

BEYOND
BELIEFS²

part 1:
**peer.
ministry**

A Need for a Different Approach



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A Need for a Different Approach

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The Beyond Beliefs study revealed that the traditional model for campus chapel services, where young adults are largely a passive audience addressed by youth ministry specialists, may be inefficacious in increasing the knowledge young adults have of the 28 Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Very few participants (6.41%) in the Beyond Beliefs study identified youth pastors as a spiritually influential person in their lives. The General Education class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist faith, a highly interactive tertiary level course where students are asked to provide a personal response to each of the 28 Beliefs, has been taught by an academic, and has proved to be profoundly more efficacious in increasing the knowledge young adults have of the 28 Beliefs. These findings suggest General Education religion classes at Adventist universities may be an underutilized and more efficacious means of immersing and educating Millennial young adults in faith based topics/issues than traditional campus ministry models.

While overall church attendance at Andrews University by undergraduate students is significantly higher than the average church, it does steadily decline over the academic year. Compulsory attendance at traditional campus ministry programming during the week may be contributing to this issue as students reach saturation point and feel comfortable missing non-compulsory church services, despite identified rewards for attending. This may set in place a habit of non-attendance that may continue after graduation. Parents and peers of Millennials were identified as the most spiritually influential person and given that parents are absent from University campuses, a peer ministry model may arrest this decline, given the apparent inefficaciousness of youth ministers employed to minister to them.

These findings challenge the traditional approach to young adult ministry and evangelism, and even question the effectiveness of youth pastors. The Beyond Beliefs study is a solution focused study committed to giving Millennial young adults a real voice. Thus, a second report entitled "Peer Ministry: Part 2 – What a solution could look like," provides a suggestion for what a solution could look like based on the real issues raised by Millennial responses that manifested themselves in the Beyond Beliefs findings.

Introduction

The traditional model used in many Campus Ministries, emphasizes plentiful programming where Millennial young adults are largely a passive audience who are addressed by exuberant, energetic older persons (many of whom are youth ministry specialists). This may sound like it would naturally be successful; however, new research from the Beyond Beliefs study shows this model may be inefficacious in teaching the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. More research is required to determine if indeed this approach may, inadvertently, be doing more harm than good.

The involvement of youth pastors or youth ministry specialists in Campus Ministries too may not be as efficacious as once thought.

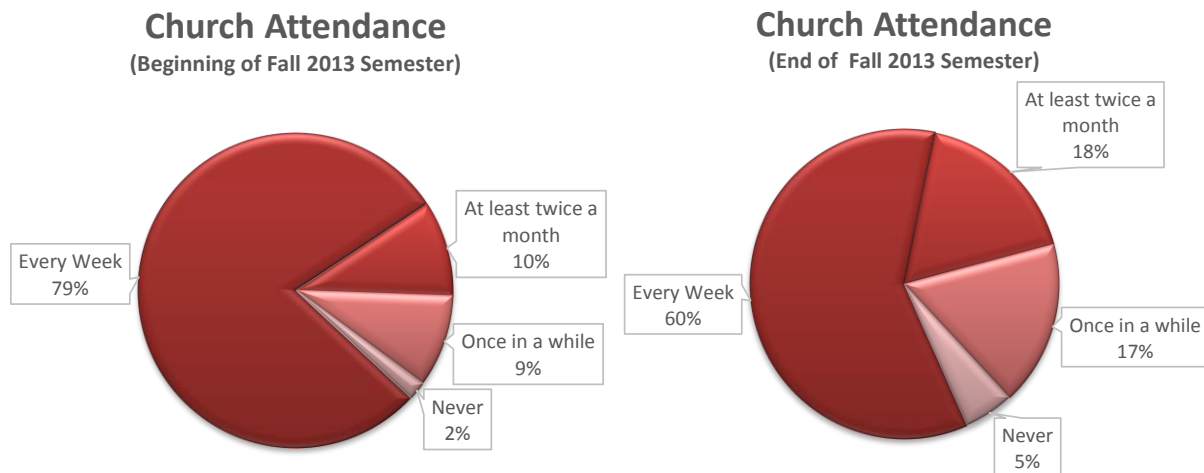
The Beyond Beliefs study, undertaken at Andrews University in 2013/2014, was able to investigate some of the spiritual habits and responses of nearly 700 Andrews University undergraduate students. The study was able to identify whether Millennial young adults:

- attended church and if this increased or decreased over a semester and an academic year;
- why they went to church/Sabbath School, or why they didn't;
- their responses regarding the weekly university chapel service;
- their knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and how this increased over a semester after attending chapel services, a week of spiritual emphasis by a youth ministry specialist, and a week-long special program by a youth evangelist that specifically addressed some of these beliefs;
- the knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism of students enrolled in the general education class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith and how this increased over a semester. This was to compare the effectiveness of relaying similar content, the 28 Beliefs, in a Religion general education class as opposed to the chapel service;
- who most influences a Millennial young adults' spiritual life.

Over 90 social, behavioral, and religious topics were explored in the *Beyond Beliefs 2* study and the results and how these factors may influence the current issue will be explored in future publications. Additionally, this landmark study had a group of 179 participants provide a 200+ word response to every one of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, where they articulated what they liked/disliked about every belief, if they thought it was important or not, or even if it was relevant or not. For more information about the Beyond Beliefs study, see our website at www.Beyond-Beliefs.com. The study is in the process of being replicated with Millennials globally (*Beyond Beliefs 3*), and also with other generational cohorts like the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, and Generation X to get an even more detailed picture of the Millennial generation.

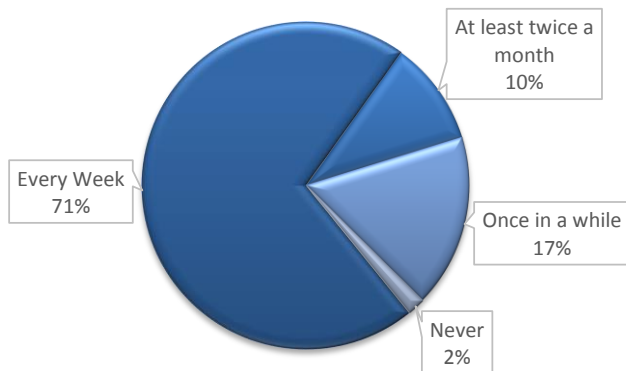
Declining Church Attendance

The *Beyond Beliefs 1* study (Spring 2013) found that church attendance at Andrews University was higher than average for the North American Division (62% for young adults at Andrews, compared to 51% of Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the North American Division¹). The second phase of this comprehensive study of Millennial young adults in North America, *Beyond Beliefs 2*, identified that during the Fall 2013 semester (Cohorts 2, 3, and 4), church attendance among Andrews University students started out much higher (79% attended every week) but distinctly decreased over the semester, with attending “once in a while” and “never” doubling from 11% to 22%.

