

TC 102

BASIC

MODULE 2

GROWING DISCIPLES

A core class of the International Sabbath School Teachers' Association
certification system

Introduction

Confusion abounds regarding what it means to be a disciple. If you were to ask ten people the definition, you would receive 10 different answers. Yet making disciples is the primary focus of Jesus' last commission to His followers before He returned to heaven: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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" (Matt. 28:18-20, NKJV).

What is a disciple? By definition, it is a learner, or a follower. However, as revealed in the Great Commission referenced above, making (or growing) disciples is not merely baptizing them—after giving them a list of beliefs to which they must ascribe. Growing disciples involves teaching them to obey Jesus. Growing disciples involves helping them to mature into the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13; Heb. 6:1, 2). Growing disciples implies relationship.

Relationship at its basic level is a process: growing in knowledge of the person, growing in our understanding of the character of that person, growing in our recognition of their needs, and walking alongside them to encourage, support, strengthen, and instruct. It is this same process that is involved in our relationship with Jesus and with His followers. Through these relationships we are transformed into His likeness.

Sabbath School is a rich environment for this transformative growth process to take place. It offers a small group experience that already holds within it, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the elements necessary to facilitate this process. As a Sabbath School teacher, your primary role is to be a facilitator, and to guide your members through this process of maturing in their relationship with God and others.

This course is based on *Together Growing Fruitful Disciples*, a model for discipleship developed through a partnership between the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Andrews University. Many of the readings and assignments are taken from its Web site, <www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com>.

Class Description

The Growing Disciples: A Model for Discipleship course is designed to assist you in identifying:

- the process through which disciples grow in their maturity;
- the areas within the discipleship process in which your class members may exhibit strength as well as those in which they may exhibit need of growth;
- the commitments that disciples can make to help them grow in their relationship with Jesus and others.

Student Fulfillment Card. At the end of this Study Guide you will find a Student Fulfillment Card. This is the record you will turn in to those who maintain records so you can receive your final certificate of completion.

- If you are studying from the print version of this class, fill in the Student Fulfillment Card and have it signed by the person in charge of Sabbath School teachers in your church/district or your pastor.

- If you are studying with an instructor, have that person sign your Scorecard.

Textbook. There is no textbook for this class. The Study Guide plus the additional readings constitute your textbook.

How to Study for the Class. The class is both theoretical and practical. It is composed of a printed study guide. It also contains a number of readings from different sources that cover valuable insights about Sabbath School teacher “doing.”

- If you are studying this class on your own, the study guide will indicate the exercises that you should complete. These contain question-and-answer sheets that identify the important points of the readings and units of study. It is very important to fill in these sheets. They are your way of knowing how you are doing in the class.

- If you are studying in a classroom-type setting, an instructor will lead you through various participatory activities.

- If you are studying in a small group, ideas are included for those studying in this environment.

- There are no examinations scheduled for this class, unless an individual instructor decides to use them.

The included Readings are essential and valuable:

- If you are studying a print edition, highlight pertinent thoughts, make notes, and digest the contents.

- If you are studying in a group, the instructor will indicate the procedure for analyzing and discussing the various topics.

Class Objectives

- Learn the different areas of growth identified within the discipleship process. (*Know*)

- Sense the need for growth in their spiritual lives as well as their members'. (*Feel*)

- Commit to incorporating this discipleship model into their Sabbath School experience.

(*Do*)

UNIT 1
Dreaming of Faraway Places

You Are Here

You're at the mall. (You know, those places where a person is inundated with thousands of items they may or may not need, but are bombarded with messages telling them they *can't* live without any of them!) You want to go to the computer store, but you don't know where it is located.

What would you do? (Circle one.)

1. Walk through the mall, checking out the stores along the way.
2. Ask someone for directions.
3. Check out the mall directory maps located near the entrances.

Option 1 is probably one of the most popular ways a person locates a store. It works. Unfortunately, often what happens is that the stores along the way entice you to stop in and check out their merchandise. By the time you get to your destination, you've spent time and money on merchandise you hadn't planned on purchasing.

Option 2 is a good way to find the store. (Take note, those of you hesitant to ask for directions!) You'll probably reach your destination sooner than just meandering through the mall, looking at stores along the way. However, you won't learn anything more about the mall except for directions to that one store, as well as the stores you pass along the way. Also, the person may himself be confused and give you incorrect directions. Yes, it does happen!

Option 3 is the best choice for many reasons. One, you see where you are in relation to your destination; thus, you gain knowledge as to the true length of the journey. Two, you can find the most direct route to your destination without the distractions of other stores that you don't need to visit, saving you time and possibly money. Three, you can see the entire map of the mall, giving you helpful information for the future, when you might need to return to the mall for another purpose.

Using a discipleship model is similar to using a mall directory map. Sure, Christ's followers can grow as disciples without one. They can enter the process of Christian transformation independent of any such model. However, like using the mall directory maps, utilizing a discipleship model offers a means through which to intentionally focus on our journey, reducing the distractions that often accompany it.

If you're like me, it's very easy to get distracted by home or work responsibilities and whittle away the precious time I set aside to invest in my relationship with Jesus. "Let me write that letter first," or, "Let me sleep a little longer before I get up and spend time with the Lord," or . . . I'm sure you have your own list of distractions.

Besides the distractions, utilizing a discipleship model helps us to see the "entire map" of the discipleship journey. We can view components that are identified as being part of a strong relationship with God and others. Where we are strong, we can seek to discover ways to use those strengths in service to God and others. Where we are weak, we can intentionally invest our time and resources in strengthening those areas.

But, first, we must be "on the same page" in our understanding of discipleship.

Reading 1

“A Biblical Discipleship.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading

Reading 2

“Discipleship in the Writings of Ellen G. White.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading

Reading 3

“The Jesus Way of Discipling.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading

Assignment 1

“Characteristics of a Disciple.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading

We're Going Where?

First Things First

Scenario: You and your spouse have been dreaming of buying a farm for years. Finally, the day has come when your dream is fulfilled—almost.

You've found the perfect 100-acre piece of property, and the owners are willing to sell it to you for less than the market rate. However, no buildings exist on the property. You can't afford to build everything all at once. So, what do you build first? (Choose one.)

- House
- Shed
- Three-car garage
- Barn

You and your spouse have narrowed it down to the house and the barn. You want to build the house first. Where will you live if you don't? Your spouse thinks the barn should be built first.

Who's correct?

"A farmer builds the barn on his property first. Why? Because the barn will pay for all of the other structures."*

It's similar as we plan our spiritual journey. Many opportunities are available for spiritual nurture: books, programs, seminars, small group activities, etc. But what will be a wise investment to help us complete the journey? A discipling model that will offer us a foundation for spiritual growth and maturity.

Reading 4

"Description of the 'Together Growing Fruitful Disciples' Model." Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Reading 5

"Together Growing Fruitful Disciples Framework." Read through the framework. Each page contains identified commitments and indicators believed to be integral to the process of spiritual growth and transformation. Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Assignment 2

"Growing Disciples Inventory." Complete the Spiritual Inventory. You may also download it at <www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com>. You will need the completed inventory for later. Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Unit 3

Packing Our Suitcases

Ortho to the Second Power

Ortho: correct, straight *doxy*: set of beliefs
Ortho: correct, straight *praxy* (praxis): practice, application

Which is more important: Correct beliefs or correct practice? Explain your answer.

(Note: This can be used as a group activity. Create a continuum in the back of the room. On one side of the continuum, have a person hold the sign “Orthodoxy.” On the other side of the room, have another person hold the sign “Orthopraxis.” Ask participants to stand in the location on the continuum that most matches their belief as to which one is more important in the Christian life. Explain your choice of location.)

In September 2007, Pastor Jan Paulsen, then president of the world church, dialoged with several North American Division pastors in a “Pastors in Conversation” broadcast. The first question posed from a pastor was, “What is more important: What we believe or who we are?” This was another way of asking, “Which is more important: correct beliefs or correct practice?”

Pastor Paulsen’s response: “We cannot differentiate between what we believe and who we are.”

The pastor continued, “When we give evangelistic meetings, we concentrate so much on the doctrines of the church—which we should. And when we have to define what we believe, we have no problem. But when we have to define who we are, we encounter problems.”

