

SERMON MINISTRY FOR JUNIORS
IN THE DORA CREEK
SEVENTH - DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

SERMON MINISTRY FOR JUNIORS IN THE DORA CREEK

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

School of Graduate Studies

Avondale Campus

Title: SERMON MINISTRY FOR JUNIORS IN THE DORA CREEK
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Problem

One of the most important problems facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the failure to hold many of its own young people. In part, this could be the result of ministers failing to communicate with the juniors of the church. So often the sermon is expressed in abstract language which is almost impossible for juniors to understand. It appears that many ministers feel that their duty to juniors has ceased once the children's story is over.

Method

Methods of communication and, in particular, the social sciences are studied to find a style of sermon that will help juniors

understand and benefit from the worship hour. The research includes a review of the child development studies of such persons as Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Erik Erikson, and James Fowler. The principles discovered are applied to the sermon to determine if this application enables children aged nine to twelve to remember and make simple applications of its message.

Procedure

Between June 1 and August 24 1985, four sermons were preached in Dora Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church. After each sermon the juniors were given opportunity to discuss their feelings. These were compared with the comments of four observers who noted the reactions of the juniors during each sermon.

Results

It was found that the attention of the juniors could be held during the sermon when the principles were applied. The adults also expressed their appreciation for the simple sermons.

Conclusion

These sermons indicated that it is possible to present a subject that will minister to the whole family. Thus a reappraisal by pastors of their methods of sermon presentation is suggested.

Andrews University
School of Graduate Studies
Avondale Campus

SERMON MINISTRY FOR JUNIORS IN THE DORA CREEK
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

by
Lewis G. Parker
November 1985

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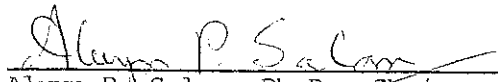
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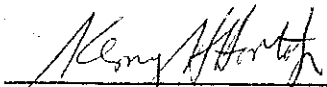
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The initial impetus for this project occurred in New Guinea in 1964. The writer was able to listen to his sermon as it was being translated. He was surprised when the translator gave a different meaning to some parts of the sermon. What was the problem? Why didn't they understand the simple English?

The writer's interest in communication further increased during his re-entry back into Australia after ten years in the mission field. The process was aided by the small church group which met in Port Hedland, West Australia. Over half the twenty-five people who met each Sabbath were children. Thus an attempt was made to present sermons which would keep the children's interest but also help the adults to reflect on the topic. Thus it was assumed that the adults were helped by the children's sermons.

The final stimulus was given in 1984 as the writer was leaving Rockhampton. A senior church member expressed his gratitude for the "simple and interesting" sermons which had been presented. Thus the writer decided to test some of the assumptions he had made over the years.

Is it possible to present sermons which will keep the interest of the whole family? It had been noted that over the years children were generally forgotten during the sermon. Also, many sermons are

based on abstract ideas which are not understood by children.

Therefore the intent of this project is to examine the presentation of the sermon in an endeavour to find how much the juniors retain and understand. The project observes the reaction of the juniors as they listen to four different styles of sermons. The analysis is also given of the degree of success of this ministry to the whole family.

CHAPTER II

A THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR SERMON MINISTRY TO JUNIORS

Introduction

History has demonstrated that the strength of the Jewish community was found in the family and how it was integrated into the community. It was God's purpose that the parents of every child should be his teacher. While this programme operated the families and the community remained loyal to God. But when parents forgot to teach, the nation of Israel chose to follow other gods.¹ To stop this drift God started the schools of the prophets. For a brief time these schools filled the breach but time revealed a sad decline which led to the captivity of the Jews and later the death of Jesus.²

In the modern church, history is again repeating itself. For some reason the church is losing many of its young people. Has modern Israel failed to teach its juniors? Has it failed to notice that times are changing? Perhaps it has failed to include the juniors so that they can benefit and participate in worship. Some suggest that society has pampered the children, and wonder if the church has done the same.³

¹ Pss 78:37-39; 106:34-36.

² Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), p. 45.

³ R. Curtis Barger, The Junior Leader (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1975), p. 20.

Many church sermons are presented for adults only because some preachers feel that children cannot understand. But Ellen G. White points out that juniors are important and that they can understand.

Children of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners and of the way of salvation through Christ. Ministers are generally too indifferent to the salvation of children and are not as personal as they should be. Golden opportunities to impress the minds of children frequently pass unimproved.¹ (Emphasis supplied.)

White makes it clear that the juniors will have no problem understanding personal religion. However problems can develop if the subject is not presented properly. Many opportunities to instruct the children have been missed because sermons have been presented that have had no interest for them. On most days, as the sermon begins, the pencils and the reading books will come out because experience has told the children that the sermon to follow is for adults only and is boring for children. Ministers have failed to realize that the problem could be in the method of sermon presentation which is used. Children learn much more from experience than they would gain at the cognitive level.²

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 1:400. Note: All emphasis in quotations is that of the original author, except where otherwise stated.

²William H. Williams, "Children's Sermons are not the Answer," Circuit Rider (September 1982), p. 12, cited by Thomas Ashton Dunbar, The Children's Sermon (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1984), p. 3.

Ministry to Children in the Old Testament

As the Old Testament is opened one important fact stands out. There appears to be no schooling system as in modern times. There was no way to gain an education. There was no way to fill young minds with facts. But this view-point reflects a modern misunderstanding. Education then had more to it than facts. Education was life and how to live it. This was seen in the first relationship God gave to the world: the family.

The Family

The system of education established in Eden centered in the family. Adam was "the son of God" (Luke 3:38), and it was from their Father that the children of the Highest received instruction. Theirs, in the truest sense, was the family school.¹

After the fall of Adam and Eve, Jesus took the place of His Father as the instructor to the human race. Thus God's plan of education was still to be carried on with the parents as Christ's representatives. The family was still the school and the parents were the teachers.² But sadly this ideal was not always followed. When it was, the high points in Israel's history were reached. This was a holy, loving community that reflected God's character to the world lost in sin.³ But the passage of time reveals that only for broken periods was such a loving community established. There are glimpses of this in the days of the patriarchs. The difference is seen between those who dwelt among the fields and hills

¹White, Education, p. 33.

²Ibid.

³Lawrence Richards, A Theology of Children's Ministry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1983), p. 18.

and those who departed from God's plan and built cities.¹ Why did this happen? Perhaps the answer can be found in the fact that the family education system failed and the children were no longer instructed about God. Many forgot that the family was both a school and a church. But the Old Testament does not reveal what could have happened if each family and community had practised God's ideals. As Israel came out of Egypt, time and distance were used by God to help the people forget some events of the past and to change their life style in preparation for the important work of being an example to the world, of demonstrating what God could do for His people. Therefore God suggested that they should remember these words:

. . . love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.²

The same message is given by White:

From the earliest times the faithful in Israel had given much care to the education of the youth. The Lord had directed that even from babyhood the children should be taught of His goodness and His greatness, especially as revealed in His law, and shown in the history of Israel. Song and prayer and lessons from the Scriptures were to be adapted to the opening mind. Fathers and mothers were to instruct their children that the law of God is an expression of His character, and that as they received the principles of the law into the heart, the image of God was traced on mind and soul. Much of the teaching was oral; but the youth also learned to read the Hebrew writings;

¹White, Education, p. 33.

²Deut 6:5-7. All scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

and the parchment rolls of the Old Testament Scriptures were open to their study.¹ (Emphasis supplied.)

Thus there is no doubt that the parents were the teachers who first had to apply the lesson to their own life. Each parent then had the responsibility to see that his child understood. This was not to be an event that happened on occasions, but was to be a daily task woven into every action of the day. The Old Testament gives no hint of public schools for children. These were a much later development. The only place of learning was the family unit and the community into which the family fitted.