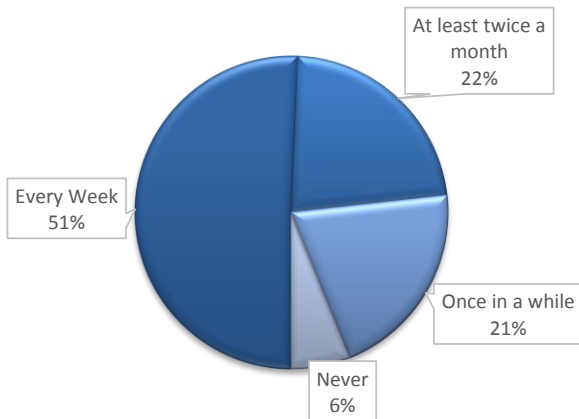


¹ Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson, *Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile* (Milton Freewater, Oregon: Center for Creative Ministry, 2008), 1; and idem., *Seventh-day Adventists in Canada: Survey of Church Members* (Milton Freewater, Oregon: Center for Creative Ministry, 2011), 2. It must be noted that the North American Division church attendance report asked participants to report their church attendance during the previous four Sabbaths and interviewed church members of all ages, not just young adults. The *Beyond Beliefs* study asked Millennial young adult participants to report their overall church attendance and included options like “never.” Thus, the inclusion of “never” poses an interesting dilemma which is discussed in Leanne M. Sigvartsen, Jan A. Sigvartsen, and Paul B. Petersen, *Beyond Beliefs 1: The Full Report – Cohort 1* (Berrien Springs, MI: ClergyEd.com & Andrews University Religion and Biblical Languages Department, 2014), 114-121.

Church Attendance
(Beginning of Spring 2014 Semester)



Church Attendance
(End of Spring 2014 Semester)



This study also identified the same distinct decrease during the Spring 2014 semester (Cohorts 5 and 6). Although the spring cohorts reported higher church attendance at the beginning of the semester than the Fall 2013 cohorts did at the end of the semester, both semesters showed a similar overall decline. Thus, when factoring in all cohorts, the overall decline of weekly church attendance was 28% from the start of the Fall 2013 to the end of the Spring 2014 semester.

This finding is surprising given there are a number of church services available specifically for young adults on campus that claim to cater to a wide range of their needs. The goal of many Adventist universities has been to provide a number of spiritual programs throughout the week in addition to regular church services held on Saturday. Unlike church, many of these programs (like the Chapel service) are mandatory and students are penalized financially if they do not attend. At Andrews University, a student is penalized over \$300 for the semester if he/she does not attend any chapel services. This is a significant sum given the hourly rate for students/young adults in a rural community with limited income opportunities like Berrien Springs is minimum wage (approximately \$8 per hour), or very close to it. There is no support in the responses of the young adults that they expect their parents to pay a penalty for them missing chapel services. Thus, a \$300+ penalty is a very significant portion of a student's meager income, particularly when considered in light of the extremely high costs of education and living expenses in a comparatively expensive rural university community.

Why Millennials did/did not attend Church

The primary reasons given by young adults (n=480) in *Beyond Beliefs 2* (Cohorts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) for why they attended church were²:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. They enjoyed the songs/special music | 69.4% (of participant sample) |
| 2. It brought them closer to Christ | 62.9% |
| 3. They enjoyed the sermons | 55.8% |
| 4. They liked to spend time with God | 51.3% |
| 5. It is what they had been brought up to do | 48.5% |
| 6. They feel more spiritual afterwards | 34.7% |
| 7. They felt bad about themselves if they did not go | 33.2% |
| 8. Their friends were going | 30.6% |

Other factors such as parents thinking less of them, nothing else to do on Saturday morning, or friends thinking less of them were reported markedly less. It is interesting to note that the top reasons seem to focus on spiritual atmosphere (music, being closer to God/Jesus). Participants could either tick or rank their responses to this question. Of those who ranked their question (n=464), they identified the sermons being the primary reason they went to church, followed by songs/special music, and they liked to spend time with God. The fourth highest ranked reason was that attending church brought them closer to God. Focus on music and sermons is an aspect that can be controlled by external influences, and it is recommended that further study should be undertaken into what type of music and sermons appeal the most to Millennial young adults. Parental influence in being brought up to go to church was also identified by nearly half of the sample (48.55%), and close to a third of the sample identified attendance of peers as a determining factor (30.6%). The aspect of peer influence will be discussed later in this report.

When asked why they did not attend church, the primary reason given by Millennials was that they like to sleep/rest after a stressful week (68.1%). There was a significant drop in the frequency of other reasons provided by young adults, the second being they liked to have a day off (32.6%). The *Beyond Beliefs* study also collected qualitative responses to each of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. From these participant qualitative responses in *Beyond Beliefs 1*, the most prominent theme among the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, by far, was the Sabbath being a day of rest (82%),³ with young adults contextualizing the Sabbath as a time not to do study, school work, or chores.

² Participants were able to select as many reasons as they liked from a given list. They were also provided space to add additional reasons should they feel it was necessary. They could either tick or numerically rank their responses, 1 being the most important reason.

³ Sigvartsen, Sigvartsen, and Petersen, [Beyond Beliefs 1: Full Report – Cohort 1](#), 320-322.

The issue of not going to Church at University

Given that young adults identified distinguishable positive rewards for going to church, why are they comfortable in not attending despite these positive rewards? Is it because there is such a proliferation of spiritual programming during the week on an Adventist university campus very similar to church services? Do young adults feel adequately spiritually fulfilled and not see the need to attend yet another spiritual event like church where attendance is voluntary? Could the proliferation of mandatory/voluntary worship services, chapels, Bible study groups, spiritual events etc. that occur on campus each week be setting in place a very precarious habit of non-church attendance that may be very difficult to break once the young adult leaves an Adventist university campus setting?

Could it be that young adults are being worn down by their studies and do not have the energy to do anything outside of what is required? If this is the case, would the removal of the mandatory requirement of chapel and other spiritual programs free up more time for students and result in an increase in weekly church attendance, which could continue when they leave the campus setting?

Is the increase in attendance following summer/Christmas break due to the influence of parents, who young adults may be with during this time?

More study pertaining to overloading young adults spiritually needs to be undertaken. In our attempt to immerse students spiritually while they are on campus, have we potentially drowned them instead – even to the point that they feel they can casually miss the primary church service?