Pastor Paulsen’s response was true. But the question remains: Do we differentiate between what we believe and who we are?

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24, NRSV).

According to Jesus, truth without Spirit is not truth. Another way of saying this is: Orthodoxy without orthopraxis is not truth. However, Spirit without truth—orthopraxis without orthodoxy—is shallow. Truth as it is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ is Truth. Thus, consider this “spiritual equation”: Spirit + Truth = Ortho².

In this portion of our study, we will unpack the delicate balance between faith and works, and discover how we can use the Growing Disciples model to help balance our load as we continue on our spiritual journey.

Reading 6

“The Balance Between Faith and Works.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Assignment 3

“Action Plan for Spiritual Growth.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Unit 4

Are We There Yet?

To Be and Not To Be

What is the purpose of Sabbath School? (Check one.)

- To socialize with my friends and pray for each other
- To study God’s Word
- To plan community outreach projects
- To help one another grow in our spiritual lives and share Jesus with others
- All of the above
- None of the above

Sabbath School is many things to many people. For some, they love coming together with their friends and catching up on what happened to them during the week. For others, they’re energized by the study of God’s Word, and being able to discuss it with fellow believers. Still others enjoy sharing how they worked in a clothes distribution center, giving out articles of clothing. You also have those who love it because it’s a small group where they can bring a neighbor who they’ve been telling about Jesus.

Sabbath School is many things to many people. Wouldn’t it be great if Sabbath School were *all* of these things to many people?

That’s the vision for Sabbath School. Growing Disciples can help you fulfill that vision.

Reading 7

“Sabbath School and the Learning Cycle.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Assignment 4

“Creating a Lesson.” Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this course.

* Tim Elmore, *Habitudes: The Art of Leading Others* (Atlanta: Growing Leaders, Inc., 2005), p. 39.

Reading 1

A BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP

For a thorough understanding of the scriptural view of discipleship, be sure to read the passages listed in the extensive endnotes to this reading.

God Reveals Himself

God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is the embodiment of love.¹ Even before Creation, God expressed love for humankind by working out the plan of salvation. Since the entrance of sin, however, humanity is separated from God and, on their own, cannot understand this kind of love. Therefore, God takes the initiative in self-revelation, wanting to restore the relationship with humanity and to save them from sin and its penalty.² God's self-revelation is manifest through: (a) nature;³ (b) prophecy;⁴ (c) the life, death and resurrection of Jesus;⁵ (d) the Holy Spirit;⁶ (e) providential workings;⁷ (f) miracles and other acts;⁸ and (g) the Word.⁹ God will continue to be revealed to those who obey His commands out of love.¹⁰ In turn, the saved ones will be empowered to help reveal God's nature to others.¹¹

God Solves the Sin Problem

Humanity was created in the image of God, capable of love and fellowship with the Godhead and others, and with moral freedom to choose whether to obey and follow the Creator.¹² Adam and Eve were enjoying a daily relationship with God until sin (a distrust of God and obedience to the temptation of Satan) separated them from God and one another.¹³ They exchanged their godly dignity and the truth about their Creator for the lies of a created being who has brought devastation and shame to all humanity.¹⁴ Through Christ, God reconciled Himself with humanity and provided the way by which humanity could be restored to relationship with Himself and their fellow human beings.¹⁵ Jesus revealed the deceptive, self-absorbed nature of Satan and all who follow him, while showing Himself to be a shepherd-Savior who died for His sheep to provide them with reconciliation and abundant life.¹⁶

Jesus Calls Disciples to Follow Him and Abide in Him

Like sheep following a trusted voice, believers know the voice of their Shepherd and are called to follow.¹⁷ They invite God's presence on a daily basis, and radical changes occur in the way they relate to the Creator and to others.¹⁸ Through Christ's transforming grace, believers are called to imitate God "as dear children."¹⁹ Through His Spirit they can come to a unique understanding of God's character and a relationship with God through a steadfast relationship of obedience.

Jesus commands us to abide in Him to receive life and to maintain a living relationship.²⁰ Abiding in Jesus means believing in Him as the Son of God, obeying what He says, loving one another within the community of God's people, extending that love by obeying Christ's command to bring the gospel to the world, and following His example to make disciples of all nations.²¹

The Spirit Empowers New Birth, Growth, and Fruit

By accepting the influence of the Spirit, the sinner can experience new birth, and, through baptism, die and be resurrected with Christ.²² A new life in Christ is characterized by spiritual

growth that leads to unity with Jesus and others.²³ Like a baby who grows to adulthood and a seed that develops into a tree, disciples will bear fruit through the Spirit as long as they stay connected to the Vine.²⁴

Having spent three years discipling the Twelve, Jesus left them with the great gospel commission to follow His example in making disciples.²⁵ To empower them to accomplish that commission, He gave them His greatest gift, the Holy Spirit.²⁶ They were to teach all things that Jesus taught.²⁷ Disciples today still grow and mature through the Spirit.²⁸ Like a farmer who prunes the plant in order to induce fruit bearing, the Holy Spirit, in harmony with the Word of God, “prunes” Christ’s disciples through conviction and correction.²⁹ Only a Spirit-led disciple can make another disciple for Jesus Christ.³⁰ Thus the life of a disciple extends the Master’s love and ministry to the world.

Jesus Calls Disciples to Love One Another and to Build Up His Body

God showed His love for the Church by sending His Son to die for her.³¹ He also designed that His love for the Church manifests itself through His disciples. He calls them to the task of loving one another and of edifying and building up the Church.³² The biblical teachings of the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit are the key to understanding how God loves and builds up the Church through His disciples. He provides every grace and ability that is needed to fulfill this commission.

The fruits of the Spirit³³ provide the graces through which God’s love is revealed in the relationships of disciples with one another. This fruit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The gifts of the Spirit, such as teaching, evangelizing, faith, and service, provide disciples with the ministries that build up the body of Christ.³⁴ God is responsible for the success of this work, only asking that His disciples serve as willing instruments in His hands.

Jesus Sends Disciples Into the World to Further His Kingdom

Throughout history God has called men and women to testify of His goodness, share their faith, and invite those who did not know Him to follow.³⁵ As the first disciples of Christ were invited to follow and then were commissioned to “go and make disciples,” so each believer becomes part of a continuing line of witnesses who seek to expand the fellowship of believers.³⁶ In simple form Christian witness involves a passionate testimony of a personal encounter with Jesus and an invitation to follow Him.³⁷ Along with witnessing through preaching and proclamation, and seeking to model the exemplary life of Jesus, disciple-making also requires the support and mentoring of new followers and fellow believers.³⁸

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this assignment.

¹ John 4:8.

² Job 11:7, 8; Ps. 82:5; Prov. 4:19; Isa. 59:2, 9; 60:2, 3; Luke 1:76-79; John 1:5-9; 3:16-21; 8:12; 9:5; Acts 17:27; 1 Cor. 13:12; Eph. 2:4-9; 2 Pet. 1:19.

³ Psalm 8; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:20.

⁴ Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Heb 1:1.

⁵ John 1:14; Col. 1:21-23; Heb. 1:2, 3.

⁶ John 15:26; 16:14, 15.

⁷ Ps. 33:5; 107:43.

⁸ Matt. 12:11-13; John 11:14, 15, 38-44; 14:11.

