

Institute for Christian Teaching
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**CONVEYING ADVENTIST BELIEFS TO STUDENTS
THROUGH THEIR PEERS
AT KOREAN SAHMYOOK UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE**

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Introduction

In Adventist universities and colleges, religious programs may aim at the following two objects: 1) strengthening the faith of Adventist students, and 2) evangelizing the non-Adventist students. For accomplishing those aims, two approaches have been mainly employed: 1) religious programs executed by the school itself and faculty, and 2) religious efforts done by students. School religious programs, in which students are required to participate, include chapels, Bible classes, the week of prayer, and worship services on Sabbaths. On the other hand, students' efforts include all the religious activities not academically required by the school such as the many activities of religious clubs and individual Bible meetings.

It cannot be denied that the school programs have played a great role in fulfilling both aims on Adventist campuses. In fact, those programs have been signs that the college has been operated by the SDA Church. It also cannot be denied that, in the case of Korean Sahmyook University and College, most baptisms have been as a result of those programs.

In spite of the importance and marvelous results from school religious programs, however, it is true that questions about the influence and results of those programs have been often raised within the Adventist community. The percentage of non-Adventist students is increasing year by year. Even though almost 800 students are baptized on this campus every year, in many cases, they seem to be baptized without a definite decision and experience of repentance. It is a reality that some of them have been baptized to fit themselves in with the culture of a Christian college. Many students who are baptized on the campus do not think that they are Adventists, and continue to practice their bad habits and no longer attend church after graduation. Even the number of baptisms is decreasing every year. What about the Adventist students? Many of them attend church and Bible classes habitually and have no personal efforts to lead their friends to Christ. Even some students who are working for campus ministry get easily exhausted because of heavy burdens and having no personal experience of soul-winning.

In this situation, the following questions are consequently raised:

Is there any more effective method for strengthening the faith of Adventist students and evangelizing non-Adventist students at the same time? If there is, how is it implemented on Adventist campuses, specifically in Korean Sahmyook University and College?

This essay primarily aims at answering those two questions by developing a specific strategy for evangelizing non-Adventist students on the campus of Korean Sahmyook University and College through Adventist students. Basically, this plan does not deny or minimize the importance of the school's religious programs. Rather, it is designed to make them more effective. Those so-called "contextual strategies" (Taylor, p. 3, 4) have great value by themselves. They have worked very well for many years. However, they have not been enough in terms of internal and spiritual experiences. Those programs have also overlooked the importance of nurturing

Adventist students while focusing on non-Adventist students. Therefore, this paper is planned to utilize Adventists for evangelizing non-Adventist students for accomplishing two purposes at the same time. Even though the project is primarily for Korean Sahmyook University and College in Korea, it can be applied to colleges in other countries.

The Religious and Educational Situation of Korean Sahmyook University and College

Korean Sahmyook University and College have 35 various departments, including theology department, with more than 5,200 students (We have a university and a college on one campus). More than 150 professors are endeavoring to teach and guide the students academically and spiritually (Korean Union Conference, p. 2.1-2.34). Even though almost 50% of the students are not Adventists, more or less 800 students are baptized every year. All the students are required to attend Bible classes, chapels twice a week, and the week of prayer meetings one week each semester. Faithful attendance in Sabbath School and divine worship are also required in order to graduate. In addition, students are exposed to many religious activities and a religious atmosphere, and many professors and pastors are helping the students to accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

The first semester begins in March and is finished in the middle part of June. After almost two and one-half months of summer vacation, there is a second semester from September to the middle of December, which is followed by another two and one-half months of winter vacation.

Definition of Terms

In this paper, the following terms need to be understood:

Adventist students, the students who attended Adventist academies or have at least one Adventist parent, who are assumed to be baptized before coming to Sahmyook University or College.

Non-Adventist students, the students who have never received an Adventist education or attended an Adventist church before coming to Sahmyook University or College.

Peer, one belonging to the same societal group especially based on age, grade, or status (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 857). In this essay it especially refers to all students, regardless of their ages and grades, to distinguish them from faculty and staff of the school.

