

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY TO RAISE CHILDREN IN GOD'S WAY IN SOUTH,
SOUTH-WEST OF MAURITIUS CONFERENCE

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The responsibility of bringing children into the world should not be taken lightly. Teaching and nurturing children in God's way should be systematic and daily in a family's life. Parents should become agent of change in the spiritual development of their children, for education involves no so much what we do or say, but most of all what we are. Not only in the families, but the churches should be collaborating agent, in the spiritual development of children. Even though teaching the faith is a hot topic these days in the families and churches, according to King Solomon a child should be trained in the way he/she should go so that when old will not depart from it (Prov 22:6).

Both the Bible and Ellen G White taught that the spiritual development of children should be a priority for families and churches. Parents needed to refocus their priorities about raising their children's in God ways.

The author of this work has developed micro programmes for children in Mahébourg and L'Escalier Adventist Churches in Grand Port Savanne district. The implementation started in 2012. The strategic planning involved two phases: the study on the theology of children and their development, implementation and evaluation of the micro programs. The focus was to create awareness among the parents and church to have a child centred approach, where a nurturing environment drew the child toward his Saviour.

The study drew conclusion such as children were not being cared for into the spiritual life of the family and churches. For the children to be raised in God's way, parents had to invest time and resources in them. Child-centred spiritual activities and programs needed to be designed and implemented. Raising children spiritually required the involvement of parents, local church leadership and the Conference.

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A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

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by

Ah Kiune Teddy

June 2014

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To all church leaders, children officers, parents

and my family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

By the end of the twentieth century, the majority of Mauritian embraced modernity including the Seventh-day Adventist church members. On one hand prosperity brought wealth but on the other hand modernity placed Mauritians in a hectic mood and a business minded situation. Hypothetically, the economic progress in Mauritius proved to be a disadvantage. Families were no longer able to spare time to invest in the nurturing and character building of their children.

In the book *7 Habits of Highly Effective Family*, Steven Covey says, “if we [parents] do not teach our children, society [peers, internet, media etc...] will. And they, and we, will live with the results.”¹ In the age of postmodernism, individualism and relativism, parenting was more important now than ever before. As Prudence stated, “our children are taught that there are no boundaries or absolute truths.”²

George Barna in the book, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* said he had never given alternative approaches serious consideration. He further stated that *adults* were the ones who influenced the world and determined the nature of our current and future reality. “If the family is central to a healthy society and a strong Church, shouldn’t we invest our resources predominantly in the *adults* who lead those

¹ Prudence LaBeach Pollard, *Raise a Leader God’s Way* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2012), 43.

² *Ibid.*, 89.

units?”³The author of this work agreed with what Barna has stated, “adult priorities come first in relation to children in the society and the church.”⁴ Furthermore when it came to academic education compared to spiritual education, the academic education had the upper hand in comparison to religious education. This way of thinking had gradually endangered the faith of children in God. However, by stepping back and taking a more proper positive spiritual role, a different conclusion might be reached.

Statement of the Problem

Mauritius society lived by the “time is money” slogan. This competition mood deprived Adventist members of time for family worship, Sabbath school quarterly lesson study, and participation in church activities. According to the general observations by pastors and lay people, church members had no more sufficient time for in-depth Bible study within their family. Approximately, about 20 to 30% of the church members in South, South-West Mauritius had time to have a deep relationship with God and His word.

According to the Sabbath School Ministries quarterly reports of 2012 from districts, 27% of the children in this territory had time to study the Bible. This current situation had also led to a decrease of the spiritual level among children in the churches of Mauritius Adventist Conference. The question was rightly asked: what can we do to raise children in God’s way?

³ George Barna, *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 11.

⁴ Ibid.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to design a series of micro programs for Mauritius Adventist Conference to encourage parents to take care of the spiritual growth of their children. It was hoped that upon implementation of the strategy; children in homes and churches regularly would be more inclined toward their faith and Adventist values. The position of this thesis would be that, “getting young people into God’s Word involving an environmental challenge, an experimental task and a forum of expression”⁵ would be the approach to lead them in their spiritual journey, even though it would take a lot of time and energy to reverse the actual tendency. The overarching aim of this study was to develop program which would help parents to instruct their children according to the principles of the Bible.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this research would help to strengthen the spirituality of children; increase their knowledge of the Scriptures and develop a healthy relationship with God. The whole Conference would be able to use the findings as a reference to cater for the need of the children in their spiritual growth.

Delimitation

The reader should know and understood that this research was confined to the process of helping parents how to teach their children in God’s way in South, South-West Mauritius. It did not attempt to handle all the issues about raising children. This did not mean that other aspects are not important. This project would be restricted to the process of teaching God’s way to Children in South-West Mauritius.

⁵ Troy Fitzgerald, “Steeped in God’s Word: Engaging Children in the Study of Scripture,” *Ministry Magazine* (2012), 23.

Methodology

The following procedure showed how the research would be done: the introduction of this study deals with the background that led to this project. The problems that arose out of this research and the delimitations were addressed. Chapter 2 set the Theological foundation based on the Bible, Ellen G. White writings and other authors.

Chapter 3 presented the local setting of the Mauritius Conference, particularly the South, South-West regions. The chapter included the collection of data according to the surveys, interviews, and questionnaires from churches. Based on the analysis of the data, the author of this work gave a summary of the findings.

Chapter 4 dealt with the program design, implementation and evaluation. In chapter 5, the author of this work presented practical implications and suggestions to address the issue of raising children in God's way. Chapter 6 concluded the study and presented further recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

It was clear that today the value of our youth is to a large extent shaped by the media.¹The report from the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation² demonstrated how media influence on children. As Donna J Habenicht stated “the media provide [the] standards and push [the child] desires. [Today] brand names mean status.”³Modern culture is opposed to Christian values. The adverse influences such as sexuality, lifestyle and uses of drug that bombard the moral and spiritual development of the child today could be deadly. Therefore, it was critical to initiate the development of the child’s biblical worldview from an early age.

Old Testament

Choun and Lawson concurred that right from the beginning of the biblical history from the Genesis account that “God’s plan for humankind always included

¹ Anthony Curtis, *Mass Media influence on Society* Retrieved April 7, 2014 from <http://www2.uncp.edu/home/acurtis/Courses/ResourcesForCourses/Media&Society/in-bible-times.html>

² Henry J.Kaisler Family Foundation, *Kids and Media* (Menlo Park, CA, 1999), n.p.

³ Donna J. Habenicht, *How to Help your Child Really love Jesus* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 18.

Children. Young ones were neither a postscript nor the result of the curse on Adam and Eve.”⁴

God intended to have a family as an environment for children. Knight comments from the Genesis account that the family “is the central institution in all social life.”⁵ Family which included children was God’s design. Normally we had a tendency to think that the Bible would be a book about and for adults only, but that was not so For the Bible comprised of “hundreds, even thousands, of references to children and related subjects such as conception [and] childbirth...”⁶

The references were there to suggest the importance God placed on children. Henceforth throughout the Old Testament, “we see a much more positive view of children.”⁷The OT gave insights and principles on how to develop the biblical worldview for raising children.

⁴ Robert J. Choun and Michael S. Lawson, *The Handbook on Children’s Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 16.

⁵ George R. Knight, *Myths in Adventism* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1985), 63.

⁶ Roy B. Zuck, “*Precious in His Sight, Childhood & Children in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 13.

⁷ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, *Listening to Children on that Spiritual Journey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy, 2010), 13.

In the Torah which is derived from the Hebrew word “*tôrâ*” meaning “instruction.”⁸

God gave a vision of what his community should achieve for children:

The aim or purpose of Old Testament education is encapsulated within the revelation given to Abraham concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Here God bids Abraham to direct his children in "the way of the Lord." This divine directive embodies the very essence of Hebrew education in the Old Testament, affirming the primacy of parental instruction⁹

Hence, the most important image casted out to us from the Old Testament, was the unrealized vision of the Mosaic ideal¹⁰ that parents at home were the first to cater for the education of their children. “Prophets taught adults, and parents taught children.”¹¹ As a result of that, Moses prepared the Israelites to enter the Promise Land, “teaching the faith to the next generation surfaced as a top priority.”¹² Therefore the content of Hebrew education expanded as God continued to reveal himself and his plan to the Israelites.

⁸ David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6: 605.

⁹ *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed Walter A. Elwell. Retrieved July 22, 2013 from <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/>

¹⁰ Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Children Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 18.

¹¹ Choun and Lawson, 27.

¹² Scottie May, *Children Matter* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 32.

Rituals and Festivals

The details of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham were filling in three chapters in Genesis (12, 15, and 17).¹³ By choosing Abraham, God's aim was that Abraham became the father of His chosen people. Knight stated that "God selected Abraham to be the father of chosen people partly because He knew he would teach his children and the rest of his household the way of the Lord (Gen 18:19)."¹⁴ By contrast, the details of the Mosaic covenant dominated the greater portions of the biblical literature found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. When we looked at the ideal community in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, there were instructions about child rearing.

But we had also found a social context, where God had designed festivals where children would be nurtured. When Israel was in the land, "God used the temple, the sacrificial system, feasts, and memorial markers to enhance children's spiritual understanding."¹⁵ The temple system reinforced "the teaching and values children were supposed to receive at home"¹⁶ These rituals were also meant to keep "the memory of God's mighty acts alive for all the people."¹⁷

By doing so, God gave an ideal description of a community that blended holydays and the nurturing of Children. In this nurturing process God gave principles to foster the spiritual development of children.

¹³ *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed Walter A. Elwell.

¹⁴ Knight, 62.

¹⁵ Choun and Lawson, 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷ Scottie May, 35.

Table 1 shows the importance of nurturing children in the Mosaic ideal community. It disclosed that the concept of nurturing children was integrated in the daily life style of this community Parents were asked to be models for their children; encourage them to participate in all spiritual activities and to teach their kids according their faith. As a result of the blending, children were expected to be brought up as participants not only observers. Israel’s history was to be experienced.

*Table 1. Principles of Ministry to Children in the Mosaic Portrait of the Ideal*¹⁸

| Concept | Principle | Old Testament Expression |
|---------------|--|--|
| Modeling | The whole community is to live out and thus model faith’s lifestyle. | Children are brought up within a community of adults who form a loving, holy community guided by the Mosaic ideal. |
| Participation | Children share with adults those experiences that give meaning to faith. | Children participate with adults in the worship, symbolism, and events that teach about God and faith relationship with Him. |
| Instruction | Teaching is woven into the daily experiences of adults and Children | Parents who love God and have taken His Word to heart teach that Word that has given their own lives shape and meaning. |

The participation of children was illustrated in the Passover and Tabernacles. Exodus 12: 6 implied that the “Passover in particular was expected to stimulate curiosity in children.”¹⁹ Thus the participation in those festivals each year was intended to shape children’s faith in God and the identity of God as Creator and

¹⁸ Lawrence O. Richards, 26.

¹⁹ Choun and Lawson, 22.

Redeemer.²⁰ Therefore, it was the duty of each parent called by God to impress God's words in minds of their children.

Fathers as the Spiritual Leader

Parents were not simply socializers of youth but they were [requested] to instruct their own children in the Word of God.²¹ Children notice, in detail, what adults did. Children needed to discover “through observation that religion is not just for [Sabbath] at church.”²² “In fact, the highest-risk young person faced is not the one from a non-believing home, but rather one from a hypocritical Christian [Israelite] home.”²³

Hence parents and specially father had an important role in raising children God's way. A father in each Bible family was considered the leader of the home. The family was instituted to be the “spiritual formation crucible for children.”²⁴

However, children did not need perfect parents, simply good enough parents.²⁵ Hence one of the basic duties of the father was to provide guidance to his children, and to settle the first foundation towards a religious life and later enabling their sons' education in Jewish schools. In Bible times “religious instruction of children in the

²⁰ Richards, *A Theology of Children Ministry*, 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²² Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, 160.

²³ Larry Fowler, *Raising a Modern-Day Joseph* (Ontario Canada, David C. Cook distribution, 2009), 96.

²⁴ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, 153. _____

²⁵ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, 153.

home was to be given primarily by fathers.”²⁶The mothers were there to assist their husband in this process of teaching the children at home. Their obligation to teach their children was set forth in the first paragraph of *Shema Yisrael*.²⁷Shema Yisrael was a Hebrew term that the Jews used to declare their allegiance to God daily. It spoke of loving God and passing Jewish traditions to their children. “It is a declaration of faith, a pledge of allegiance to One God.”²⁸

There were several levels of teaching in the Israelites community:

- God as teacher (Exodus 20: 1-2)
- Moses the teacher of the law (Exodus 18: 20: 24: 12; Deut 4: 14)
- The teaching role of Jewish parents (Deut 6: 6-7)
- Priest as teachers in Old Testament (Lev 10: 11; Deut 24: 9)
- The teaching roles of the prophets
- Wise men as teachers
- Scribes as teachers (Jer 8: 8)²⁹

These levels attested how serious education for the children was in the Old Testament. According to the article about the several levels of teaching in the Jewish community,

²⁶ Zuck, 128.

²⁷ Pařík Arno, *The Jewish Education*. Retrieved February 24, 2010 from. <http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/avice7.htm>

²⁸ Simmons.Shraga, *Shema Yisrael*. Retrieved February 24, 2010 from <http://www.aish.com/jl/m/pb/48954656.html?tab=y>. It is said upon arising in the morning and upon going to sleep at night. It is said when praising God and when beseeching Him. It is the first prayer that a Jewish child is taught to say. It is the last words a Jew says prior to death.

²⁹ Simmons. Shraga, *Shema Yisrael*.

the Shema could be summarized in three parts: God, Parents and the Community.

Each of these had a particular role to play.

Home as a Spiritual Environment

Another component in the teaching and nurturing system patterned by God in the Mosaic community would be the home. “In a rich spiritual environment [home] children become aware of and open to God.”³⁰ The environment that parents provided plays an important role for the children’s spiritual growth.

It was important to note that May in her article stated that, “the spiritual world [home and community] that we create for our children to inhabit, with its content of religious stories, language, and prayer, enables our children to think spiritually.”³¹ Mfune in his work states the following:

Psychologists tell us that when it comes to learning about, God, the way children acquire their beliefs is less by hearing what their parents say than by observing how they actually behave... Studies have shown that boys are more affected by a life of inconsistency than girls are when it comes to religion. This means that if the family is disorganized and chaotic, if worship is not consistent, or if parents talk of God as loving and forgiving while in their everyday lives they are harsh and unforgiving, boys are more likely to be negatively affected than girls.³²

Therefore, the two Old Testament passages in table 2 below stretched out the dilemma of nurturing and leading. Moses framed the two statements by stating that: “It was not your children who saw what he [the Lord] did for you in the desert until you arrived at this place” Deut 11: 5. This passage denoted that those who had

³⁰ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, 44.

³¹ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, pp 43-44.

³² Saustin Sampson Mfune, *Parenting for Heaven* (Western Cape: South Africa: Africa Publishing Company, 2012), 50.

experienced the Lord's mercies were ought to communicate their encounter with those who lack such experience.

Teaching and Nurturing

Teaching and Nurturing were the two components that God wanted to share to Israelites’ families. How was this going to be done? The divine instruction was embedded in those *two passages below*.

Table 2 shows the comparison between two Bible texts. The Bible texts in Table 2 revealed that it mattered to God that those children were properly nurtured and raised. Following those sets of Bible texts, the families made their spiritual life and also of their children a top priority. By giving these principles twice in the book Deuteronomy illustrated that the spiritual development of a child is not to take for granted. Hence Israelites families were commanded to take care of the daily spiritual growth of their children. The context of Deut 6:5-7 derived from the reorganization of Israel from a tribal family base into a national power. But this reorganization of the Israelites came with a formal charge from God “to supervise the spiritual development of their children [over and over].”³³ These passages described how the parent’s faith should be communicated to the children.

Table 2. Bible Text Comparison

| Deuteronomy 6: 5-7 | Deuteronomy 11: 18-19 |
|--|---|
| <p>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. NKJV</p> | <p>Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up .NKJV</p> |

³³ Choun and Lawson, *The Handbook on Children’s Ministry*, 20.

More than just an enunciation, May stated that “God intends the home to be the primary context for teaching children”³⁴ His way. Along with these two passages, Gen 18:19³⁵ charged parents to give religious instruction to their household and their Children. Genesis 18:19 cryptically defined the content of Hebrew education as "the way of the Lord."

Generally speaking, "the way of the Lord" refers to knowledge of and obedience to the will of God as revealed through act and word in Old Testament history. The way or will of God for humanity reflects his personal character and attributes. As human beings love their neighbours as themselves (Lev19:18), practice righteousness and justice (Gen18:19), and pursue holiness (Lev11:44) they walk in the way of the Lord in that they mirror God's character.³⁶

The very basis of Judaism was to be found in the conception of holiness.³⁷ "You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy." "And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye might be Mine" Lev 20: 26. That was to say, it was the destiny of the Jewish people to be different. Holiness meant ‘being different.’ And their whole educational system was directed to that end, being different as an individual and as a nation. This notion of being holy and walking in the way of the Lord, started right at home.

³⁴ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May ,151.

³⁵ Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD)*, rev. ed. ,1979, 987.

³⁶ *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed Walter A. Elwell.

³⁷ Lawrence O Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Chariot Victor Publishing, 1997), PC study Bible Software version 5.

Their educational system was nothing less than the instrument by which their existence as a nation, and their fulfilment of their destiny, was ensured.³⁸ First and foremost the Jewish ideal of education was the ideal of holiness, of difference, of separation from all other peoples in order to belong to God.

The care given to young Jewish children reflected Judaism's overwhelmingly positive attitude toward childhood. According to ancient rabbinic law as recorded in the Talmud, a father was obligated to redeem his (first-born) son, circumcise him, teach him Torah, teach him a trade, obtain a wife for him, and according to one other opinion, to teach him to swim as well. No provision for child maintenance was mentioned explicitly in this list of parental obligations because the moral obligation to care for one's children was so elemental.³⁹

In addition to that, most of research studies had shown that “most children develop their idea of God during early childhood.”⁴⁰ Daily interaction between parent and children were planned either develop a suitable idea of God or a bad idea. Consequently, these three factors: the teacher, the family and daily life⁴¹ were extremely crucial in the development of their understanding of God.

Since at the early age they could not read about God, but “their idea about God gets formed by their human relationship.”⁴² Altogether the three factors were needed

³⁸ Lawrence O Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*.

³⁹ Jay R. Berkovitz, *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. Retrieved 24 February, 2014 from <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/In-Ke/Judaism.html>

⁴⁰ Donna J. Habenicht, *How to Help your Child Really Love Jesus* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 67.

⁴¹ Richards, 23.

⁴² Habenicht, 68.

so that teaching could be done as a whole. The stages of life in education of the young Jew revealed how relevant, starting training at the age of 3is.⁴³

Teaching and Nurturing in Historical Books

In the historical books of the Bible, the aspect of teaching took another form. Prophet Samuel instituted the “school of prophets”. Its aim was “to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, to provide for the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the future prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counsellors.”⁴⁴The teaching was oral in both school and at home. “But the youth also learned to read Hebrew writings, and the parchment rolls of the Old Testament scriptures were open to their study”⁴⁵

In Samuel's day there were two of these schools--one at Ramah, the home of the prophet, and the other at Kirjath-Jearim, where the ark then was. Others were established in later times.⁴⁶ The establishment of these schools was needed because the parents in Israel became indifferent to their obligation to God and to their

⁴³ Ron Moseley, *Jewish Education in Ancient Times*. Retrieved February 24, 2014 from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/2958111/jewish-education-in-ancient-time>

⁴⁴ Ellen Gould White, *Patriarch and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958) chapter 58.

⁴⁵ White, *True Education, An Adaptation of Education* (Pacific Press, 2000), 32.

⁴⁶ Ira M. Price, *The Schools of the Sons of the Prophets*, Vol. 8, No. 7 (University of Chicago Press Article Stable). Retrieved February 24, 2010 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3156528>, 1889), pp 244-249.

children.⁴⁷ Therefore to meet this growing evil, “prophets and the schools for the son of prophets”⁴⁸ were provided as agencies to aid parents in the education work.

Teaching and Nurturing in Proverbs

Apart from the Pentateuch and the historical books, the book of Proverbs accentuated the concept of nurturing and teaching children. The Hebrew word translated "proverbs" is “*mashal*”. It designated a wide range of literary types, but its etymology implies “likeness” and “to rule”⁴⁹ or reigning or exercising dominion.