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- ⁹ Exodus 19; 20; Num. 12:7, 8; Deut. 8:3; Ps. 19:7-9; 119; Matt. 3:17; John 5:38, 39; Rom. 2:20; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:21.
- ¹⁰ Prov. 4:18; John 14:21; 15:15; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:12, 13.
- ¹¹ Matt. 5:14-16.
- ¹² Gen. 1:26, 27; Josh. 24:15; 1 John 4:12, 19.
- ¹³ Gen. 3:12; Isa. 53:6; 59:2.
- ¹⁴ Rom. 1:18-24.
- ¹⁵ 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:13-17.
- ¹⁶ John 8:44; 10:10-14.
- ¹⁷ John 10:14, 27.
- ¹⁸ Ezek. 36:26; Rom. 8:6; John 15:15.
- ¹⁹ Eph. 4:31-5:2.
- ²⁰ John 15:4, 5.
- ²¹ Matt. 28:18-22; John 3:16; 13:15; 1 John 3:24; 4:15.
- ²² Gal. 2:20.
- ²³ John 17:23.
- ²⁴ John 15:5; 1 Cor. 3:1, 2; Eph. 2:10; 4:13; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 4:13.
- ²⁵ Matt. 28:19, 20; John 13:15.
- ²⁶ Matt. 28:20.
- ²⁷ John 14:26.
- ²⁸ Ps. 139:23, 24; Rom. 9:1; Phi. 3:15; James 1:2-5.
- ²⁹ 2 Tim. 3:16.
- ³⁰ John 20.
- ³¹ John 3:16.
- ³² John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 14:19; 1 Cor. 12:27; 14:12; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 11-16; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8; 3:11, 23; 4:11, 12; 2 John 1:5.
- ³³ Gal. 5:22, 23.
- ³⁴ 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4; 1 John 4.
- ³⁵ Gen. 18:18, 19; Deut. 4:9, 10; 6:4-9; 20-25; Ruth 1:2, 16; 1 Kings 17:7-24; 2 Kings 20:15; Esther 4:13-16; Prov. 6:20-23; 22:6; Isa. 49:6; Dan. 1:8; John 4:46-53; Acts 26:1-29; Eph. 6:4.
- ³⁶ Matt. 4:19; 28:19, 20; John 20:21; 1 John 1:2-4.
- ³⁷ John 1:40-42; 4:29.
- ³⁸ Deut. 6:4-9; Isa. 58:6-12; 61:1-4; Matt. 25:34-40; Luke 1:36, 46; 4:18-21; Acts 8:35; 12:25; 15:36-39; Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Tim. 1:3-2:26; 4:11.

Reading 2

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN WHITE

“It is your privilege ever to grow in grace, advancing in the knowledge and love of God, if you maintain the sweet communion with Christ it is your privilege to enjoy. In the simplicity of humble faith ask the Lord to open your understanding, that you may discern and appreciate the precious things of His Word. Thus you may grow in grace, grow in simple, trusting faith.”¹

“Abiding in Christ is choosing only the disposition of Christ, so that His interests are identified with yours. Abide in Him, to be and to do only what He wills. These are the conditions of discipleship, and unless they are complied with, you can never find rest. Rest is in Christ; it cannot be as something apart from Him.”²

“The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action.”³

“We need to live in close fellowship with God, that we may love one another as Christ has loved us. It is by this that the world is to know that we are His disciples.”⁴

“All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved. The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another. This love is the evidence of their discipleship. ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,’ said Jesus, ‘if ye have love one to another.’ When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence.”⁵

“When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun.”⁶

“So the Christian strikes root deep into Christ. He has faith in his Redeemer. He knows in whom he believes. He is fully persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. . . . The roots of faith strike deep down. Genuine Christians, like the cedar of Lebanon, do not grow in the soft surface soil, but are rooted in God, riveted in the clefts of the mountain rocks.”⁷

“The Saviour . . . points out the sign of discipleship: ‘Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.’”⁸

“Our Saviour compares Himself to a vine, of which His followers are the branches. He plainly declares that all who would be His disciples must bring forth fruit; and then He shows how they may become fruitful branches. ‘Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (John 15:4).’”⁹

“The humility and benevolence of Christ's life revealed in ours, is the testimony we give to the world that we are his disciples. Through a life of obedience and self-sacrifice we are to reveal the love of God for fallen man.”¹⁰

“Christ is our personal Saviour; and if we are his disciples, our wrong-doing will cease, unrighteousness will come to an end. The strife to be first will no longer exist; for Christ will be formed within, the hope of glory. Pure and undefiled religion will be seen in our lives.”¹¹

“In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men.”¹²

“Do not seek to shun responsibilities. To do this is to dishonor the claim of discipleship. In His ministry on this earth Christ represented His Father. We are to follow in His steps.”¹³ (*Letter 140*, 1901).

“As you reveal wisdom by faithfulness in the home life, . . . you will reveal faithfulness in the church as patient, kind, forbearing teachers. The Lord will see that you can be entrusted with souls. You have learned lessons in His school as to how to deal with human minds and to lead them forward and upward to the holy standard of God, that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”¹⁴

“Those who are called of God to labor in word and doctrine should ever be learners in the school of Christ. . . . Those who do not feel the importance of going on from strength to strength will not grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”¹⁵

“There are many Seventh-day Adventists who do not understand that to accept the cause of Christ means to accept His cross. The only evidence they give in their lives of their discipleship is in the name they bear. But the true Christian regards his stewardship as a sacred thing. He perseveringly studies the Word, and yields up his life to the service of Christ.”¹⁶

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this assignment.

¹ *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 292.

² *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 110.

³ *The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 218, 219.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 677, 678.

⁶ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 117.

⁷ *Our High Calling*, p. 331.

⁸ *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 292.

⁹ *Reflecting Christ*, p. 96.

¹⁰ *Review & Herald*, September 17, 1908.

¹¹ *The Youth's Instructor*, December 8, 1898.

¹² *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

¹³ *The Publishing Ministry*, p. 259.

¹⁴ *Testimonies to Southern Africa*, p. 33.

¹⁵ *Reflecting Christ*, p. 297.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

Reading 3

THE JESUS WAY OF DISCIPLING¹

Jane Thayer

One time in earth's history God in human form walked this earth, living as the man Jesus, interacting with people, teaching them, healing them, discipling them to Himself. Jesus provides the prototype for discipling and our starting place for learning how to disciple.²

Presenting the Call and the Cost

When Jesus "called" someone, He was calling them to believe in Him for eternal life. He was calling them to salvation. Although we are most familiar with The Twelve Disciples, Jesus called many others to follow Him. He called fishermen, tax collectors, scribes, religious leaders, rich people, poor people, men, women, and children. They were invited, not because they were worthy or had special abilities, but because of the grace of God.³ The choice was made by Jesus.

The call demanded a response. It was a pivotal moment. "From that point, a person was either a disciple of Christ or turned away from him."⁴ Jesus made it clear that there was a cost to following him. He placed high demands on people. He told a rich, young ruler to sell all that he had. When one who was called asked first to bury his father, Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their own dead" (Luke 9:60).⁵ Another was willing to follow, but wanted to say goodbye to his family, and Jesus responded, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (verse 62). The harshest of all statements He said to the large crowds traveling with him: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (14:26).

These are truly hard sayings of Jesus. But we must consider them in the context of His other teachings on family. He strongly supported marriage and loved children (Mark 10); He used parental love as an analogy to show the love of God for human beings (Matt. 7:9-10); He provided for His own mother when He should no longer be able to do so (John 19:26). "So the hard sayings do not undercut the theological and ethical importance of the family, although they raise questions about the order of our loyalties and loves that we must honestly deal with."⁶ Without question, Jesus demands to have the highest priority in our lives.

Jesus pointed out that this cost needs to be recognized and evaluated at the start of the journey. If you want to build a tower, would you not "first sit down and estimate the cost" to see if you have enough money for the project? (Luke 14:28, NIV). If a king wants to go to war with another king, would he not "sit down first and consider" whether he has enough men to risk a battle? (verse 31). Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." We do not experience the cost only at the beginning of the journey, for Jesus also said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me" (9:23). With such an "encouraging invitation," who would want to follow Jesus? The answer is found in the very next verse, "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (v. 24). Yes, life, life, and more life is found when we follow Jesus.

Restoring Relationships

In the days when Jesus was on earth, He was living—as we are—in Act 3 of the Grand Metanarrative. On His life hung all hope of redemption and restoration. Everywhere He went, He brought healing and new life. The life He offered was so radically different from any ideal imagined by the people at that time that He explained it with the use of the metaphor of a “new Birth,” “You must be born again” (John 3:7). Discipleship is about all of life, not some compartmentalized “spiritual” aspect of life.

Central to this new life is the restoration of a personal relationship with God. His invitation represents ever more intimacy with Him: “Come to Me”; “Follow Me”; “Abide [remain] in Me” (Matt. 11:28; 4:19; John 15:4). As intimate as the branch is to the vine, so He invites us into such a relationship with Himself.