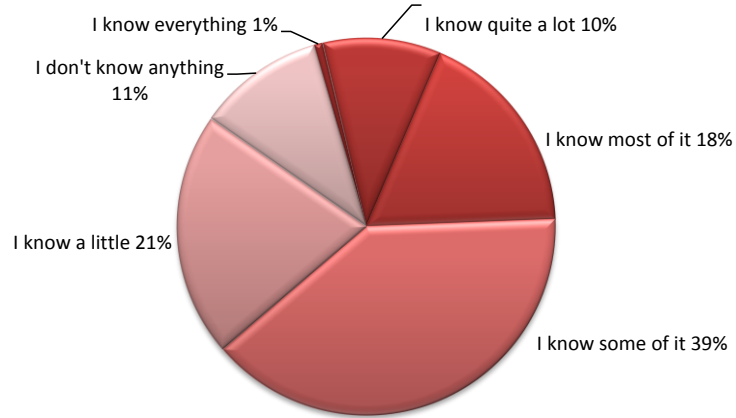
It could well be that more spiritual programming really isn't "more" and it must be identified if there is a law of diminishing returns with relation to numerous and compulsory spiritual programming.

Chapel as a means of communicating beliefs

Participants who attended only chapel services in the *Beyond Beliefs 2* study (Cohorts 3, 4, and 6) were asked to rate their knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism at the start of the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters and then at the conclusion of their respective semesters, after attending weekly chapel services organized by former Andrews University campus chaplain, Japheth DeOlivera. Pastor DeOlivera invited a number of local, interstate, and international youth speakers and specialists to speak at Chapel; during week of spiritual emphasis; and then at an additional week long program with a youth evangelist where all programs addressed a particular fundamental belief. When combined, these programs systematically addressed each of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. The results for Fall 2013 (Cohorts 3 and 4) were as follows.

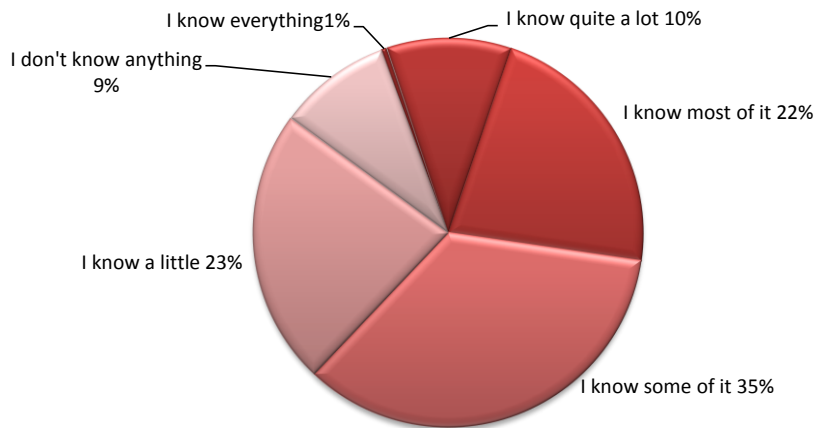
Knowledge of Fundamentals (Beginning of Semester)

Chapel Group



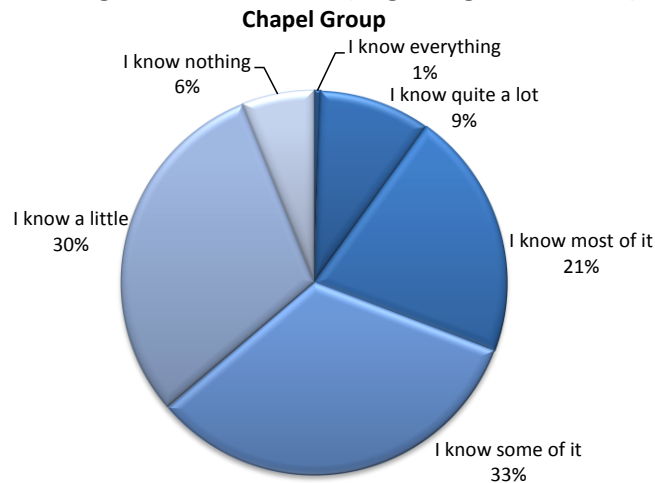
Knowledge of Fundamentals (End of Semester)

Chapel Group

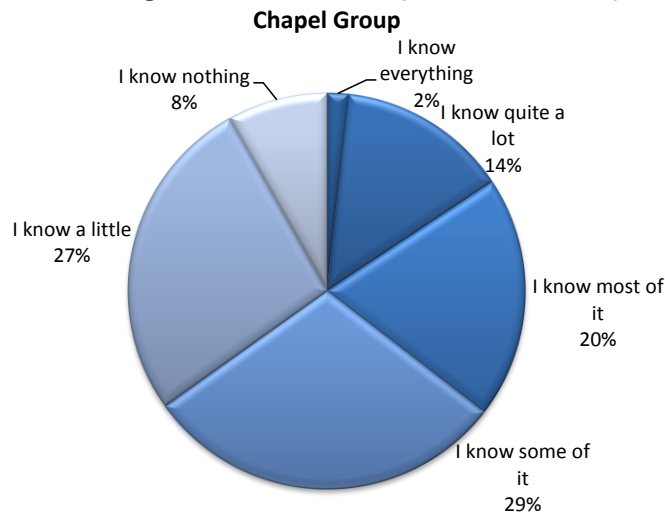


The results for the Spring 2014 (Cohort 6) semester were as follows:

Knowledge of Fundamentals (Beginning of Semester)



Knowledge of Fundamentals (End of Semester)



First of all, it is surprising that there is a limited knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism among Millennial young adults attending an Adventist University, given that 90% of the participants in this study identified as being baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist church and had presumably undertaken baptismal classes that covered these beliefs prior to baptism. Given the low levels of comprehensive knowledge, it would seem baptismal training did not take place or was undertaken at such an early age that comprehension and retention was limited. While one may argue that focusing on Jesus is all that matters in young adult ministry, this may be problematic as many Christian churches offer a Jesus based faith that encourages members to develop a personal relationship and seek salvation through Christ. Without an understanding or appreciation of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, one has to ask

what would motivate a young adult to retain their Seventh-day Adventist affiliation when so many other churches offer Jesus too?

Cohort 1 of the *Beyond Beliefs 1* study identified that young adults are not adverse to the 28 Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but rather expressed appreciation for them, especially when the belief provided some specific personal benefit to them. Interestingly, many young adults cited that their lack of knowledge of the beliefs may have been due to no one taking the time to teach them, or that the focus of their baptismal experience was to baptize them as early as possible to secure their church membership, rather than take the time to ensure they knew the beliefs of the denomination that the act of their baptism would automatically make them members.