This book was known as “a work of instruction and a book of education.”⁵⁰ The Book of Proverbs was more than just catchy sayings, they were rules for living. Aside from the Torah, it was thus the oldest handbook of education.⁵¹ The wise men considered that life itself as a discipline. These rules were specially designed in such a way as to help children have discipline, wisdom, and attain righteousness.

The section of Prov 1:1-9 to Prov 18 gave parental advice to Children. The Anchor dictionary stated that “in all likelihood instructional literature in the Book of Proverbs belongs to such house pedagogy.”⁵² Solomon often held up his words of instruction as teaching to his son(s).

⁴⁷ White, *True Education*, 31.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 513.

⁵⁰ Roy B. Zuck, “*Precious in His Sight, Childhood & Children in the Bible* (Grand Rapids MI, Baker Books, 1997), 136.

⁵¹ Robin Scarlata, *History of Biblical Education*. Retrieved February 24, 2014 from <http://www.haydid.org/robineducation.htm>

⁵² *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5: 518.

In appendix A had a list the many ways Solomon referred to teaching his son(s)⁵³ and how the responds should be. Through the introduction of monarchy in Israel, it had brought about a shift in power. The centre of authority gradually moved from the heads of family to a chief of state. This shift slowly had affected the nurturing and teaching of children in the household. Those parental instructions in the book of Proverbs were given to restate the duties of parents towards their children.

The use of these words “*miswah*” and “*tôrâh*” raised the possibility that the Mosaic Law lied behind the vocabulary about parental instruction.⁵⁴The use of these two words implied that the parental teaching in Prov 6:20 suggest that they had the same referent in Prov6:23.⁵⁵

According to Anchor dictionary “these parental teachings emerged from persistent efforts to penetrate reality so as to order life for maximum success in achieving honour, wealth, health and offspring.”⁵⁶ Zuck stated that “the word “*tôrâh*”, is also related to the verb “*yarah*” “to point or direct” so that the idea of teaching is pointing the student in the right direction.”⁵⁷

Jewish Education

With the Mosaic ideal for the Israelite community, the schools for the son of prophets and the book of Proverbs, we had a foretaste for what it meant to raise Children in the right path. It was meant by God in the establishment of the Israelite

⁵³ Zuck, 136.

⁵⁴ *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol 5: 518.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Zuck, 137.

nation, to give a suitable transmission of their faith in the Creator and the knowledge about Him.

Jewish education system was instituted to produce better citizen. Despite the fact, the raising children in God's way seemed to be a long process, table 3 below showed that more positive things came out for children.

Table 3 shows valuable results of the Jewish Education

*Table 3. Valuable Results of Jewish Education*⁵⁸

| |
|--|
| Jewish education, achieved four valuable results: |
| (1) it developed a taste for close, critical study. |
| (2) it sharpened the wits. |
| (3) it encouraged a reverence for law and produced desirable social conduct. |
| (4) it formed a powerful bond of union among the Jewish people. |

The results of the constant nurturing came be observed in the life style of the children. These four values illustrated the fact that young Israelite's development is a wholistic one, including a strong sense of belonging to the nation As long as the parents had respected what had been established, the younger generation was stronger. There were basically three agencies or institutions responsible for the education of youth in Old Testament times: the home or family, the community, and formal centres of learning. Here it was important to remember that the process of education described in Scripture was predominantly the informal (home and community), not the formal education of learned institutions. This system was indeed for the good of the parents and children.

New Testament Time

⁵⁸ Robin Scarlata, *History of Biblical Education*.

In the Gospels we encountered the working out and development of the principle of nurturing children in the Old Testament. Teaching Children in the New Testament times took another turn. In the New Testament the word “training” (‘nurture’, KJV) “occurred six times with four of those references speaking of discipline or correction (Heb 12: 5, 7-8, 11).”⁵⁹ In 2 Timothy 3:16, the other use in this phrase was “training in righteousness.” Hence Paul wrote of “instruction” (*nouthesia*, admonition in KJV) three times, it conveyed the meaning of warning but in Ephesians 6:4 it communicated both positive and negative ideas.”⁶⁰ This implied that it was important for Paul to take care of the children.

Greco-Roman’s Education

During this period, the Greco-Roman’s education was prevailing everywhere, even in Palestine. “Greco-Roman education was, therefore, widespread and long-lived: it continued in the eastern half of the empire for centuries without a break; it had been fully accepted at Rome itself by the second century B.C.”⁶¹

Generally “Greek and Roman adults valued their hope for the future.”⁶² But Stoic philosophers, who influenced the thinking of many in Jesus’s day, taught “that children under 7 years old were inactive and were considered more as young animals to be trained than human beings to be guided in a learning process.”⁶³

⁵⁹ Zuck, 137.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁶¹ David R. Jackson, *Education and Entertainment: Some Aspects of Life in New Testament Times* Retrieved June 4, 2010 from http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/vox/vol06/education_jackson.pdf

⁶² Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, 12.

⁶³ Ibid.

Consequently it was not an easy task, to maintain the Jewish identity as people of Yahweh. Jewish education system in the New Testament followed almost the same pattern of the Old Testament. The Jews continued to cater for the transmission of the teaching of their patriarch from the Old Testament.

Even if the importance of education had not been so heavily stressed [in the New Testament], the Jews, like the Greeks, would have realized its enormous value for maintaining their own culture and religion in face of an alien environment.⁶⁴

Jewish education in the time of Christ was of the orthodox traditional type and in the hands of scribes, Pharisees and learned rabbis. The home was still the chief institution for the dispensation of elementary instruction.⁶⁵ Regardless of what happened in the synagogue or in the community, the home remained the primary place of education for the children.

Timothy who was Paul's disciple is an example of one who has been taught at home. Since churches met in the homes of member; the teaching was also done there (Rom 16: 3-5).

While the synagogue school still existed, the home was still considered a primary place of education for children. Timothy is a notable example of a child who had been educated in the Scriptures in the home (2 Timothy 1:5).⁶⁶

Although parents assured the education of their children at home, formal schools of learning in those times were common throughout Palestine.

⁶⁴ David R. Jackson, *Education and Entertainment: Some Aspects of Life in New Testament Times*

⁶⁵ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.

⁶⁶ *Holman Bible Dictionary*. Retrieved June 4, 2010 from <http://www.studylight.org/dic/hbd/view.cgi?number=T1737>

Education in Palestine

All Hebrew boys were required to attend school. It was not common for them, to be without proper education. May said that “boys learned trade from their fathers or as an apprentice, and they also attended the synagogue school.”⁶⁷

Alfred Edersheim stated:

There can be no question that, according to the law of Moses, the early education of a child evolved upon the father; of course, always bearing in mind that his first training would be the mother’s (Deut11:19, and many other passages). If the father was not capable of elementary teaching, a stranger would be employed. Passing over the Old Testament period, we may take it that, in the days of Christ, home-teaching ordinarily began when the child was about three years old.⁶⁸

According to what Edersheim stated careful training of the memory commenced, which had ever since been one of the mental characteristics of the Jewish nation. Young Jewish children started formal education at the age of 5, learning to read and write.⁶⁹No schools for girls, but they could be taught the Bible privately. Young girls would learn at home from their mothers and other women. Girls were, by and large, excluded from the elementary schools, however, though some Talmudic sources suggested that fathers taught their daughters informally.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May , 13.

⁶⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*(Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library).Retrieved June 4, 2010 from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edersheim/sketches.html> (1825-1889).

⁶⁹ Eliezer Ebner, *Elementary Education in Ancient Israel*. Retrieved June 4, 2010 from http://www.archive.org/stream/elementaryeducat009410mbp/Elementaryeducation009410mbp_djvu.txt

⁷⁰ Jay R. Berkovitz, *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*.

According to the Jewish custom “man and women worshipped separately; only men counted for a quorum.”⁷¹ Young women were educated in the way of the Lord and culturally acceptable domestic skills by their mothers or other women of some standing⁷² until marriage.

In Jewish religion women were also kept subordinate and silent. Women were more restricted in Judaism than they had been in the Old Testament. Women were barred from studying the Torah. They could not be counted among the minyan, the quorum of men who had to be present for worship to take place. Theoretically any adult person had the right to read and to preach in the synagogue. But in practice women were kept physically separate from men in the synagogue and were not allowed to read at all. Furthermore, women were denied the education which would have enabled them to preach.⁷³

The Jewish teachers considered that “woman’s mission and duties lay in other directions; that the subjects studied were not always suitable for women.”⁷⁴

This article stated that “girls were, by and large, excluded from the elementary schools.”⁷⁵ Yet, despite the obstacles that women faced, there were always educated

⁷¹ Spirit and Truth Fellowship International, *Comparison of Paul's Teachings about Women / Common Teachings of Time*. Retrieved April 7, 2014 from <http://www.truthortradition.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=250>

⁷² Andrew E Hill. *Education in Bible Times*. Retrieved April 7, 2014 from <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/education-in-bible-times.html>

⁷³ Elisabeth M. Tetlow, *The Status of Women in Greek, Roman and Jewish Society*. Retrieved April 7, 2014 from <http://www.womenpriests.org/classic/tetlow1.asp>

⁷⁴ David R. Jackson, *Education and Entertainment: Some Aspects of Life in New Testament Times*.

⁷⁵ Jay R Berkovitz, *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*.

and learned women in the Jewish society. Young men were educated by a Rabbi (teacher) from the local synagogue. According Jewish scholars “as understood within Jewish society and culture, childhood referred broadly to all stages of life that preceded adulthood, at which point an individual attains economic independence and assumes family or communal responsibilities.”⁷⁶

Since education was a priority of the Israelite, their education system was logical and systematic.

Table 4 shows various stage of learning in the life in Jewish education’s system.

*Table 4. Jewish Education’s System in Ancient Time*⁷⁷

| Age | Place of Study | Book used |
|------------|---|-------------------|
| At three | Home education start | Leviticus, Psalm, |
| At five | the Hebrew Bible was to be begun to be read | Oral law, Torah |
| At six | he would be sent to school | Torah |
| At ten | the child began to study the Mishnah | Mishnah |
| At fifteen | he must be ready for the Talmud | Talmud |

⁷⁶ Ibid. Research conducted by Jewish historians over the last thirty years, similar to most general studies devoted to childhood, stands largely in opposition to the theories advanced by French historian PHILIPPE ARIÈS. Ariès argued that childhood as we know it today did not exist in medieval society, owing to a lack of "awareness of the particular nature of childhood." Only with the approach of modernity was childhood "discovered." Countering these claims, Judaic scholars have assembled overwhelming evidence, culled from ancient and medieval Jewish sources, attesting to distinct develop-mental phases of childhood within Judaism and a clear appreciation of the child as such. Abundant evidence in the Talmud indicates that the transitional stages, which include infancy, childhood, ADOLESCENCE, and youth (young adulthood), were widely acknowledged within ancient Judaism.

⁷⁷ Ron Moseley, “Jewish Education in Ancient Times,” *Restore Magazine* 3.2, www.scribd.com/.../jewish-education-in-ancient-times

Table 4 allowed us to see the progression in the nurturing process. It demonstrated how serious the spiritual education was in the Jewish education's system in Ancient Time. From the age of three, education started until the child arrived at the age of fifteen. Books of the Torah were used along with the Mishnah⁷⁸ and Talmud⁷⁹.

Therefore the "synagogue" translated house of assembly was the Jewish place of both worship and education.⁸⁰The synagogue apparently came into existence during the Babylonian captivity when the Jews were deprived of the services of the Temple.

During captivity they began meeting in small groups for prayer and Scripture reading. When they returned to Israel the synagogue spread rapidly and developed into an important educational institution. Synagogue services made an important educational contribution to the religious life of the community. The elementary school system among the Jews developed in connection with the synagogue. Even before the days of Jesus, schools for the young were located in practically every important Jewish community. It has already been stated that in general the school was held in the synagogue. Commonly its teacher was the "*chazan*" or "minister" (Luke 4:20) by which expression we were to understand not a spiritual office, but something like a lay

⁷⁸ Mishnah Yomit, *What is the Mishnah?* Retrieved May 22, 2014 from <http://www.conservativeyeshiva.org/what-is-the-mishnah> The Mishnah is both a collection of Jewish laws and a study book for deriving Jewish laws and yet it is neither. The Mishnah is a collection of Jewish laws dealing with nearly every subject imaginable, from the laws of Shabbat and holidays, to marriage laws, to civil laws to laws concerning the Temple in Jerusalem

⁷⁹ Michael L. Rodkinson, *What is the Talmud?* Retrieved May 22, 2014 from <http://www.come-and-hear.com/editor/whatis.html> The Talmud is a huge collection of doctrines and laws compiled and written before the 8th Century, A.D., by ancient Jewish teachers. The Talmud, which often cites the Old Testament, is the basic book of Jewish law.

⁸⁰ Vipool Patel, *Life of Jesus First Century Context of Palestine Israel*. Retrieved June 4, 2010 from <http://www.jesuscentral.com/ji/historical-jesus/jesus-firstcenturycontext.php>

official of the synagogue. This officer was salaried by the congregation; and was not allowed to receive fees from his pupils, lest he should show favour to the rich.

William Barclay, in *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Baker), suggests that Jewish education was very different from our notions of teaching and learning. The Hebrew concept of education was not "to impart knowledge" or to "prepare oneself intellectually." It was to produce holiness and to impart a distinctive lifestyle. When Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus about the importance of teaching in the church, his concept of education was Hebrew, not twentieth century.⁸¹

To pursue this notion of Holiness in the Jewish education system; teachers were prohibited to promise something that they could not accomplish. Neither were they allowed to lose patience even though their pupil did not understand them readily. Child training was conducted in a unique spiritual way so that it also reflected the teacher's, minister's or *chazan's* life. Indeed, to the Jew, child-life was something peculiarly holy. Hence religious care was connected with academic education.

As this article stated "education was a priority for Jewish people. It was also the custom of the time for young adults to attach themselves to a local teacher or sage."⁸² It had been precisely this educational system which had kept the Jewish race in existence. "The Jew was no longer a racial type; he was a person who followed a certain way of life, and who belonged to a certain faith. If Jewish religion had faltered, or altered, the Jews would have ceased to exist."⁸³ Without this educational system, the Jewish society would not have been what it was then and today.

⁸¹ Lawrence O Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*.

⁸² Gerard Hall, *Jesus the Christ*. Retrieved June 4, 2010 from <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/staffhome/gehall/xtology2.htm>

⁸³ Lawrence O Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*.

Jesus' View of Children

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus took time to minister to the Children. As mentioned before, in the Greco-Roman society, Stoic Philosopher said that children were considered to be like animals. This article stated that "it's remarkable that when children were not given any importance or respect [in the Greco-Roman society], Jesus showed such great respect, love, and concern for them."⁸⁴ The people of Jesus' time were disturbed for He had time for children. Scholars of Jesus' day considered it a waste of time to spend time with children outside of teaching sessions.⁸⁵ Children were not a priority for those leaders. While few of the world's great religious leaders have had little regard for children⁸⁶, Jesus was different.

Children had no inherent value to the Roman culture into which Jesus Himself was born. After birth, a midwife would place a new-born by on the ground. If the *paterfamilias* deemed it worthy of life, he would pick it up announcing that the baby was accepted into the family. If the new-born was deformed or if the *paterfamilias* deemed that the family could not support another child, it would be "exposed" or deliberately abandoned in a specific area where it would either die of exposure or be picked up and sold by a slave trader.⁸⁷

Jesus taught and practiced the rights and values of children. There were several encounters of Jesus with children, even very young children; this demonstrated

⁸⁴ P Ribes, *Jesus and Children*, Retrieved June 11, 2013 from http://ribessj.org/JESUS_AND_CHILDREN.pdf

⁸⁵ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, 39.

⁸⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co, 1974), 206.

⁸⁷ James N. Watkins, *Jesus: Culture Changer* Retrieved July 10, 2013 from <http://www.jameswatkins.com/culturechanger>.

that the young ones according to Zuck “are to be loved, appreciated, blessed, prayer for, welcomed and protected.”⁸⁸He, Jesus, had a heart of children and they were drawn to Him.

Ellen G White Writings

Ellen White in her writings stated that childhood is once-in-a-lifetime an opportunity to fill our Children’s minds with thoughts of God, His Word and of inspired author’s words.⁸⁹This group age if parents fostered the proper setting; the child would develop a Biblical Character.

She also wrote “that the Lord has decreed that family shall be the greatest of all educational agencies.”⁹⁰ According to Habenicht, several of the developmental tasks that helped children grow spiritually involve Scriptures and Ellen White continued by stating the following:

1. Understanding why the Bible was written
2. Getting to know the people of the Bible as friends and admired heroes
3. Enjoying reading the Bible
4. Seeking help from the Bible for daily living
5. Memorizing significant Bible passages
6. Understanding how the Bible was written
7. Learning how people lived in Bible times
8. Knowing and accepting the major doctrines of the SDA Church as personal beliefs

⁸⁸ Roy B. Zuck, 216.

⁸⁹ Habenicht, 76.

⁹⁰ Knight, 62.

9. Begin to learn about the Bible history and prophecy

10. [Teaching them the root of the SDA Church in the Bible]⁹¹

These tasks introduced us to what Ellen White had to say about Children's education

Early Training of Children

As the Jewish system in the Old Testament, children were to be cared for from their early years, especially in religious matter. It would be a mistake, either to take it for granted that they would learn by themselves or just to say that they were too young for those things. Ellen White stated that:

Too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his character than all that it learns in future years.⁹²

The early years were crucial in the development of the children and when it came to Godly things it matters the most. Never assumed that they were too young or they would not understand. That fact was that they are like blank papers on which God's instructions were being written. Properly instructed they will become like their heroes in the Bible. No matter the cost, attention must be given to their spiritual development.

The first child especially should be trained with great care, for he will educate the rest. Children grow according to the influence of those who surround them. If they are handled by those who are noisy and boisterous, they become noisy and almost unbearable.⁹³

⁹¹ Habenicht, 79.

⁹² White, *Child Guidance*, (Review and Herald, 2002), 193.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

Training of children, no matter how much time and effort it took, must be initiated at early age, for they were in a learning stage. Many things influenced children, not only their parent. Other parent (s), relatives, siblings, teachers, neighbours, friends, life experiences, and the world at large all play a part. Good environment and training worked together. Parents must not believe that their children are too young to be taught. The proper information should be delivered according to their understanding.

Children of eight, ten or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion... If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ.”⁹⁴

The educators and the parents must be sensible to the need of their children, for children are very eager to learn new things.

Parents Involvement in Teaching Children

Ellen White stated that “true education is not the forcing of instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind.”⁹⁵ When teaching young children, Ellen White recommended the use of various methods⁹⁶. In those guidelines, the involvement of parents was a must. Ellen G White was also asking for a close monitoring by those parents.

Parents must be conscious that their characters were under scrutiny from their children. Even though it seemed that children do not bother about what was happening at home, they were very aware in which environment they were living.

Be what you wish your children to be. Parents have perpetuated by precept and example their own stamp of character to their posterity.

⁹⁴ White, *Testimonies For the Church* (Review and Herald,1858) vol 1, 400.

⁹⁵ White, *Education* (Review and Herald: Washington DC, 1893), 41.

⁹⁶ See Appendix G,pp 105-106

The fitful, coarse, uncourteous tempers and words are impressed upon children, and children's children, and thus the defects in the management of parents testify against them from generation to generation.⁹⁷

Parents could mould the character of their children in such a way that it could have a positive or negative impact in their life. “Help the child to see that parents and teachers are representatives of God, and that, as they acted in harmony with Him, their laws in the home and the schools are also His. As the child is to render obedience to parents and teachers, so they, in turn, are to render obedience to God.”⁹⁸ Children were to be trained in their homes within their family. But they must also emulate the lives of their trainers, the message that they were taught. However if they don't see that the trainer's teachings are not put into practice, they would not listen and obey. “Parents [trainers] could perform their role as shapers of their children's lives well or poorly.”⁹⁹ This aspect in training and nurturing by parents was crucial in their spiritual development. If such things were not done properly, these children would suffer a lot and may go astray.

There are many, even among those who profess to be Christians, who do not take up their home duties in the fear of the Lord. There is many a prayerless home, and that, too, among those who profess to believe the special truths for this time. The Bible is not brought into the family as the Guide of life. The parents, not being men and women of prayer, do not train and command their households in the way of God's commandments. That holy standard is set aside because finite man thinks he sees a better way.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ White, *Child Guidance*, 278

⁹⁸ White, *Education*, 360.