The so-called Great Command links a relationship with God and a relationship with other human beings. Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:37-38). Jesus says this statement sums up everything. “Religious people” are tempted to think that if they go through all of the religious exercises, they are the kind of person God wants. But Jesus said that “if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,” leave your gift and “first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (5:23, 24). The vertical relationship (with God) and the horizontal relationship (with others) appear to deepen concurrently. The immediate response of Zacchaeus to Jesus’ special attention to him was that he offered to give half of his money to the poor and to restore four-fold what he had taken dishonestly from others (Luke 19:8).

Jesus expected His followers to be dependent on each other and supportive of each other. Although many people followed Him, He had an inner circle of twelve men. The prayer He taught them was for group prayer: “Our Father . . .” He sent them on field trips two by two. He established the church. The way Jesus disciplined people makes it rather obvious that discipleship does not consist solely of having a wonderful devotional life.

“Discipleship is becoming like Jesus as we walk with him in the real world. And the real world begins in my home, in my closest relationships, in the moment-to-moment circumstances of life.”⁷ It seems strange that it should be the most difficult to “follow Jesus” in our closest relationships, yet, in our close relationships all facades are exposed so that we could confess what Popeye always said, “I y’am what I y’am” when I am with my family and friends. Often what we “y’am” isn’t a pretty picture. Jesus wanted to restore relationships. Many of the difficult challenges He presented in the Sermon on the Mount dealt with the restoration of human relationships: anger toward a brother, adultery, divorce, judging others, going the second mile, loving enemies (Matthew 5).

Restoring relationships brings life, life, and more life. Loving God and others is an indicator that we are following Jesus, who said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35, NKJV). Loving one another is a sign that we are disciples of Jesus.

Restoring Truth

Christians believe that Jesus is the Word made flesh and that this Word was in the beginning and created all things. Imagine what mysteries of the natural world He could have revealed to people. But He did not. Instead, he used nature primarily for analogies to help people understand God and His kingdom and how they are to live in it. This was the truth He came to restore.

The greatest of the seven “I am” statements is surely this one: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). What a bundle of claims.

The truth about God and about ourselves had become hopelessly distorted, hidden under rigid religious regulations, under cultural mores, under human greed and self-centeredness. His cleansing of the temple is a powerful symbol of His cleansing of religious ideas and behaviors. Using only His personal authority, He made a whip of cords and drove out the money changers and the noisy animals. In their place the people truly seeking God returned and praised God. As Jesus cleansed the temple, He also cleansed the teachings.

Jesus restored the truth of the Scripture. In the Sermon on the Mount, all of His teachings beginning, “you have heard it said, but I say to you,” stripped away layers of confusion and restored deep levels of truth that we are still exploring. He quoted Scripture at times of temptation (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). He taught from the roll of Isaiah (Luke 4:16-21). Not only did He restore the truth of the Scripture, but He also opened up new insights. From the example of His life, He taught the importance of the word in defining truth. After His resurrection, He taught the disciples to reinterpret the Hebrew Scriptures’ symbols and prophecies about the Messiah as pointing to Himself—an understanding which was, of course, an entirely new concept (Luke 24:27).

Dozens and dozens of times, Jesus prefaced a teaching with the words, “I tell you the truth.” (This is the newer translation of the King James Version’s “Verily, verily, I say unto you.”) Jesus said that if we know His teaching, then “you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). This truth includes not only the truth about God but the truth about ourselves. “Truth both preserves and provides a life for us. It protects us, and it also guides us into activities and relationships that are life-giving. For example, truth warns us of the danger of not following God’s ways.”⁸

We find the truth about ourselves by looking into the face of Jesus. In the Old Testament Moses ordered a brass serpent to be placed on a tree and lifted up so that people could look on it and be spared from the death of venomous serpents loose in the camp. This pre-figured Jesus’ being made sin and being lifted up on the cross so that we could look on Him and be saved (Num. 21:8, 9; John 8:31). Knowing the truth of what Jesus taught and doing it is a second sign of being a disciple.

Restoring Purpose Through Service

The classic biblical metaphor for servant leadership is the story of Jesus taking a towel and wash basin and washing the feet of the disciples (John 13:4, 5). In that one dramatic act the disciples saw how their pride and ambition clashed with the life that Jesus was offering them. Life, Jesus taught, is not about gaining “the whole world” (Matt. 16:26). If you want to be great, you have to become a servant “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20:28). This teaching completely overturned cultural values—then and now. It requires us to “deny” our natural inclinations to be self-focused and provide for all of our own needs and wants (Luke 9:23).

As part of the training that Jesus gave His disciples, He sent them off on a journey with a purpose. Before they left, He gave them “power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” (Matt. 10:1). Here are His instructions regarding what they were to do: “Preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons” (verses 7, 8, NIV). In today’s terminology, we would say that His tasks included both religious and social

services work. His teachings support both emphases: “Go and make disciples.” Teach “them to obey everything I have commanded you.” “You give them something to eat.” “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (28:19, 20; 14:16; 25:40, NIV).

Against every secular voice (and some voices within the church) we hear, Jesus says that we find our life by losing it. In serving others, we transcend our own self-centered little world and play our redemptive/restorative role in Act 3 of the Grand Metanarrative. Jesus said that we would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). He said he would be with us always (Matt. 28:20). Jesus said that without He, we could do nothing that would last, but if we abide in him, we will bear much fruit (John 15:5). The bearing of “much fruit” is the third sign that Jesus says indicates a disciple.

Becoming a productive disciple takes time. Even though Jesus was the teacher sent from God, it took Him time to make disciples of those who followed Him. He was working with people who were less than perfect. But He had patience. He did not gather the disciples together and give them a long lecture that outlined everything that He expected them to become and to do. Jesus and the disciples walked together and the lessons grew out of real life situations.

The Gospels portray the disciples as slow learners. James and John wanted the highest positions in the new kingdom and said that they were willing to drink the same cup as Jesus to get these awards. How prophetic. James died for his faith, and John was exiled for his. Most of us can see ourselves in Peter’s roller coaster faith and doubt, his brashness, his sin, and finally his deep repentance. Nicodemus first came to talk with Jesus under the cover of darkness. Later he used his influence in the Sanhedrin to spare the life of Jesus. And after the death of Jesus, both Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea stepped forward as disciples to serve their Lord in His death. Commitment, understanding, and growth occurred over time.

Even as He was facing the cross and preparing His disciples for His departure, He knew that they still had much to learn. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). The teaching would not end with His bodily absence. The Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send, would be their teacher. “He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8). Even after Pentecost, it took a vision from God to help Peter understand that the Gospel was also for the Gentiles—despite the modeling of Jesus in His relationships with Gentiles. Peter’s personal experience was needed for understanding. Only then could Peter say, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:34, 35, NIV). Being a disciple of Jesus is a lifelong journey of transformation.

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this assignment.

¹ (Used by permission from *Teaching for Discipleship: Strategies for Transformational Learning*, by Jane Thayer).

² See Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references in this reading are from *The New King James Version* of the Bible.

⁶ Stephen G. Post, *Spheres of Love: Toward a New Ethics of the Family* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1994), p. 14.

⁷ Michael Wilkins, *ibid.*, p. 123.

⁸ Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals About Personal Growth* (Grand

Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), p. 321.

Reading 5

Reading 5

TOGETHER GROWING FRUITFUL DISCIPLES FRAMEWORK¹

CONNECTING

GROWING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS.

As a growing disciple, I am:

1. Developing a dynamic relationship with God.
2. Developing an identity that is complete in Christ.
3. Developing Christ-centered family relationships.
4. Developing Christ-centered relationships in the local and global church as a member of the body of Christ.
5. Developing positive relationships with those outside the church to fulfill the Gospel commission.

UNDERSTANDING

GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS AND HIS TEACHINGS.

As a growing disciple, I am:

1. Learning that Christ calls me to be His disciple.
2. Learning that God is the source of life.
3. Learning about the human fall from God's original plan, and its consequences.
4. Learning that God has provided everything that is needed for the redemption of human beings.
5. Learning that God has provided everything needed for the restoration of human beings into the image of God.

MINISTERING

GROWING IN PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S MISSION OF REVELATION, RECONCILIATION, AND RESTORATION.