The Community

This community was shaped by laws which covered every aspect of life. There were civil laws, health laws, and moral laws.² Thus we see that "the moral and religious training of the people from child-hood up was regarded. . . as one of the principal objects of life."³ This is born out in Exodus: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (19:6). And for this same reason He chose Abraham. "For I know that he will command his children and his household after him" (Gen 18:19). Thus God helped the family living in the community, by giving them laws for worship which revolved around a weekly cycle. So each week blessing was brought by the Sabbath with its freedom from work

¹Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 69.

²Exod 20:1-17; Deut 17:11; 29:29.

³Kaufmann Kohler, "Education," The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Ktav Publishing House, n.d.,) 5:42.

and a time for the community to assemble. This was the day in which the family thought of God as their creator, and a day in which they were reminded that God was their redeemer from poverty, slavery, and sin. Thus the weekly cycle helped the family with its nurturing programme, by prompting discussions about God and creation. Entwined in this cycle was the yearly calendar and the festivals. All the festivals and ceremonies had for their object the inculcation of religious and moral lessons for the children.¹

Three times a year every male over twelve had to present himself at the temple.² However, it was made a family occasion when everyone went together. So for about a month each year parents were given an ideal opportunity to tell their children about their past history and teach practical lessons along the road. This seems to be the key which explains the success of the Jewish home. The children participated in their worship. They were not compelled to sit for long periods listening to sermons for adults. But each family relived their past history. This is highlighted in the passover ceremony and the feast of tabernacles. Even to this present day the Jews still involve the children in the passover. They eat bitter herbs, break wafers and ask questions. But the purpose is to remind them of the tense moments in Egypt, where each family sacrificed its lamb and sprinkled the blood on the door post. As this was done in later years the whole family remembered the past history. Thus God had this plan so that the past would not be forgotten:

¹ Ibid.

² Lev 23; White, Desire of Ages, p. 75.

And when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, "What do you mean by this service?" you shall say, "It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt."¹

The children learned from the repetition and visualization of the ceremony. The feast of tabernacles also was a time when the whole family lived outdoors in booths made of woven branches to remind them that their forefathers lived in booths as they came out of Egypt.² What an opportunity this gave to the parents. They had a whole week in which to repeat and remind the children of the patriarchal stories and the mighty acts of God in their behalf. Thus this repetition reaffirmed their identity as God's people and reminded them that He only was their Redeemer who brought them out of Egypt. This gave character to their community and moulded the minds of the children.

Aaron Demsky lists three main periods in the development of national religious institutions and all of these have one central point--WORSHIP.³ During the patriarchal period Abraham built altars to the Lord (Gen 12). These influenced his own children as well as others who passed by and saw the altars which were in contrast to the groves of the heathen nations.⁴ Thus Abraham's household was a powerful argument for God. The family and worship would have been enough to keep the community as a solid nurture centre

¹Exod 12:25-27 (RSV).

²Lev 23:43.

³Aaron Demsky, "Education," Judaica Encyclopedia (Jerusalem: Ketes Publishing House, 1972), 6:383.

⁴Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1954), p. 128.

but many families failed to keep up with nurture for the children. Therefore "in pity for their weakness God gave them a symbol of His presence."¹ The sanctuary was to be His dwelling place (Exod 25:8). Thus a system was started which would aid the family in nurture as now a regular priesthood operated a service in which all could participate. This participation was enlarged as the sanctuary was set up in Jerusalem during the developments of the kingdom period. Now there were professional priests and prophets. But in the third period of Babylonian exile quite a change took place. The scribes began to explain the law and the synagogue developed as a training system. Thus a public teaching system started. But the main object of life was still the worship of God. Thus the whole family would go up to the temple together and the children would join in the ceremonies. But beside the temple and its pageantry the family still had other aids to help in training their children. God gave them memorials.

These memorials were erected at important places so that the children would ask, "What mean ye by these stones?" (Josh 4:6). This gave opportunity to repeat more history so that the children would understand more about their loving God. In the home the parents had more reminders for the children. Texts were written on the door posts and on the gates (Deut 6:9; 11:20). Their whole life in the home and in the community was completely entwined with worship and God. This was not in a preaching context but a living relationship. Thus it was a joy to sing Psalms and praise God while

¹White, Education, p. 135.

they worked together with their parents learning to do daily tasks and sharing life together.¹

Thus the success of the Jewish family is seen in the amount of participation and involvement which the children had in living and in worship. Some important examples are Samuel and Moses, both of whom left home before reaching their teens.² But their lives reflected the knowledge of God which they learnt while living with their families. White speaks of Moses in these words:

The lessons learned at his mother's side could not be forgotten. They were a shield from the pride, the infidelity, and the vice that flourished amid the splendor of the court.

How far-reaching in its results was the influence of the one Hebrew woman, and she an exile and a slave!³

Ministry Principles in Proverbs

Proverbs expresses many general pedagogic principles that aid in the family nurture of children.⁴ One of the most important rules is to listen to instruction: "My son, Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov 1:8). And for nurture to be successful there must be some positive goals: "Then shalt thou understand righteousness and judgment" (Prov 2:20). But to do this the child needs a model to follow, and usually it will be his father: "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Prov 20:7). "My son give me thine

¹Richards, p. 25.

²Exod 2:10; 1 Sam 2:18.

³White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 244.

⁴Kohler, "Education," The Jewish Encyclopedia, 5:42.

heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Prov 23:26). But none of the above will be without discipline: "My son despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction; For who the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Prov 3:11-12). But the context of ministry in Proverbs is still the home and its influence. In the child will be seen the example and discipline given by the parents. But yet Proverbs clearly shows that, if a personal relationship with God is going to last, the young person must make his own decisions. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; . . . In all thy ways acknowledge him" (Prov 3:5-6).

Ministry Development in Schools

God's first plan was that the home should always be the school, and the parents should be the teachers. But the community and the family did not keep to this plan, therefore God had to use other means to try and save his people, so he gave them the school of the prophets.

Wherever in Israel God's plan of education was carried into effect, its result testified of its Author. But in very many households the training appointed by Heaven, and the characters thus developed, were alike rare. God's plan was but partially and imperfectly fulfilled. By unbelief and by disregard of the Lord's directions, the Israelites surrounded themselves with temptations that few had power to resist. . . .

To meet this growing evil, God provided other agencies as an aid to parents in the work of education. . . .
 . . . Samuel, by¹ the Lord's direction, established the school of the prophets.

Thus for a time the school of the prophets served as a barrier against the wide spread corruption.² Two schools opened, and others

¹White, Education, pp. 45-46.

²Ibid., p. 46.

came later.¹ Some of the consequences of these schools were not welcomed by Israel for

the discipline and training that God appointed for Israel would cause them, in all their ways of life, to differ from the people of other nations. This peculiarity, which should have been regarded as a special privilege and blessing, was to them unwelcome. The simplicity and self-restraint essential to the highest development they sought to exchange for the pomp and self-indulgence of heathen peoples. To be "like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5) was their ambition. God's plan of education was set aside, His authority disowned.²

The picture grows blacker as New Testament times are approached because "the children of Christians were normally sent to the pagan Greek or Roman schools that served children in that society."³ The curriculum included the study of pagan poets who dealt with love, hate, and the sins of the gods. No Christian in good conscience would teach in these schools, yet they rationalized sending their children because there was nowhere else to send them. A close look reveals a great difference in philosophy from the Jewish standard. "While to the Greek, man was the measure of all things, to the Jew, God always came first."⁴

The only other place of learning was the synagogue. These developed as the Jews were taken captive and also as the distance to journey to the temple became too long. Therefore places of Sabbath worship were built in the villages. During the week these synagogues were used as schools. The children would be instructed in the law and in copying the scripture. Unfortunately, the Rabbis had

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 49-50.