⁹⁹ Knight, 64.

¹⁰⁰ Review and Herald, May 4, 1886.

As Ellen White stated above, children needed to be guided in their day-to-day life. No matter how difficult it was to teach your children, parents should not squander their time on earthly things by running after wealth, prestige and so on. The priority of priorities was that children are taught the ways of the Lord. Those daily lessons been taken from the Bible and parent's own experiences, would tune one day or the other the heart of their kids to God. As Jonathan and Ana Gallagher stated "this means spending time with your children, talking to them and showing them not only skills and academic instruction but the values by which you are operating."¹⁰¹ By doing so the perpetuation of God's ideal plan of child raising is being fulfilled. Children's education would be an issue which is being raised by everybody. Charles Spurgeon quoted that "when home is ruled according to God's Word, angels might be asked to stay with us and they would not find themselves out of their element"

Contemporary Authors

Importance of Childhood

Donald M. Joy said "there is some mysterious sense in which the creation is re-echoed in the birth of every Child."¹⁰² Watching them playing, hearing their lisping voices, observing the innocence, gave us a deep understanding of the importance of childhood learning. There was no need to teach about the existence of God and about

¹⁰¹ Jonathan and Ana Gallagher, *The Nuts and The Bolts, A Christian Perspective on Practical Parenting* (Alma Park, Grantham, England: Autumn House, 2002), 53.

¹⁰² Donald M. Joy, *Children Education in the Church*, ed. by Roy B. Zuck and Robert E. Clark (Chicago: Moody Press 1975), 17.

the value of prayer, they accept without question.¹⁰³ Children in many places accepted God at face value. But there was a need to teach the little ones to know Christ.¹⁰⁴

Children will go through different stages, and most of them will be harmless. The important thing is to stay tuned to the inner working of your child. What's going on in your child's heart? Is he/ she compassionate and kind? Is he/she responsible? These are the things that will endure, not the wardrobe.¹⁰⁵

Hence taking care of their relationship with God would be also a matter in which a lot of time is needed. Playing with their moral and spiritual character by saying they were too young, would put them in great danger. As parent good judgment is needed so that they c kept a good balance.

There was a need to go along with them; meet them where they were, if we would help them. According to the article on “the theoretical-models-of-child development” the author stated that parent should show interest “in their world, in their work, in their play, and even in their sports. This interest would gain the love and confidence of your child, and the lesson of respect and obedience will be readily learned.”¹⁰⁶

Children Require Time

Adventists believed that young children required time to mature as they developed new skills; yet they also valued the necessity of providing guidance [by

¹⁰³ Charles H. Betz, *How to Teach the Bible With Power* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 41.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰⁵ Kevin Leman, *Have a New Kid by Friday* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2008), 271.

¹⁰⁶ Prudence LaBeach Pollard, *Raise a Leader*, 43.

their parents], problem solving techniques, reinforcement and expectations.¹⁰⁷ Betz concurred by stating that

Children are especially capable of such experiences because of the very nature of the development of the human mind.... [Young] children have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fantasy. They are creative and imaginative and indulge in magical explanations, inventing a wide range of supernatural persons and events. This capacity makes them highly susceptible to belief both in Santa Claus and in God.¹⁰⁸

It would be important that children in a religious environment be stable during their first [thirteen] years and that they have wide exposure to authentic adult faith.¹⁰⁹

Zuck stated that “Billy Graham said it well: for best results in marriage and in rearing children and building a stable home, follow the instruction of the one who performed the first wedding in the Garden of Eden.”¹¹⁰

To be in tune with their children, parents needed to understand the stage of the development of Child. Being aware of intellectual, emotional, physical, social and spiritual development of a child, help parents to cater to the specific needs for his/her kids. There were eleven tasks from biblical precepts that every person should follow: “to lead, pray, dedicate, provide, love, enjoy, model, worship, discipline, encourage, and teach.”¹¹¹

Parent’s Relationship with God Matters

¹⁰⁷ Gillan Byne, *Early Childhood Education Model*. Retrieved June 4, 2012 from <http://www.youngchildministries.com/child-care/theoretical-models-of-child-development>

¹⁰⁸ Charles H. Betz, 42.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Zuck, 107

¹¹¹ Ibid.

V. Bailey Gillespie, a Christian psychologist, put emphasis on the close relationship between identity formation and religion when he said: “Religion tells man who he is a, child of God; what he is, one in need of saving; where he belongs, - in the family of God; belong-through commitment to God... and what’s man’s future is identify with God.”¹¹² Appendices B and C gave an insight how things go for a child.¹¹³ Hence parent must not only seek good, and do good, but *be* good. Parent relationships with God would make an impact on their kids.

Where these conditions existed, he [the child] would separate fantasy from faith naturally and easily as his mind grows.¹¹⁴ David Heller asserted that, “the spiritual awareness that can develop in your child is infinite it can grow as deep as his or her imagination.”¹¹⁵

Communicate with Your Children

Harvey S. Wiener, in his book *Talk With Your Child*, said that, “talking and learning depend on each other. Are you satisfied that you’re talking enough with your child now? In general, family statistics in this regard are pretty grim... [Mothers spend 30 minutes daily with their children and fathers 15 minutes in the USA.].¹¹⁶” In developing country like Mauritius the range could be a bit higher but no more than 45

¹¹² V. Bailey Gillespie, *Religious Conversion and Personal Identity: How and Why People Change* (Birmingham, England: Religious Education Press, 1979), 156.

¹¹³ Barry Gane, *Building Youth Ministry, A Foundational Guide* (California: Hancock Center Publications, 2005), pp 46-47.

¹¹⁴ Donald M. Joy, 17.

¹¹⁵ David Heller, *Talking to Your Child About God* (Toronto, Canada: Bantam Books, 1988), pp 157-158.

¹¹⁶ Harvey S. Wiener, *Talk With Your Child* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 7.

minutes of mothers and 25 for fathers. This revealed the importance of talking with Children. We [parents,] all talk *to* our children, every day: “Put your coat on,” “Don’t forget your lunch,” “Wipe your shoes,” “Take your bath,” “Turn off the television,” “Go to bed,” etc. The great need is talking *with* children.¹¹⁷

Let’s bear in mind that the way children defined that they are loved is by the time you spent with them. There’s nothing more special that any parent can do than to help his or her child to honour God;¹¹⁸ parents should never stop trying to do things that bring their children closer to God. As Weiner stated,

it will not happen by accident. It may not happen even if we devote our best resources to that task, but the possibility is worth the risk. In fact, this isn’t really a risk at all since our personal success in life is completely wrapped up in our willingness to nurture these young people.¹¹⁹

Children’s future is in the hands of their parents. Whatever is invested in them, it will be reproduced in future.

The Leadership in the Family

For them to succeed, they must also be participants in this journey with God.

In his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Family*, Covey spoke of principle-

¹¹⁷ Wiener, 5-11: Talking with them can include the following: Converse with your children at the table; Ask questions about their day to day activities and share your own life experiences with your children; Read aloud to your children and talk to them about the words and pictures; Seek your child’s opinion about issues-clothing, food, entertainment; Encourage your child to enlarge on one-or two-word statements; Provide options for your children when a decision has to be made. Ask them to give their reasons; Invite your children to share in planning vacations; Arrange for your pre-schoolers to play near you so you can converse with them about their play; Ask your children to explain their pictures as they draw. Play verbal word games with your children using riddles, rhymes, synonyms, etc; Name and identify familiar objects or concepts as you read;

¹¹⁸ Barna, 135

¹¹⁹ Wiener, 136.

centered family leadership:

1. Setting an example of trustworthiness - modelling
2. Building relationships of respect and caring - mentoring
3. Aligning our structures to our mission - organizing
4. Teaching empowering principles – teaching

The leadership in the family should function around those four points mentioned above. Working with these four principles would help the leader of the family to nurture the child thoroughly. These principles went along with the four basic needs of humans relate with the four roles and the four unique human gifts as mentioned below, bring a balance development in the child’s spiritual growth. The needs of the children which were fulfilling by their parents would produce gifts. This gift would impact on the character of the child

| <i>Needs</i> | <i>Role</i> | <i>Gifts</i> |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1. To Learn (mental) | Teaching | Imagination |
| 2. To Live (physical/economic) | Organizing | Independent will |
| 3. To Love (social/emotional) | Mentoring | Self-awareness |
| 4. To Leave a Legacy (spiritual) | Modelling | Conscience |

According to Covey, parents must model their child or children so that they could leave legacy after they had passed away. Mother and father were asked to give careful study of the most effective means by which to nurture the character of each child; theirs would be the task of stewarding the life that God has tendered to their care.

Troy Fitzgerald wrote “today, we need a seismic shift from a ‘quick dip’ of our children in the Scriptures (indirect and superficial knowledge) to steeping them in the Word of God (deep and purposeful).”¹²⁰

Now that we knew that education starts at home, Donna J. Habenicht in her

¹²⁰ Troy Fitzgerald “Steeped in God’s Word: Engaging Children in the Study of Scripture, 2012”, Ministry Magazine 2012, 23.

book, *How to help your child really love Jesus*, encouraged parent to use the family worship as a key component¹²¹ to educate and teach their children. She outline set of keys to understand today's children.¹²² Along with those keys, we also looked-for the understanding of the developmental tasks of children in different ages.¹²³ The tasks were divided into four main areas:

- Faith in God's Word
- Faith Relationship with God
- Faith for Daily Living
- Faith Relationship with other People

Now that these facets had been exposed to the parents, they should understand that every child is a unique person and the time frame differs from the pre-schoolers to the 6-12 years old. Five to ten minutes at most for the pre-schoolers; 15 to 20 minutes is about right from the 6-12 years old.¹²⁴ So the first and more important task was to know the dynamics of the child that you were teaching. Along with the keys from Donna J Habenicht and the developmental of faith in a child, parents must also kept in mind the cognitive development. These components would help them in the process of teaching God's way.

¹²¹ Habenicht, 158.

¹²² Donna J. Habenicht and Larry Burton, *Teaching The Faith* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 22. Keys to understanding today's children

- Children's individual families differ in structure and functioning. Children mature earlier, both physically and mentally, and they are more independent.
 - Children learn from the media, they learn in groups, and they are expected to know more than children of previous generations.
 - Children are growing up in a postmodern society that does not provide leadership on moral issues and rejects religious values.
- Children are growing up in a multicultural society. They are expected to relate to people from all cultures and values.

¹²³ See Appendix C.

¹²⁴ Habenicht, 159.

Summary and Conclusion

According to an African proverb, it took a village to raise a child.¹²⁵ Similarly to raise a child in God's way more than the two parents were needed. Three components were needed: God, Parents and the church community. But the environment where the child was living plays also a major role in his spiritual growth. Hence a home where the father played his role as a spiritual leader, not where he abandoned or transferred his responsibilities to his wife, would be a home where child would feel the effect of stability. Raising kids were very challenging, parents needed to maintain a daily contact with God for them to be able to accomplish as God intended. Therefore, training by parents meant teaching by example. The issues raised in this chapter were some of the most important that parents had to deal with.

Given the facts that:

- Father is the spiritual leader at home
- Home is the first setting of learning and teaching
- Learning must start at early age and be done daily
- The nurturing process needs time and commitment
- and that parent must stay in tune with God

It would be a challenge that was worth the price, for we must not “play games” with these most important endeavour. Chapter 3 gave data about the local setting and the context of Mauritius where the survey has been done. Throughout this chapter Mauritius Island and the Seventh Day Adventist Conference is described so that the reader can understand the multicultural environment of Mauritius.

¹²⁵ Myrna Tetz & Gary L. Hopkins, *We can Keep Them in the Church* (Nampa ID: Pacific Press, 2004), 112.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL SETTING

Introduction

Arab and Malay sailors knew of Mauritius as early as the 10th century.¹ But Portuguese sailors first visited in the 16th century. The island was first colonized in 1638 by the Dutch. It is situated 900 km east of Madagascar. Covering an area of 2040 km², its territory includes Agalega, St Brandon and Rodrigues. It is sixty-one kilometers long and forty-six kilometers wide at the extremes and has a total land area of some 1,865 square kilometers.² Mauritius is located in the South West part of the Indian Ocean, north of the tropic of Capricorn. Mauritius had been successively a Dutch, French and British colony.³

Chronology of Key Events

Mauritius history was very rich from Portuguese, to Dutch to French and British. These nations played a role in the key events before the independence of Mauritius. A chronology of keys events before Mauritius became a British Colony.

Table 5 shows Mauritius key events chronologically until its independence.

¹ U.S Department of State. *A Brief history of Mauritius*. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/>

² Country Studies Program. *Mauritius History*. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/mauritius/geography.html

³ PothegadooK.D, *Statistics Mauritius*, Ministry of finance and Economic development. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://statsmauritius.gov.mu/English/StatsbySubj/Pages/Gender-Statistics-Year-2012.aspx>.

*Table 5. A Chronology of Key Events:*⁴

10th century - Phoenicians, Malays, Swahili and Arab seamen visit island but do not settle. Island named Dina Robin by Arab mariners. Flightless bird became extinct shortly after Mauritius was settled in the 1600s

1498 - Portuguese explorers stumble upon Mauritius in the wake of Vasco da Gama's voyage around the Cape of Good Hope.

1510 - Portuguese navigator Pedro Mascarenhas visits the island and names it Cirné. It is used as a port of call, but the Portuguese do not establish a permanent settlement.

Early settlement

1598 - Dutch claim the uninhabited island and rename it after their head of state, Maurice, Prince of Orange and Count of Nassau.

1638-58 - Dutch settlement begins, but colony soon fails.

1664-1710 - Second Dutch attempt at colonization fails. The Dutch withdraw permanently. By this time the dodo - a unique bird found only on Mauritius - has become extinct. Pirates inhabit the island.

1715 - French East India Company claims Mauritius for France, renames it Ile de France.

1721-67 - Settlement begins; Port Louis founded as a base for attacking the British in India.

1767 - French East Indies Company sells Mauritius; control of island transferred to French government.

1796 - Settlers break away from French control when the government in Paris attempts to abolish slavery.

1810 - British forces land in Mauritius after defeating the French in battle at Cap Malheureux.

Those events in table 5 started for the 10th century until the 20th century. It showed the long journey that Mauritius took to become an independent country. French and British government made the most impact on the island destiny. In Appendix E, a table gave the reader a complete chronology of keys events until Mauritius gained its independence. It became independent of Britain on 12th March 1968, with Seewoosagur Ramgoolam as prime minister. Having been a commonwealth country for 24 years⁵, Mauritius acceded to the status of republic on 12th March 1992.

⁴ BBC News, *Mauritius Profile*. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13882731>

⁵ The Crown Commonwealth. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from http://cnrsociety.org/Crown_Commonwealth.pdf

Political Situation and Local Government

Mauritius was described as one of Africa's success stories, having had a stable democracy and good human rights record.⁶ The political structure was patterned to a large extent on the British system. Mauritius was a constitutional republic with three tiers of government: central, local and village. The structure of the Local government is as followed: five Municipal Councils, four District Councils and 124 village Councils.

Local government on the island of Mauritius is divided into urban and rural authorities. In the urban areas there are five municipal councils, including the capital, Port Louis, which has city status. In the rural areas there is currently a two-tier system of four district councils and [who administrate the] 124 village councils.⁷

Most of villages were found on the coastal area and outside the town. The population of Mauritius is now estimated about 1, 2 million people.⁸ The growth rate of the population is: 0.729% per year. Although women were more numerous in the population; this was not the case for all age groups.

Among the age of 30, men were more numerous.

At ages 30 years and above, women outnumbered men and their proportion increases at higher ages. The male-female ratio stood at around 98 for those aged between 30 to 49 years compared to 50.5 among those aged 80 years and over; there were around 2 women for very man in this age group. The main reason for this imbalance is that women live longer than men.⁹

⁶ U.S Department of State. *A Brief history of Mauritius*. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/mauritius/p/MauritiusHist.htm>

⁷ Nyasha Simbanegavi, *The Local Government System in Mauritius*. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://www.clgf.org.uk/userfiles/1/files/Mauritiuslocalgovernmentprofile2011-12.pdf>

⁸ K.D.Pothegadoo, *Statistics Mauritius*.

⁹ K.D.Pothegadoo, *Statistics Mauritius*.

Mauritius had a cosmopolite population coming from Europe, Africa and Asia. Hence the amount of the various group ages differed from one to the other.

Table 6 showed the population of the Republic of Mauritius by age and sex from 10 to 80 by 1st July 2009. It should the male and female population and the ratio between to two groups. As shown in table 6, only among the youth that males were more than female, otherwise female dominant in another age group. It illustrated also that men were increasing only among the 10-19 years old.

Table 6. Population by Age and Sex,¹⁰

| Age-group (years) | Male | Female | Sex ratio (males per 100 females) |
|----------------------|---------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| Under 10 | 93,103 | 90,010 | 103.4 |
| 10 – 19 | 105,502 | 102,910 | 102.5 |
| 20 – 29 | 101,514 | 99,717 | 101.8 |
| 30 – 39 | 97,774 | 99,791 | 98.0 |
| 40 – 49 | 97,348 | 97,886 | 99.5 |
| 50 – 59 | 75,457 | 77,924 | 96.8 |
| 60 – 79 | 52,388 | 65,913 | 79.5 |
| 80+ | 6,071 | 11,724 | 51.8 |
| Total | 629,157 | 645,875 | 97.4 |

¹⁰ Central Statistics Office Ministry of Finance & Economic Development. *Mauritius in Figures* Retrieved July 17, 2013 from <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/housing/file/gpsav.pdf>

Economy and Land

Mauritius had a reputation for stability and racial harmony among its mixed population of Asians, Europeans and Africans.”¹¹ During the 20th century, Mauritians lived in an easy go mood. However, with the arrival of industrialization, Mauritian people learnt the western slogan “*time is money.*” The Gross Domestic Product¹²(GPD) gives an idea of the change of paradigm. In 1990 it was 5.1 and by the end of 2008 it had decreased to 3.7. Mauritius had been a volcanic island with mostly flat and occupied either by building and mainly agriculture.

There is “about 43% of the area is allocated to agriculture, 25% is occupied by built-up areas and 2% by public roads; the remaining consisted of abandoned cane fields, forests, scrub land, grasslands and grazing lands, reservoirs and ponds, swamps and rocks.”¹³

Religion and Festival

The Mauritian society had a diversity of cultures, its population from several backgrounds. Mauritians are mainly descendants of immigrants from France, England, Africa, India and China. The cultural diversity and racial harmony made Mauritius a unique place. At the time the author undertook this project; most Mauritians were

¹¹ BBC News. *Mauritius Country Profile*. Retrieved February 24, 2010 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1063172

¹² UNICEF Retrieved February 24, 2010 from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/mauritius_statistics.html#72 “GDP per capita average annual growth rate (%), 1970–1990; 5.1;(emphasis mine) GDP per capita average annual growth rate (%),1990–2008;3.7(emphasis mine) GDP per capita (emphasis his) - Gross domestic product (GDP) is the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output. GDP per capita is gross domestic product divided by mid-year population. Growth is calculated from constant price GDP data in local currency.”

¹³ Forestry Department Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 Country Report Mauritius*. Retrieved February 24, 2010 from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/a1565E/a1565e.pdf>

multilingual and comprised of different races, cultures and religions. Mauritian culture is based on the diversity of the population, that's why there is no "official religion" in Mauritius. There had been four major religions that exist in Mauritius, namely Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

The faithful gather in temples, churches, mosques that were scattered over the island. Mauritius had a cosmopolitan culture. The main festivals and religious events celebrated in Mauritius are Cavadee, Chinese Spring Festival, Christmas, Divali, Easter, Eid-ul-Fitr, Ganesh Chaturti, Holi, Maha Shivaratree, Père Laval Pilgrimage and Ugadi. The ancestral melting-pot of Mauritian's culture allowed different communities of faith to cohabit in mutual respect.

Ethnic Group in Mauritius

Nowadays in 2014, this cosmopolite population of Mauritius is also known as "*La Nation Arc en Ciel*", the rainbow nation. Ethnic group from Asia composed the majority of Mauritian.