As a growing disciple, I am:

1. Seeking opportunities in all daily activities to minister to others.
2. Investing myself in the discipleship of others.
3. Recognizing and responding to the needs of God's suffering children in the local community and around the world.
4. Supporting the ministries of the local and global church with personal resources.
5. Embracing the evangelistic mission of the church to tell the world the story of Jesus.

^{1 1} This inventory is downloadable online at < <http://growingfruitfuldisciples.com/assets/files/Framework-0610.pdf>>.

EQUIPPING

GROWING THE BODY OF CHRIST BY WALKING ALONGSIDE OTHER DISCIPLES IN ORDER TO SUPPORT, NURTURE, AND STRENGTHEN IN LOVE.

As a growing discipler, I am:

1. Helping other disciples engage in a transformational devotional life.
2. Helping other disciples build Christ-like relationships.
3. Helping other disciples study and obey God's word.
4. Helping other disciples live a contagious, holistic Christian life.
5. Helping other disciples discern where God is working in His world and in their lives.
6. Helping other disciples use spiritual gifts in fulfilling a personal call to mission and ministry.

CONNECTING: GROWING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS

C1. To develop a dynamic, deepening, love relationship with God, I am:

- C1.1 communing with God regularly through His word, prayer and other Christian disciplines.
- C1.2 participating with other believers in worshiping God on Sabbath and at other times.
- C1.3 worshipping God daily as a living sacrifice by choosing His will over my own will.
- C1.4 paying attention to what God is doing and praising Him for His love and faithfulness.
- C1.5 participating with God in His mission of reconciliation and restoration.

C2. To develop an individual identity that is complete in Christ, I am:

- C2.1 surrendering my heart and my will to God
- C2.2 learning that God places infinite value on me.
- C2.3 recognizing my continual need of God's forgiving and empowering grace.
- C2.4 inviting the Holy Spirit to guide in my on-going self-reflection and actions.
- C2.5 embracing cultural expectations that are aligned with the Bible and replacing those that are not.

C3. To develop Christ-centered family relationships, I am:

- C3.1 recognizing that my commitment to Christ takes priority over every human relationship.
- C3.2 contributing, supporting and extending unconditional love to those within my family circle.
- C3.3 holding as sacred my family commitments and responsibilities to parents, spouse, and children.
- C3.4 passing on the Christian faith to my children through both teaching and living an authentic Christian life.
- C3.5 practicing hospitality, welcoming into my family or home those who God brings to my attention.
- C3.6 committing to live by biblical standards of sexual morality.

C4. To develop Christ-centered relationships in the local and global church as a member of the body of Christ, I am:

- C4.1 being supported and nurtured by the community of believers.
- C4.2 praying with and for fellow believers, rejoicing with those that rejoice, and caring for those that are in need.
- C4.3 loving and serving the church's children, continuing to disciple them as they mature into adults.
- C4.4 treating others redemptively when they are disciplined or shunned by church or society.

C4.5 keeping informed and responding to news and stories of the world church.

C5. To develop positive relationships with those outside the church, I am:

C5.1 respecting and praying for non-believers because all are of infinite value to their Creator.

C5.2 being a good neighbor, participating in community life, and helping those in need.

C5.3 being ethical in all my business dealings and in my professional and personal life.

C5.4 reflecting the character of Christ in all my interactions with others.

UNDERSTANDING: GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS AND HIS TEACHINGS**L1. To understand that Christ calls me to be His disciple, I am learning that:**

- L1.1 by beholding Jesus and abiding in Him, I will continue to grow more Christ-like.
- L 1.2 the love of Christ constrains me to a life of obedience and self-denial.
- L 1.3 all biblical teachings illustrate the character and mission of Christ.
- L 1.4 being a disciple involves all of my life – my worldview, my relationships, and my purpose and mission.
- L 1.5 I will participate in the body of Christ and its work in the world.
- L 1.6 I accept life – both now and eternally – as a gift from God to be shared with others.

L 2. To understand that God is the source of life, I am learning that:

- L 2.1 God is the creator and sustainer of the universe, including all people created in His image.
- L 2.2 God is a triune God consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- L 2.3 God reveals Himself to us in many ways, but most clearly through His Son, the Incarnate Word.
- L 2.4 God is love and he desires from me a response of love for himself and for others.
- L 2.5 the God-given purpose of humanity is to glorify God through daily life, work, and relationships with others.

L 3. To understand the consequences of the human fall from God's original plan, I am learning that:

- L 3.1 the great controversy between God and Satan originated in heaven.
- L 3.2 because of the disobedience of the first human beings, I have a will to sin and a sinful nature.
- L 3.3 the ten-commandment law of God expresses the character of God and gives the standard for human conduct.
- L 3.4 the natural world no longer reflects the perfection in which God created it.
- L 3.5 the Bible is needed to interpret the natural world as an expression of the character of God.

L 4. To understand that God has provided everything that is needed for my redemption, I am learning that:

- L 4.1 salvation and eternal life are gifts to me through the grace of God.
- L 4.2 Christ came to earth to reveal the character of God and to die in my place as atonement for my sin.
- L 4.3 the love of God draws me to feel sorrow for my sin, to confess, and to repent.
- L 4.4 God forgives sin and restores brokenness.

L 5. To understand that God has provided everything needed for my restoration, I am learning that:

- L 5.1 Jesus died to redeem me from sin and now lives to restore me to physical, mental, and spiritual wholeness.
- L 5.2 through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ will live in me and I will live in Him.
- L 5.3 because every person is created in God's image, my relationships will be based on love, forgiveness and respect.
- L 5.4 the Holy Spirit daily prompts me to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with my God.
- L 5.5 God expects me to be a steward of all he created.
- L 5.6 the great controversy ends when God brings an end to sin and restores Earth to its original perfection.

MINISTERING: *GROWING IN PARTICIPATION IN GOD’S MISSION OF REVELATION, RECONCILIATION, AND RESTORATION*

M1. To seek opportunities in all daily activities to minister to others, I am:

- M1.1 inviting God to change me to bear the fruits of the Spirit.
- M1.2 choosing Jesus as a daily companion and sharing Him joyfully.
- M1.3 investing myself in service wherever the Holy Spirit leads.
- M1.4 carrying out my occupation as a calling to ministry.
- M1.5 building networks for friendship, fellowship, and support.

M2. To invest myself in the discipleship of others, I am:

- M2.1 willing to be mentored by maturing Christians, accountable for my spiritual growth.
- M2.2 willing to be humble and honest when sharing my walk as a disciple.
- M2.3 committing time and effort to mentoring growing Christians.
- M2.4 working intentionally to train fellow believers to disciple others.

M3. To recognize and respond to the needs of God’s suffering children locally and globally, I am:

- M3.1 looking for physical, mental, social and spiritual needs in the local community.
- M3.2 responding mercifully to the discovered needs, individually and/or as a church.
- M3.3 speaking out and acting to relieve suffering and injustice in society.
- M3.4 reducing human suffering by being a faithful steward of God’s creation.
- M3.5 acting compassionately on behalf of people who are disadvantaged or at-risk.

M4. To support the ministries of the local and global church with personal resources, I am:

- M4.1 managing my resources with the understanding that all belong to God.
- M4.2 returning a faithful tithe and giving offerings systematically.
- M4.3 serving in one or more ministries of my local church.
- M4.4 participating personally, as possible, in global service projects or ministries.

M5. To embrace the evangelistic mission of the church, I am:

- M5.1 praying for the Holy Spirit to prepare me to reach others for Christ.
- M5.2 choosing to be aware of the spiritual climate locally and globally.
- M5.3 using my spiritual gifts to help tell the world the story of Jesus.
- M5.4 able to give a reason for my faith when asked.
- M5.5 sharing the story of my personal relationship with Jesus with community members, family, friends and co-workers.

EQUIPPING: GROWING THE BODY OF CHRIST BY WALKING ALONGSIDE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

E1. To help believers engage in a transformational devotional life, I am showing others how to:

- E1.1 study the Bible to know Christ and to develop a biblical worldview.
- E1.2 communicate with God through prayer and Christian meditation.
- E1.3 participate in other Christian disciplines to be open to the Holy Spirit.
- E1.4 set priorities to allow for regular, quality devotional time.
- E1.5 seek spiritual growth opportunities with other believers.