³Richards, p. 37.

⁴G. H. Blackburn, "The Aims of Education in Ancient Israel," Journal of Christian Education 9 (1966): 54.

prescribed rigid rules for every act of life, so that the "requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision."¹

Ministry to Children in the New Testament

Into this picture came Jesus, and His reaction showed that in the Jewish community the importance of ministry to children had, in part, been forgotten. It was true that children could be brought to a Rabbi to have him say a blessing for them.² But the community had largely forgotten practical home training for the children. Thus Jesus showed that children can understand the kingdom of God when he said, "do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14, NIV). Children need to be ministered to. They can teach many lessons, and Jesus cited one: "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15, NIV). Their faith, trust, and understanding may cause amazement but in all simplicity they can come to Jesus. Thus White's statement becomes very revealing: "If properly instructed very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners and of the way of salvation through Christ."³ And "in the closing scenes of this earth's history many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power."⁴

¹White, Desire of Ages, p. 84.

²Ibid., p. 511.

³Ellen G. White, Counsels on Sabbath School Work (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1938), pp. 79-80.

⁴Idem, Counsels To Teachers (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1913), pp. 166-67.

The New Testament Community

In the New Testament community there is still a place for the family. The first glimpse is found in Acts.

And they continued steadfast in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. (Acts 2:42-47)

This reveals two things about the community life of the young church: (1) the church met in home-sized groups; and (2) they shared with each other. Thus the children would be included in their ministry. In the writings of Paul we find that the community is still working together, and the expressions used reveal that this church still had a love for children.

Like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much . . . that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his children (1 Thess 2:7-11, NIV).

Paul used the family relationship to portray how he felt about these people. By this word picture we see the family as a warm loving relationship. Thus in the New Testament can be seen reflections of the Old Testament community. It is a picture of Christian ministry to children and to the whole family. There is no question that participation by children was in the OT system. But it is not so clear that this participation took place in the NT after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Participation was the key-stone to Israel's survival as a holy people. And it does explain their existence today. They used God's method in worship and in the home training, and that method revolved around participation.

Thus in Adventism today the question must be asked: Are God's children being educated in God's way both in the home and in

the community? Or is there a need to minister to forgotten juniors, and to "feed my lambs"? "The Lord is not glorified when the children are neglected and passed by."¹ R. W. Menninger says it this way:

To put it bluntly, our adult society tends to regard that adolescent as an unfortunate inconvenience, a sort of bad moment that we half wish would go away . . . a kind of incidental way station in life which will surely pass if we wait long enough, or hold our breath, or look the other way.²

Perhaps God has given us a few clues on how to find the answer in ministry for juniors. "The children had a part in doing as well as listening and in this way they soon felt at home."³ Here is indicated an area of research for this project. Do the juniors participate in worship?

Other Religious Writers

In writing about the training of Jewish children G. H. Blackburn noted that for a boy to be involved in worship two things would happen: (1) he would participate; and (2) he would be told what the festivals meant.⁴ Thus he had two opportunities to learn. This type of religious education had great advantages:

It would be very easy from some points of view to criticize Jewish education. It was not perfect. It was in many respects narrow. It neglected culture and was exclusively religious . . . Nevertheless Jewish education succeeded. . . Spartan, Athens, Rome failed.⁵

¹White, Sabbath School Work, p. 77.

²R. W. Menninger, "Adolescence for Adults," Blue Cross, 22:5; cited by Barger, p. 21.

³White, Testimonies, 6:106. Note: The context refers to camp meetings.

⁴Blackburn, p. 51.

⁵Ibid., p. 55.

Thus, although there may be short-comings compared with today's standard, Israel's religious belief kept the community together.

A Methodist educator shows that there are two things to be done to help children with worship: (1) if children cannot participate in worship, it may be necessary to change the style of worship; and (2) we must learn to communicate more effectively to children.¹

This may also indicate some of the areas that need to be looked at in the Seventh-day Adventist Church during this project.

Miriam Wood expresses clearly the thoughts of some children:

My parents never will understand me! We can't communicate on any subject, so why try? They're hopelessly behind the times and won't make any effort to see that the world has changed.²

Is this true? Have adults closed their minds? White would indicate that perhaps this is so. "Very much has been lost to the cause of the truth by a lack of attention to the spiritual needs of the youth."³ It is therefore necessary to find just how much the younger generation and especially the juniors understand during church sermons.

¹Dunbar, pp. 4, 91.

²Miriam Wood, The Art of Living When You're Young (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1964), p. 9.

³Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1948), p. 207.

Conclusion

The strength of the Jewish community was found in the family and in participation. The high points of Israel's history were reached when God's people followed this plan of working together. Thus religion and worship were the centre of living as the children acted out the ceremonies with their parents. This strength of the family carried in part into the New Testament church. But the question that is waiting for an answer today is: Has the church forgotten juniors during the church sermon? The answer could be given by following God's plan of participation with the children, both at home and at church worship.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES

Introduction

Nothing is static in this world. All people grow older and change. The minds of children are yet undeveloped both physically and intellectually. As they grow the environment will affect them physically, mentally, and socially. These effects are seen as the experience of children and adolescents. As they mature, children will show great transformation in their physical, cognitive and social capabilities. All will go through this natural process of growth as they develop into adults.

It must be remembered that what will be understood by adults will not necessarily have the same meaning to a child of twelve. Thus the importance of this chapter and its relationship to the overall project is that at no time can a preacher or teacher assume that all will understand or give the same meaning to what is being said. This is so because they are at different levels of understanding and growth.

This study therefore hinges on research of this growth process by such people as Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and James Fowler. They have produced studies in stage theories of development, each viewed from a specialized interest. When put together and compared, these theories give the relative

capabilities and expected development of a person at any age. This project is concerned with children aged nine to twelve and how their abilities influence the type of communication that a person must employ in order to teach them.

Erikson--Emotional Development

Erikson has suggested a useful framework for understanding how people develop emotionally from birth to death. It is called the "eight ages of man."¹ At each stage there is a central issue or crisis which must be resolved. In these stages Erikson balances a positive trait against a negative trait as either of them is a possibility for development. In each case how the person meets the challenge facing him will affect how he meets the issue of the next stage.

During years 3-6 the child chooses either the path of initiative or the path of guilt.² This is the time in which the child learns to use his body in new activities, such as peddling a tricycle, drawing, cutting, and pasting, etc. If a child is successful and is encouraged, his development will be positive. But if he is not allowed to attempt such activities or is criticised for his clumsy efforts he may develop feelings of guilt or inferiority.

¹Erikson's "eight ages of man" are: (1) basic trust versus mistrust; (2) autonomy versus shame, doubt; (3) initiative versus guilt; (4) industry versus inferiority; (5) identity versus role confusion; (6) intimacy versus isolation; (7) generativity versus stagnation; (8) integrity versus despair. Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 239-66.

²Ibid., p. 246.

In this stage the child uses initiative as he faces each crisis. The crisis is often beset with fumbling and fear, but as it is resolved the child seems to "grow together" both in his person and in his body. "He appears 'more himself,' more loving, relaxed and brighter in his judgment, more activated and activating. He is in free possession of a surplus of energy."¹ This permits him to forget failures and move on to the next conquest, even if it does seem uncertain or dangerous. But the danger of this stage is a sense of guilt concerning the goals contemplated or not reached.

Another category in Erikson's "eight ages" occurs during the years 6-12. The issue faced is "industry versus inferiority."² In this stage a child will attempt many things considerably greater than those of the previous stage. Cognitively he develops new abilities just short of abstract thinking. If criticized for attempting new things the child will develop an inferiority complex. This stage is therefore the child's "entrance into life" because he now learns to win recognition by producing things.³ He develops a sense of industry by adjusting to the laws of the tool world. Play is not now as important as the production of some product or success in a task. The child is now taught by the steady attention he gains from diligent work. It is at this stage that all children receive instruction from their parents and friends about how to work.