Figure 1 shows cosmopolite population of Mauritius and gives an idea of this cosmopolite population. Mauritius is composed mainly of Hindus, Muslims and General Populations, the three main ethnic groups. According to this census, Hindus were the major ethnic group in Mauritius. But even among the 48% of Hindu, it must be divided into Tamil, Telugu and Marathi. Out of the 48% come the Hindu minorities such as the Tamils (7%), Telugus (3%), and Marathis (2 %) claim a distinct cultural identity of their own.¹⁴

¹⁴ Oddvar Hollop, *Integration, cultural complexity and revivalism in Mauritius*. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://iias.asia/iiasn/10/Regional/10CCCA01.html>

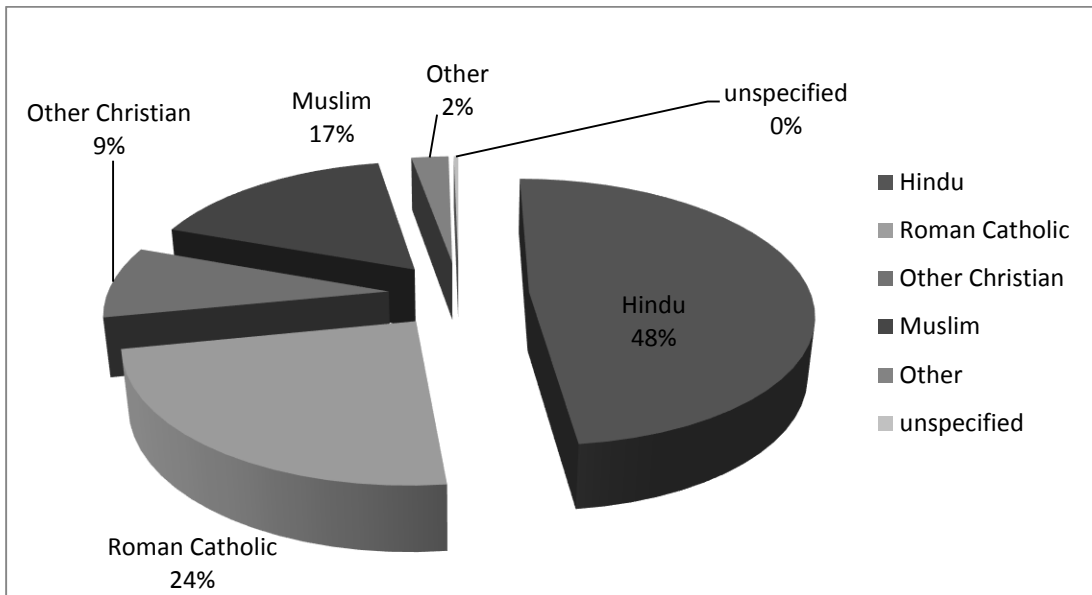


Figure 1. Census 2000 in Mauritius

Languages Spoken

Along with these various ethnic groups, Mauritius had another particularity. Figure 2 shows the languages spoken in Mauritius. Figure 2 showed the languages spoken in Mauritius among the ethnic groups. Most of Mauritians speak creole, even though the large ethnic group spoken Hindi and Bhojpuri. Those spoken languages even though spoken by the majority of Mauritian were not the official language. English had been the official language on the island and all the administrative documents of the government (in parliament, for traffic regulations, for administrative purposes in schools, and it is also the official medium of instruction) were in English. According to census 1986 and 2000, the figure indicated that the majority of

Mauritians did not speak English.¹⁵ However the table also indicated that there is no more language barrier in Mauritius, most Mauritians spoke creole.

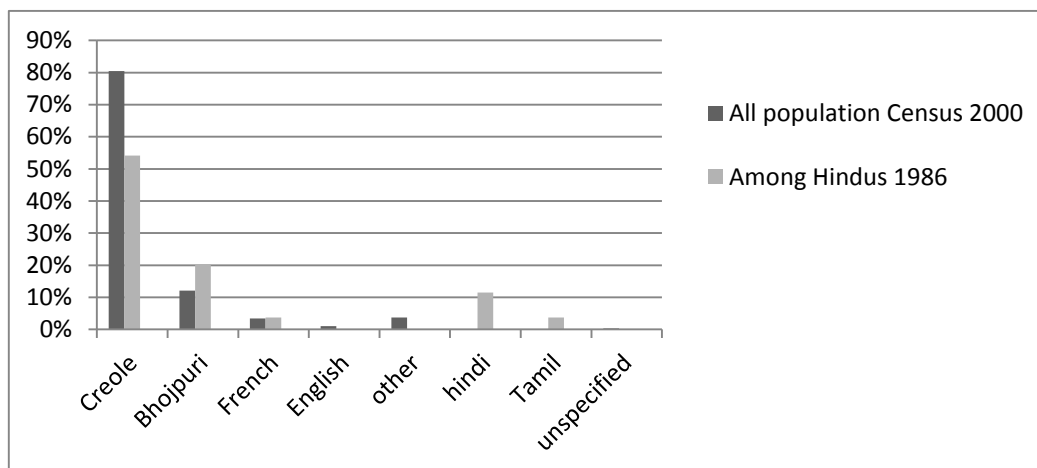


Figure 2. Main Language Speaking in Mauritius

The growing use of Creole by non-Creole Mauritians had reflected a “widespread movement away from ethnically based language use.”¹⁶ French is used in the education and predominated in printed and broadcast media, in affairs and business. It had the status of a semi-official language and it is the most widespread European language used on the island.¹⁷ By this time the Mauritian Creole is very

¹⁵ Emi Sauzier Uchida, *Language Choices in Multicultural Mauritius* Retrieved from May 5 2014 from http://dspace.wul.waseda.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2065/32794/1/KyoyoShogakuKenkyu_126_Sauzier-Uchida.pdf

¹⁶ Helen Chapin Metz, *A Country Study*. Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://www.country-studies.com/mauritius/ethnicity,-religion,-and-language.html>

¹⁷ Sylvie Maurer, *Former British Colony Mauritians in the Face of Globalisation* Retrieved July 11, 2013 from <http://laboratoires.univ-reunion.fr/oracle/documents/290.html>

spoken and is also considered to be the country's native tongue, being used by 90% of the population. This language derived from the French language and with influences coming from other dialects.¹⁸

Districts and Villages

Today in 2014 Mauritius is composed of 10 districts¹⁹, the tenth is Rodrigues. At present time, the Southern part of the island is composed of the district of Grand Port and Savanne, and the west part is Black River. The population stood at 174,718 in 2000. The Grand Port Savanne District Council and some villages councils of the south were founded some 45 years back so as to enable inhabitants of the south to participate actively in the development of their respective villages.

At present, the District Council had under its jurisdiction 36 villages covering an area of 515 square kilometers. Grand Port District had extensive coastal frontage along the east and southern coasts of Mauritius extending from Pointe aux Feuilles on its north-eastern boundary to Butte aux Sables on its southern boundary.²⁰ In this district presently, Mahébourg, L'Escalier, Chemin Grenier villages' councils are situated whereas in Black river district, Cotto Raffin and Bambous village

Indian Ocean Union Mission and Mauritius Conference

Among that variety of culture and ancestral worship and tradition, the Advent Movement was born. The Seventh Adventist Diocese of Mauritius is found in the

¹⁸ Klaus Kastle, *Mauritius Demographics*. Retrieved July 17, 2013 from <http://www.m-a-u-r-i-t-i-u-s.com/trip/mauritius-demographics/>

¹⁹ See Appendix D.

²⁰ Central Statistics Office Ministry of Finance & Economic Development. *Mauritius in Figures*. Retrieved July 17, 2013 from <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/housing/file/gpsav.pdf>

India Ocean Union Mission which was organized in 1938 and reorganized 1960.²¹

Currently the Union has 808 Churches, for a membership comprising 139,673 Adventist members.

In this background presently, the Mauritius Conference is composed of first forty churches and groups involving 4,679 baptized members at 31 December 2011. In 1914 on the 2th of April, Paul Badaut was the first missionary to bring Seventh-day Adventist the Gospel to Mauritius.

A little more than four months after his arrival, Pastor Paul Badaut baptized by immersion the first Mauritians, the number of 24, won to Adventist's cause. The first baptism service held Saturday, September 12, 1914 at the Saint John River at Trianon. As of this date, the small island of Mauritius becomes a full member of the Church of 7th Day Adventists, founded in 1863 in Battle Creek, MI, United States. The French missionary lays the groundwork for Adventist Mission in Mauritius. This entity is then one with Madagascar Mission, "Mauritius-Madagascar Mission of Seventh-Day Adventists", based in Rose Hill.²²

Nowadays the Adventist Diocese had two major institutions and real estate consisted of several houses and two centres, the most important are:

- a. The Adventist college in Phoenix
- b. Retirement home Adventist Rosie Le Meme
- c. The training centre of Phoenix
- d. The youth centre in Belle Mare

Today in 2014, the Diocese is divided in five Areas from the North to the South and the fifth is Rodrigues. The South South–West of the Conference is

²¹ The territory encompassed Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mayotte Reunion, Rodrigues, and Seychelles; with Central Malagasy, Mauritius, and Reunion as Conferences; and the Antsiranana, Mahajanga, Seychelles, and South Malagasy as Missions

²² Breejan Burrun, *The Seventh Day Adventist Mission of Mauritius*, Retrieved July 11, 2013 from 2013, <http://www.lemauricien.org/weekend/110508/mg.htm#4>

composed of eight churches with around 750 Adventists, which is commonly under the leadership of a district pastor. In this part of the Diocese, there were 200 children from 0 to 14 years old according to the Conference Children Ministry Department. This study was held in this particular region.

Research Findings and Analysis

Demographics

A questionnaire was sent in the Adventist churches of South, South-West of Mauritius. The purpose of the questionnaire was to make known how parent catered about the spiritual growth of their children. The survey was also looking about the way parents organized their spiritual activities at home. Hence the general questions were about the background and the family settings. For in the multicultural context of Mauritius, the importance of teaching children could differ from one culture to the other.

Whereas the personal ones were about their family worship, how much time the families invested in spiritual activities, about their child involvement during church activities, about the daily encounter of their child with God and finally the rest of the questions were specific interrogations about the spiritual life of the child. Out of the thirteen questions which had been asked, three were general questions.

Of the 200 questionnaires sent out to the parents, 73 were returned. The age group of the participant was from 20 to 59 years old. The average age was between 30 years old to 39 years old. Among families 64% had a Catholic background, 3% Hindu background and the rest had not mentioned theirs. Presently, this indicated that very few or none had an SDA background when they were young; therefore they were not in constant contact with the aspect of Biblical nurturing in their family. Unfortunately

among the families surveyed only 38% are SDA parents' mother and fathers, 58% of the families had only one parent SDA member and 4% had not declared their status.

These facts may impact on the spiritual growth of the child is not negligible, for a good environment, in one of the three components to facilitate the spiritual education as mentioned in Chapter 2.

Since the parents were the representatives of God on earth (see section on Ellen White writing), the message that the children were receiving can be very confusing and ambiguous, if both don't go in the same direction. Families participating to this survey had various configurations.

Table 7 shows the amount of children in the families surveyed. It gives an idea about the amount of children in the families. This table indicated the composition of the families surveyed with more families have either 2 or 3 children. Assuming that most of them came from the age 6 to 14, it was very challenging to master the art spiritual of teaching and leading if parents were not connected with God. According to the survey, in those families 56 % were girls and 44% were boys. It was a good indication that allowed the author of this work to say that according to the Mosaic instruction, these families needed a sense of belonging to God and His word. Since Mauritian lived in a hectic mood as mentioned in the introduction, a family two children would find it difficult to cope with the demand at work and then at home if they were not well organized.

During the survey, families at random with children were selected. But children were aged from birth and not exceeding 14 years old. Table 8 gives a glimpse about the age group of the children in the families during the survey. These figures illustrate that most of the children comes from the crucial age. For it has been showed in Table 4 that the building character and spiritual awareness starts from birth until 9

years old. And above 9 when training was done properly the child was ready to commit their life to God.

Table 7. Amount of Children in the Families

| Numbers of Children | Families |
|---------------------|----------|
| 4 | 4 |
| 3 | 23 |
| 2 | 29 |
| 1 | 17 |

Table 8 Percentage of Age Group

| Age Group | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------|
| 0 to 2 years old | 11 |
| 3 to 6 years old | 20 |
| 6 to 10 years old | 33 |
| 11 to 14 years old | 36 |

Nurturing Aspects

The author of this work noted from the result of the survey that the time for Family Worship and/or for Morning Watch are supervised for most of the period by mothers, for they are at 54% ; father is represented by 22% and both of them 24%. Even though mothers were taking care of the spiritual needs of their children, this was a reserve situation as stated in Chapter 2.

According to the Biblical foundation, both parents should be involved in the nurturing process of their children, mostly fathers who were known to be the spiritual leader in the family.

Figure 3 showed how surveyed parents were involved in the nurturing process of their kids. It illustrated the input of fathers, mothers, and both in the nurturing process of their kids. There was a substantial transfer in the role of educating children spiritually in the 21st century. We liked it or not, the lack of involvement in the spiritual development of their child had an effect on the child, for the child required both role models to have a balanced growth. It had been a significant shift from the Biblical concept that God gave to the Children of Israel. Mothers were capable to instruct spiritual values to their children but fathers had been appointed by God as the first spiritual leader in their family.

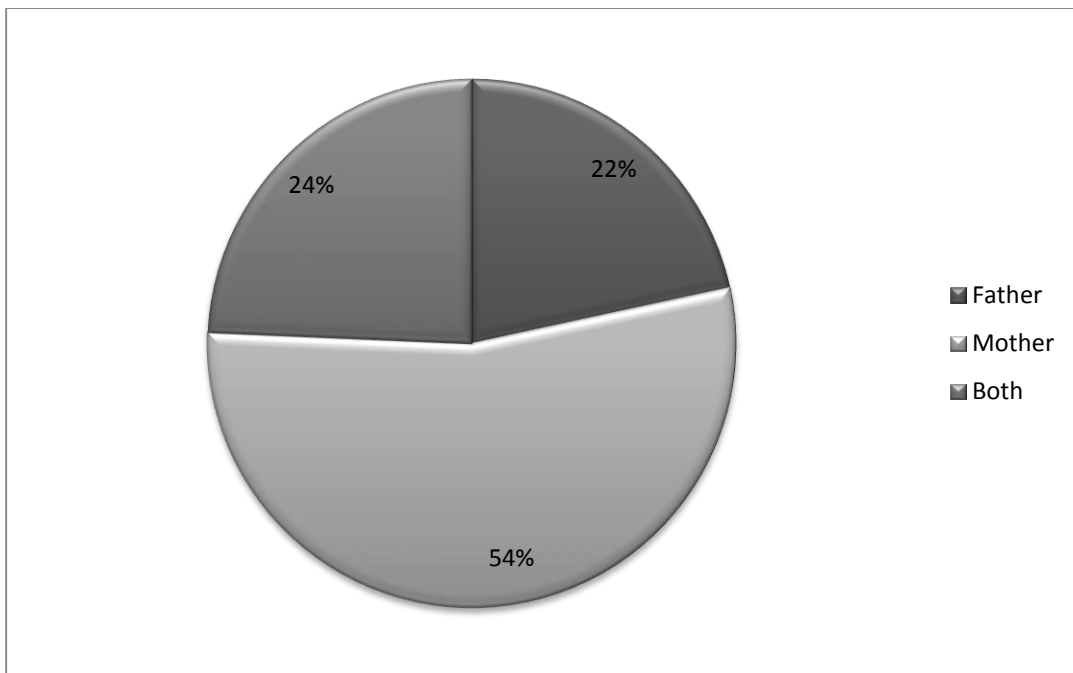


Figure 3 Parents Involvement in the Nurturing of their Children

This shift was not the only one, because 49 % of the families did not plan and prepared their family worship or Morning watch. According to the Biblical foundation, this lack of planning about the spiritual thing was not in line with the teaching of God to Moses when they were in the wilderness.

Today in 2014, life and our society is about planning, the same thing applied to our spiritual time in the family setting. Lack of organisation in this matter had been a hindrance in the spiritual development of the child.

Figure 4 shows whether parents planned the spiritual time at home. Figure 4 gave an idea of the situation in the families surveyed. It demonstrated that for 30% the families surveyed the spiritual moments can be done without planning. For 19% it didn't matter for them to plan or not to plan. Families, who didn't plan, sent a wrong message to their children; message can be or is perceived that God and his teachings were not a priority in these types of family.

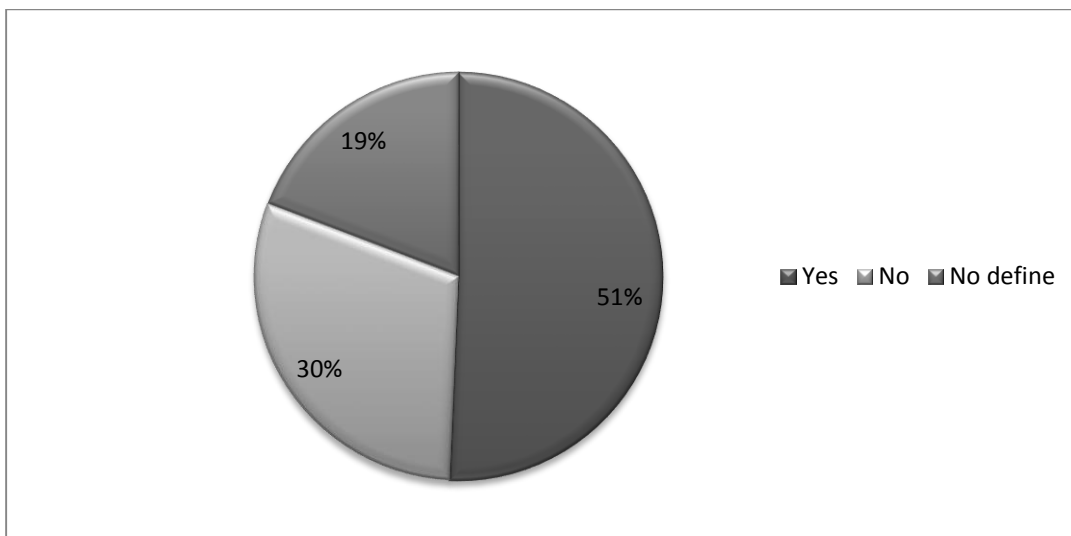


Figure 4 Planning of Spiritual Time

As Mfuné stated that “a home atmosphere which is tense and disorganized is a recipe for future disaster in the lives of your children.”²³ Following the shift in the role of the spiritual leadership in the home, the author of this work had found a relationship between the use of time in the teachings of our beliefs and this shift.

The lack of time and planning in the family circle would have an impact on the time used in teaching our beliefs and values. Along with the organisation of these spiritual moments, consequently the time factor was crucial.

Figure 5 showed how much time is used in the teaching of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. This chart in figure 5 showed that parents used less than time to nurture their child. As it is shown in the figure 5, 60% did not indicate how much time they used to teach their children. It indicated that time they allowed for spiritual things is or may not be a priority.

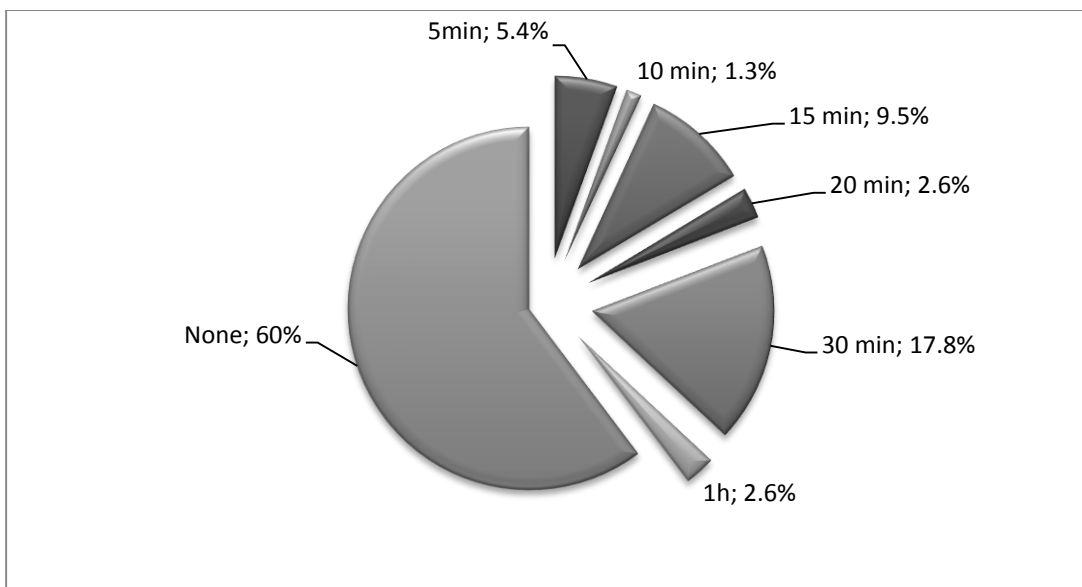


Figure 5 Showing the Amount of Time Parent used to Teach their Children

²³ Saustin Sampson Mfuné, *111 Tips For Raising Godly Kids*, (West Cape, South Africa: Africa Publishing Company, 2012) 70.