E2. To help believers build Christ-like relationships, I am showing others how to:

- E2.1 inventory themselves, acknowledge defects of character, and invite God to remove them.
- E2.2 work with God to care for themselves and live a balanced life.
- E2.3 cherish, respect and nurture family members as children of God.
- E2.4 be disciplined by other believers in the body of Christ.
- E2.5 resolve conflicts within the home, church, workplace and community.

E3. To help believers study and obey God's word, I am showing others how to:

- E.1 understand the purpose of Scripture.
- E.2 use study tools to more effectively interpret biblical meanings.
- E.3 discover study methods that will help them engage in regular Bible study.
- E.4 apply biblical principles to their lives thoughtfully and faithfully.
- E.5 discern spiritual truth in a balanced manner.

E4. To help believers live a contagious, holistic Christian life, I am showing others how to:

- E4.1 understand the biblical teaching to love the Lord with our heart, soul, strength, and mind.
- E4.2 explain how Christ is the center of all biblical teachings.
- E4.3 express Christ's love by creatively using their talents and interests.
- E4.4 apply biblical principles to every aspect of their lives—mind, body, and spirit.
- E4.5 lead someone to accept and follow Christ.

E5. To help believers discern where God is working, I am showing others how to:

- E5.1 pray for a clear understanding of what God wants to accomplish through them.
- E5.2 recognize the work of the Holy Spirit within and around them.
- E5.3 detect where God is calling them to serve.
- E5.4 assess the needs of those God has called them to serve.
- E5.5 evaluate the culture they are called to serve in, in order to find and reach others.

E6. To help believers use spiritual gifts to fulfill a personal call to mission and ministry, I am showing others how to:

- E6.1 confer with fellow believers to confirm and refine their areas of spiritual giftedness.
- E6.2 prepare for mission and ministry by participating in training programs.
- E6.3 disciple other believers in the body of Christ.
- E6.4 choose and participate in ministries that use their gifts and talents.
- E6.5 find ways to support Adventist mission and evangelism, ministries and education.

Reading 6

THE BALANCE BETWEEN FAITH AND WORKS

Ellen G. White

A Living Testimony

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.’ There are many in the Christian world who claim that all that is necessary to salvation is to have faith; works are nothing, faith is the only essential. But God’s word tells us that faith without works is dead, being alone.

“Many refuse to obey God’s commandments, yet they make a great deal of faith. But faith must have a foundation. God’s promises are all made upon conditions. If we do His will, if we walk in truth, then we may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us. While we earnestly endeavor to be obedient, God will hear our petitions; but He will not bless us in disobedience. If we choose to disobey His commandments, we may cry, ‘Faith, faith, only have faith,’ and the response will come back from the sure word of God, ‘Faith without works is dead.’ Such faith will only be as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal.

“In order to have the benefits of God’s grace, we must do our part; we must faithfully work, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We are workers together with God. You are not to sit in indolence, waiting for some great occasion, in order to do a great work for the Master. You are not to neglect the duty that lies directly in your pathway; but you are to improve the little opportunities that open around you. You must go on doing your very best in the smaller works of life, taking up heartily and faithfully the work God’s providence has assigned you. However small, you should do it with all the thoroughness with which you would do a larger work. Your fidelity will be approved in the records of heaven.

“You need not wait for your way to be made smooth before you; go to work to improve your entrusted talents. You have nothing to do with what the world will think of you. Let your words, your spirit, your actions, be a living testimony to Jesus, and the Lord will take care that the testimony for His glory, furnished in a well-ordered life and a godly conversation, shall deepen and intensify in power. Its results may never be seen on earth, but they will be made manifest before God and angels.

What Is My Part?

“We are to do all that we can do on our part to fight the good fight of faith. We are to wrestle, to labor, to strive, to agonize to enter in at the strait gate. We are to set the Lord ever before us. With clean hands, with pure hearts, we are to seek to honor God in all our ways. Help has been provided for us in Him who is mighty to save. The spirit of truth and light will quicken and renew us by its mysterious workings; for all our spiritual improvement comes from God, not from ourselves. The true worker will have divine power to aid him, but the idler will not be sustained by the Spirit of God.

“In one way we are thrown upon our own energies; we are to strive earnestly to be zealous and to repent, to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts from every defilement; we are to reach the highest standard, believing that God will help us in our efforts. We must seek if we would find, and seek in faith; we must knock, that the door may be opened unto us. The Bible

teaches that everything regarding our salvation depends upon our own course of action. If we perish, the responsibility will rest wholly upon ourselves. If provision has been made, and if we accept God's terms, we may lay hold on eternal life. We must come to Christ in faith, we must be diligent to make our calling and election sure.

A Do-nothing Faith?

“The forgiveness of sin is promised to him who repents and believes; the crown of life will be the reward of him who is faithful to the end. We may grow in grace by improving through the grace we already have. We are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, if we would be found blameless in the day of God. Faith and works go hand in hand, they act harmoniously in the work of overcoming. Works without faith are dead, and faith without works is dead. Works will never save us; it is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf. Through faith in Him, Christ will make all our imperfect efforts acceptable to God. The faith we are required to have is not a do-nothing faith; saving faith is that which works by love, and purifies the soul. He who will lift up holy hands to God without wrath and doubting, will walk intelligently in the way of God's commandments.

“If we are to have pardon for our sins, we must first have a realization of what sin is, that we may repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We must have a solid foundation for our faith; it must be founded on the Word of God, and its results will be seen in obedience to God's expressed will. Says the apostle, ‘Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’

Evenly Balanced

Faith and works will keep us evenly balanced, and make us successful in the work of perfecting Christian character. Jesus says, ‘Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.’ Speaking of temporal food, the apostle said, ‘For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.’ The same rule applies to our spiritual nourishment; if any would have the bread of eternal life, let him make efforts to obtain it.

“We are living in an important and interesting period of this earth's history. We need more faith than we have yet had; we need a firmer hold from above. Satan is working with all power to obtain the victory over us, for he knows that he has but a short time in which to work. Paul had fear and trembling in working out his salvation; and should not we fear lest a promise being left us, we should any of us seem to come short of it, and prove ourselves unworthy of eternal life? We should watch unto prayer, strive with agonizing effort to enter in at the strait gate.

“There is no excuse for sin, or for indolence. Jesus has led the way, and He wishes us to follow in His steps. He has suffered, He has sacrificed as none of us can, that He might bring salvation within our reach. We need not be discouraged. Jesus came to our world to bring divine power to man, that through His grace, we might be transformed into His likeness.

After My Best—What?

“When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. But He will not accept those who claim to have faith in Him, and yet are disloyal to His Father's commandment.

“We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easy-going, accommodating, crossless religion. But Jesus says, ‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’”¹

Like Two Oars

“If we are faithful in doing our part, in cooperating with Him, God will work through us [to do] the good pleasure of His will. But God cannot work through us if we make no effort. If we gain eternal life, we must work, and work earnestly. . . . Let us not be deceived by the oft-repeated assertion, ‘All you have to do is to believe.’ Faith and works are two oars which we must use equally if we [would] press our way up the stream against the current of unbelief. ‘Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.’ The Christian is a man of thought and practice. His faith fixes its roots firmly in Christ. By faith and good works he keeps his spirituality strong and healthy, and his spiritual strength increases as he strives to work the works of God.”²

Present a Balanced Message

“Let my brethren be very careful how they present the subject of faith and works before the people, lest minds become confused. . . .

“Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, ‘Without me ye can do nothing’ (John 15:5). From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God. Unless the Holy Spirit works upon the human heart, at every step we shall stumble and fall. Man's efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. . . .

“Never leave the impression on the mind that there is little or nothing to do on the part of man; but rather teach man to cooperate with God, that he may be successful in overcoming.

“Let no one say that your works have nothing to do with your rank and position before God. In the judgment the sentence pronounced is according to what has been done or to what has been left undone (Matthew 25:34-40).

“Effort and labor are required on the part of the receiver of God's grace; for it is the fruit that makes manifest what is the character of the tree. Although the good works of man are of no more value without faith in Jesus than was the offering of Cain, yet covered with the merit of Christ, they testify [to] the worthiness of the doer to inherit eternal life. That which is considered morality in the world does not reach the divine standard and has no more merit before Heaven than had the offering of Cain.”³

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

¹ *The Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1980.

