

Characteristics of a Healthy Church

Characteristics of a healthy SDA Church

CLEAR IDENTITY

Revelation 12:17 "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world." {AA 9.1}

Revelation 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

"The final objective of all efforts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that of preaching the gospel and preparing men and women to meet the Lord." {4BIO 427.1}

URGENT MESSAGE

Revelation 10:11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

"In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import--the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention. {9T 19.1}

Revelation 14:6 "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people..."

"The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work... If she will be true to her allegiance, if she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her." {LHU 315.3}

EFFECTIVE TRAINING

Acts 22:15 "For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard."

"There should be no delay in this well-planned effort to educate the church members. {ChS 58.4}

"The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers."- Testimonies, vol. 7, p. 19.

"The people have had too much sermonizing; but have they been taught how to labor for those for whom Christ died? Has a line of labor been devised and placed before them in such a way that each has seen the necessity of taking part in the work?--Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 431.

"Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. {LHU 311.3}

SOUL-WINNING MINISTRIES

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

"He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost. {MH 105.4}

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."--The Ministry of Healing, p. 143.

CHRIST-CENTERED EVANGELISM

1 Corinthians 1:21 "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

"There may be conversions without the instrumentality of a sermon. Where persons are so situated that they are deprived of every means of grace, they are wrought upon by the Spirit of God and convinced of the truth through reading

the word; but God's appointed means of saving souls is through "the foolishness of preaching." {5T 300.3}

"The preaching of the word is a means by which the Lord has ordained that His warning message shall be given to the world." Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 323.

1 Corinthians 2:1,2 "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

"Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out. It is at the cross of Christ that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy." {GW 156.2}

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Acts 4:32 "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."

"We are exhorted to love as brethren, to be kind, courteous, forbearing, in honor preferring one another. Love for God and for one another constitutes the divine credentials which the children of God bear to the world. "By this," said Jesus, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." {HS 214.1}

John 17:20,21 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."

"The prayer of Christ to His Father, contained in the seventeenth chapter of John, is to be our church creed. It shows us that our difference and disunion are dishonoring to God. {3SM 21.1}

INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 28:19,20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."

"In the place of devoting your powers to theorizing, Christ has given you a work to do. His commission is, Go throughout the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." {UL 148.3}

Matthew 4:19 "Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'"

"We are to be consecrated channels, through which the heavenly life is to flow to others. The Holy Spirit is to animate and pervade the whole church, purifying and cementing hearts. Those who have been buried with Christ in baptism are to rise to newness of life. . . . Upon us is laid a sacred charge. The commission has been given us: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19, RSV). . . . You are dedicated to the work of making known the gospel of salvation." (Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 19-21).

INSPIRING SABBATH SCHOOL

Acts 17:11 "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

"The Sabbath school is an important branch of the missionary work, not only because it gives to young and old a knowledge of God's word, but because it awakens in them a love for its sacred truths, and a desire to study them for themselves; above all, it teaches them to regulate their lives by its holy teachings.--TSS 109, 110.

Luke 24:32 "And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'"

"The Sabbath school should be one of the greatest instrumentalities, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ."--TSS 20.

"The Sabbath school, if rightly conducted, is one of God's great instrumentalities to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth. It is not the best plan for teachers to do all the talking, but they should draw out the class to tell what they know. Then let the teacher, with a few brief, pointed remarks or illustrations, impress the lesson upon their minds." -- TSS 18, 19.

HEART-FELT WORSHIP

Acts 2:46,47 "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

“What is the object of assembling together? Is it to inform God? Or to instruct him by telling him all we know in prayer? We meet together to edify one another by a mutual interchange of thoughts and feelings, thus making one another acquainted with our aspirations, our hopes, and gathering strength, and light, and courage, from one another. By our earnest, heart-felt prayers, offered up in faith, we receive refreshment and vigor from the Source of our strength.” {RH, May 30, 1871 par. 4}

Matthew 15:8,9 “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

“The absence of the heart-felt religion, the love that purifies the soul, places the professed followers of Christ with his enemies.” {RH, January 27, 1891 par. 12}

FERVENT PRAYER

Matthew 21:13 “And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

“Prayer is the key that will unlock the treasure of heaven to you.”
{LLM, 203}

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.”

“Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God... It is impossible for the soul to flourish while prayer is neglected.” {SC, 99}

SUMMARY

1. Clear Identity
2. Urgent Message
3. Effective Training
4. Soul-winning Ministries
5. Christ-centered Evangelism
6. Meaningful Relationships
7. Individual Discipleship
8. Inspiring Sabbath School
9. Heart-felt Worship
10. Fervent Prayer