Why Peer Group Evangelism?

It is Biblical

Peer evangelism looks like one of the main methods that God himself has chosen to

communicate with humankind. In fact, the incarnation of God, Jesus, is the best model of peer group evangelism. "God became a man." Why? Ellen G. White emphasizes that it was because he wanted to "draw near to sorrowful, tempted men" (White, p. 23), and "since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs" (ibid, p. 24).

Jesus' first disciples were the result of peer group evangelism. Apostle John, in the first chapter of his book, shows that how he and his friends became the disciples of Jesus. After hearing John the Baptist had spoken of Jesus, John and Andrew, who had been the disciples of John the Baptist, witnessed what they believed concerning Jesus to each of their brothers, James and Peter. Philip, who was from the same town with Andrew and Peter, after meeting Jesus, visited Nathanael, his friend, and presented what he thought of Jesus.

Jesus himself used the power of peer group in evangelism. He commanded two demon-possessed men in Gerasenes, after healing them, not to follow him but to "return home and tell how much God has done for" them (Luke 8:26). They went away and told all over town, and, according to White, the result was in abundance (White, p. 340). The woman whom Jesus met beside Jacob's well at Sychar can be another model of peer group evangelism. The woman, after recognizing the man who was standing in front of her was Messiah (John 4:26), "leaving her water jar, went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?'" (v. 28, 29). John witnesses that the result of her testimony was marvelous; "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (v. 39).

Apostle Paul, one of the great evangelists, also emphasizes the importance of common factors between the evangelist and the unbeliever in evangelism. He stresses that he himself "became like a Jew," "one under the law," and "became weak," and "all things to all men," because he wanted "to win as many as possible" (1 Cor 9:19-22). It might not be an exaggeration to say that it is this peer group mentality that made Paul one of the greatest evangelists in Christian history.

It is Effective

The effectiveness of peer group evangelism might be demonstrated through three dimensions. First, the peer group is the most influential group to the young people. Second, it is helpful for strengthening the faith of young people who are engaged in soul-winning program. Third, this method gives non-believers the chance to receive the gospel without being forced, so that they can become "true Adventists" more easily.

Peer Group - Most Influential Group for Young People

Human is a social being. From the beginning, human was created as a member of a group. Within the social group, there is a mutual influence of one another. Holmes declares that "nobody can live with meaning entirely for himself" and human changes through the influence of parents, schooling, friends, church, and so on. He continues, however, that the peer group is the

greatest single influence in shaping young people of high school and college age (Holmes, p. 79).

After a careful study on college impact, Alexander W. Astin concludes that students' values, beliefs, and aspirations tend to change in the direction of the dominant values, beliefs, and aspirations of the peer group. . . the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years (Astin, p. 398). James Zackrison also points out that people are more receptive when approached by the people with something in common (Zackrison, p. 155).

Peer Group Evangelism - Effective for Adventist Students

First of all, through peer group evangelism, the young people, who are willing to participate in evangelistic programs, might feel that they are doing something in soul-winning programs. Many Adventist young people do not realize that they are playing a role in evangelizing students even while they are serving in Sabbath School and Adventist Youth activities, for they have no opportunity and experience to teach non-Adventist students individually. As a result, they are easily discouraged and give up the evangelizing efforts.

Another positive effect of peer group evangelism is to prepare the students as experienced Church leaders in soul-winning for the future. One of the problems in the Korean Adventist church is that only a few among adult church members, even church leaders such as pastors and elders, have real experience of soul-winning. They do not know how to approach souls, how to teach Bible, and how great the joy of soul-winning is. Accordingly, they are afraid to share their faith and are passive in evangelism. The campuses of Adventist universities and colleges are really great fields for Adventist students to experience and taste the joy of winning souls. The college students are usually more open-minded than adults; they might be easily approached as a friend; the environment is more Christian; and the school supports evangelistic efforts. Therefore, through encouraging Adventist students to experience soul-winning on the campus, the college could contribute to providing mission-oriented leaders and church growth.