Teaching SDA beliefs is not a primary thing in these families. Hence those children in this 60 % were in danger spiritually speaking. Apart from that, the average of minutes they used is around 5-10 minutes daily. These figures needed a lot of attention to understand them more especially when we compared them with the amount of time children spent in school and in front of a television. It was mentioned in Table 10²⁴, that the majority were from the age group of 3-6 and 11-14 years of age. As stated on page 37, the average time of concentration is five minute for pre-schoolers and 10-15 above 10 years old.

This survey demonstrated that among the 11% of the families only 5.4 taught their children for about 5 minutes; this situation had not portraying a good picture at all. Whereas the age group of 6 to 14years the chart showed a significant decline in the time allotted for daily teaching. Among the 69% of the families in this same group age, only 1.3% used 10 minutes to teach, time frame with the least according to Donna Habenicht. Nevertheless it also indicated that 17.8 % of the families used 30 minutes to teach their children. This had been a positive outcome. In line with figure 1 and figure 2 gave an idea on how the parents feel about their children imitating their spiritual experience.

In every normal family, children took their parent as their role. Parents cannot escape to this role. Figure 6 showed how children imitate their parents in their spiritual experience It gave an idea about impact of the parent spiritual life on their kids, even though only 12% of parents felt that in any situation, they made an impact. On the basis of this pie chart, 43% of the parents don't feel that they have an impact or little impact on the spiritual life of their children. When we combined that 43% to the 45% who is taught from time to time; this survey gave an idea how far we were from

²⁴ See page 78.

what God intended in the Pentateuch. In the Torah God intended the Hebrew parents to be role models for their children; these facts showed that 88% of the families surveyed don't take their role as spiritual leaders for the children as a daily top priority as stated in Chapter 2.

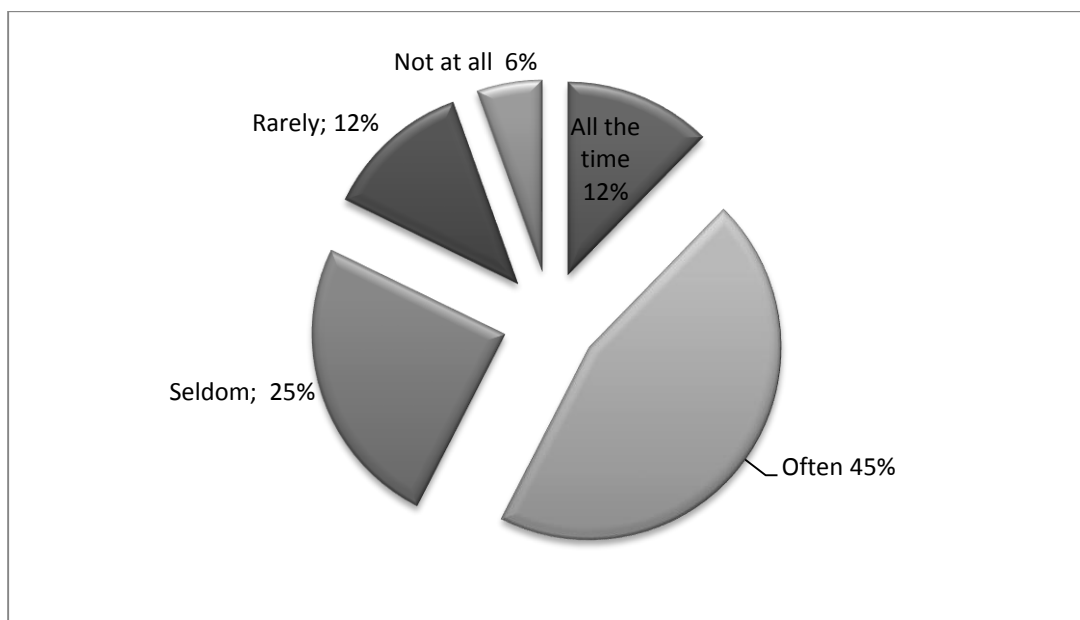


Figure 6. Children Imitating Parents' Spiritual Experience

These percentages showed that parents had a lot to do, in order for them to achieve what God intended for their families. Only 12% of the participants felt that their spiritual life had an impact on the daily experience of their children.

During the survey the families were asked about the spiritual moment at home. It was about morning watch, teaching the Sabbath school lesson and family worship.

Figure 7 showed the percentage of parents getting involved in the planning of these spiritual activities. According to Figure 7, those basic spiritual activities were monitored by at least 50 % of parents. It also showed that almost 50% of the families that had participated in the survey did not have morning worship at their place.

Various reasons could be associated with facts, no time at all, parents going to work

very early. Still among these participants, half don't have a daily encounter with God. It is a dangerous thing since children take their parents as their role model.

Figure 7 also shows a decline compared to the percentage of Sabbath school lesson study mentioned in Chapter 1. Less than 50 % studied their Sabbath school lesson.

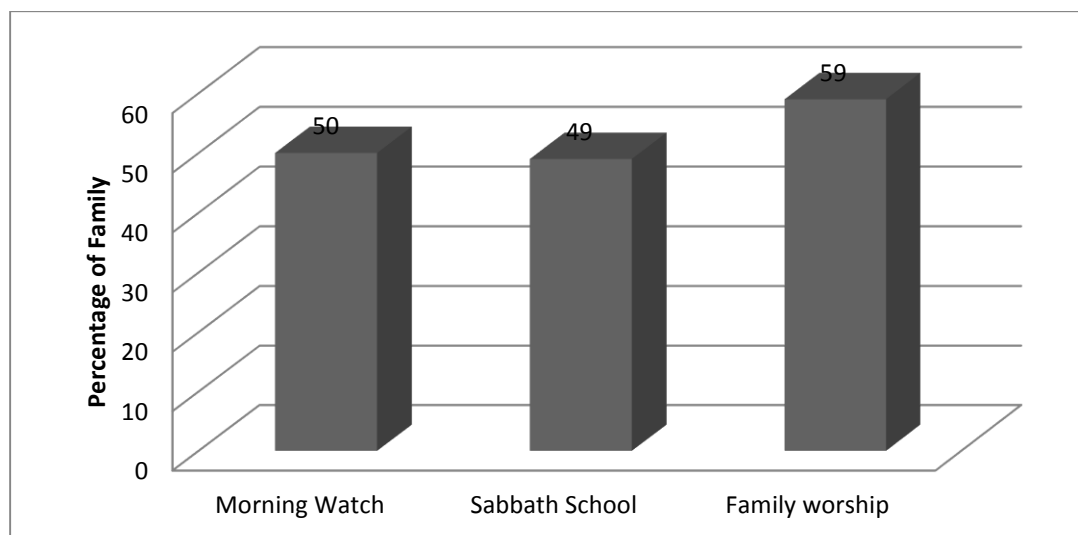


Figure 7. Percentage of Families doing Morning Watch, Sabbath School

This could be explained by the fact that 51% of the families did their Sabbath school alone. By saying so, children were left by themselves. They were without guidance. It was an indication of little or no time or the parents felt that their children could manage these lessons alone.

Since training meant to lead by example, the author of this work had been asking how much a child could go on without assistant when he or she sorted out his/her Sabbath school lesson. Throughout the Old Testament it had been stated that parents were responsible for the nurturing of the child or children. Hence if during family worship, time was not allowed to find out if the lesson had been well assimilated, the child could miss the opportunity of spiritual growth. But still the

graph showed that in the spiritual moments mentioned, almost 50 % don't teach their children daily or periodically.

Figure 8 shows time allocated for morning watch and the percentage of families doing it. It showed how only 24% used more than ten minutes. Families that were involved in this survey were also asked about the use of time. Since Mauritian lived by the time is money slogan, this data helped to understand the priority of the Adventist family. It gave an idea of how much time was allocated for morning watch. It revealed that time allocated for morning watch is poor and in some case very sticking. Among the group surveyed, only 24% of them used 10 minutes or more to nurture their kids at home, nevertheless assuming that presently spiritual nurturing is a priority a lot of improvement is needed in this area. As mentioned in Table 5, 50% of those in the group age 0 to 2 years old did not teach of at least 5 minutes. This trend was recurrent in all of the age group.

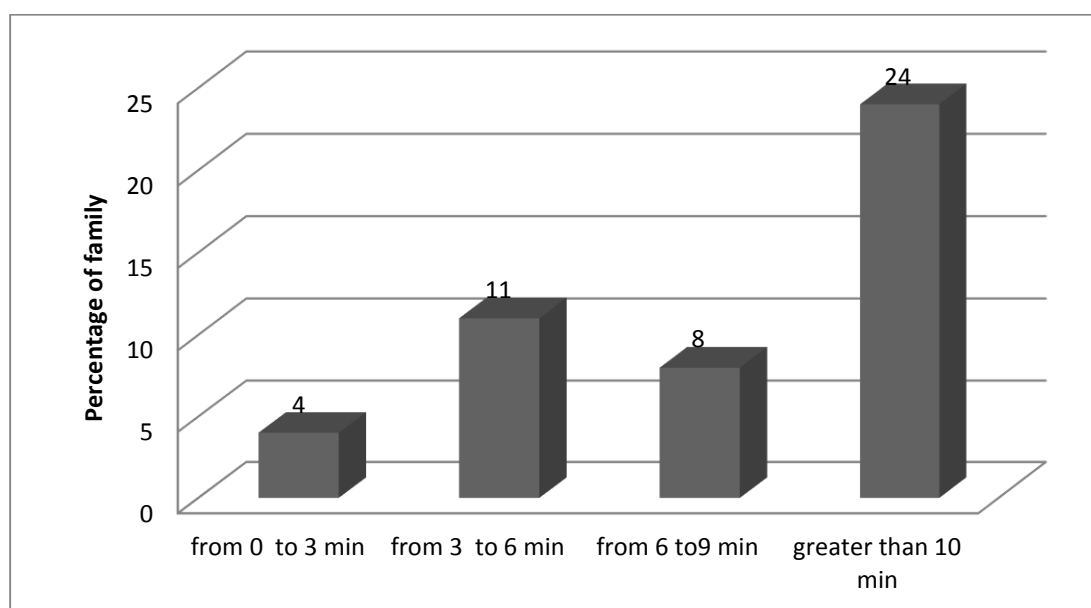


Figure 8. Time Allocated for Morning Watch and Percentage of Family

Since Mauritians live in a frantic and demanding mood, this tendency had affected time spent in family worship in these Adventists home. Meanwhile the situation was not totally a negative one, for 24 % of the families out of the 73 participants' survey were doing their best to have a sustainable time frame for the Morning watch. In the time frame of 10 to 15 minutes the same result could be said for the time allocated for School. But for family worship in this time frame, it was 10% only, whereas for family in the time frame of > 15 minutes it is 26 %. These figure explained that there must be a change in the time allocated for spiritual moments if parents wanted to make an impact and left a legacy for the future. The two indications from the survey had shown that almost 50% of the participants said that their children don't pray systematically and don't ask for the spiritually food.²⁵

During the process of collecting data, the research focused on the involvement of children during church's programs. Few questions were asked about parents sending their children to those activities.

Figure 9 showed the attendance during church programs such as baptismal class, small groups, adventurer/pathfinder and so on It showed the attendance during programs organized by the church. Among the family surveyed during the Sabbath programs the attendance was and above 50 over 70 children. On the other days of the week the attendance was relatively under 30 children. Especially during the prayer meeting on Wednesday, the attendance was at its lowest point.

Since Mauritius had a cosmopolite population with various ethnic groups, knowing what is done elsewhere could be a good indication. Hence information was gathered about Muslim and Catholic used of time in nurturing process.

²⁵ See Appendix F.

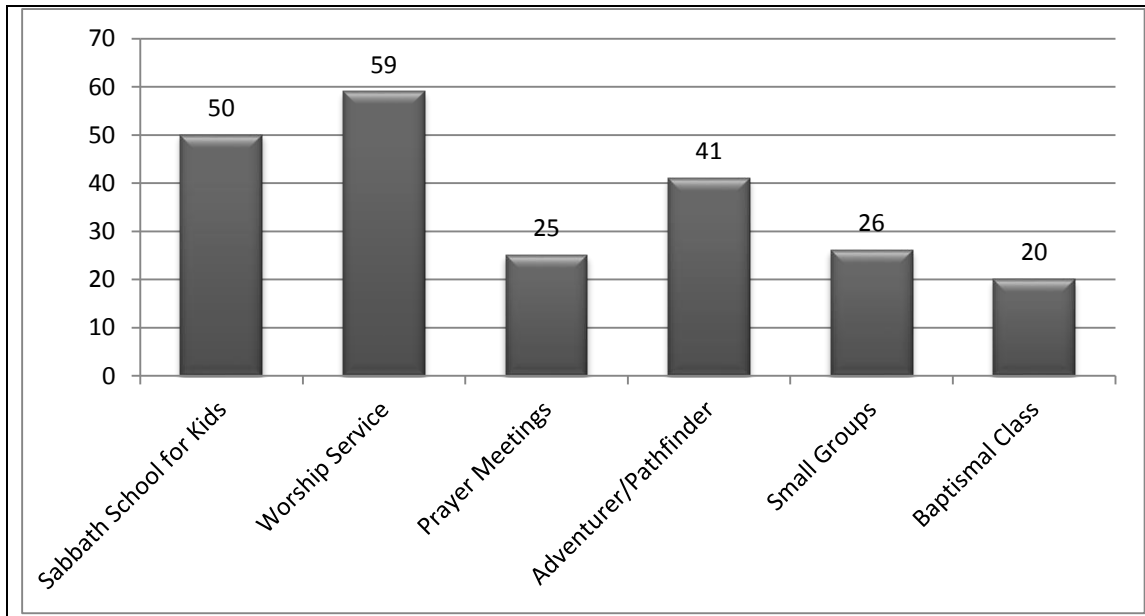


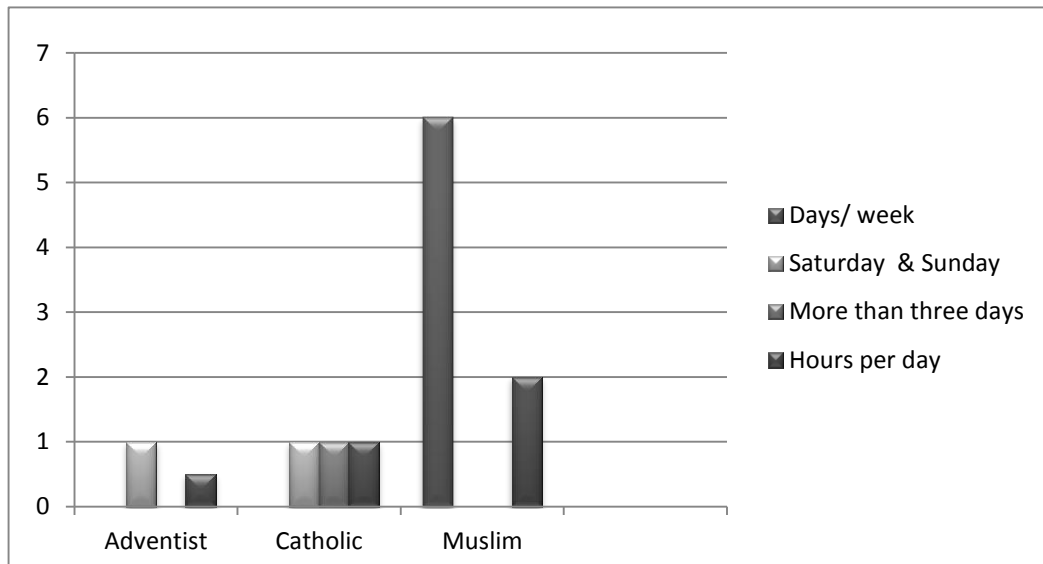
Figure 9. Attendance During Church Programs

Figure 10 shows the comparison among other religious bodies in term of nurturing children spiritually. Figure 10 revealed what is done among Muslim and Catholic in term of teaching children. In comparison with the two ethnic groups, an Adventist child in Mauritius spent only one day of the week in church. He stayed there, depending on the activity between 30 minutes to 1hr 30, whereas a Muslim²⁶ child spent two hours, six days during the week in the Mosque. On the other side, the Catholic child spent more than three days at church programs. For the Adventist parents we could assume that the rest of the week, they would take over from the church's program and activities. But this survey had shown that 49 %²⁷ of parents weren't taking their responsibility as it should be. Even though that the context was not the same we could see where Muslim placed the priority for their child.

²⁶ A Muslim child spent 2 hours daily in the Mosque learn Quran and Kaida, according to Zaheer Summun, a former Muslim converted to a 7th Day Adventist. He is a member of Glen Park Adventist Church and currently, the adventurer Director. Kaida is a book in which they learn Arabic.

²⁷ See Appendix F.

Figure 10 Comparison Between Days and Hours Spent in Spiritual Activity



Conclusion

According to the findings, the author of this work acknowledges that much needs to be done in assisting parents to raise their children. Time had been one of the major hindrances. Participation in the activities during the Sabbath was higher compared to other days of the week. Parents were less and less perceived as role models in the family. Therefore our fundamentals beliefs weren't rooted in the hearts of our children. Nevertheless in some situations, the percentage of participation was reasonable. These situations are reversible if proper action is taken. Based on this analysis and finding,, recommendations will be given to improve and make an impact in the spiritual life of the parents and children. The following chapter will try to address these issues and challenges.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

“We believed that children and young people should be the single greatest priority for [families and churches] in the coming decade. If children’s work is neglected you lose the next generation,” said Patrick Johnstone.¹ Johnstone’s statement posits the responsibility of the family and church in the domain of working with children. In other word, he was at this time advocating that it is a must for the families and churches to invest time, energy and money, anything less, will place the next generation in danger. This investment should be of long and short term so that it can enabled the families and the churches to achieve their goals.

In the present day in 2014, “children’s ministries are about developing the faith of children ages birth to fourteen. [It] looks at the whole child and seeks to provide multiple ministries that will lead children to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him.”² Hence this chapter discussed about various programs, suggested solution and recommendation in trying to be close to God’s ideal for raising children.

¹ Kayetkm Chalwe, *Transforming Kids Ministry*. Retrieved February 05, 2014 from <http://transformingkidsministry.com/2013/03/03/great-childrens-ministry-and-leadership-quotes-from-cpc2013/>

² General Conference of Seventh Day Adventist Children’s Ministries. *Our Philosophy*. Retrieved February 05, 2014 from <http://www.gcchildmin.org/philosophy/index.html>

Program Design

The model of program didn't not necessary follow one specific pattern, since the needs for the children differed from 0-3, 4-8 to 9-14 years old. Therefore micro programs had been designed for specific purposes which go along with the findings and tendencies found during the survey. Some ideas that had been implanted, and were in line with the General Conference program for Children's Ministries. Throughout this chapter a variety of programs, activity, ideas and suggestions were presented.

JAMENCO

JAMENCO was a magazine that had been designed to help kids increase their knowledge about God. It was a French acronym (*Jésus Avec Moi, je dois un Enfant CONquérant*), stood for: *Jesus with me, I become a conqueror child*. Since 2011, the magazine is published each quarterly along with the adult magazine 'Le LIEN'. Each quarter had a specific theme such as "sharing Jesus to other Kid, wisdom, Easter, Christmas and the truth." The content was planned such a way that the child would need the assistance of their parent. This intended partnership between the child and his parent were there to remind parent that their involvement in the spiritual growth of their children was not optional. Now that the conference had produced more than 7 magazines, it became a most for the kids. Their interest in spiritual things had increased. Hence the author of this work in those times had achieved one of the purposes of this magazine that is to stimulate the desire to be acquainted with spiritual thing and to create awareness about the Bible and Jesus.