Piaget--Cognitive Development

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget studied the intellectual or cognitive abilities of people. From his many observations of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 250.

³Ibid.

thousands of people he concluded that a person during development will go through four stages.¹ This cognitive development is all part of growing up or maturing. Everyone goes through these stages but the length of time in each stage varies with the experience of the individual. Thus when a minister recognizes these stages he can adjust his style to suit the needs of the children.

Piaget's third stage mirrors the juniors in this project. He suggests it can be found in children from age 7-12.² During this stage at eleven or twelve, most develop skills towards reason and abstract thought. The world is not seen as nearly so self-centred. This child will now mix and cooperate with other children and adults.

Since he is able to reason between alternatives he is capable of changing opinions and of behaving in different ways for different situations. He no longer needs to see and handle objects to know that they exist, but can visualize them in his mind. Because he is able to read he has the ability to think in sequence and to give attention for longer periods of time. Stories are a delight in this stage. Rules are another important area of concern, for this child is able to understand why rules are necessary and is capable of making and changing rules to fit the need. This type of child is able to solve problems involving concrete objects and events but he is unable to solve issues that are hypothetical or purely verbal.³

¹Douglas Graham, Moral Learning and Development (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), p. 193.

²Ronald Duska and Mariellen Whelan, Moral Development (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), pp. 10-11.

³Barry J. Wadsworth, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development (New York: David McKay, 1971), p. 90.

Kohlberg--Moral Development

Although Piaget did research on moral development the best-known researcher in this field is Lawrence Kohlberg. He presents a number of moral dilemmas for people to gauge the stage of moral development they have reached.¹ Kohlberg identified six stages with two occurring at each of three distinct levels.

Level 1. The Pre-Conventional Level

Stage 1. The punishment and obedience orientation

Stage 2. The instrumental relativist orientation

Level 2. The Conventional Level

Stage 3. The interpersonal concordance of "good boy--nice-girl" orientation

Stage 4. The law and order orientation

Level 3. Post-Conventional, Autonomous, or Principled Level

Stage 5. The social-contract legalistic orientation

Stage 6. The universal ethical principle orientation

In his study he found that each person must progress through the stages in order.² But it has been found that most adults do not go past stage four with a few developing to stage five and six.³

The juniors in this project would be at about stage four. They have orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behaviour consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake. But to aid in the juniors' development Duska and Whelan suggest that

¹Duska and Whelan, pp. 42-44.

²Ibid., p. 47.

³Ibid., p. 102.

. . . empathy and mutual respect should be the focus of moral education programmes for young children, since it is the ability to understand from another's perspective that enables them to participate more fully in the family, school and peer communities. It is this function, the developing of empathy by stimulating the child to put himself in another's position, that Kohlberg has found to be the most important contribution of the family to moral development.¹

Thus the "contribution of the family" in helping the child to think of others highlights one of the themes in this project--the family worshipping and doing other things together.

Fowler--Faith

More recently, Fowler has addressed the same concerns as Piaget and Kohlberg. His study has been to look at the process of faith development and to determine which characteristics are universal to all people. He has discovered that all have faith.² Fowler has found six stages in faith development. He claims that all must pass through each stage.³

Stage One. "Intuitive-Projective" faith (three to seven years). This is the stage of first self-awareness. The "self-aware child" is egocentric as regards the perspectives of others but has an extremely productive imagination.⁴

Stage Two. "Mythic-Literal" faith (seven to eleven or twelve years). In this "stage the person begins to take on for himself the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to his community."⁵

¹Ibid., p. 107.

²James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 45.

³Ibid., p. 113.

⁴Ibid., p. 133.

⁵Ibid., p. 149.

Stage Three. "Synthetic-Conventional" faith (eleven or twelve to seventeen years). The interest of this person now extends beyond the family to school, peers, and religion. "Faith must provide a coherent orientation in the midst of that more complex and diverse range of involvements."¹

Stage Four. "Individual-Reflective" faith. This stage is "particularly critical for it is in this transition that the late adolescent or adult must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes."²

Stage Five. "Paradoxical-Consolidative" faith (thirty is a minimal age). This stage is unusual before mid-life because it involves a critical recognition of one's "deeper-self." Thus the past is "reworked" and "reclaimed."³

Stage Six. "Universalizing" faith (few people enter this stage). This would be a "self-actualized person" or a "fully functioning human being." Some examples would be "Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Teresa of Calcutta."⁴

But of particular interest to this project is Fowler's description of the faith stage typical of children from age seven to twelve. Most children at this age would be in Fowler's second stage—the "mythic-literal" stage. At this stage "beliefs are appropriated with literal interpretations, as are moral rules and

¹Ibid., p. 172.

²Ibid., p. 182.

³Ibid., p. 197.

⁴Ibid., p. 201.

attitudes. Symbols are taken as one-dimensional and literal in meaning."¹ Thus it is important that faith be presented in a simple style.

In no way is it sufficient for ministers to tell children cute moralistic stories, or preach adult sermons reduced to a child's level. The former runs the danger of substituting good behaviour for the good news and the latter overlooks the fact that children live in their own world, and cannot be considered miniature adults.²

Therefore the preacher must look carefully at what constitutes effective communicating with children. Children need worship appropriate to their age because their concerns, their levels of understanding are different. Flemming has shown that juniors may not express or show that they are even listening.³ But the preacher needs to keep in mind that children learn ten per cent from what they hear, thirty per cent from what they see and sixty per cent from what they do.⁴

So this reveals the central issues of this project. How much do children learn from sermons? Is there enough time spent in helping them? Does the church make any attempt to include the whole family in practical worship? Both the church and the home need to re-evaluate exactly what is being done for the juniors. Such an attempt will be looked at in the next chapter.

¹Ibid., p. 149.

²Richard Coleman, Gospel Telling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 1982), p. vii.

³A. J. Flemming, "The Optimum Age and Readiness for Baptism of Adolescents," (M.A. project report, Andrews University, Avondale Campus, 1984), p. 76.

⁴Coleman, p. 16.

CHAPTER IV
PREPARATION AND ORGANIZATION
OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

For years the present writer has been concerned about sermons. Are they helping the whole congregation? Perhaps some are endured because of loyalty. How much is really understood in the Sabbath morning sermon by the adults and, in particular, by the juniors? The usual practise has been to give the children a story before the sermon starts. After this it is time to take out books and pencils. Thus, over the years Seventh-day Adventist preachers have built up a double problem which needs to be addressed: (1) the children have been educated to listen only for the children's story, and (2) the sermon has been prepared with little thought for children.

Fortunately, God has given the Seventh-day Adventist preacher some good principles to follow.

1. The sermon needs to be plain and simple so the humblest mind can comprehend¹
2. "Too much talk will lead them to loathe even spiritual instruction."²

¹E. G. White, Testimonies, 3:214.

²Ibid., 2:420.

3. "It requires tact and wisdom and human love and sanctified affection for the precious lambs of the flock."¹
4. "You must win their affection, if you would impress religious truth upon their heart."²

This immediately alerts the thinking person to see the large field that is open to a researcher. As there are many areas (e.g., child-centred worship as contrasted with adult-centred worship) that could be studied in an endeavour to find ways that would help juniors to understand and take part in worship, this project will deal with only four areas.

1. The preparation needed before the sermon
2. The types of sermons to be presented
3. The language used in the sermons
4. The presentation of the sermons

Preparation Before the Sermons

After the presentation of the first sermon, White's advice was followed.³ Thus the present writer negotiated to help in the junior Sabbath School. Arrangements were made to take a ten-minute feature each Sabbath morning. The Sabbath School leader was delighted because he had been looking for somebody to help each Sabbath.