Peer Group Evangelism - Effective for Non-Adventist Students

As mentioned above, young people learn their values through relational and social ways. They hate to be conditioned, controlled and persuaded by adults. For them, the indirect approach is more effective than a direct approach. Peer group evangelism can make the non-Adventist students feel less pressured concerning the matter of religion. In fact, many non-Adventist students who are attending Adventist universities and colleges are struggling with religious matters because they think that they are in the middle of the Adventist culture. In this case, the indirect approach through peer group can help non-Adventist students to enjoy campus life without religious stress, while the ultimate goal of the Adventist school, soul-winning, is accomplished at the same time.

Non-Adventist students who are interested in the Adventist Church can get more individual opportunities to study the Bible and to know Adventism through their peer group before becoming Adventists. It may help them to understand regarding baptism itself and biblical truth.

Peer-group evangelism produces a continuous relationship between the Adventist student who shared his faith and the non-Adventist student who received the gospel from him: The relationship may continue after baptism and even after graduation. There might be many ways to examine the success of Adventist education. However, the number of students who attend the local churches after graduation can be one of the most accurate gauges for this. It is a reality that many students who were baptized on the campus disappear in the church after graduation. Evangelism through peer-group can be one of the alternatives to keep in touch with them even after graduation.

Evangelistic Strategies for Non-Adventist Students

Evangelistic strategies are composed of two tasks: 1) organize small groups - the school's task, and 2) approach and teach - Adventist students' task.

Organize Small Groups

The school could provide Adventist students with opportunities to meet non-Adventist students as much as possible. One way to do this is by organizing small groups by departments. This is one of the ways to share spiritual responsibilities with Adventist students and give more opportunities for developing personal relationship with their non-Adventist friends.

Organization of Groups

All students are to be members of groups that are composed of students in the same department from different school years. Since usually there are 40 students in a year class, 20 is an appropriate size for a small group. For the university group (the university has four-year school system), 5 persons from each school year, and for the college group (the college has two-year school system), 10 persons from each grade can be organized as a group. It could be considered that a student belongs to a same group from the freshman to the graduation.

Each group has a leader who is selected from among the senior students, and an assistant leader from each school year class. Each professor of the department is in charge of two or three small groups and every professor has a student assistant from among the theology department students. A pastor takes care of one or two departments with an assistant who is a theology student.

The leaders of the small groups are selected by the professors and the chaplain of the department before winter vacation. Leadership of the groups starts at the beginning of the first semester and finishes at the end of the school year, which means the following February. Leaders of the Sabbath School of each department could be the leaders of the groups. Group members are decided before the winter vacation except freshmen. Freshmen are divided into groups by professors and group leaders after they have completed all the entrance exams. When dividing the groups, first of all, the balance between Adventist and non-Adventist students in a group should be considered.

Meetings and Activities of Small Groups

These small groups are primarily for religious purposes, but they can be used as part of the administrative system during the school year. The group members should be encouraged to gather together anytime at any place. The professor who is in charge of the groups should pay special attention to the group leaders as well as other group members.

The group members may meet at least once a week during Sabbath School lesson study time. Sabbath School classes can be divided according to the small group and study the Lesson Quarterly under the leadership of the group leader. Chapel is another opportunity for their meetings. At least once a month, a small group or the groups that are under the same professor can have a meeting during the chapel period.

Since most of the Korean young people are accustomed to using computers and are very interested in them, cyberspace can provide another meeting place for groups. The leader of the group may use e-mail as one of the ways to keep contact with his members and encourage members to send e-mails to one another to develop good relationships. Chatting with one another through the internet at appointed times during the week could build closer feelings of intimacy to the "N-generation." Writing letters to the members is a time-consuming task, but it will bring marvelous fruit.

During summer or winter vacation, going out to one of the local churches, even abroad, for doing evangelistic crusades or social services has proved to be one of the best methods to create intimacy among the participants and to evangelize non-Adventist students. One crusade team can consist of one, two or three groups.