The *Beyond Beliefs 1 – Full Report, Cohort 1* publication recommended that for this reason, early baptism may not be an ethical practice, with one participant describing early baptism as though others “don’t care for the individual’s relationship and walk with Christ.”⁴ Other participants also expressed concern about being “shoved” into the baptismal font. Subsequent cohorts of the Beyond Beliefs study identified that, among young adults who reported being baptized prior to age 14, when asked if they could do it again would they have waited to be baptized, approximately two-thirds said they would have. For those aged 14 or older only a third said they would have waited. More information relating to issues regarding early baptism can be found in the *Beyond Beliefs 1: Full Report*, which is available through Amazon.com and the Beyond Beliefs study website at www.beyond-beliefs.com.

With regard to Andrews University campus weekly chapel services, there was very little change in the self-report knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism from the beginning of the semester to the end. One could argue that only half of the 28 Beliefs were covered in a semester (the remaining covered during the next semester); however, it seems plausible there should have been positive shift. Similarly, at the conclusion of the Spring 2014 semester, when participants would have been exposed to all 28 Beliefs, there would again be some equal shift. This suggests that, despite the range of local, interstate, and international speakers – many of whom were specialist youth pastors who participated in the Andrews University chapel service, week of spiritual emphasis, and evangelistic event – the retention of the programs’ content does not indicate a measurable increase. This is surprising given the organizers and guest speakers of these programs are prominent youth speakers/ministers and one would assume a much higher result would have naturally been attained. This raises some concerns because these findings suggest these ministers are not effectively communicating the actual official beliefs of the church who employs them as ministers to a very critical generational demographic. Additionally, significant financial outlay was provided to bring these ministers to campus at a time when the University was operating under budgetary constraints due to lower student enrolment than was budgeted.

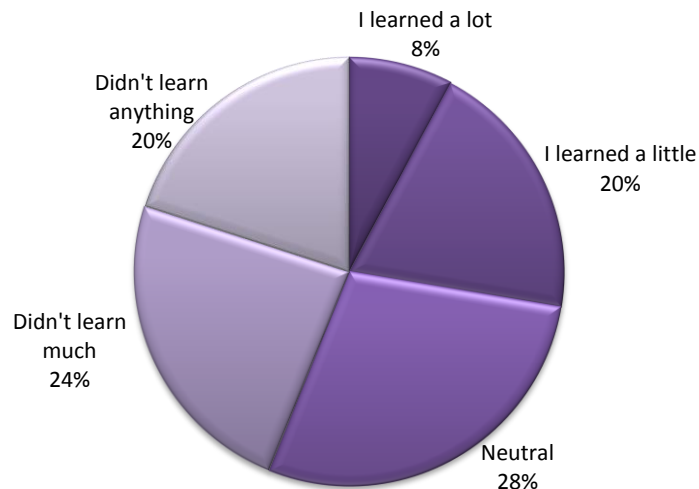
It may well be the homiletical methodology, the chapel model itself, or a range of other issues that may be contributing to this issue. Whatever the reason, it raises concern for the traditional chapel model,

⁴For further reading on what young adults had to say about Baptism, see chapter 15 in Sigvartsen, Sigvartsen, Petersen, [*Beyond Beliefs 1 – Full Report, Cohort 1*](#), 247-262.

the type of incumbent who pursues youth ministry, the tools/methodologies they are equipped with to carry out their job, and their training in understanding the target group they will work with.

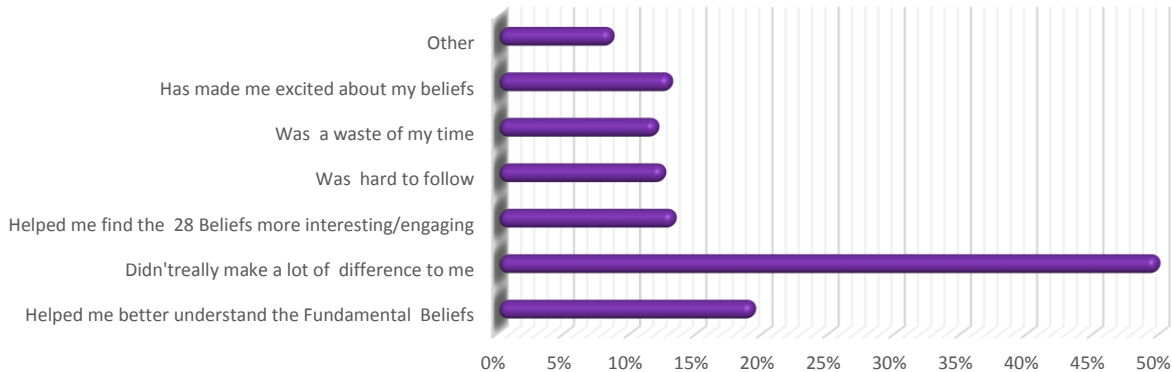
The *Beyond Beliefs 2* study (Cohorts 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) also asked how effective the chapel service was in communicating the 28 Fundamentals at the conclusion of the study. The results for the two semesters are as follows:

How effective was the Chapel services in communicating the 28 Fundamentals of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?



A mere 28% indicated they learned a lot (8%) or learned a little (20%), 28% were neutral, while 44% reported learning very little (24%) or nothing at all (20%). With the 72% who were neutral or did not learn anything or a great deal, one could argue that programming with guest speakers may have entertained them or made them feel good; however, how much they actually learned and how this motivated them to be active church participants seems to be minimal, as the chart below indicates that being excited about their beliefs accounted for 13.05%. Only 19.32% articulated that they were able to better understand the beliefs, and 13.32% found the beliefs more interesting. These responses were given by Cohorts 3, 4, 6, where Cohorts 2 and 5 were excluded to not skew the data since participants in these two cohorts were also undertaking the RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith class.

Attending the Chapel service this semester:



It is concerning that almost half (49.87%) of the participants found the chapel service did not really make a lot of difference to them. Could it be that specialist youth pastors are not as efficacious as once thought? Efficacy studies measuring youth pastor effectiveness seem to focus more on the anecdotal numbers that attend events or are baptized rather than empirical data relating to the retention and reaction of the message by the audience. Given the sermon is one of the most prominent reasons for why young adults attend church, reaction and retention of the message being communicated is paramount and should be empirically considered when determining efficacy.

It is anecdotally accepted that youth pastors inherently know what to say to young adults, but from this study it seems they may not, or that the pedagogy they are utilizing to communicate their message is not suited to the target audience. It may be that the financial investment in chapel and campus youth ministers/chaplains could be put to more effective use elsewhere – especially when the university is operating over budget.

