weekly," reports percentage data from the 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey relating to meditation, and feelings of spiritual peace and wonder about the universe (Pew, 2015, p. 27, 82). The percentage figures for meditation relate to those who declared themselves to be Christians, but the figures for feelings of spiritual peace and wonder about the universe are those for the whole population. As in Table 12.1, the line labelled, "NAD Teachers, ≥ weekly" has been added to enable easy comparison with the results of the NAD teachers' survey. Unlike Table 12.1, it is not possible to provide comparative data from the Global Member Survey, as no comparable data were reported.

Table 12.2 Other Measures of Spirituality

	Meditate		**Peaceful**		**Wonder**	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
0 Never	23	12.2	0	0	2	1.0
1 Seldom	45	23.8	7	3.7	18	9.4
2 A few times a month	26	13.8	31	16.4	33	17.3
3 A few times a week	34	18.0	57	30.2	52	27.2
4 Once or more a day	61	32.3	94	49.7	86	45.0
Total	**189**	**100.0**	**189**	**100.0**	**191**	**100.0**
Pew 2015, ≥ weekly		45		64		45
NAD Teachers, ≥ weekly		50.3		79.9		72.2

It is noteworthy that 12% of the teachers stated that they never meditated. Even so, teachers in SDA schools in North America meditated slightly more frequently than those who identified themselves as Christians in the 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. They also experienced feelings of spiritual peace and wonder about the universe more frequently than the general North American population.

Tithing as a Spiritual Practice

Some may find it curious that tithing practice is included in this chapter as a practice of Adventist spirituality. The reason it is found here is because research conducted across four countries in 2013, including research done in the Northern Californian Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, showed that tithing behavior correlated strongly with what was described as "The Adventist Package: Personal Practices of Spirituality" (McIver, 2016, p. 128–32) The practices of spirituality measured in the tithe survey included attending Sabbath school, opening and closing Sabbath, studying the Sabbath school lesson quarterly, reading and reflecting on the Bible every day, praying often during the day, reflecting on spiritual things during the day, and attending small group meetings. It was discovered the greater number of these spiritually related behaviors in which the respondents to the tithing survey engaged, the more likely they were to tithe regularly (McIver, 2016, p. 30, 128–132). For Adventists, then, tithing correlates with behaviors of Spirituality. A consistent theme of the book I wrote to disseminate the results of my research on tithing behavior was that it was through their participation in tithe and its resultant blessings that most Adventist church-members could most clearly see the hand of God in their lives (McIver, 2016, p. 22, 144, etc.).

Table 12.3 records the percentage of income that the teachers in Adventist schools in the NAD report they return as tithe.

Table 12.3 Tithes and Giving as a Percentage of Income for NAD Teachers

	Tithe		Total gifts to charities, tithes and offerings	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
0%	3	1.0	3	0.8
less than 2%	10	3.2	10	2.6
2-4%	3	1.0	3	0.8
5-7%	6	1.9	9	2.4
8-9%	16	5.1	1	0.3
10%	201	64.4	31	8.2
11% or more / 11-14%	73	23.4	177	46.7
15-20%	N/A		111	29.3
more than 20%	N/A		34	9.0
Total	**312**	**100.0**	**379**	**100.0**

As may be observed from the table, 87.8% of the teachers report that they return 10% or more of their income as tithe to the Church. The comparative figure for SDAs in Northern California was 69.4% (figures derived from table on McIver, 2016, p. 259). One can conclude therefore, that, on average, NAD teachers contribute a greater percentage of their income as tithe than church members living in California, and most likely, other church members in the NAD. If gifts to charities and offerings are also taken into account, then 93.2% of teachers give 10% or more of their income.

Table 12.4 reveals how NAD teachers react to the statement, “I know that God has blessed me because I return tithe”. The result is notably different from the responses in the survey on tithing behavior in Northern California. Table 12.4 provides the numbers of NAD Teachers who strongly disagreed, disagreed more than agreed, etc., to the statement. The table also provides data from the tithe survey conducted in Northern California SDA Churches as a whole (McIver, 2016, p. 139, Table 9.10), and the subgroup who returned greater than or equal to 8% of their income as tithe (McIver, 2016, p. 143, Table 9.12).

Table 12.4 I know that God has blessed me because I return tithe:

	NAD Teachers		California Church Members 2012 who tithe ≥8%	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Strongly DISAGREE	69	41.6	46	6
Disagree more than agree	43	25.9	55	7
Agree more than disagree	28	16.9	181	23
Strongly AGREE	26	15.7	498	64
Total	**166**	**100.0**	780	100

It is evident from Table 12.4 that a clear majority of the Northern California church-members who tithed 8% of their income or more agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "God has blessed me because I tithe" (87%), but only 32.6% of the NAD teachers agreed with the statement. There is no real evidence to determine why this difference exists, aside from a handwritten comment next to this question on one of the Branch D surveys which said, "He says he'll bless when we obey. Sometimes that blessing is b/c of our tithe obedience, sometimes that blessing is spiritual and not external" (Survey ID 1473). The tithe research in Northern California revealed that the motive that God will bless is positively related to tithing behavior, but only just (McIver, 2016, p. 128). But those that tithed in Northern California perceived that God had blessed them because they tithed. My conjecture (and that is all it is), is that the teachers had been taught that God will bless them whether or not they tithe, and that this is reflected in the way that they read this particular item on the survey.

Concluding Observations

Personal spirituality is a very individual experience that is related to beliefs and feelings. Researchers are dependent on spiritually related behaviors such as prayer and Bible study as indicators of personal spirituality, together with what respondents to surveys reveal about their inner emotional states. By the measures of outward behavior and self-revelation of their inward emotional states of feelings of inner peace and wonder at creation, the teachers in Adventist Schools in the NAD reveal very high levels of personal spirituality and engagement

with spiritual things. Compared to both the wider population of Christians within the United States, and Adventist church-members across the world, the teachers responding to the survey prayed more frequently, read their Bible more frequently, were more frequently found in worship services, meditated more frequency and experienced feelings of spiritual peace and awe at creation.

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