The purpose was to give opportunity to build up a relationship with the juniors. This was to "win their affection" so that they would be happy to discuss the project sermons.

¹Idem, Sabbath School Work, p. 81.

²Ibid., p. 177.

³See p. 27, nn. 1 and 2 and p. 28, nn. 1 and 2.

For the first quarter "salt" was the topic for the ten minute segments. Although the juniors were unaware of the fact, they were being "schooled" to present the last sermon for this project. Therefore each week one characteristic of salt was discussed. During some segments physical demonstrations were used. One demonstration showed that an electric current from a 6-volt battery would pass through water after salt was added. These periods built up a friendship between the juniors and the writer. During the second quarter the writer combined with the Sabbath School leader to present some slides on New Guinea. This was not mere entertainment, for the slides were used to help facilitate a discussion on the needs of others and the importance of missions.

Types of Sermons Presented

Four types of sermons were selected for presentation to the Dora Creek church.

A devotional sermon. This was taken from the background of the author's experience with mission boats and aircraft. The theme was the danger of drifting away from Jesus. The trouble with drifting is that nobody is aware of the problem, unless some special instruments are used. So in the Christian life people can become "castaways" because they failed to check in which direction they are travelling spiritually. David found that his feet had begun to slip (Ps 73:2) but he was saved by checking at the sanctuary (vs. 17). However this checking needs to be done in times of peace because it is too late to take a sighting during a storm.

A modern-parable sermon. Two professionally iced birthday cakes were used. One was a fruit cake, while the other was only a cake tin with icing over it. This was to help all see that life has no meaning if it is only pretence and outward show. The test of a good cake is the taste and not its looks. Likewise the test of a good Christian is a personal love for Jesus as well as the actions which people see.

"Jesus as a person" sermon. Can we really know what He was like? This sermon came from the experience of some who had grown up in churches with a stained-glass window picture of Jesus behind the pulpit. As they heard the stories of Jesus they often perceived that the stories did not agree with the picture in the window. In the picture Jesus had no muscles and his hands were "lily-white." But the Bible stories portrayed him as being a real man. Thus the picture on the wall was different from the picture in the Bible. Therefore, this sermon was helping the audience to correct the picture of Jesus in their minds. How tall was Jesus? What colour were his eyes? What about his voice? Did Jesus have any muscles?

Participative sermon. The juniors from the Sabbath School helped present a sermon on "Salt." The sermon was based on Matt 5:13. "Ye are the salt of the earth." It was built upon different experiments that had taken place in the Junior Sabbath School. Salt adds "flavour", it "preserves"; it "purifies"; it "controls"; it "helps"; it "gives strength"; and conducts electricity when placed in water. Therefore these characteristics portray how a Christian should live in this world.

The Language of the Sermons

From past experience it was assumed that, if the wording of the sermon was simple, the whole congregation would understand the message. However this assumption had never been tested. Therefore, for this project a trained school teacher who was a church elder, was commissioned to critique all the sermons for their content and use of words. His task was divided into a number of areas. First, he was to check that all the language used was simple enough for juniors to understand. Was the sermon expressed in simple English with a vocabulary level to suit nine to twelve year old juniors? Secondly, he had to check that the sermon was expressed in concrete terms without unexplained abstract concepts.

The Presentation of the Sermons

To help with the assessment, observers were placed in the congregation. These people were given an outline of the sermon. Their task was to watch the juniors and to mark on the sermon outline any points of high or low attention. This would be gauged by a number of criteria.

1. Talking to friends
2. Reading books or drawing
3. Restlessness
4. Any signs of real interest e.g. taking notes, opening Bibles or watching the preacher.

The observers included the following people: an ordained pastor, a high school teacher, a fourth year theology student, a second year teacher trainee and the researcher's wife.

The Questionnaire¹

The questionnaire was given to all who were present at the first sermon on June 1, 1985. Enough time was given for the survey to be filled out and returned to the deacons as each member of the audience left the church. The purpose of the survey was to find answers for the following areas:

1. How long should a sermon be and what should be the major topics
2. How do children relate to the worship period both at church and home
3. The relationship between the child and the pastor

The survey consisted of seventeen questions. The first sixteen were multiple choice which were to be answered by ticking the appropriate box. The last two questions were asking for a short written comment.

Discussion with the Juniors

These discussions took place at different times. Some were held after the sermon, and some during a ten minute segment allotted during the Junior Sabbath School time. Their purpose was to find two main things:

- (1) Did they understand the meaning of the sermon? and
- (2) Was the topic of interest to them?

After the first sermon the juniors went out to their Sabbath School room for a discussion on the sermon. The first topic for discussion was: What did today's sermon say to you? The aim was to find out how much of the sermon was really retained. Their recall at first was the illustration but on further questioning they had

¹See appendix 1.

no problem in giving the meaning of each point. The second question was: What do you think of preachers? They answered that they were boring. Then followed an expansion of what they considered to be boring and why this was so. The basic problem discovered was that most preachers forget that juniors are in their congregation, nor do they express the sermon in a way which will hold their attention. Thirdly, the juniors were asked how they felt about church worship. They felt that the sermon hour was not really for them but it had to be endured because "mum" and "dad" made them sit it out.

CHAPTER V

IMPLEMENTATION : THE SERMONS

The author had a number of ideas that could be used for this ministry project. Therefore between December 1984 and March 1985, negotiations took place with the Department of Theology at Avondale College and this project on "Sermon Ministry for Juniors" was accepted. In this project an attempt would be made to determine which style of sermon would be most helpful to juniors in their worship.

Once approval was received, the Pastor of Dora Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church was approached to ascertain his personal feelings and to discover if this project could fit into his plans for the 1985 church year. He was glad to help and suggested that a written request be presented to his church board. While the board agreed in principle to the project, some members asked for more details before final approval was given in April 1985. In the same month the church Pastor allotted the following dates for the presentation of the sermons: June 1, June 15, July 20, and August 24.

Next an approach was made to different people to evaluate the sermon. A church elder was asked to do two things. First, he had to ascertain whether only simple words were used so that children of nine to twelve would understand. Secondly, he was asked to evaluate the presentation to make sure that it was simply

presented and that it would not be difficult for juniors to follow each point. A retired minister was then asked to note how the juniors reacted during the sermon. The criteria suggested for gauging their interest were: talking to friends, reading or drawing, restlessness, or signs of real interest, such as opening their Bibles. Three others also were requested to do the same as the Pastor. These were a fourth year theology student, a second year teacher-trainee, and the researcher's wife.

Beside these observers a questionnaire was constructed to help ascertain the real facts.¹ However, it must be remembered that parents answering the questionnaire may put down what their ideal is for the children rather than the real facts. One example of this is Question 13. The result from adults indicates that 26 percent of the children say preachers are boring, but in discussion with the juniors 100 percent thought them boring!

The survey revealed that 27 percent of adults preferred a Bible study style sermon, 22 percent preferred prophecy, 20 percent preferred a devotional sermon, 18 percent preferred a youth sermon and 13 percent preferred a children's sermon. But according to the parents 46 percent of the children do not really learn much from the sermon, because the children feel that the worship service is not really for them.

The Pastor does not get a bad rating in the home. Half of the families do talk about the pastor; 37 percent enjoy his good stories, but sadly, 26 percent talk about him because he is boring.

¹See pp. 31-32 above and appendix 2.

The church would like to see the youth participate more in Dora Creek worship. But it may be needful for the officers of Dora Creek church to think of methods of training the youth so that they can implement the desire of the church to include this group more in worship.