The efficacy of a Religion General Education class

Now to compare the findings relating to chapel with the participants who undertook the general education class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith. Unlike chapel programs, week of spiritual emphasis, and the evangelistic event, the audience in this class was not passive and was not being spoken to by youth pastors or numerous youth specialist speakers. Rather, it implemented pedagogical teaching methodologies that involved active analyzing, reflecting, discussion, and evaluating. Participants were asked to write a 200 word personal journal response for each of the 28 Beliefs that asked them to articulate the following:

- if they liked/disliked the belief;
- if they thought it was important/unimportant;
- if it was relevant/irrelevant;

- and why they answered the way they did.⁵

They then participated in an interactive class where multimedia, group, and class discussion predominated, allowing them to express their concerns, ask questions, share their insights, and hear those of their peers. They were empowered to not just hear about the fundamentals, but were also asked to submit a term paper where they wrote a commentary for a belief of their choice in their own words which reflected what was important to them and using language that a young adult would use.⁶ There is no gradable exam for this class, nor is the purpose of this class to memorize the 28 Beliefs. As a general education class (not a religion class), for accreditation purposes its priority is to demonstrate critical thought, written analysis, and obtain an understanding of a world religion. Demonstrated competencies are observable in journal submissions where examples of active analyzing, reflecting, discussion, and evaluation are transparently demonstrated and recorded. A copy of the syllabus along with teaching materials for this class is available at www.Beyond-Beliefs.com/teach.

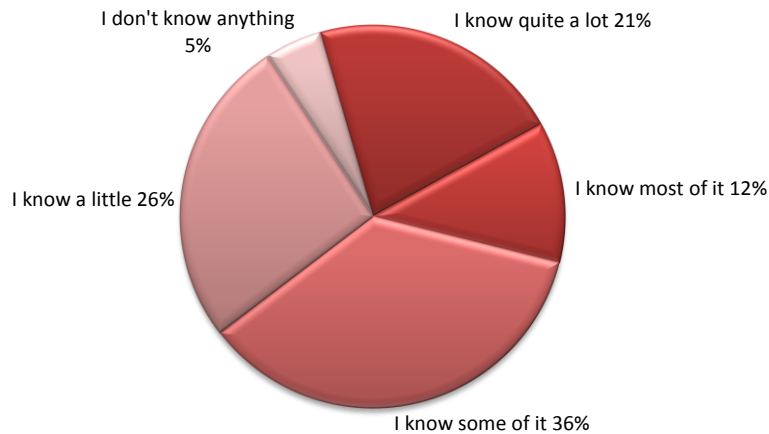
Like the chapel cohorts, these students were asked to self-report⁷ their knowledge of the 28 Beliefs at the beginning and end of the semester. The results for the Fall 2013 semester (Cohort 2) were as follows:

⁵ These journals were given a pass/fail grade only and were graded based on whether the writer wrote an articulate entry that demonstrated analysis, reflecting, and critical thought. Journals were not graded for getting it “right” or “wrong” or writing what they thought the professor wanted to hear. Students who wished to participate in the Beyond Beliefs study gave their signed consent for these journal entries to be used as a part of the qualitative component of the study. As this is a transparent study, these anonymous responses are publically available. A cursory glance at these responses reveals participants are not writing what the professor wanted to hear. The Beyond Beliefs study was presented to prospective participants as an opportunity of having a voice, and to let leadership and laity know how Millennials really felt about the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and over 90 social, behavioral, and religious topics. It would seem from the 4,000+ qualitative responses gathered to date that Millennial participants did not take this opportunity to have a voice lightly – they submitted articulate and well thought out responses.

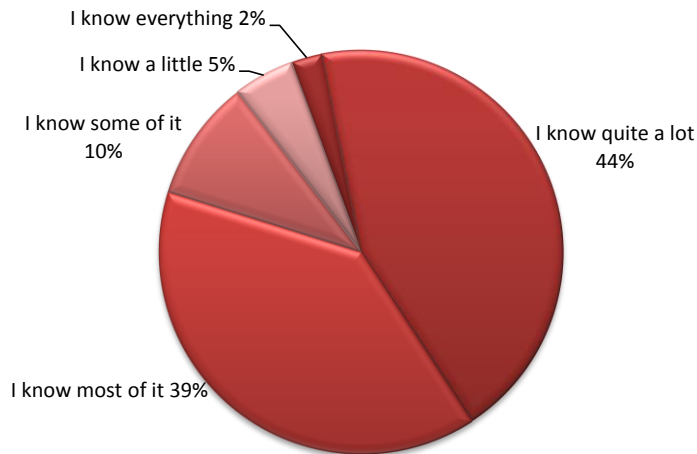
⁶ Students also gave permission for researchers to use their term papers in order to create a fundamental commentary for Millennial young adults that was written largely by Millennial young adults using the language and emphasizing the issues that are important to this demographic group.

⁷ Some question the reliability of self-report methodologies. The Beyond Beliefs study was carried out entirely on young adults who are legal adults and aged between 18 and 32. They are old enough to get married, enter into contracts, go to war, and are reproductively mature. The assumption that legal adults who are university students and pursuing professional degrees are incapable of accurately self-reporting their knowledge of the beliefs is questionable and is at the heart of the tendency to treat Millennial young adults as though they were still children. Issues with self-report methodologies lie with the tendency to overstate ones beliefs or to report oneself in the best light possible. From the responses above, this does not seem to be the case as with the chapel cohorts; there was virtually no change. With the RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith cohorts their assignments and external efficacy testing by the university supports the findings of these self-report responses.