Sermons, and Other Relevant Materials

To impact parents and churches about working with children, once a year as from 2011, sermons had been written to sensitize them. The adventurer and children ministries special Sabbath were used to bring awareness about children spiritual growth. These sermons were preached all around the island. Since it was a large public during divine service, most of the church members and church officers were placed in front of their own responsibility toward children and children ministries. According to the survey, there was a great necessity to shift paradigm as mentioned in chapter 3. For much was invested in the academic domain of the children and far less in his/her spiritual life. So the aims of the sermons were to alert about the issues concerning children's spiritual growth and the building character of children. One of the sermons had the theme "An open church for Children." Open in this context meant to put the children first and to care about his/her spiritual growth. The church should be a place where children would like to go. The full content of the sermon is found in the Appendix H. Along with these sermons stuffs were shared so that churches and families can impact on the spiritual life of their children.

In every church liturgy, children's time had been added. A book with meaningful stories was produced to sustain this effort. To reinforce our belief in tithe and offerings, from now on each child has his own tithe and offerings envelope. Since Sabbath school lessons played a major role in the spiritual growth of children, the Conference had introduced the teacher's guide for Grace Link lessons. This guide had help to improve the quality of the delivery of the lessons.

From now on, L'Escalier Adventist Church and Mahébourg Adventist Church both had teacher's meeting for children lessons. These changes made teachers felt more confident in the presentation of the lessons.

Prayer Meeting for Children

Thirty years ago children would go to church and be a part of the prayer meeting along with their parents. Nowadays the author of this work had found that adult programs along with adult terminology don't suit children at all. As a way of addressing this problem, Mahébourg and L'Escalier Adventist church had planned to have a prayer meeting for children. Once a week, children (Adventists and non-Adventists) were gathered for their prayer meeting. During these meetings, children would learn to pray and sing praises to God. A part from that, systematically they were taught the 28 fundamentals beliefs of the Seventh Day Adventist Church for children. A French translation of our beliefs had been shared among the churches in the South South-West of the island. After that they would learn the 10 commandments and its implication.

During the implantation of the micro programs, the reorganisation of the prayer meeting for children was a priority.

Table 9 showed the attendance during the meeting slightly increases in 2012 for parents had understood the concept. It was more than a baptismal class, for the teachers (at least two) would take the time needed to teach the child. Among the group of children who attended those meeting six were been baptized. The aim of the prayer meeting was to nurture the children in such a way that they will have a solid biblical foundation in their life.

Table 9. Attendance During Children Prayer Meeting

| Churches | Mahébourg Adventist church | L'Escalier Adventist church |
|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2011 | 10 children/meeting | 15 children/meeting |
| 2012 | 15 children/meeting | 23 children/meeting |

Bible Camp

The concept of Bible camp was designed by the former Children ministry director Sister Roseline Labonne. As from 2007, once a year, a Bible camp was organized in Belle Mare Adventist Youth Centre. The main rule was, each Adventist kid should bring at least a non-Adventist friend with him. These camps were sponsored by the conference. At least 1000 dollars were invested for the camp each year, for the conference administrators believed and supported fully this project.

During the period November 2010 until March 2014, the author of this work was in charge of the organization of these camps, and changed the rule slightly. All non-baptized children in the church were allowed to participate even though they did not bring a non-Adventist friend. In December 2011, children from the South South-West churches were gathered together for five days. The attendance varied with at least 60 % non-Adventist participants. We stayed in Adventist Youth Centre in Belle Mare and the Bible Society complex. Along with other micro programs Bible camps were scheduled to improve the spiritual development of children. Those camps had a specific program just like the vacation bible school.

Table 10 showed the attendance for the participants during the Bible camp from 2012 to 2013. The figures in the table indicated how much parents and churches believed in this program. Since Bible camps weren't programmed just for fun and for the sake of having an activity. The main philosophy behind was to cater for the spiritual life and the mission life of the children.

Table 10. Attendance During Bible Camp

| Year | 2012 | 2013 |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| Amount of participant | 205 | 120 |
| Non-Adventist participants | 137 | 63 |

During the Bible camp, a specific program was designed which include learning about Jesus, stewardship, health for kids and craft. Among the instructor, lay people, children ministries officers and pastors worked together so that the goal could be accomplished. Our main goal was to draw the kids closer to Jesus and by the end of the camp, kids had learned more about the Bible and Jesus.

Council with Elders and Delegates from all the Church

Throughout 2010-2013, Mauritius Adventist Conference used to organize a council for members, Elders, personal ministries officers and pastors. During one of these councils 2011, time was set aside so that the author of this work could explain the philosophy, purpose and the challenges of working with children in the church.

The content of the presentation was based on the program “Kids in Discipleship.” For the first time, an assembly was in front the reality about working with children, in the churches and families. Adding to the presentation a booklet was shared for elders and pastors “*children ministries manual for elders and pastors.*” In 2012 a batch of 80 persons were taught in Phoenix training centre for three days about children issues in the church. Children ministries officers, adventurer staff, children Sabbath school officers and the other individuals attended these training sessions. The emphasis was about the theology of children ministries and working with kids. Most of the participants stayed overnight; hence informal discussion took place about this

issue. A part from the council and training session, pastors were informed and encouraged to work with the children ministries department in the local churches. Each year during the first quarter, the author of this work had trained adventurer officers, children Sabbath school officers and also children ministries officers. His aim was that these officers could grasp the philosophy and theology of working with children.

Church for Children

Nowadays we lived in a consumerism society. Public and private infrastructures were designed to response to the needs of the consumers. If they missed those aspects, this meant bankruptcy for them. In addition to that, shops, shopping malls, airports and so on were studying and responding to the need of the children in their businesses. A lot had been done, to conquer the market. Yet in our own churches, we had been missing this concept.

E. Stimson said “it takes more than preaching aimed at children so that the young ones would have the feeling of being part of our community of faith.”³ Having that statement in mind, churches must grasp the concept of having a place for kids; not only a room, but also an environment where the spiritual growth of the children would expand. If we wanted a change in the church of tomorrow, we needed to start now. So the concept “churches for children” was churches which were aware of the physical, social, spiritual and emotional need. In those churches, all the furniture and other stuff took in consideration the needs of the children.

³ E. Stimson, *The Church Will Have To Change*. Retrieved February 11, 2014 from <http://www.pcusa.org/today/archive/feature>

The programs from the pulpit to the various classes responded to their needs and were planned and prepared with all the professionalism required, nothing was done by chance. No matter how much it would cost, the needs of the children came first, for their eternal life is presently at stake. This aim of this concept was to “put the children first in every aspect.” L’Escalier Adventist church had understood this concept. Gradually they had started to redesign the church’s environment for their children. Since 2012, Sister Daniella Pyndiah⁴ and her team had invested their time and money for the well-being for the kids.

This year, once a month, they had a Bible class for the kids; during these sessions children were taught about Jesus, and also Fundamentals Belief of the 7th Day Adventist Church.

Children Prayer Meetings and Evangelistic Efforts

A part from the Bible class, the church program for kids included children prayer meeting, Ten Days of prayer, Evangelistic effort for children and the Church week of prayer in November.

Table 11 shows the progress this church had made in three of the activities mentioned above. In L’Escalier Adventist Church nurturing children became gradually a top priority for the children’s ministries department. In this table above, before 2011, the interest about nurturing our children in L’Escalier Adventist Church was low about 5-10 children during the programs. As from 2011 an average of 25

⁴ She is the children ministries director for the last year 3 years and for the 2 years to come. Leaving in a poor village, her vision was to help every child to know Jesus. She started with the aid of her mother in law and sister in law. Nowadays her ministry is well known in the village. There is no need for her to go a look for children. The children promoted to their friend what is done at Daniella’s place. With a good training, she and her team are able to cater for the spiritual and physical need of those children.

children assisted the program design for them. An evangelistic effort was designed for them and among the attendance there were also non-Adventist. The theme was “the Hero of faith.” Those non-Adventist children in the village of L’Escalier most of them were catholic background.

Table 11. Attendance During Children Programs at L’Escalier Adventist Church

| Children programs | 2011 | 2012 |
|-------------------------|------|------|
| Children prayer meeting | 10 | 50 |
| Ten Days of prayer | 25 | 30 |
| Evangelistic effort | 45 | 34 |

One of them told his parent that he wanted to become an Adventist and other wanted to skip the first communion training. This had upset some Catholic teachers. During the evangelistic effort the amount of children increased a lot.

Figure 11 shows the progression in the attendance day by day. Crusade for children could be a great asset in the mission of the Adventist Church. The church understood that children also needed to hear the gospel from early age, these crusades helped to achieve this goal.

It also showed the attendance during a children’s crusade in Mahébourg and L’Escalier Seventh day Adventist Church. The average of children during this program was 38 for Mahébourg and 35 for L’Escalier. Through this evangelistic effort 56 children visited and 54 children visited Mahébourg and L’Escalier respectively. In those two areas, the challenge was big for children from various backgrounds participate during these activities, even though most of the children come from a Catholic background.

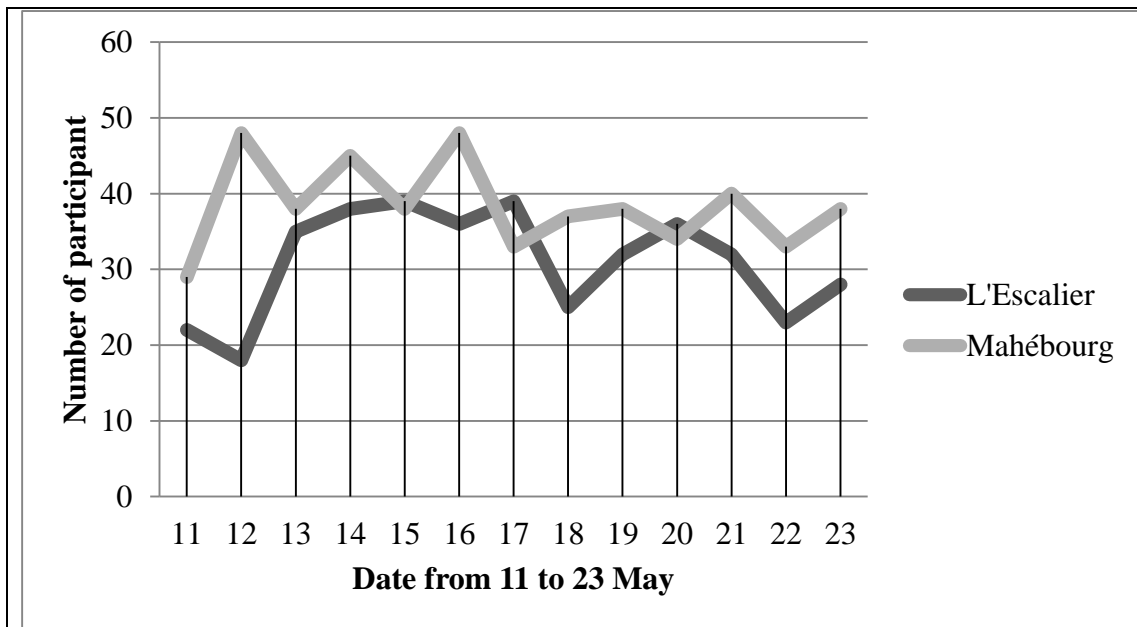


Figure 11. Attendance During Children's Crusade

Since the work with children had been systematic, the influence of this church had increased significantly in the area. There was a time when Sister Daniella Pyndiah and her team had asked children to stay at their place, for they were not fully equipped to afford all these children this ministry.

Bible Timeline

The Conference had also invested a lot to help parents with the spiritual growth of their children. A Bible timeline was produced and share among 940 children who were the most regular, during evangelistic effort for children. The timeline was a guide to help the child to follow the chronology of events in the Bible until Jesus comes again. Parents were encouraged to guide their children through this adventure in the *Lien* magazine. With the aid of his/her parents, the child would learn a lot about Salvation and Sin. The aim of this Bible timeline was to bring the Bible stories in the life of children. With all these improvement, children began to fill welcome in their churches. Now, parents began to realize how much need to be done

to sustain the spiritual growth of their children. In spite of the challenges, the church board of L'Escalier had voted to support financially programs from the department. The church board felt that the church needed to invest time and money in those programs and activities.

In summarizing this section, the author of this work had observed that the numerous programs and meetings set up for the children of the targeted churches had greatly increased their spiritual welfare. Such programs and meetings for children could therefore be adapted to a broader region with great success.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

Based on our discussion on the theological/biblical foundation, the local setting and the analysis of finding, I presented practical implications and suggestions to tackle the problem and to improve the situation for the children to maximize their full spiritual potential. Briefly here were problems encountered: time factor, the shift in spiritual leadership role, parents were not perceived as role model, spiritual training not a priority, no sufficient monitoring and modernity as hindrance to enhance spiritual growth.

Time had been a major obstacle in this century. As a result it had affected many Christian homes. Fathers and Mothers don't have sufficient time to spend with their kids "for they are often too busy or too tired to perform their nurturing task with much energy and/or enthusiasm."⁵ Unfortunately, when these families gained more time, they had neglected the daily nurturing and monitoring of their children.

⁵ Knight, 100.

Parents were not seen and perceived as role model nowadays, since TV, friends and other stuffs had replaced them.

Therefore “the media provided [to them] their standards and push their desires [beyond their limits].”⁶

The media-television, computers, videos-are powerful influences on children’s lives. They provide heroes, tell them what to buy, teach them how to solve problems with violence or sex, and encourage them to be passive observers of life instead of active participants.⁷

In addition to that modern technology even though it seemed to be of great help, it had taken a major place in the kids’ life. For now children were left alone and they weren’t nurturing themselves properly. The impact for the early one may seemed to be negligible. But it was obvious that childhood is once in a lifetime opportunity to fill our children minds with proper thoughts. Andrew Murray made a similar point when he noted that there had been a need for parents to be mentors. He said that “education involves no so much what we do not say, but most of all *what we are*.”⁸Missing this opportunity could be at the parents’ own risk.

The solutions proposed would be first address to parents, then church leaders and the conference. Nevertheless since the challenges in parenting and working with children were big, all the solution should take in consideration the context, environment, and the academic level of the parents before using them right away.

⁶ Donna Habenicht and Larry Burton, 18.

⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁸ Andrew Murray, *Raising Your Children For Christ* (New Kensington, U.S.A: Whitaker House, 1984), 103.

Parents

Nowadays parents are often tired and pressured with work.⁹ Time had been a major hindrance for them; “every family member is hurrying from one activity to another, including children.”¹⁰ Consequently time allocated to nurture their children at home was not enough. This time factor was a major challenge for parents and children.

Therefore it gave a good reason to have specific time frame or the reinstatement of the daily family worship in the home. The family worship must be more no less than 30 minutes and not more than one hour. The program must be attractive and creative since “children learn less from words and more from pictures and designs.”¹¹ A sample of a 30 minutes guide is provided to parents.¹² The content should include history telling, memorizing verse, intercessory prayer and songs. Depending on the accessibility of the parents and children’s schedule, it was advisable to have at least one family worship daily. Doing so, daily monitoring is a must; even though we tend to believe that since the child was in age of understanding everything so we could leave him/her alone.

To achieve this goal, modern technology could be a good aid by creating an electronic planner, with daily reminder; this could help parents to become systematic. For those who couldn’t afford these technologies, they could design their planner on a board and set the alarm of their watch.

⁹ Habenicht and Burton, 17.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Habenicht and Burton, 19.

¹² See Appendix I. p 115

Both parents and children would gain from this close monitoring. In the same vein, child development expert Urie Bronfenbrenner pointed out that “the most important setting for a young child is his family, because that is where he spends the most time and because it has the most emotional influence on him.”¹³

Therefore the dining room or in the child’s bed were places where nurturing and monitoring could be done. A family council should be instituted. This small comity is where family’s problems were discussed, prayed about and solved.

There should be a set of rules within the family circle on how to face any situation.¹⁴ These rules would guide parents smoothly through the challenges of raising children [God’s way].¹⁵ For example, if the child didn’t want to pray, parents needed to focus on the problem not on the person. Our response should be don’t force him/her to pray. As a home,¹⁶ parents should invest time to teach and to nurture their kids. Today in 2014, homes must rediscover his first purpose, which was a place of learning.

¹³ Urie Bronfenbrenners, *Ecological Model of Child Development*. Retrieved February 16 2014 from [http://oconto.uwex.edu/files/2011/02/AppendixB-BronfenbrennersEcologicalModelofChild Development.pdf](http://oconto.uwex.edu/files/2011/02/AppendixB-BronfenbrennersEcologicalModelofChildDevelopment.pdf)

¹⁴ Richard Templar, *The Rules of Parenting*, (Edinburgh Gate, Great Britain: Clays ltd, Bungay, Suffolk, 2008), 3. The point here [speaking about the rules] is that you’ll enjoy the thing a whole lot more if you stay sane. Your sanity isn’t only important because you are important, but also because your children need sane parents. And there are just a few Rules that you’ll find, once you get the hang of them, help you keep your head when all about you are bawling theirs off.

¹⁵ Ibid., 241.

¹⁶ Urie Bronfenbrenners, *Ecological Model of Child Development*. Home is the most influential system in a child's environment while he or she is developing. The family influences every part of the child's life, for example his or her beliefs, nutrition, language, and health. No matter what type of family a child comes from, the home is a very important system in the environment of a developing child.

Parents were encouraged to develop a strategy along with their children. Spiritual learning and growth would then become a priority.

Church Leadership

The local church leaders were asked to have a close attention to what is done in children ministries department including adventurer, teen Sabbath school and other children's activities and programs. "Yesterday's be-quiet-be-reverent-and-listen-to-me teaching methods will not work [nowadays]."¹⁷

Hence systematically, elders and pastors needed to go and see what is done in the small church. Twice a year with those working with children, they should evaluate what is done and what is taught. Their participation is not required for it is a must, so that their input can improved the quality of the teaching. They should follow the mission, vision and philosophy for the conference department. These officers should not be left alone; they must feel that the church leadership cares for them. Another thing, a close monitoring should be done with the Sabbath school record. Leaders needed to tackle the issue of the decrease in the study of the Bible during visitation. There was no need to wait for the business meeting, it would be too late. Bi-monthly with the children's officers, they gathered the parents to access the situation and bring practical solution.

When the budgeting time arrived, child's work should have a fair amount of money to be able to achieve their goals. From time to time or once in the semester, the preaching should be about raising kid's God way.

¹⁷ Donna J Habenicht and Larry Burton, 20.

Along with that, the church leaders must make their church a children friendly place.

The church could

- show the children God's love and care as well as His acceptance and salvation.
- show a child God's way, the limits He sets and the way He helps in daily living.
- challenge [them] to make choices and think clearly about God's way in a confused, muddled, and frightening world.
- introduce them to a friendship with Jesus, their forever friend.¹⁸

The church leadership should allow some changes in the worship service to adapt the involvement of children in the church liturgy. For example: junior deacon, scripture reading by a little one and the introduction young preacher on the pulpit. "Childhood leads the way to adulthood. A child led to Christ can never totally forget Him."¹⁹

The Conference

Practical seminar about parenting should be scheduled on each quarterly along the family department of the church. A national survey should be done to more understand the needs and the wants for parents. This would help parents to be empowered.

Equipping the parents on a monthly basis and evaluation their progress could support to develop a good habit. Thus, these training and seminar will prove to parents that spiritual growth is not optional. Nowadays it is a top priority for their little ones.

A part from seminar, the conference was highly encouraged to have a clear policy about working with children and children growth. The nominating committee

¹⁸ Donna J Habenicht and Larry Burton, 21.

¹⁹ Ibid.

for the conference election must not look down the election of children ministry director. For this nomination can and would impact on the quality of service that was delivered. He/she should be a full time director.

In the same vein, the Conference should recommend to the pastors to see to it that the election of children officers in the churches isn't business as usual. Unfortunately the church had the tendency to appoint officers just as stop gap. Those officers should be able to stay in office no less than 3 years. A lot of change especially among the young ones section disturbing the child in the feeling and emotional. If there is a need for change it must be done smoothly.

The use of manual from the General Conference/ Division/Union should be taken in consideration in the Conference. These good stuffs don't fit the local context. The Conference director and his/her team should browse them before sending them in the churches. For example, the content of Gracelink lessons sometimes wasn't the same as it is presented in the Bible mainly when these lessons were translated in other languages. Hence there is a need to give the proper information.

Summary and Conclusion

Working with and for children today, it is one the best thing that can happen to church leaders, officers and parents. But they needed our care and attention daily. Equipping and empowering parents could help to reverse the tendency. On the same vein, the church leadership should get involve systematically in the program, activities and whatever is done for children. Along with parents and the church leadership, the Conference input and involvement showed that working with children is one of their top priorities. Therefore these programs, solutions and recommendations were there to pave the road for a better understand of children growth and their potentials in the church.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study is about raising children in God's way for the South-South West of Mauritius. Of particular interest for the implementation and the evaluation of the program were the churches of Mahébourg and L'Escalier.