² *Review and Herald*, June 11, 1901.

³ *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 379-382.

Reading 7

SABBATH SCHOOL AND THE LEARNING CYCLE

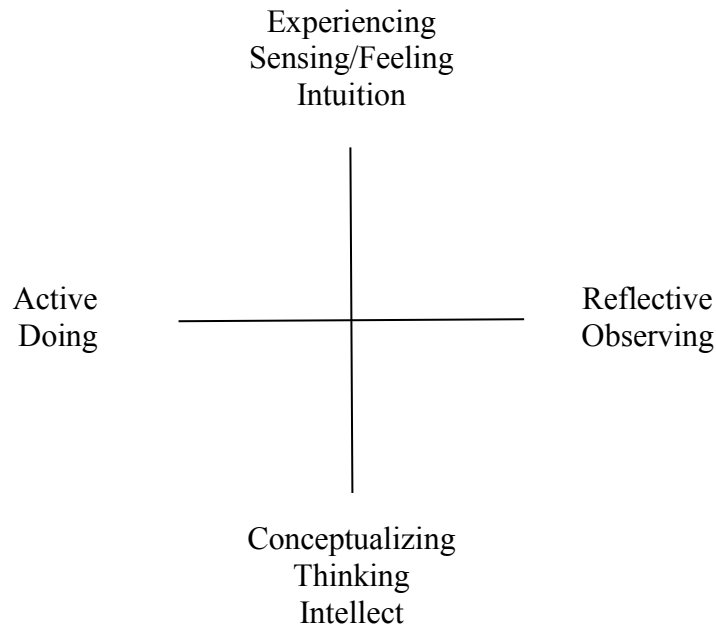
What Is the Learning Cycle”

People learn in different ways. In the early 1970’s, Dr. David Kolb identified two dimensions of learning: *perceiving and processing*. The ways in which people perceive and process information constitutes their “learning style.”

Some people perceive life through their senses and feelings—by direct (subjective) experiences. Others perceive life through their intellect (objectively) by conceptualizing or thinking. Most of us have a blend of these two lenses, but we usually favor one. (See the vertical line in Illustration 1.)*

People process new experiences through reflecting (observing) or through action (doing)—or somewhere in between. (See the horizontal line in Illustration 1.)

ILLUSTRATION 1



For example, though my husband and I share the same style of perceiving life—through direct experiences—we process it differently. He processes new experiences through action, while I process them through reflection. Both are valuable. So, when we go to the beach, he’s the first one with his boogie board into the water. And everyone usually knows it, since his zest for life is difficult to keep under wrap, and he yells with excitement as he enters the water! “Come in, Bonita,” he’ll urge. “The water is perrrrrfect!”

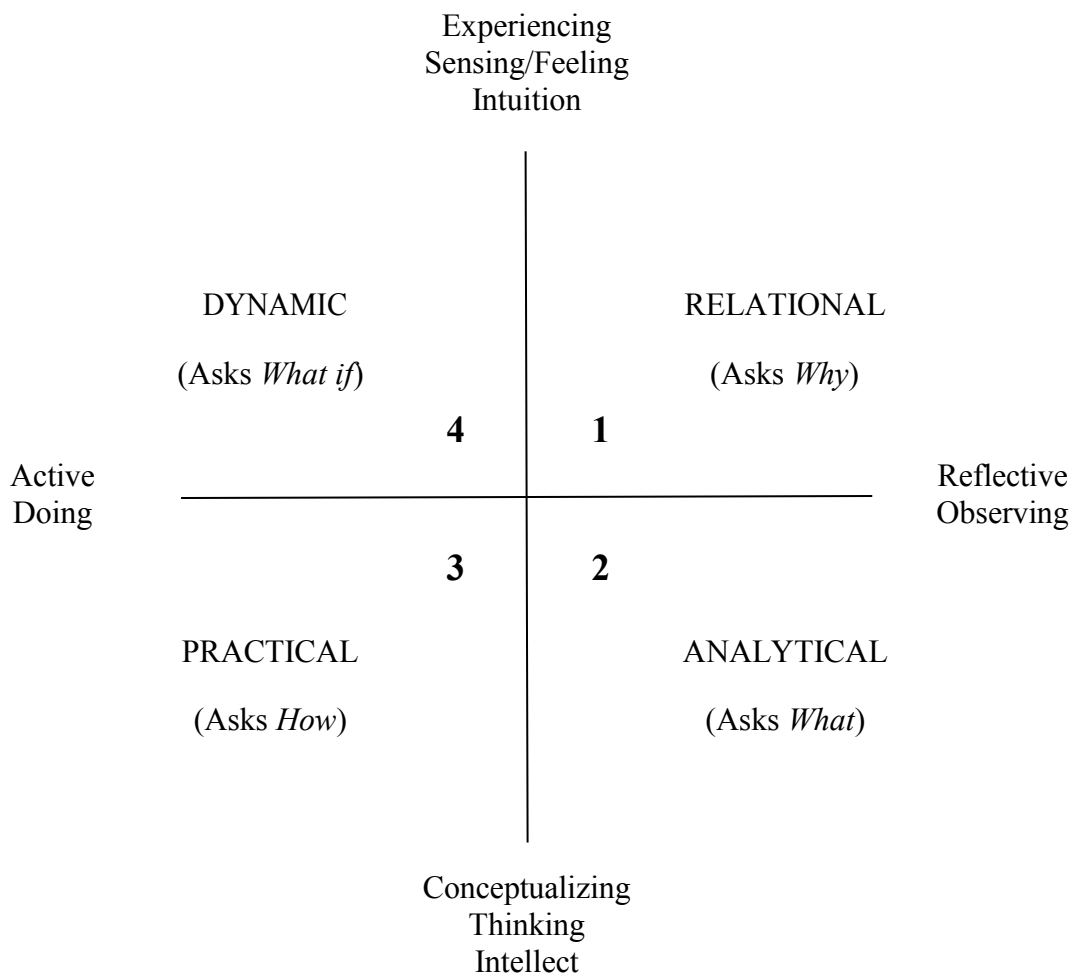
I, on the other hand, sit back and observe the situation for a while before I feel comfortable enough to go in. My internal dialogue runs along these lines: *OK, Bonita, there appears to be no undertow—Roy’s still standing. . . . It’s a sunny day, so the water won’t freeze*

me to death. . . . There aren't too many people around, so I won't have to dodge them to ride my wave back onto the beach. . . .

Once I've gone through this reflection time, I'm usually ready to jump into the new experience—unless I have a great book to read; then, forget the water.

With Kolb's work as a foundation, in 1987, Dr. Bernice McCarthy described four basic learning styles and the particular teaching strategies that are most effective for people to learn. According to Dr. McCarthy, each learning style asks different questions and displays different strengths during the learning process. These learning styles use both right- and left-brain processing techniques. Thus, when we integrate all four learning styles in our teaching, we are educating the "whole brain." (See Illustration 2.)

ILLUSTRATION 2



Our local congregations are comprised of both types—and more. There are those who want to act, do, and experience, as well as those who want to reflect and observe before they experience. We have those who need to think about it more than others before they actually do something, and we have those who would much rather think about it and reflect on it rather than do something!

- The **relational** learner asks the question, “*Why* is Sabbath School important to me?”
- The **analytical** learner asks the question, “*What* do I need to know about the topic we’re studying?”

- The **practical** learner asks the question, “*How* do I apply the knowledge I acquired?”
- The **dynamic** learner asks the question, “*What* if I use this information?”

Have you ever heard a church member say about their Sabbath School teacher, “He’s a nice man (or she’s a nice woman), but I just don’t get anything out of his teaching” Or “her lessons are too ‘dry,’ too ‘shallow,’ ‘just a bunch of stories,’ or ‘just plain irrelevant to my life.’

First, we must face the fact that we will never be able to reach everyone. However, as we come to better understand the learning cycle, we will begin to realize that one of the reasons people express themselves in these ways is because often we are skipping one or more of the components of the cycle. And when we incorporate each component into our sermons, more of our listeners may respond to our message.