Knowledge of Fundamentals (Beginning of Semester)
RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith and Chapel Service

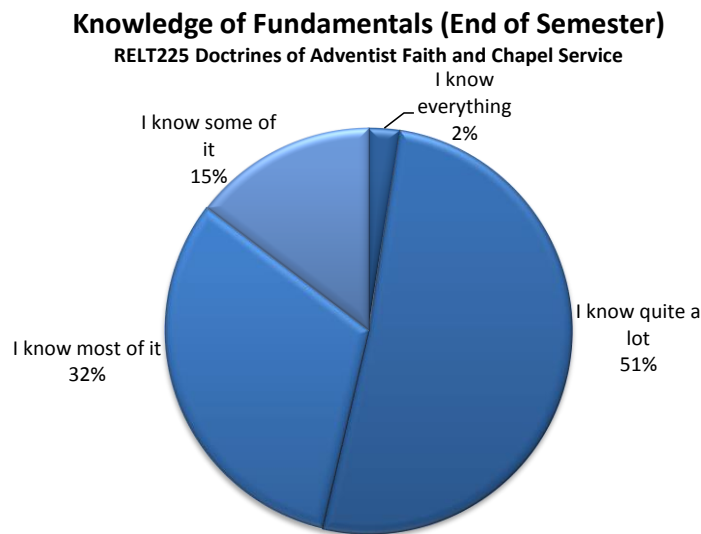
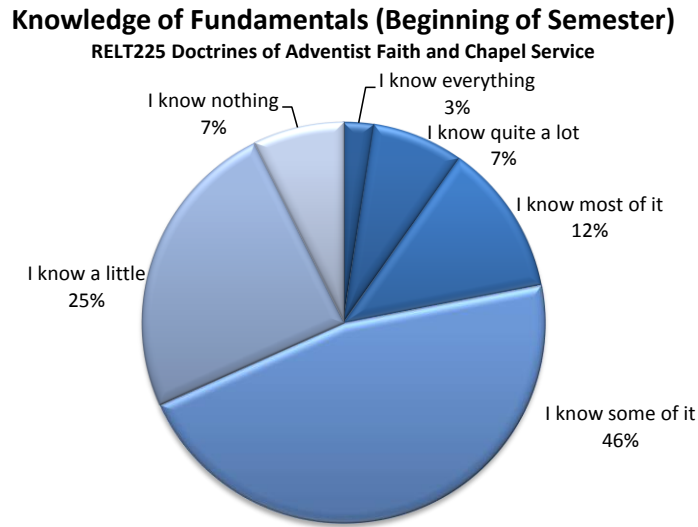


Knowledge of Fundamentals (End of Semester)
RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith and Chapel Service



The starting point at the beginning of the Fall 2013 (Cohort 2) semester was fairly similar to the chapel-only groups (Cohorts 3 and 4); however, the outcome at the end of the semester was drastically different, with the “I know a lot” and “I know most of it” categories jumping from a combined 33% to 83%. A similar result was observed for the Spring 2014 cohort which changed from a combined 22% to 85%.

The results for the Spring 2014 semester (Cohort 5) were as follows:



As can be seen, the shift in a young adult’s knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism was substantial. A similar drastic shift was also observed in Cohort 1 (Spring 2013) of the Beyond Beliefs study. The “I know everything,” “I know quite a lot,” and “I know most of it” responses changed from a combined 20% to 86%. In Cohort 1, REL225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith students did not participate in the chapel service, week of spiritual emphasis, or the evangelistic program in addition to their class (data for Cohort 1 was collected the previous academic year). Thus, Cohort 1 provides support that the Cohort 2 and 5 results are due to the efficacy of the REL225 class, not a combination of attending both class and chapel.

Further evidence which supports the efficacy of this class, outside the context of the Beyond Beliefs study, is the actual grades the students received for the class, as evidenced in the class effectiveness review undertaken by the University under the direction of the Provost’s office. The syllabus which

follows a competency based learning model has clearly defined objectives, defines how these objectives will be taught, how they will be adequately and appropriately assessed to determine competency, and provides very transparent evidence (the assessments themselves submitted through Andrews University Moodle assessment submission software) that learning truly occurred, grades were not inflated, plagiarized content was not submitted, and the self-report learning levels reported by students at the conclusion of the Beyond Beliefs study were not overstated. Jan Sigvartsen, who is also one of the researchers of the Beyond Beliefs study, and taught these classes, required these additional supports to eliminate any accusation or assumption of bias.⁸

The interactive environment of the class where young adults are invited to articulate their own responses to spiritual beliefs in their own words rather than be told pre-formulated answers from a pulpit seems to have resonated with this group. Additionally, the opportunity to openly discuss their perspectives in a non-polemic environment, with particularly their peers, exposed them to a range of personal experiences that may need to be taken into consideration. This seems to be an attractive prospect for educated young adults who are developing the process of critical thought in their respective disciplines. Additionally, the use of a Religion academic who utilizes pedagogical methodologies with an emphasis on evidence based critical thought may be perceived by Millennial young adults as more credible than a minister (even specialist youth ministers) because this style of learning mirrors the rigor and attention to empirical evidence they are accustomed to in their respective higher education disciplines. The anecdotal assumption that academics are ineffectual in communicating spiritual and religious topics to young adults seems to have no support in the current study. Given they are trained and employed to teach, the assumption seems questionable and may be motivated by agenda or prejudice towards highly educated people. If anything, this study seems to indicate it is either the youth specialists themselves, their ministry methodologies, lack of ongoing interaction with Millennial young adults, or any combination of these factors (or others yet to be identified) who are struggling to teach the 28 Beliefs of Adventism.

Further study is required to identify if church members both Millennials and non-Millennials alike believe a minister, who often has a Master of Divinity qualification, is a credible person with rigorous training. It may well be that for Millennial young adults, a “masters” or “doctoral” qualification is no longer a sign of higher learning and authority in a subject. Rather, obvious research rigor and evidence-based replicability of what a minister actually says gives a person credibility, regardless of his/her qualifications.

⁸ For full disclosure, Jan Sigvartsen is only employed as a contract teacher at Andrews University and only received a total salary of \$2,100 (no additional benefits) for teaching this 15 week class, 3 hours a week. This is significantly less than that of an Andrews University campus chaplain’s salary and the travel costs of interstate and international speakers who participated in the chapel services. This teacher has nearly concluded his PhD (Religion) studies and has no specialist training in youth ministry; rather, he possesses extensive experience and training in exegetical research methodologies and previously attended Hebrew University of Jerusalem, an educational institution that is a world leader in his research specialist field. He is also not an ordained minister, as like many young academics who teach religion and ministry disciplines, has not pursued ordination as a mark of solidarity with female clergy.

Further study is also required to identify if academics who have a strong background in exegesis, and hence, research rigor and evidence-based transparent inference, are perceived as more credible than ministers who have undertaken practical degrees. Again, for full disclosure, it must be noted that Jan Sigvartsen is creator of ExegesisPaper.com, an online resource that outlines how to undertake and write scholarly exegesis. According to Google Analytics, this resource receives over 30,000 visits from biblical scholarship students annually from over 142 countries globally. It may well be that the findings of the Beyond Beliefs' study reflect Jan Sigvartsen's own personal ability to credibly teach and facilitate discussion relating to biblical research and may not be representative of academics elsewhere. Thus, further investigation into the pedagogy used by both ministers and academics may be timely.