Chapter 1 had focused on the background of the problem, the definition of terms, delimitations and the methodology which is the procedure used in attempting to address the identified problem. People were living a 'time is money' slogan; there were not time to invest in the spiritual life of their children. It also highlighted the challenge about the raising children God's way in a developing country. This aspect in the family life was not a priority. The South-south west churches and families were also living in this hectic mood and there were a decrease in the Sabbath school lessons and other church program especially among children.

Chapter 2 was about the biblical foundations about raising children God's Way. In both Old and New Testament, the study showed that children should be nurtured and mentored in the family. Parents were the first teacher for their children. Fathers and mothers should cater for the future life of their children. Nowadays the home was the first school for the children to learn about God and His ways. Ellen G. White supports what the Bible says. Child raising was a main concern in her writing. Along with that, other contemporary authors had been consulted about this matter. They suggested that child spiritual development is not optional. They brought forward some counsels on how to deal with this matter.

Chapter 3 had focused on the local setting of Mauritius and the Seventh-day Adventist Conference's history, and the context where the churches are found. The local setting includes the background, the political situation, the various ethnic group and the languages spoken. It also described the complexity in which the Adventist population is found; lots of ethnic groups, cultures and belief about religion matter. In this section, the data collection, the research findings and analysis were found. The demographic setting and the history of the 7th day Adventist Conference were discussed.

The Chapter 4 focused on the program design, implementation and evaluation. Various micro programs had been implemented, particularly in the two churches Mahébourg and L'Escalier. The response to the program went in the good direction, for a change in the parents and churches mentality was noted. After a while, these churches started to put children first.

Chapter 5 presented further practical implications and recommendations for parents, church leadership, and conference. Raising children in God's way required involvement of all these.

Conclusion

Children were not being nurtured into the spiritual life of the family and churches. Families had neglected to look after the spiritual growth for their children. Children had been nurtured with left overs in some cases. Also in the churches where the programs had been used, leaders were not aware of their weakness in working with children. They assumed that everything was under control. In the present day in 2014, our family setting is in danger of spiritual malnutrition. In some situation, the children have parents who lack the spiritual knowledge, because they had invested much of their time in their jobs. Little time is invested in teaching the young ones.

There had been a need for church leaders to act upon the current situation in their churches according to children spiritual growth. The church were doing business as usual, there is no creativity and desire to make children's work a priority.

The implementation of the various programs had gradually influenced the families and church leaders. Children's prayer meeting and children's time during worship on Sabbath had progressively been accepted as forming part of the church life. Now the leaders think about children when they were planning for an activity.

Recommendations

The following recommendations would stimulate the way of thinking of parents and boost children's spiritual growth:

- (a) Parents should invest more financial resources in books, DVDs, that can empower themselves and their children
- (b) Church leadership should have a close monitoring about the nurturing of children. There is a must for a strategic planning and an action plan from the children ministry department.
- (c) Church leadership should invest in the training of children's officers and material for children
- (d) Church leadership should get the best-trained people to work with our children.²⁰
- (e) Church leadership should create a nurturing environment that draws children toward their Savior.²¹

²⁰ Habenicht and Burton, 13.

²¹ Ibid.

- (f) Local church administration should see to it that parents are empowered in the domain of spiritual parenting.
- (g) The Conference should vote a charter for children during the administrative session. This would be like a policy for all churches to follow as a guide, to do children's work in the church.
- (h) The Conference should subsidize books, and other stuffs which will boost the empowering of children teachers, parent and children.
- (i) The Conference must have a clear philosophy and policy about the children's work.

APPENDIX A

COMMANDS IN PROVERBS

From Solomon to His Son (s) Regarding Parental Instruction

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Listen to | “your father’s instruction” (1:8, 4:1) “what I say” 4:10 “my words” 4:20 “my words of insight” 5:1 “my instruction” 8:23 “my advice” 19: 20 “ the sayings of the wise” 22: 17 “your father” 23: 22 |
| 2. Pay attention to | “what I say” 4:20;7:24 “my wisdom” 5:1 “the sayings of the wise” 22:17 |
| 3. Do not turn aside | “from what I say” 5:7 |
| 4. Do not forget | “my teachings” 3:1 |
| 5. Do not swerve | “from [my words]” 4:5 |
| 6. Do not forsake 1:8;6:20 | “your mother’s teachings” “my teaching” 4:2 |
| 7. Accept | “my words” 2:1 “what I say” 4:10 “commands” 10:8 “instruction” 19:20 |
| 8. Lay hold of | “my words” 19:20 |
| 9. Hold on to | “instruction” 4:13 |
| 10. Guard | “instruction”4:13 “my teachings” 7:2 |
| 11. Heed | “father’s instruction” 13:1 “instruction” 16:20 |
| 12. Keep | “my commands” 3:1;4:4;7:2 |
| 13. Store up | “my commands” 2:1;7:1 |
| 14. Apply your heart to | “instruction” 23:12 |
| 15. Apply your ears to | “words of Knowledge” 23:12 |

APPENDIX B

SPIRITUAL CHILD RAISING²²

| | |
|--|---|
| Attention to individual development and personal interests | White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 232, 2 |
| Memory work and independent thought | White, 1954/2002, CG, p. 511, 4; White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 230, 2 |
| Physical, practical work and hands-on activities | White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 220, 2 & pp. 207-209 & 212-213 |
| Thorough, multi-disciplinary, well-rounded training | White, 1903/2002, Ed. p. 232, 4 |
| Hymns and Scripture songs | White, 1954/2002, CG, pp. 523-524 |
| Bible and mission stories | White, 1954/2002, CG, pp. 514-515 |
| Prayer and reflection | White, 1954/2002, CG, p. 254 |
| Nature object lessons | White, 1954/2002, CG, pp. 46-59 & pp.534-536; White, 1954/2002, CG, p. 515, 1 |
| Bible and mission stories | White, 1954/2002, CG, pp. 514-515 |
| Simplicity and effectiveness | White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 107, 2 and p. 233, 1 |
| Illustration | White, 1954/2002, CG, p. 514, 3; White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 233, 1 |
| Enthusiasm and dignity | White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 233, 2 & 279, 1 |
| Well-planned lessons with a distinct goal | White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 233, 4 |
| Mastery learning | White, 1903/2002, Ed., p. 234, 1 |
| Parental involvement | White, 1903/2002, Ed., pp. 283-286 |

²²Julie Yamada. *Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved July 29,2013 from <http://paucearlychildhood.adventistfaith.org/benefits-of-developmentally-appropriate-program>

APPENDIX C

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN

| 9-11 years old | |
|----------------|--|
| Intellectual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They 're concrete thinkers- should use non symbolic objects • They're in the golden age of memorization power |
| Emotional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They like a non-mushy touching • They enjoy obvious concrete humor |
| Physical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They're energetic and active • They express awareness of sexuality with dirty jokes |
| Social | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They're eager to please whoever they're with • They don't have a strong internal sense of right and wrong • They like competition, team games, clubs and 'mysterious' activities • They express affection, both positive and negative |
| Spiritual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want Christian heroes to look up to. • They make spiritual decisions based on facts only. |

Facets of the Spiritual Formation of Children by Age

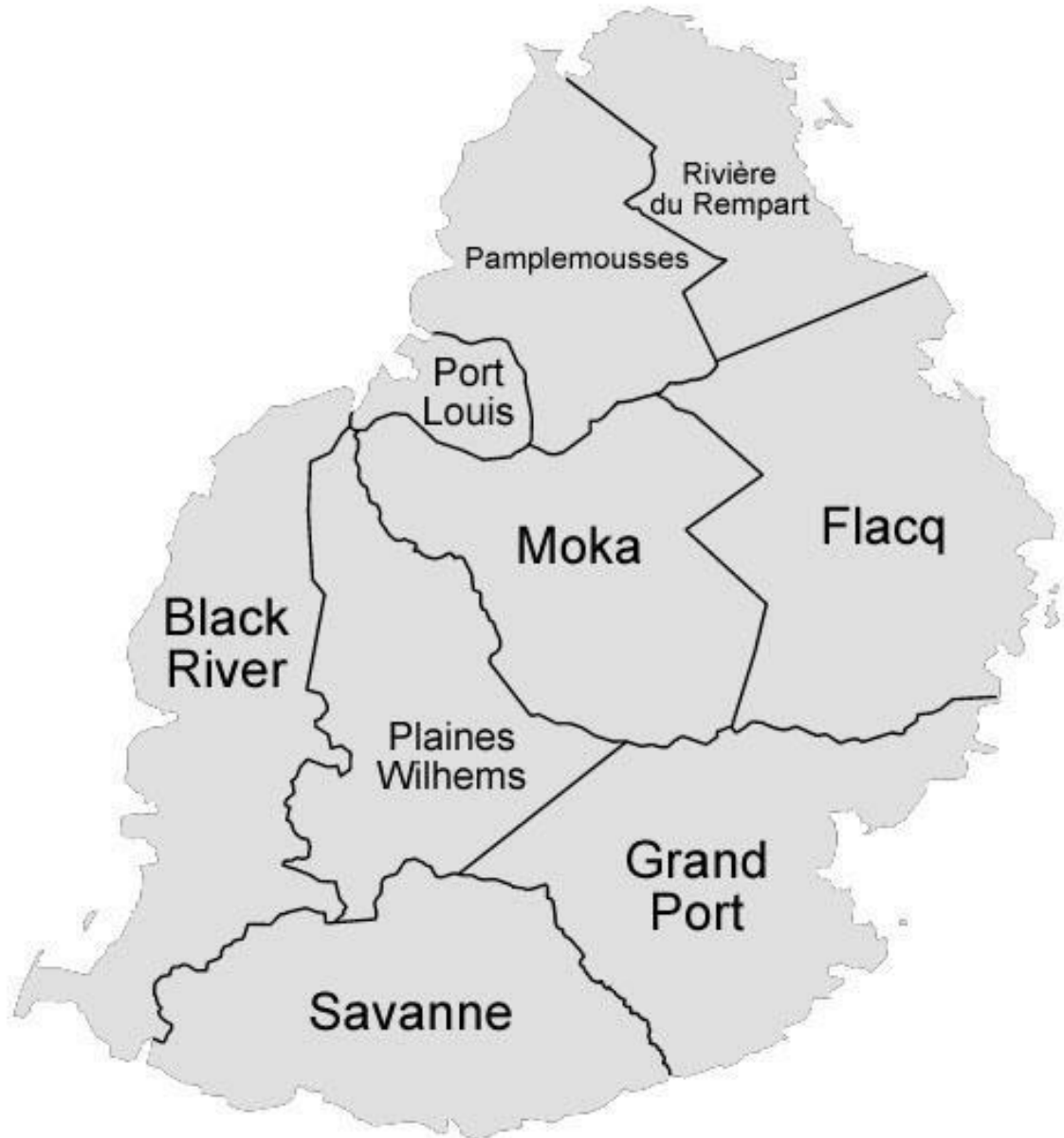
| Facets | Birth to 5 years | 6 to 9 years | 10 to 14 years |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| General spiritual development | * | ** | *** |
| Beliefs and theology | * | ** | *** |
| Character development | *** | ** | * |
| Grace and Salvation | * | ** | *** |
| Biblical Knowledge | * | *** | *** |
| Service for others | ** | ** | *** |
| Prayer life | *** | *** | *** |
| Conscience development | *** | ** | * |
| Church community | * | *** | *** |
| Great controversy (the big picture) | | ** | *** |
| Baptism and commitment | | * | *** |
| Growing Christian Life | * | ** | *** |
| Sharing God with others | * | ** | *** |

1 symbol= beginning time to learn (or major learning has occurred at younger ages)

2 symbols= important time for learning

3 symbols= most important time for learning

APPENDIX D
MAP OF MAURITIUS



APPENDIX E

FROM BRITISH RULE TO INDEPENDENCE

British rule

1812 - Colonel Draper founds the Mauritius Turf Club, which opens the first racecourse in the southern hemisphere and the second oldest in the world.

1814 - Mauritius, Seychelles and Rodrigues ceded to Britain under Treaty of Paris.

1834 - British abolish slavery. It is phased out on the island under a transition period known as "apprenticeship".

1835 - Indentured labour system introduced. In subsequent decades hundreds of thousands of workers arrive from India.

1847 - Incorrectly-worded Penny Black postage stamps are issued in Mauritius; later they become among the most sought-after stamps in the world.

1866-68 - Malaria epidemic kills more than 40,000 people after Anopheles mosquito accidentally introduced.

1876 - Indian rupee becomes official currency.

1912 - Mahatma Gandhi visits.

1910 - Indentured labour system abolished. Between 1834-1910, 451,776 Indians were brought to Mauritius to work on the sugar estates, of which 157,639 returned to India.

1926 - First Indo-Mauritians elected to government council.

1936 - Creole politician Dr Maurice Cure founds Mauritian Labour Party (MLP), or Parti Travailleiste.

1937 - Rioters demand better economic conditions and participation in government.

Towards independence

1942 - Donald Mackenzie-Kennedy becomes governor. Introduces consultative committee which for the first time includes representatives from all Mauritian communities.

1948 - New constitution gives the vote to many Indians and Creoles in an enlarged legislature.

1957 - Internal self-government introduced, with an electoral system based on the Westminster model.

1958 - New constitution - all adults over 21 can vote. Island divided into four single-member constituencies.

1959 - First elections under universal adult suffrage won by MLP, led by Dr Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

1960 - Cyclone Carol devastates island, leaving thousands homeless and prompting a housing revolution.

1964 - Ethnic rioting; Hindus and Creoles clash.

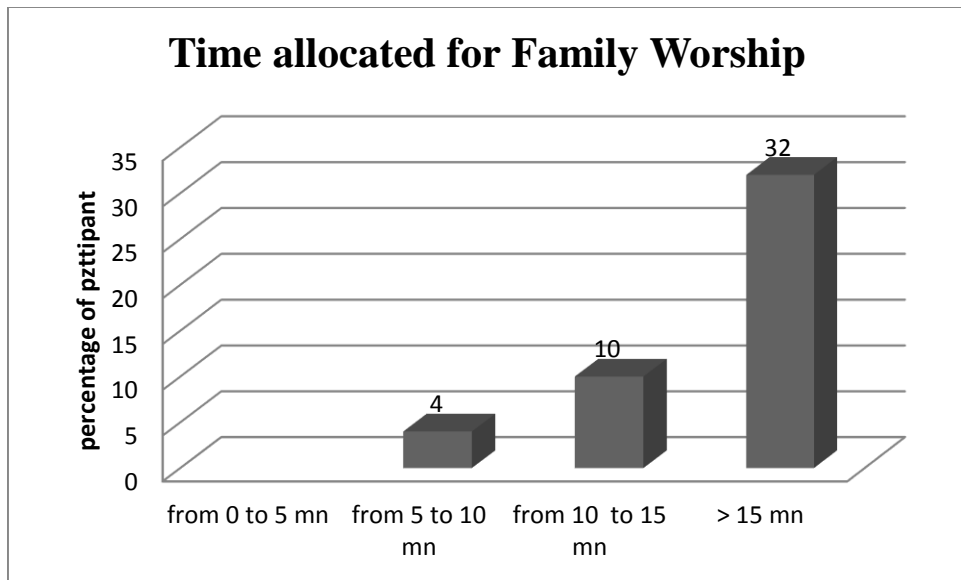
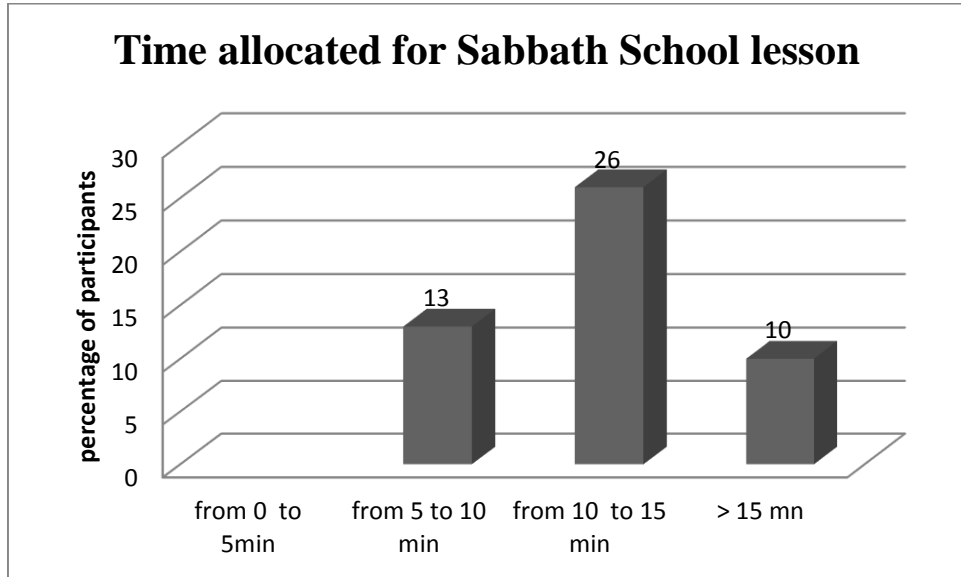
1965 - Constitutional conference held in London to discuss independence.

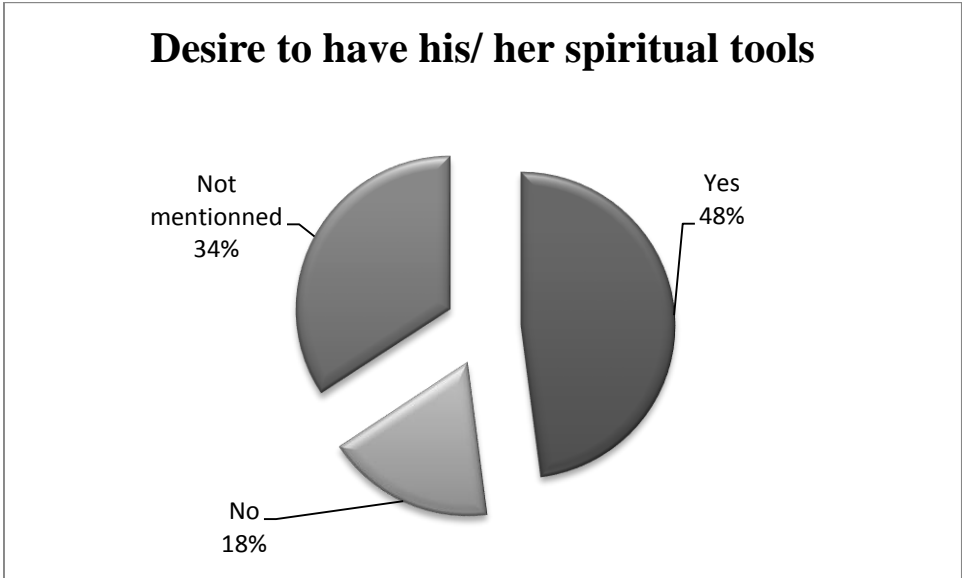
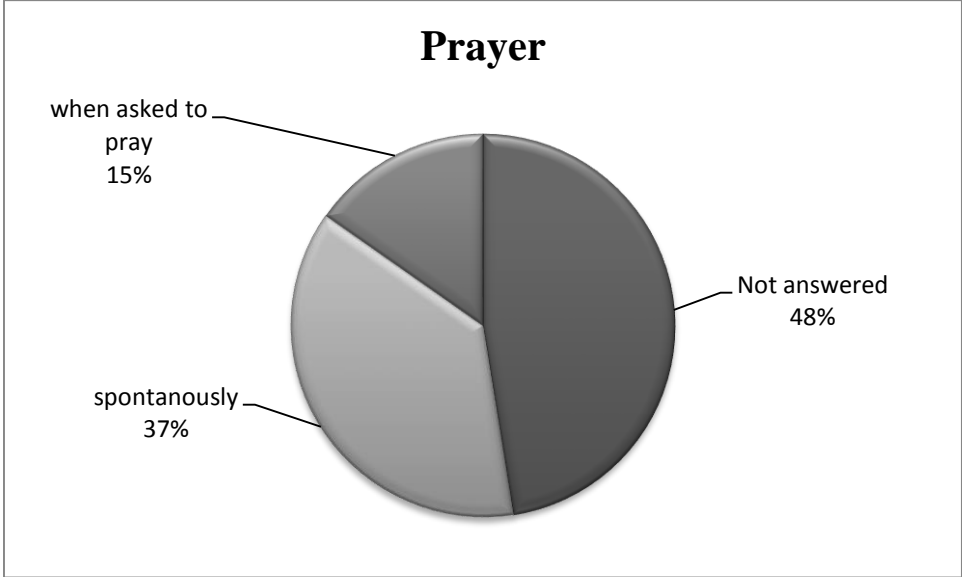
1966 - Britain drives out some 2,000 residents of the Chagos archipelago, in the Indian Ocean. Many are sent to Mauritius. Britain leases the Chagos islands to the US for 50 years. The US builds a military base on the largest island, Diego Garcia.