The Four Focuses of Sabbath School

The four focuses of Sabbath School—fellowship, Bible study, Mission, and Outreach—answer these same four questions of the learning cycle:

1. *Why* do we come to Sabbath School? (**Fellowship**)
2. *What* should we learn in Sabbath School? (**Bible Study**)
3. *How* should that learning affect our lives? (**Mission**)
4. *What* if we put that learning into practice? (**Outreach, i.e., Service and Witness**).

The teacher’s edition of the *Adult Bible Study Guide* is designed to aid you, the teacher, in answering these questions. For each lesson, you will find the following four modules, which correlate with these questions:

1. Why is this topic important? (**Motivate**)
2. What do I need to know about the topic? (**Explore**)
3. How shall I apply this to my life? (**Apply**)
4. What if I act on this knowledge? (**Create**)

The components of the Growing Fruitful Disciples discipleship model also answer these four questions:

1. Why is being a disciple important? (**Connecting**)
2. What is it that I need to know about God and salvation? (**Understanding**)
3. How can I apply this understanding to my life? (**Equipping**)
4. What if I apply it; what will my life look like? (**Ministering**)

As you can see, the Growing Fruitful Disciples discipleship model, the ABSG teacher’s guide, and the four focuses of Sabbath School are all based on the learning cycle. Thus, they can become a transformational synergy through which to help your Sabbath School members learn more effectively.

For example, as you plan your lessons, you can draw from the teacher’s guide for activities and questions that will enhance learning. With your understanding of the learning cycle, if you don’t find anything in the teacher’s guide that meets your needs, you can develop your own activity, questions, or materials to fulfill the desired outcome of that component. Once you’ve taught the lesson on any given Sabbath, you can encourage your members to take what they’ve learned in Sabbath School and see how it can help them to grow in the areas of their lives in which they’ve identified a need to grow.

And, based on these ideas of learning, the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department provides two very practical weekly resources that will provide enrichment for your teaching: < <http://www.sabbathschoolteacher.org>> and < <http://www.cqbiblestudy.org/article.php?id=3>>.

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

* Charles Betz (with Jack Calkins), *Leading Adult Sabbath School* (Advent Source, Lincoln, NE: 2001), p. 20.

Assignment 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE

Read through the following Scripture texts from *The New King James Version* that speak about disciples. Decide what characteristics of being a disciple Jesus is addressing in that text. The first two are done for you. Afterward, answer the questions at the end of the exercise.

1. "Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few'" (Matt. 9:37).	Worker
2. "When He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease" (Matt. 10:1).	Authority
3. "Whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42).	
4. "When John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples" (Matt. 11:2).	
5. "He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" (Matt. 12:49).	
6. "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread" (Matt. 15:2).	
7. "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me'" (Matt. 16:24).	
8. "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" (Matt. 28:19).	
9. "He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?'" (Mark 4:40).	
10. "They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20).	
11. "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples'" (Luke 11:1).	
12. Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on" (Luke 12:22).	
13. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).	
14. "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).	
15. "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).	
16. "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed'" (John 8:31).	
17. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love	

for one another” (John 13:35).

18. “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1).

19. “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8).

20. “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

21. “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24).

22. “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

23. “Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea” (Acts 11:29).

24. “The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52).

25. “Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’” (Acts 14:22).

Questions:

- What do these characteristics of a disciple tell us about our role as a disciple?

- How can we exhibit these characteristics in our lives?

- What impact could this understanding have on your Sabbath School class?

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this assignment.

Assignment 2

GROWING DISCIPLES INVENTORY

Christ calls us to follow Him as disciples. Disciples are those who have come to Jesus for eternal life and are becoming like Him as they live in relationship with others. Discipleship is not something we do alone, only on Sabbath or during a five-week seminar. For the Christian, discipleship is life.

Instructions: Respond to the 20 statements below. Score your answers. Serve and equip others using strengths. Invite a Christian to help you grow in weaker areas. Learn more about the Growing Disciples Model at <www.inventory.growingdisciples.info>.

How often is this true of you? Circle one number for each.	Rarely/ Never	Not Often	Quite Often	Regularly /Always	Write circled number in space
I am deepening my relationship with God.	1	2	3	4	□
I keep learning more about what it means to be a growing Christian.	1	2	3	4	□ □
I am sharing my faith through my daily activities, e.g., work, study, play.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □
I am encouraging others to spend time with God daily.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am discovering who I am in relationship to Christ.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I keep learning more about who God is.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am discipling one or more members of the body of Christ.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am teaching others how to build Christ-like relationships.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am developing Christ-centered family relationships.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I keep learning more about the human fall from God's original plan.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I volunteer to serve in my community without reward, outside my family.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am helping others to study and obey God's Word.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am developing Christ-like relationships with church members.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I keep learning more about God's grace and plan of salvation.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am supporting my church's ministries with my time and money.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am showing others how to live as committed, healthy Christians.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am developing positive relationships with those who are not part of my church or family.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I keep learning more about how God has provided everything needed to restore me to His image.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am helping my church tell the story of Jesus.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
I am teaching others how to use spiritual gifts in God's work.	1	2	3	4	□ □ □ □
Totals					Total columns = □ □ □ □
					Plan to grow. C U M E

Assignment 3

ACTION PLAN FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Choosing to follow Jesus is the first step to being a disciple. Each of us follows a unique path as God leads. Think about the results of your Growing Disciples Inventory (Assignment 2). Then consider action steps to keep growing closer to Jesus.

- Plan to reflect Jesus' love using your three greatest strengths.
- Commit to growing in your three weakest areas.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you in deciding what to do and acting on your plan.
- Read the Commitments and Indicators in your Growing Disciples Framework (Reading

5) to get started.

- Decide on actions to take, with God's help, and fill these in below.
- Review your plan with a Christian friend or mentor.
- Commit to following your plan. Be accountable to a Christian friend/mentor.

My Spiritual Growth Plan

Name _____

Date _____

A. I am stronger in these 2 processes:

Within these processes, I am strongest in these 2 commitments:

1. _____

_____ & _____

2. _____

_____ & _____

B. I am weaker in these two processes:

Within these processes, I am weakest in these 2 commitments:

1. _____

_____ & _____

2. _____

_____ & _____

C. I commit to helping others grow spiritually using my 4 strengths (see A). Here are actions I can take:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this reading.

Assignment 4

CREATING A LESSON

Using the Learning Styles information, the *Adult Bible Study Guide* teacher's guide, and the Growing Fruitful Disciples curriculum framework, create an adult Sabbath School lesson on the topic of your choice (i.e., forgiveness, the Second Coming, depression, etc.).

Example:

Forgiveness

Motive: Why is the topic of forgiveness important in the Christian's life?
[Create opening illustration or activity]

Explore: What does the Bible say about forgiveness?
[Develop questions]

Apply: How do I apply the biblical principles to my life?
[Ask questions, simulate possible scenarios, etc.]

Create: What if I apply these principles to my life? What will it look like?
[Cast a vision]

Be sure to mark on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this assignment.

Student Fulfillment Card

GROWING DISCIPLES

This fulfillment card is the record that you have successfully completed the basic certification class “Growing Disciples” of the International Sabbath School Teachers’ Association training curriculum. When all the items are completed, have the card signed by your class instructor, a Sabbath school superintendent, person in charge of Sabbath school teachers in your church/district, your pastor, or someone from the conference/mission in charge of Sabbath School teacher training.

Check the items completed.

I have completed the following:

Unit 1

- Reading 1: “A Biblical Discipleship.”
- Reading 2: “Discipleship in the Writings of Ellen G. White.”
- Reading 3: “The Jesus Way of Discipling.”
- Assignment 1: “Characteristics of a Disciple.”

Unit 2

- Reading 4: “Description of the ‘Together Growing Fruitful Disciples’ Model.”
- Reading 5: “Together Growing Fruitful Disciples Framework.”
- Assignment 2: “Growing Disciples Inventory.”

Unit 3

- Reading 6: “The Balance Between Faith and Works.”
- Assignment 3: “Action Plan for Spiritual Growth.”

Unit 4

- Reading 7: “Sabbath School and the Learning Cycle.”
- Assignment 4: “Creating a Lesson.”

- The course study guide “Growing Disciples.”

_____ has satisfactorily completed the International Sabbath School Teachers’ Association class “Growing Disciples.”

(Signature) _____

Date _____

Position _____