One may also argue that participants who participated in the class had an incentive to learn the fundamentals because they were going to receive a grade for this class. There is little support for this assumption when one reads the syllabus for the class, which is publically available at ClergyEd.com, Beyond-Beliefs.com, and in the *Beyond Beliefs 1: Full Report* publication. The syllabus does not ask students to memorize the fundamentals nor is a gradable exam given to test if young adults are able to recite fundamentals from memory. The class asks students to articulate a response expressing what they like/dislike about each of the fundamentals, if they feel each are important/unimportant, and how each is relevant/irrelevant to young adults. They are not graded on their ability to recount the fundamental, but rather, because this is a General Education class with secular accreditation requirements – it is their ability to formulate an articulate response utilizing the process of critical thought that is graded.

While some may have an expectation that learning the 28 Beliefs should be totally altruistic it seems with Millennials, learning the beliefs with some personal benefit (like combining it with a university class that counts towards their degree) may be preferable. The Beyond Beliefs study identified that young adults were favorable towards the beliefs when they knew what they were and expressed a real liking for beliefs that provided them with some personal benefit, it seems natural that obtaining some personal benefit from learning the beliefs would also appeal to them.

It seems that this assessment, however, provides the student the opportunity to read, assess, internalize, and put their thoughts regarding the belief into their own words. In doing so, retention of the belief itself and its parameters seems to be more readily retained by the participant as it becomes more meaningful and personal. It also allows them to identify how a belief is important and/or relevant to their lives, and may see how it applies daily/frequently, again, allowing them to retain a knowledge of this belief more easily.

Who influences the spiritual lives of Millennial young adults?

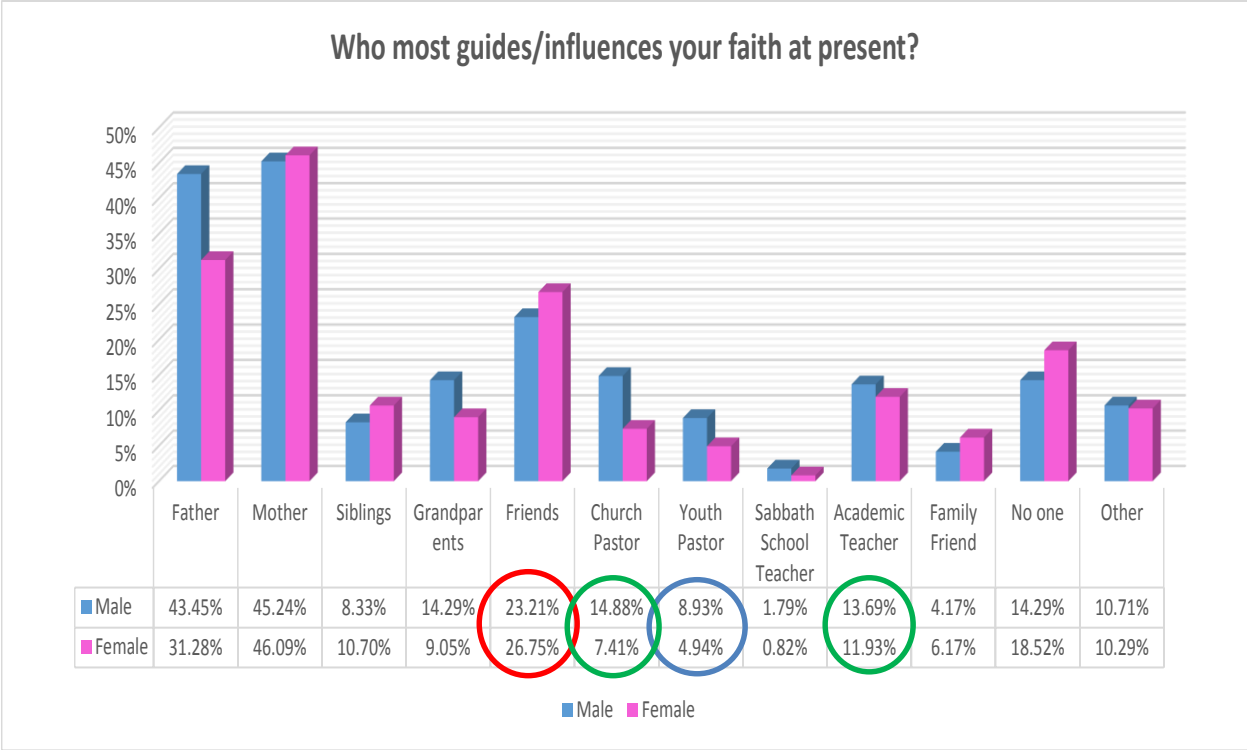
The *Beyond Beliefs 2* study also asked young adults who was the most influential person in their spiritual lives. The results are as follows:⁹

- Mother 46.4%
- Father 35.8%
- Friend 24.7%
- No One 17.2%

The youth pastor (6.4%) was ranked as the 10th most influential person and the church pastor scored a little better with 10.5% while academic teachers scored 12.2%. This would suggest that the financial investment in a youth specialist pastor may not give as much “bang for your buck” as once thought.

The following chart shows the male-female split to the above question, and some of the differences are interesting to note. Mothers are perceived to have the most influence, however, male participants view their father as more important in their lives than their female counterparts (43.45% - 31.28%). This difference is also seen when it comes to Church pastors (14.88% - 7.41%) and youth pastors (8.93% - 4.94%) but to a much lesser degree academic teachers (13.69% - 11.93%). Since church pastors and youth pastors are more likely to be males, this difference could be an indication that female participants perceive males to have a lesser role in their faith life. Further research is warranted, since there is a higher number of female students at Andrews University (60% - 40%) and, more broadly, female members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It should also be noted that apart from the mother and father, friends rank the highest for both the male and the female participants (23.21% - 26.75%), although slightly higher by the females.

⁹ Participants were able to select as many people as they liked from a given list. They were also provided space to add additional people should they feel it applicable.



Given the shift in the self-reported knowledge of young adults outlined above, a competent teaching academic who employs interactive teaching methodologies and is focused on empowering young adults to explore and learn from each other, rather than preach or lecture to them, seems to be far more efficacious in teaching the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Given the significant salary inequality between church employed youth pastors and contract religion teachers at Andrews University (\$2,100 total – no additional benefits), the latter may constitute a far better financial investment of tithe payer’s/church money, particularly since the 45 students who undertake the RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith class each semester also generate over \$100,000 in tuition fees for that class alone. A distance education class that could be undertaken by students not attending an Adventist University may also be a means of teaching, provided they learn alongside peers in online cohorts.