June 1 : "Drifting"

Simplicity of Style

The vocabulary used was at a level suitable for juniors. However the preacher used some expressions which were too juvenile. This occurred mainly in the game "Let's Pretend." In an effort to keep everyone's attention, some words and phrases were used which would have been more appropriate for the primary Sabbath School. Unfortunately, the observers failed to record the exact words but the writer agreed with their assessment.

Concreteness of Language

The sermon was based on the writer's personal experience with navigation. This was linked with the parable of the sower. An abstract concept was introduced that all persons are like soil. But the game of "Let's Pretend" was used to help them understand. In this game all were told to imagine that they were sitting on a mountain with a lake at its base. Jesus was standing part way down the mountain. While they were listening to him they ran sand and gravel through their fingers. At this point the attention of the whole congregation was gained and they were waiting for the next instruction. But it is important to remember children have all

handled seeds and understand what "growth" means. Therefore they could interpret for themselves what it meant to be good soil.

A Special Test

Although this project was aimed at the nine to twelve year-old juniors, a test was also devised to see how the lower age group would listen. A six year old boy who had never been at Dora Creek church before and who had never heard the present writer was brought by his mother. They sat in the third row from the front of the church just in front of the pulpit.

During the sermon the writer was able to watch his interest and when it wained the writer was able to get it back by making sure the illustrations were expressed in the most catching manner and that all large words such as "navigation" and "drifting" were explained.

Observers' Comments

The high school teacher (who was seated on the platform).

"You got the children to use imagination - most watched."

The pastor in front section of congregation. "During the children's story there was good concentration but the primary children automatically shut-off after their story. Their attention was regained with your introduction story. However, you lost the primary children ten minutes before the end, but picked them up again with the final story. But with the juniors they maintained their interest."

Observer in centre back of church. "There was good attention in the first half, but low attention when a group of texts was used."

But you kept the juniors' attention with some medium interest and rising to high at the finish."

Teacher at the back of the church. "As soon as the children's story was finished the primaries and some juniors took out books and papers. This appeared to be from habit. There was good attention with the illustration on navigation. Some juniors took out their Bibles when encouraged by the preacher. One junior even told his father about an error in an illustration."

Issues Raised by Observers

The children automatically shut off after their story. This had been noticed during previous weeks of personal observation. This was encouraged by the local pastor who gave the children a picture to colour after their story was finished.¹

The juniors' attention dropped when a group of texts were used. The sermon had eight Bible texts but six were closely linked together in the middle of the sermon. It was noticed that it was much harder to keep the juniors' attention during the reading of the linked texts especially when two references were used to give a variation on one point. The two texts were Gal 2:20 and 2 Cor 12:9. This led to a further extension of the project in later sermons. No two texts were presented to support the same point and different

¹This project is not suggesting the pastor was doing wrong. There is no right or wrong here. All that is being looked at is the attention the children give to the sermon. Colouring is certainly much better than noise.

translations were used.¹ But the results were still much the same. Juniors seem to lose interest as soon as a text is read.

The children opened their Bibles when encouraged by the preacher but some became discouraged because insufficient time was given for the juniors to find the texts. This also led to a further extension in this project. Time was allowed before the texts were read. Thus more juniors continued to use their Bibles.

Discussion with Juniors

From a discussion with the juniors it was discovered that they had understood the sermon. Their main reason for understanding was that the illustrations showed what the Bible was saying. They expressed their preference for "real-life" sermons which took in "every-day happenings." This fits with the findings of Chapter III as children in this age group cannot understand abstract ideas.

The Questionnaire

The adult survey filled in after this sermon showed that 41 percent thoroughly enjoyed the sermon. A further 35 percent were happy with the sermon, while 22 percent felt it was just an ordinary presentation. But 2 percent were not happy. The dissenters may have had a point because some of the wording was a bit juvenile. This was purposely done with this sermon. Most of the words were suitable for children aged ten-to-eleven years, with some sections down to six-to-eight years. But although the age level of the vocabulary was down, only 2 percent did not like the sermon. Thus a

¹The following translations were used: King James Version and New International Version.

sermon can be presented that will interest most of the people most of the time. This suggests that the sermon can be adjusted to meet the needs of most of the family.

June 15 : "The Parable of the Cakes"

Simplicity of Style

During this sermon all words used were suitable for juniors aged nine-to-twelve years. At no time was the level lowered as in the first sermon.

Concreteness of Language

This sermon had a fundamental error in the introduction. The story that was used had an abstract meaning but juniors cannot usually understand abstract thought. The juniors felt that they did not understand what the sermon was about until after it had progressed for about five minutes. This showed a failure on the part of the preacher to realise that the opening story, although simple, was of no value to the juniors because they could not work out the abstract meaning. Later in the sermon some were able to work backwards and understand the meaning.

Added Features

During the previous sermon the juniors lost interest when a string of texts was used. Thus this sermon was structured to make sure no two texts came together in the discourse. However it was still found that once the preacher started to read, some lost

interest. This supports the finding of M. S. House that the story method may be the best for juniors.¹

Another feature for the children was for them to count the number of stories told during the sermon. This generated a side effect, when one boy produced a list of the number of times the words "Jesus," "God," and "Son" were used in the hour.

The blackboard was used in this sermon to check if it would help with maintaining attention. It was noted by the observers to be a helpful addition. They found that there was more complete attention whenever there was any action which differed from the norm, e.g., writing on the blackboard, or moving around the platform.

The Parable

The parable of the cakes helped to hold the juniors' interest. Before the sermon started the writer suggested that he needed someone to help with an illustration. The purpose, at this time, was to gain the attention of some of the smaller children and to draw them away from their pencils and books. They were told that the child who was selected, would be sitting up and taking notice of the speaker. This project was not just for the juniors alone. They were the control group. But this project is concerned with ministry to the whole family. Therefore it was important that the reaction from other members of the congregation also be recorded. The purpose of this project was sermon ministry to juniors. However,

¹M. S. House, "A Narrative Ministry to a Teenage Bible Class" (M.A. project report, Andrews University, Avondale Campus, 1984), p. 78.

the rest of the congregation could not be ignored because they make up the whole church family. One aim of this project was to minister to the whole family.

The child finally selected was a boy of six. His task was to take a slice off the two cakes that were on the table in front of the desk. But before he did this he was to select which one he would choose if it was his birthday. One cake was nicely decorated while the other was plain with only two bells on it. He selected the plain cake. This was a minor failure in the illustration because it was hoped he would select the nicer looking one. However, the failure was caused because the cake was too fancy for a boy. It would have been better if a girl had been selected.

The boy had no problem taking a slice off the plain cake but the fancy one gave him a problem. He was unable to cut the tin under the icing.

The theme of the parable was a simple presentation of salvation and Jesus. Outward show or externals will get nobody to heaven because looking nice on the outside is only sugar coating if the heart is not given to Jesus first. The Christian needs both the icing and the cake.

After the sermon, the juniors were given a piece of cake. But first they expressed their feelings about this modern parable sermon. Most of the sermon was understood and at no time were they bored. They could not remember if this sermon was a different kind to the previous one. The interval of two weeks could explain this. But at no time in any of the discussions did they suggest or notice the different style.

Some Side Effects

Unbeknown to the author a non-Adventist family was in the audience for the first time. A member had tried to explain to them the difference between legalism and faith. But this simple parable helped answer their problem.

The methods used in this sermon produced some interesting results: First, a six year old boy copied down the items from the board and gave his effort to the writer. Why did he do this? Perhaps he was beginning to say, "I can relate to you because you think about us." Secondly, another junior begged the writer to come to his school to give a Bible lesson, and thirdly, the author was asked to teach a special combined youth lesson.