Independence

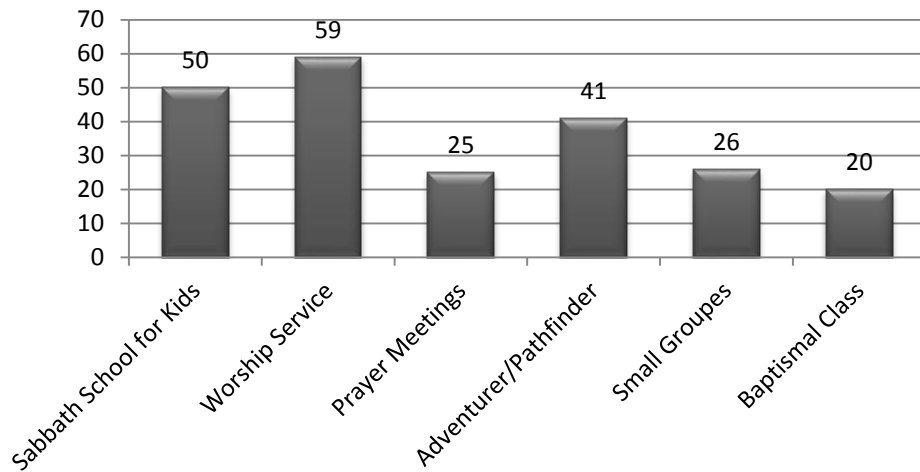
1968 - 12 March - Independence.

APPENDIX F
SURVEY FINDINGS

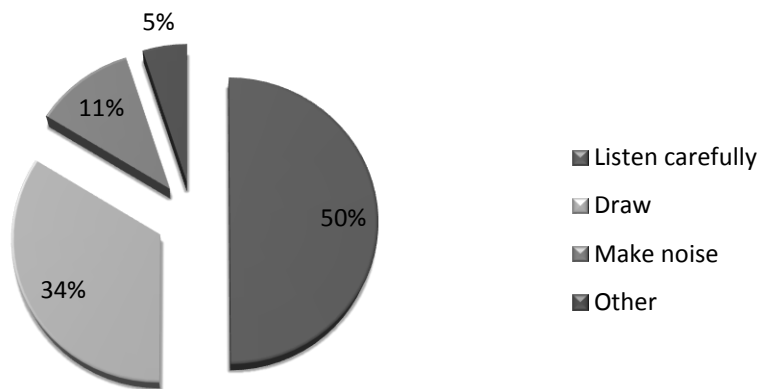




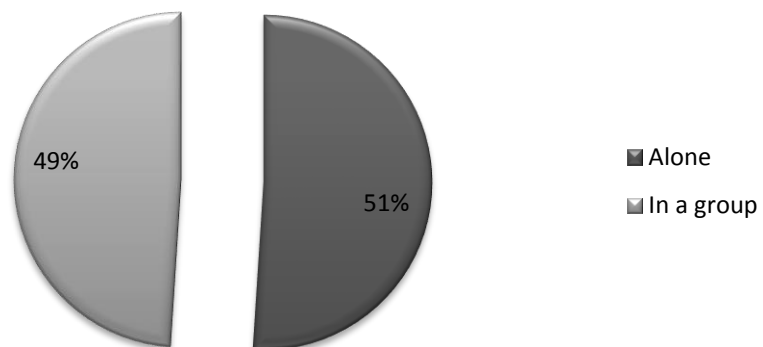
Attendance during Church's programs



Attitude during worship service



Doing their Sabbath School lessons



APPENDIX G

BUILDING SPIRITUALLY STRONG CHILDREN

- Have a strong relationship with God yourself, talking time to nurture your own spiritual growth through Bible study and reading.
- Talk to your children about your faith and your relationship with God.
- Talk about how God has been there for you through the difficult times. Talk about the doubts you used to have, and how your faith has been strengthened
- Have an active prayer life and share your prayer experiences with your children.
Pray for your children and with your children
- Help your children to look for answers to prayer, but also to understand that God knows best, and sometimes the answers come in ways that we're not expecting, or even wanting.
- Have regular and interesting family worship times.
- Be positive as you talk about your church and its leaders. Be realistic, and help your children to understand that even church leaders may make mistakes, and encourage them to be supportive rather than critical
- Have a practical understanding of God's grace. Grace is about God loving us no matter what we've done, but just because we're his children. This is one of the most beautiful aspects of the Christian faith
- Collect stories of grace and share them with your children. One of the best messages you can give your children about God is that he is always there to love them and welcome them, no matter what they have done, just like in the story of the father and the prodigal son in Luke
- Learn how to put grace into action in your family, offering forgiveness and acceptance when your children have made mistakes
- Deal with your children the way God has patiently dealt with you.
- When you need to discipline your child, think first about the way God has disciplined you. Think about his tremendous love for you and your child, and deal with your child gracefully rather than harshly. This is a powerful illustration of God's love. A child who lives with harsh discipline may grow to think that God is harsh, and will fear or reject him.
- Above all, love your children as God loves them, following 1 Corinthians 13 as a guide to practical parental love.

APPENDIX H

SERMON

Children Ministry Department
SABBATH – 15 OCTOBER 2011
A church open to children
Mark 10: 13 – 14

Introduction

One of the most vivid memories of my childhood is most probably the good old “Chinese shop” down the corner of the road. Our young friends would probably not understand what I am talking about since these shops no longer exist today. Yet they played an important role in the survival of the early communities, as they were the sole suppliers of provision then. The journalist Emmanuel Richon in *Le Matinal* of 17 February 20011, states “the Chinese shop was, at that time synonym of survival, help and hope”. The children of that time were excited to visit the shops.

Why? Because the shopkeeper would display jars full of all kinds of sweets on his counter and the children could hardly resist them. All the “Chinese shops” actually did the same; sometimes the shopkeeper would give a few sweets for free so that the children would want to buy more later on. Children liked to visit these shops because they were attracted by the sweets and because the shopkeeper made them feel comfortable. Today, most businesses apply the same principle to attract children, they create an environment where the children feel comfortable. This is what brands like Mc Donald and KFC do to attract children. What can we learn from them? What does the Bible teach us concerning the way we should treat children.

How can we benchmark with these businesses when it comes to the treatment of children?

Let’s find out how they proceed to attract children? If you walk round a shopping mall or a fast food. You will notice that they are all equipped with a children’s corner or a play area for children that propose a wide range of activities to their young customers. Children can even watch films for their age group on television.

In doing so, the children can enjoy themselves in a secured place while their parents can do their shopping with a peace of mind knowing that their children are safe. More and more businesses are now targeting at children, including airlines, hotels and restaurants. They have even adapted their menus to suit the taste and preferences of children.

The aim of these businesses is to show that they value children as customers as much as they do for adults. By showing that they care for the children, businesses hope to obtain the loyalty of their parents. They also aim at increasing customer satisfaction of the parents as well.

In the light of this I ask myself. “How does the church cater for the needs of its children?

- Could it be that the people of the world know better how to treat children?
- Is the Church less attentive to the needs of the children?
- Have we lost our standard and fall into mediocrity?

If businesses have understood the importance of treating children well, our churches should do far more than entertaining children.

- a) I am not talking about providing the children with colouring books to keep them busy during the sermon.
- b) It is not about asking our deacons and youth leaders to baby sit the children so that the parents could be hassle free to listen to the sermon.

It is not our job to keep the children busy or to keep them quiet during the sermon.

Our aim is to BRING THEM TO JESUS.

It is high time for us to change our attitude towards children. If we, as a church treat the children the way they should, we will be blessed. A new approach does not mean putting old wine in new wine skins. We should change our attitude and ask ourselves what the children of our church really need. Let’s try to find the answers to our question by reading a text from the Bible. Let’s read together Mark 10: 13-14. We will also consider how the other evangelists report this event.

What does the Bible say about children?

The encounter of the children with Jesus is reported in three books of the gospel. Let us see how the three writers report this event. After Jesus had finished preaching and discussing with the Pharisees, He was surrounded by the crowd and everyone wanted His attention. People had come to Jesus to be healed; on the other hand, the church officials wanted an audience in order to test Him.

Pressure came from everywhere, but there was another small group of people who deep in their heart felt the need to meet Jesus.

Before going further, I would like to point out that this Jesus we are talking about had formerly healed 27 people, among who were 5 children. All this brought the desire to meet Jesus in the heart of the mums; so one of them set out with her child to look for Jesus. She most probably shared her intention to one of her neighbours as she set out for her journey. The neighbour followed her soon the other mothers joined the little group in their quest. They were now on their way to meet the Saviour. As Jesus saw them, he felt the deep need of these mothers. Jesus saw their tears bursting and their lips moving as they silently prayed for their children. The three gospel writers clearly describe the expectations of these mothers.

- Mathew reported that they wanted Jesus to lay his hands on the children and pray for them
- Mark and Luke reported that the mothers wanted Jesus to touch the children

Surprisingly, Luke reported that children were also brought to Jesus. The term also clearly means the apart from the sick, the crowd that was constantly asking for comfort and healing, there were the children also. So after the discussion with the Pharisees, attending to the needs of the crowd, Jesus also had to give special attention to the children. The mothers' hearts were full of love and emotion as they came near Jesus. But they did not imagine that Jesus was protected by body guards. All the three writers agree on the role the disciples had given themselves.

They:

- a) Rebuked those who brought the children to Jesus (Mark 10: 13-14)
- b) Sent them away (Mathew 19:13)

Yet, it was Jewish custom to bring children to Rabbis so that they would lay their hands on the children and bless them. They must have been shocked to see themselves denied of access to the Great Rabbi. Let's try to visualize the scene. The 12 disciples forming a security belt around Jesus. The security belt acted as a barrier between Jesus and the crowd, but also as a warning so that the crowd would give way to the Master. Their motto was "*do not bother our Master*". In other words, leave him alone.

The twelve were ready to accomplish their mission; they were determined to meet the objective they had set themselves. Protect the Lord from any activity that would threaten His career.

In the minds of the disciples the mission of Saviour was too important to be disturbed by such petty things. The disciples were not happy to see the Master being tossed by the crowd. They were outraged because according to them the people were disregarding the ministry of the Master.

Jesus did not interfere because He wanted to see the attitude of the disciples towards the children. It should be borne in mind that the term children includes new born, babies, toddlers and older children. The noise made by the little ones must have disturbed the disciples. Children were most probably crying, some kept moving around and some went running towards Jesus. They most probably felt like losing control. One most probably needs some patience and a lot of love to handle the little ones, which was not possible from the disciples. What they could only do was to send the children away.

How did the disciples perceive the children?

We can easily criticize them. But let's look at our own way to do things in our churches.

- a) As adults we usually want quality time with the Lord, yet we deny the children of the same benefits.
- b) We hardly see to it that they have studied their Sabbath school lessons.
- c) The meeting place of the children is quite often below standard and hardly meet the children's expectations
- d) We hardly teach them how to worship and yet expect them to behave properly during church service
- e) The children's participation in the church service limits itself to one day a year yet as they grow up, we expect them to become active church members.

No one is being blamed here, but it is important to reflect on how we cater for the spiritual needs of the children. Just like the disciples our inner motivations are revealed by the way we treat the children.

Even though we say we care for children, it does show itself through our deeds.

That evening Jean-Claude laid down in his coach after a hard day at work. He had planned to watch the news on TV and rest at the same time. His five year old son, Yohan, came to him and started to talk to him.

Jean-Claude only wanted to be quiet, so he just said,

- *Shut up, leave me alone!*
- *Yohan said, "Dad, I want to tell you something."*
- *Shut up! Can't you find something else to do?*
- *The little boy changed his tone and continued,*
- *"Dad tells me, do you prefer Jesus to the TV? Yohan, prefers Jesus!"*

When the children find themselves at the bottom of our priority list, then we are just like the disciples and Jean Claude. This also means we are encouraging the attitude, "reserved to adults, no admission for children". What is worse is that the disciples, in doing so, were projecting a wrong image of Jesus

How did Jesus Himself see the Children?

Mark is the one who describes this episode with more details. He reported that Jesus himself was "indignant". Jesus was not happy by the way the disciples treated the children; he was pained by their attitude.

Jesus was indignant by the fact that:

- a) The children did not receive much consideration from the disciples.
- b) The disciples did not show any love for the children
- c) That people, in general look down upon children

In blaming the disciples for preventing the children from coming to him Jesus was addressing himself to the disciples of all times: church leaders, preachers, associates, and the lay person as well. Jesus draws the children to him, and he says to us: "allow the children to come to me." It's just as if Jesus was telling us: "If you do not prevent them from doing so, they will come to me." (The Desire of Ages)

It is interesting to note the way Matthew reported Jesus' comment, he writes: " Allow the little ones to come to Me and do not forbid or restrain or hinder them," Matthew 19:14. Through these words Jesus wanted to avoid the disciples to:

- a) To hinder and restrain access to the children
- b) To deny the children access in God's big family

For Jesus has given his precious blood for the redemption of the children of His time and of all times as well. The disciples failed to understand that it was important to bring the children to Jesus.

They rejected the children because they thought that only adults deserved to be “touched” by Jesus. The word “touched” here literally means to be spared in view of eternal life.

How can we apply Jesus’ words to real life situations?

As a church we should not:

- a) Restrain or hinder access to children
- b) Refuse to integrate the children into God’s big family

On the other hand, we should understand how important it is to provide the children with an environment that will contribute to their spiritual development. In that way our young ones would receive an education that would prepare them so that they would become heaven’s citizens. The point is that it is our duty to open our churches to children.

What does the term “a church opened to children mean”?

This means that as a church we should:

- a) Prepare the children for eternal life
- b) Design programs and be equipped to meet the needs of children
- c) Encourage the involvement of children in church life
- d) Have clear objectives about how we can bring children to love the church
- e) Be aware of the physical, social, spiritual and emotional security needs of the children

It is of utmost importance that we review our programs and think how to promote children’s involvement in church activities; this in collaboration with the leaders of Children Ministry Department, the pastor and the church board. To make it clear, I would like to ask two questions to the adults. I am not expecting any answer if not a change in attitude.

1. What memories do you keep of the children’s Sabbath school at your time?
2. What memories do you keep of the church at your time?

If you are honest with yourself, you would most probably answer one Sabbath school teacher was nice, the other one wasn’t. There were very few activities that were actually adapted to the needs of children. Most probably going camping with the church or going out for picnics with all the families of the church were the only activities that were really fun.

As for me, I still remember the first elder and the first deacon of my church. They were really committed; unfortunately their zeal was somehow suffocating for the children. As a matter of fact, changing our attitude towards the children will result in:

- a) Children that will be God's instrument to bring the Good News to adults.
- b) Children that will hold fast to their faith when family life becomes critical
- c) Children who will not be afraid to witness their faith, even in adverse situations
- d) Children who will actively contribute to the greatest miracle that can happen in a man's life

This brings to my mind the experience of the young Samuel, the children of the widow who did not have enough money to pay her bills, Naaman's little maid and the young boy who brought his lunch to Jesus. All these children, most probably, have had parents who had given them the right perception of God and taught them what it meant to serve Him. What if the church opens its doors to children? This would most probably make them feel welcome in the Lord's community down here on earth.

Conclusion

It's now time to hear the end of the story of Jean-Claude and of his son Yohan. *That day, as he felt regrets, Jean-Claude quit the news on TV, he switched off the TV, he forgot about the rest,.....took his little boy in his arms and cuddled him with all his love, he still has not regretted it.* My dear brothers and sisters, we cannot compete with the "Chinese shops" and the trademarks. What we can do, is to benchmark with them to learn from their expertise. They make children their priority as customers and the reward is the profit they reap from this marketing strategy. Our children should be at the heart of our church life so that they could be brought closer to God and be proud of their Christian identity.

In doing so, children will love to go to church. I wish to invite you to consider Jean-Claude's example. Let's build a church where our children would find a refuge when things go wrong. Being a church that caters for the needs of children, will make us instruments that will bring the children to the Saviour. They will learn to hold fast to their faith in Christ. They will find hope and courage. Bringing them to an encounter with the Lord will form their own character. Finally, we will be able to say, "God's kingdom is for their likes."

Therefore, dear elder(s), deacon(s), dear member(s) of the church board and dear adult, I wish you could take the commitment, this morning to open our communities to the children who feel misunderstood, disdained and rejected. From now on, we will be able to say, “Dear Lord; here are the children that you have entrusted onto us.”

APPENDIX I

30 MINUTE GUIDE FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

1min: Opening Prayer

10 min: Read a story. I recommended the Bible timeline. Include also the Sabbath school lessons

4 min: Easy questions. Ask for specific question, to help the children to ponder on what they just heard and studied

4min: Allow time for children to ask questions about the Gracelink lessons

4min: Memorizing Bible verse. Take the memory verse or the verse from the morning watch.

4min: Prayer. Give everyone the opportunity to say a short prayer. Assign each a prayer request. Example:

Family
Christian and non-Christian neighbours
The Conference

2min: Worship's songs: Try to learn a child's song. Don't worry if you have no musical capacity in your family.

1min: closing prayer

Tips:

- Sit around the table in the dining room. This helps children to concentrate
- Decide the time that you will have your family worship together (Explain its importance)
- Be creative in the preparation. Ask children to participate, to decorate and so on
- If one person in the family skip or it always late, don't pressure him/her. Instead pray for him and try to talk with him/her
- Avoid long prayers; be direct and use simple words.

APPENDIX J

SURVEY

This survey is done in order to know if you as parents spend time to educate your children from 0 to 14 years, in the spiritual realm. I thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this survey in the most honest way as possible. We assure you that all your data will remain confidential.

1. How many children from 0 to 14 years do you have at home?

2. How old is (are) your (yours) child (children)?

0 to 2 year 3 to 6 year 6 to 10 year 11 to 14 year

Gender: M F

How many girls and / or boys?

3. Are you born in an Adventist family?

Yes No Whom Dad Mom

If not what other denominations are you?

4. What are the spiritual moments you practice with your family at home and specify the number of time that you spend per item?

Do you plan these spiritual moments Yes No

If yes, who does what? Dad Mom

Alone in Group Morning Watch

0 to 3 min 3 to 6 6 to 9 min greater than 10 min

Sabbath School Lesson Alone in Group

0 to 5 5 min to 10 min 10 to 15 min greater than 15 min

Family Morning Worship Evening Night

0 to 5 5 min to 10 min 10 to 15 min greater than 15 min

Other - Specify.....

0 to 5 5 min to 10 min 10 to 15 min greater than 15 min

5. Your child participates in the program personally "Revived by the Word" (reading a chapter of the Bible each day)?

Yes No

6. How much time do you spend daily to teach the fundamental beliefs and values of Adventists?

7. Does your child have personally?

His/ her Bible

His Sabbath School Quarterly: Grace LINK (Beginner / Kindergarten / Primary / SMS)

Other - Specify.....

Does your child look for his Bible and quarterly or other book?

8. Does your child attend regularly?

The Sabbath School for Kids

The worship service (adults and children)

The prayer meetings

Adventurers / pathfinders meetings

Small groups

The baptismal class

If not, what is the cause?

Do not feel like it

Must go to tuitions

You can't accompany him/ her

9. During worship on Sabbath morning your child:

- Listens carefully
- Draws
- Makes Noise

Does your child ask to attend church services?

10. Does your child pray?

- Every morning
- Every night
- During the day
- Not at all

Does your child pray spontaneously or on request?

11. Does your child accept God as his heavenly Father?

- Yes No

12. Does your child know Jesus and what He did to save the world?

- Yes No

If so, does he speak of Jesus around him?

- Yes No

13. On a scale of 1 to 10, please note how your child imitates you in your spiritual experience?

1 All the time 2 Often 3 Rarely 4 Seldom 5 Not at all

Your details:

Age: Church:

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