“Ministry” may be perceived by a student body who are our future medical, health, scientific, engineering, business, and education professionals as a non-rigorous discipline, despite a minister having a ministerial graduate degree like the Master of Divinity qualification or Doctor of Ministry qualification. It would seem they believe peers have more influence on their spirituality than a youth pastor, with 30.6% of the Cohort 2 sample stating they attended church because their friends were attending.

Conclusion

The Beyond Beliefs study revealed that the traditional model for campus chapel services, where young adults are largely a passive audience addressed by youth ministry specialists, may be inefficacious in increasing the knowledge young adults have of the 28 Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Very few participants (6.41%) in the Beyond Beliefs study identified youth pastors as a spiritually influential person in their lives. The General Education class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist faith, a highly interactive tertiary level course where students are asked to provide a personal response to each of the 28 Beliefs, has been taught by an academic, and has proved to be profoundly more efficacious in increasing the knowledge young adults have of the 28 Beliefs. These findings suggest general education religion classes at Adventist universities may be an underutilized and more efficacious means of immersing and educating Millennial young adults in faith based topics/issues than traditional campus ministry models.

While church attendance at Andrews University by undergraduate students is significantly higher than the average church, the Beyond Beliefs study discovered that it does steadily decline over the academic year. Compulsory attendance at traditional campus ministry programming during the week may be contributing to this issue as students reach saturation point and feel comfortable missing non-compulsory church services, despite identified rewards for attending. This may set in place a habit of non-attendance that may continue after graduation. Parents and peers of Millennials were identified as the most spiritually influential person and given that parents are absent from University campuses, a peer ministry model may arrest this decline, given the apparent inefficaciousness of youth ministers employed to minister to them. Thus, a free second report, entitled "[Peer Ministry: Part 2 – What a solution could look like](#)," provides a suggestion for what a solution could look like based on the real issues raised by Millennial responses that manifested themselves in the Beyond Beliefs findings.

Link to FREE Part 2 report:

[Peer Ministry: Part 2 – What a solution could look like](#)

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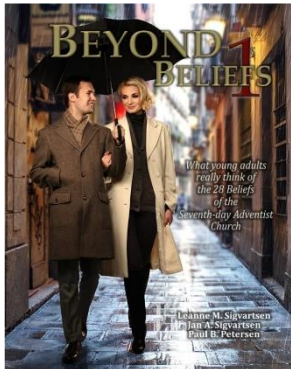
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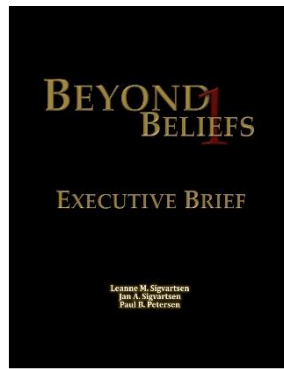
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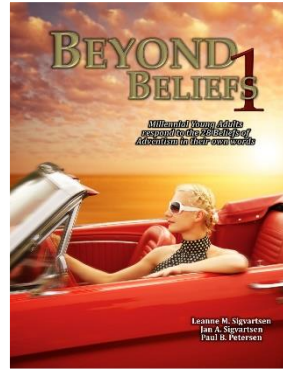
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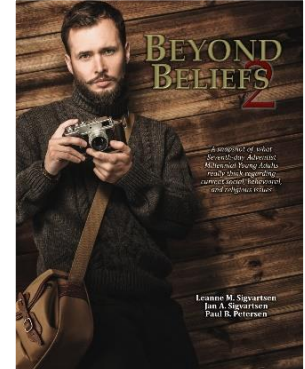
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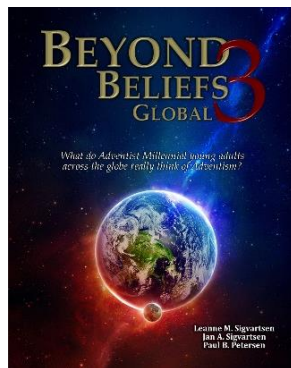
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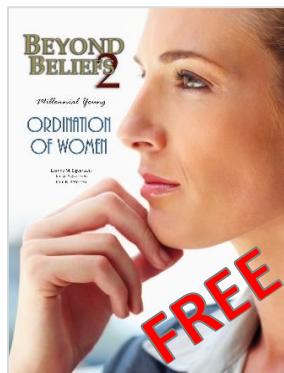
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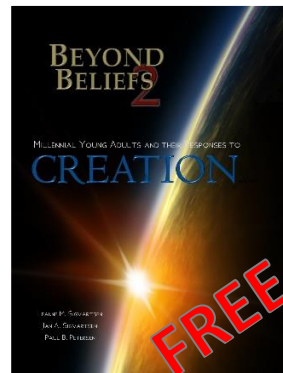
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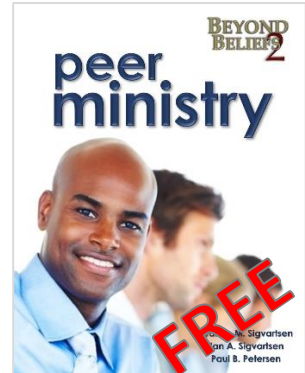
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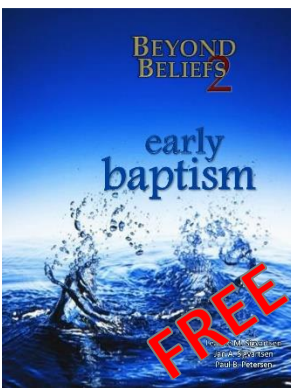
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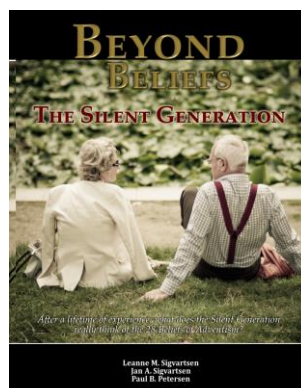
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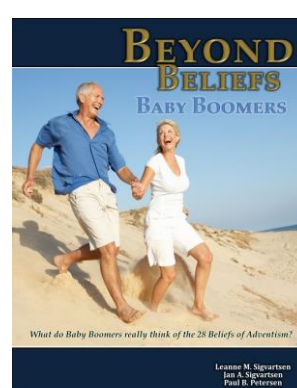
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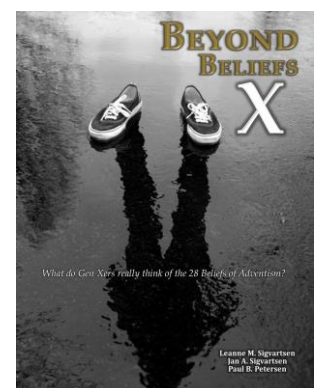
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