Teach the Bible

Once non-Adventist students show a positive response toward the Adventist teachings, they should be taught something deeper regarding Christian beliefs and Adventism. One of the Adventist group members is best suited to teach them. In this case, even though the Adventist student seems to be weak in biblical knowledge and teaching experience, he can share his understandings about truths of the Bible as he understands it, and his personal experiences. It would be more powerful and effective to the students than if pastors or professors were to do it. Of course, the group leader and the theology students who help the professors or the pastor might teach the non-Adventist students.

Biblical Subjects

In preparing for baptism, it is recommended to have individual Bible studies at least five times before baptism. It may be better to have these Bible meetings intensively during a week than once a week for five weeks.

Bible subjects to be presented should be varied according to the spiritual conditions of the baptismal candidates. They can be divided into three categories: 1) for atheists, 2) for Christians of other denominations, and 3) for other religious groups.

An atheist usually does not distinguish Adventists from other Christian groups. In their view, all denominations are the same within the category "Christianity." Strong distinctions between Adventists and other Christian groups might create negative image toward the Adventist Church, even concerning Christianity as a whole. Therefore, the following topics, which are common to other Christian bodies, might be taught: 1) The existence and love of God, 2) The Bible as God's word, 3) Redemption through Jesus Christ, 4) The condition of man in death, and 5) Biblical prophecies.

In Korean Christianity, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, generally, has a negative image. It is known as a cult with strange doctrines. Many churches teach their members not to have contact with Adventists, not even to talk with them. In fact, many sincere Protestant and Catholic parents and students who come to our university or college are very careful not to be assimilated into Adventist culture. Because of this, Adventist students should approach and teach them very carefully. Bible teaching is recommended to begin with what they are familiar with, such as 1) salvation by faith and 2) the Bible as God's word, and move on to something new to them, such as 3) the Sabbath commandment, 4) Biblical prophecies, and 5) the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Most students of other religious groups are Buddhists. They are usually more accommodating, at least outwardly, toward Adventist values. They usually think that there might be many ways to reach truths and, consequently, do not stick to their own religion so seriously in comparison with Christians. The similarity of the lifestyle, such as preference for vegetarianism and country life, are also reasons for their easier acceptance of Adventism. For these students, the differences between their religion and Christianity might be taught, such as 1) God as the highest god and creator, 2) redemption through Jesus Christ, 3) salvation by faith not by works, 4) the condition of man in death, and 5) biblical prophecies and the second coming of Jesus.

Textbooks

The primary textbook should, of course, be the Bible. Some of the books would be needed if the Adventist students are not accustomed to teaching the Bible. It might be helpful if chaplains would produce a guidebook for Bible teaching according to the different kinds of non-Adventist groups. This book may include how to approach the students, how to teach the Bible, and how to lead the small group, as well as the subjects of Bible teaching mentioned above. This book can also be used as a manual for training Adventist students for evangelizing non-Adventist students.

"The Ways of Hope," published by Voice of Prophecy, would be helpful. Using "The Ways of Hope" on the website (<http://www.adventist.or.kr>, <http://bibleinfo.org>) would be interesting to the non-Adventist students.

Training Strategies for Adventist Students

Training Adventist students is a crucial part in accomplishing the two aims of this project: 1) evangelizing non-Adventist students, and 2) strengthening the faith of Adventist students.

Adventist students can be trained through two programs: 1) regular Bible classes, 2) special training programs during vacations.

Regular Bible Classes

In order to train Adventist students, the current Bible class system might need to be modified. At Sahmyook University and College, Bible classes have been offered by department and school year, which means that all the students in a certain school year of a certain department are required to take the same class.