Although these may be very subjective they are all saying one thing. The sermons were hitting their mark. The preacher found that children, juniors and youth now stopped and talked. No real attempt had been made to influence them individually but they were happy because they felt somebody understood and cared about them. Perhaps White reveals the reason. "You must win their affection, if you would impress religious truth upon their heart."¹

Observers' Comments

Part way through the sermon the author, in an endeavour to illustrate the foolishness of outward show, said: "Look at me--just a perfect saint." And to this one observer heard a junior reply: "He's only another cake tin."

¹White, Sabbath School Work, pp. 176-77.

Thus the second sermon showed that small children, juniors and the whole church can enjoy the worship together. This is so especially if most can understand what is being said.

July 20 : "Jesus--What Was He Like?"

Simplicity of Style

The observer felt that there were no problems in the wording of this sermon for juniors aged nine-to-twelve as the sermon stayed within their vocabulary limits.

Concreteness of Language

This sermon used familiar language which all juniors could understand. How tall was Jesus? What colour were His eyes? What about His voice? Did Jesus have any muscles? Were His hands nice and white? Where did He sleep? Everyone immediately knew the meaning of the above words as no abstract ideas were used for any of them.

Added Features

A junior was chosen to read the Scripture reading. This exercise showed that she had read it a few times at home. And she was happy to take part.

The method of presentation for this sermon was different from the other two. Only three Bible texts were used toward the end of the sermon. However the Scripture was not added for a conclusion. The whole sermon was on Jesus. But for two-thirds of the sermon the audience was answering questions from their personal knowledge of the Bible. The questions drew the whole congregation into the

worship hour. But some adults do not understand that juniors and youth need a little more time to answer. Even this may be saying something to the preacher. Adults too love to take part.

The writer was able to make the most of eye contact with this sermon and this contributed to its success. The whole sermon was geared for a final appeal. This appeal was woven around the story of Albert Schweitzer. When only a boy of eight he was playing with other boys, and all had sling-shots. Schweitzer had taken aim and was about to kill a song-bird when he heard the church bell ring. This changed his attitude and he never used the sling-shot on birds.

The juniors were then asked to come forward and ring a bell and promise the Lord that they would follow Him like Schweitzer did. The first to respond was a six year old girl and about twelve of that age group came forward. At this point the preacher should have made a different kind of appeal to divide the juniors from the primary group. But he failed to do this. Some adults also responded to a different appeal and gave their testimony. The appeal was a success and the whole church was happy with the results. But the juniors did not respond. This possibly happened because: (1) the method of appeal was too juvenile; and (2) juniors do not voice or show their opinions in public.

Observers' Comments

The observers agreed with the author that this sermon was the best for the purpose of meeting the needs of the series to that date. With the use of the blackboard, eye contact and the discussion which flowed easily from point to point. All these helped in holding

the attention of the whole congregation. Thus a well-directed discussion brings with it a warmth of feeling and belonging.

A Field for Further Study

But all this opens up a large area which this project is unable to touch, namely, the preacher and his style. This brings in so many variables: e.g., personality, and the right and wrong use of stories. A limited attempt was made to see that the sermons were presented in a vocabulary that juniors could understand, but that hardly touches the surface of style.

Strength of This Sermon

The strength of this sermon was the participation of the whole family. Even though the juniors did not respond to the final appeal they did answer some of the questions during the sermon discussion. One junior came forward and helped with an illustration for the childrens' story at the start of the sermon.

August 24 : "Salt"

Simplicity of Style

There was no problem with the wording of this sermon as the vocabulary used stayed within the juniors' comprehension limits.

Concreteness of Language

This sermon did have an abstract theme. The Christian is salt. But the problem of understanding was overcome by taking words that would give a concrete understanding to the juniors. The first word used was "flavour." Salt adds flavour to what we eat. So the Christian adds flavour to the world by his actions, his love, and

example. The next word was "preserves." In the junior Sabbath School an experiment proved what this meant. So in the sermon one junior was able to show two bottles of green beans. In one the contents were rotten while in the other plenty of salt had preserved the beans. Other words used were "purifies," "controls," "helps," and "gives strength." So the strength of this sermon was that the juniors were discussing a topic which had been worked through in their Sabbath School discussion periods.

New Features

This sermon was combining two principles. The children were sharing what they had learned in Sabbath School. Secondly, it was giving the juniors a chance to play a part in worship. The first reaction from the juniors was, No! They did not wish to help with a sermon. But with a little bit of encouragement they took their parts. Two even phoned the author to see if they could change some words in their own talk.

Observers' Comments

"Once you finished the children's story and sent them back to their seats they seemed to feel that their part of the service was over."

"You were always competing against colouring books. Perhaps the parents need to be educated into helping their children to have Bibles ready."

This later comment came from a new observer who was at Dora Creek for the first time. Perhaps he was looking at a lower age group than juniors. But this does open an important topic. What

are we really doing for our families, is it merely to educate and entertain or is it to convert?¹ White reveals that children of eight are old enough to be addressed on personal religion. This was one reason for this project, to test that children can understand religion and be interested in sermons that include them as part of the congregation.

Another observer noticed that while the juniors were helping and doing their part, there was almost complete attention.

One observer thought that the sermon lacked a conclusion. In many respects he was correct. But this was intentional. There is a danger of moralizing with children. This sermon looked at the different aspects of good salt and at each section a comparison was made between the good and the bad. Therefore the author did not wish to fall into the trap of moralizing or making all the conclusions. Surely sermons are supposed to make people think.

Admittedly, the very subjective nature of some conclusions raises even more questions. But when many adults come and give thanks for an interesting and simple presentation, the writer could be forgiven if he begins to believe that the simple message is getting through.

¹White, Testimonies 6:105.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this project has been to examine different types of sermons to determine how they help juniors. Thus child development principles have been applied to the composition and delivery of each sermon. This study has focused on children aged nine-to-twelve years of age. Sometime toward the end of this age period juniors begin to understand some abstract illustrations. They are just beginning to understand more than the concrete. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the worship period is meaningful to them. In order to accomplish this goal, a number of development theories have been studied. Each has helped the writer understand juniors better.

Erickson's writings indicate that juniors are beginning their entrance into life. They develop a sense of industry where play is not now as important as the construction of some object or success in a task.¹ Thus if parents can skillfully direct the juniors they will move into the next stage without thinking that worship has been a failure.

Piaget's theories regarding the development of cognitive abilities has been helpful.² If one is going to communicate with juniors it is essential to be aware of the cognitive limitations

¹Erikson, p. 250.

²See Wadsworth, p. 90.

that will affect such a dialogue. The simple fact is that juniors cannot understand abstract thought.

Kohlberg's research indicates that juniors would have an orientation towards authority and fixed rules.¹ Right behaviour consists of doing one's duty and showing respect for authority. Thus a good relationship between the minister and the junior will help to promote good attitudes about the church. But unfortunately the church is only one part of this total environment. The home too has a strong influence on each child. Because of his position of esteem, the minister is in a pivotal position regarding the impressions that the junior will receive. He can make the juniors' relationship to the church a healthy and enthusiastic one, or he can adversely affect this relationship.

These studies show clearly that if those who lead in worship are concerned about the inclusion of children in their services, they must be willing to learn how to communicate more effectively with children. It must be realized that many concepts of Christianity are expressed in abstract terms, which are rarely understood by children. But White reminds us that "children of eight, ten or twelve" are old enough to be addressed on personal religion.² Thus preachers must spend more time bringing their sermons down to the "every-day," "real life" terms, which will be understood by most members of the audience. Therefore a sermon in which the pastor has good stories, appropriate action, involvement of juniors, and the

¹ See Duska and Whelan, p. 107.

² White, Testimonies, 1:400.

correct use of the blackboard or other visual aid, will rate as a "good one." But if he stands still behind the desk, with no illustrations in the sermon, he has failed in his ministry to the whole church.

In beginning this project the present writer also failed to understand some of the principles of communication. This project has listed four types of sermons which the author presented, to try to find which type the juniors would like the best. But title and style are basically only abstract terms. Thus the juniors did not even notice the different styles of presentation. Therefore, it must be recorded that this part of the project was a failure because of personal ignorance. But the project did reveal the truth that plain and simple sermons can be comprehended by the humblest mind.

It is not suggested that every week there will need to be a sermon for children. But this project has proved that sermons can be presented that help the whole spectrum of the congregation.

Some more research needs to be given to the section called the "Children's Story." The present writer found that even the adults called out answers to some questions. This is perhaps the only time during the sermon when a preacher has full attention. Thus it is suggested that this section be not always placed at the beginning of the sermon. In this way the children will not be programmed to "do their own thing" once the story is over. Perhaps using the name "children's story" causes the whole problem? Why should they be selected to have a special section? Should not the regular worship have something to suit everybody? These are only questions not conclusions. The present writer does not have all the

answers. Of concern is the problem created by preachers who assume that after the children's story the children's part is now over and the rest of the time is for "mum" and "dad."

Much more study needs to be done into the home and the church working together. The children that come from homes where worship is conducted stand out from the others. God's plan needs to be re-introduced where parents train their children. So this too is an area where more research and parent training is needed. Twenty years ago the J.M.V. Society did this. But now that we have let that and the Youth Department die, who fills the gap if parents fail in their task? This is not offered in a critical way but only as an observation of what was found in the Sabbath School classes. Can the home help the church in the battle to save juniors for Christ? This method was successful in Israel's day and it ought to be successful today. God's plan seems to be that parents teach their children the way of salvation. It is an important principle invented by God for the family and the community--worshipping together as a family unit both at home and at church.

APPENDIX 1.

Ministry to Juniors : Questionnaire

MINISTRY TO JUNIORS : QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete this questionnaire and hand to the deacons as you leave today.

Please tick the questions that concern you. SOME MAY NEED MORE THAN ONE TICK.

1. MY AGE GROUP.

13-15	15-20	20-30	30-40	40+
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

2. HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE HAVE SERMONS FOR CHILDREN?

Once in 6 weeks	Once per mth.	Twice per mth.	Each week.	None.
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE HAVE SERMONS FOR YOUTH?

Once in 6 weeks.	Once per mth.	Twice per mth.	Each week.	None.
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

3. WHAT KIND OF SERMON INTERESTS YOU?

Children's.	Youth.	Prophecy.	Devotional.	Bible study.
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

4. HOW LONG SHOULD A SERMON BE?

One hour.	45 Minutes.	30 Minutes.	20 Minutes.	15 Minutes.
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

5. DURING CHURCH SERVICE TIME WOULD YOU BE HAPPY IF?--

Children help.	Youth help.	More items.	Audience participation	Don't change.
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

6. HOW DID YOU ENJOY TODAY'S SERMON?

5	4	3	2	1
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
++	+	+-	-	--

+ NON-PARENTS GO TO QUESTION 17.

7. DID YOU HAVE CHILDREN OR YOUTH AT CHURCH TODAY?

Children.	Youth.
[]	[]

8. PLEASE TICK THE AGE-GROUP(S) OF YOUR CHILDREN OR YOUTH?

1-5	6-8	9-12	13-15	16-20
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

9. DID YOUR CHILD UNDERSTAND THE SERMON TODAY?

5	4	3	2	1
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
++	+	+-	-	--

10. DOES YOUR CHILD ENJOY SINGING OUR HYMNS?

5	4	3	2	1
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
++	+	+-	-	-

11. DOES YOUR CHILD FEEL THAT HIS/HER PRESENCE IS IMPORTANT IN CHURCH WORSHIP?

5	4	3	2	1
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
++	+	+-	-	-

12. AT HOME DOES YOUR CHILD TALK ABOUT THE PREACHER?

5	4	3	2	1
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
++	+	+-	-	-

13. WHAT MADE YOUR CHILD TALK ABOUT THE PREACHER?

Joined family conversation.	Preacher boring.	Funny stories.	Good stories.	Heart touched.
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

14. WHAT INTERESTS YOUR CHILD IN FAMILY WORSHIP?

Sabbath School lesson.	Concern for others.	Bible stories.	Prayer.	Singing.
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

15. WHEN IS THE HIGHEST INTEREST?

Morning	Evening
[]	[]

16. HOW MANY TIMES PER WEEK - ON THE AVERAGE - WOULD YOU HAVE FAMILY WORSHIP?

14	10	7	4	1
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

ALL TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING.

17. WHAT DID TODAY'S SERMON SAY TO YOU? (One sentence please.) _____

18. DO YOU HAVE SOME SUGGESTIONS THAT COULD HELP OUR COMMUNITY WORSHIP?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

APPENDIX 2.

Ministry to Juniors : Questionnaire Results

MINISTRY TO JUNIORS : QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Question 1

The age group of those filling out the survey

	<u>Returns</u>
13 - 15	3%
15 - 20	15%
20 - 30	13%
30 - 40	17%
40 +	44%
	8% were invalid

Question 2

How often should we have sermons for children?

	<u>Results</u>
Once in 6 weeks	12%
Once every week	19%
Twice per month	34%
Once per month	35%

How often should we have sermons for youth?

	<u>Results</u>
Once in 6 weeks	8%
Once every week	24%
Twice per month	37%
Once per month	31%

Question 3

What kind of sermon interests you?

	<u>Results</u>
Children's	13%
Youth	18%
Prophecy	22%
Devotional	20%
Bible Study	27%

Question 4

How long should a sermon be

	<u>Results</u>
60 min.	12%
45 min.	38%
30 min.	40%
20 min.	8%
15 min.	2%

Question 5

During church service time would you be happy if....

	<u>Results</u>
Children helped	21%
Youth helped	30%
More items	18%
Audience participation	27%
Don't change	4%

Question 6

How did you enjoy today's sermon? (Sermon 1)

<u>Ratings</u>	<u>Results</u>
+ 5	41%
4	35%
3	22%
2	2%
- 1	

Question 7

Did you have children or youth at church today?

Children	25
Youth	15

Question 8

Age group of children or youth

<u>Groups</u>	<u>Results</u>
1 - 5	22%
6 - 8	26%
9 - 12	13%
13 - 15	25%
16 - 20	14%

Question 9

Did your child understand the sermon today?

<u>Ratings</u>	<u>Result</u>
+ 5	12.5%
4	19%
3	50%
2	6%
- 1	12.5%

Question 10

Does your child enjoy singing our hymns?

<u>Ratings</u>	<u>Result</u>
+ 5	10%
4	21%
3	45%
2	12%
- 1	12%

Question 11

Does your child feel that his/her presence is important in church worship?

<u>Ratings</u>	<u>Result</u>
+ 5	3%
4	24%
3	26%
2	21%
- 1	26%

Question 12

At home does your child talk about the preacher?

<u>Ratings</u>	<u>Result</u>
+ 5	3%
4	16%
3	30%
2	16%
- 1	35%

Question 13

What made your child talk about the preacher?

	<u>Result</u>
Joined in conversation	20%
Preacher boring	26%
Funny stories	2%
Good stories	37%
Heart touched	15%

Question 14

What interests your child in family worship?

	<u>Result</u>
Sabbath School Lesson	13%
Concern for others	19%
Bible stories	38%
Prayer	11%
Singing	19%

Question 15

When is the highest interest?

	<u>Result</u>
Morning	41%
Evening	59%

Question 16

How many times per week, on the average, would you have family worship?

<u>Worship Periods</u>	<u>Result</u>
14	19%
10	16%
7	39%
4	16%
1	10%

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