Organization of Bible Class

This paper suggests that this one class should be divided into two classes—Adventist and non-Adventist classes. In this case, however, in order to reduce the professor's teaching load, it is highly recommended for students on the same year-level in two different departments to be put together in one Bible class. The professor of the Bible class may give a lecture to non-Adventist students according to the regular time schedule, and to Adventist students on Friday, on which usually there is no class or only a few classes in Sahmyook University and College. Since most pastors—Bible teachers—are in charge of two departments as a Bible teacher and pastor for ceremonies, operating this system might not have many problems. On the contrary, some advantages are expected from this Bible teaching system besides the chance for training Adventist students for campus ministry: 1) the professor can approach students with different methods according their spiritual levels, and 2) the students can have more opportunity to be mixed with students from other department.

Additionally, this class might be used as an after-baptism class. The students who are baptized may join this class in the following semester, and may later be utilized as leaders after finishing one-semester of training.

Training Subjects

In the class for Adventist students, the professor could expound the biblical truth more deeply and meaningfully, while the lectures in the class for non-Adventist student could be rendered in a relatively evangelistic atmosphere. Since the Adventist students also need to be fed spiritually, the biblical subjects should be taught at more or less 60% of the classes. During the remaining classes, special practical topics for training them to do campus ministry might be prepared. The following topics are suggested: 1) teaching methods how to teach the Bible, 2) how to manage small groups, 3) Christian leadership, and 4) how to develop social relationships. Even if these topics are repeated every semester, the quality and perspective of the lectures should be deeper and deeper.

In addition to the regular Bible and special training topics, the Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly should be discussed before it is presented to the small group members on the following Sabbaths. If the chapel is scheduled to be rendered by the group during the following week, how to handle that chapel period might be discussed in these classes.

Special Training Programs

Special training programs are offered during summer and winter vacations. During these vacations, all the Adventist students and small group leaders who are staying at dormitories and living near the school are encouraged to attend the college church in the school and participate in special retreats.

Sabbath Activities during Vacations

Special Sabbath Schools and worship services should be organized for the students. During Sabbath School, the topics of Lesson Quarterly, which is supposed to be taught in the following semester, might be discussed in advance. The sermons could be focused on campus ministry and evangelism as well as general topics. In the afternoon, the students join in writing letters and sending e-mails to non-Adventist students. They may also contact their group members by telephone. Learning how to lead social activities, which help leaders to lead their groups as well as to spend Sabbath afternoons meaningfully, can be done during these vacations.

Retreats for Training

Special retreats could be held for the Adventist students and group leaders during summer and winter vacations. The summer retreat is recommended to be held at the very beginning of the vacation, because as soon as vacations begin, most students want to get part-time jobs in order to earn money. Since the summer vacation usually begins at the last day of final exam, on Friday of the middle part of June, the retreat can be started that very day with a duration of two nights and three days at a remote and quiet place.

In the retreat held during winter vacation, those Adventist students who are going to be freshmen should be encouraged to join the retreat as well as the existing students, even though it is held before the new school year begins. The retreat should focus on developing good relationships between freshmen and higher school year students. For this reason, it would be better for this meeting to be held the last weekend of the winter vacation.

Preparing and equipping Adventist students and small group leaders for campus ministry are the main purpose of these retreats. A master plan for evangelizing non-Adventist students in the following semester should be presented by the chaplaincy and discussed at these meetings. The leaders' experiences and methods of sustaining communication with their group members could be given and shared with one another.

Conclusion

Most scholars agree that young people are influenced more by the peer group than by any other group. Thus, from the evangelistic viewpoint, it can be said that peer group evangelism is the most effective evangelistic method for young people. To apply this method to campus ministry, two things should be done: 1) there should be trained students on the campus, and 2)

opportunities for those students to meet non-believers should be given as much as possible.

Adventist universities and colleges should encourage and train Adventist students to participate in campus ministry. Training programs for them can be offered through regular Bible classes and special retreats during vacations.

To evangelize non-Adventist students, the school and professors must provide many opportunities for them to come into contact with trained Adventist students, and the trained Adventist students should seek the chance to give them Bible teaching on an individual basis. By doing this, Adventist students themselves can experience the real joy of soul-winning, which in turn strengthens their faith.

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