A man and a woman are walking together in the rain on a cobblestone street. The man is on the left, wearing a brown double-breasted coat over a plaid scarf and dark trousers. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored trench coat over a dark turtleneck and a dark cardigan. They are both smiling and looking at each other. A large black umbrella is held over them. The background is a blurred city street with buildings and streetlights, suggesting a rainy urban environment.

BEYOND BELIEFS 1

*What young adults
really think of
the 28 Beliefs
of the
Seventh-day Adventist
Church*

**Leanne M. Sigvartsen
Jan A. Sigvartsen
Paul B. Petersen**

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DEDICATION

Erna, Elana, and Natalie

*What doesn't kill us only makes us funnier
And if it does kill us... we're gonna go out laughin'*

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I Timothy 4:12

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." (NIV)

Chapter One

Beyond Beliefs

Significant effort, financial resources, and study has been given to retaining youth within church denominations, however, most of these studies have focused merely on the sociocultural attitudes of young adults and their attitudes towards general religious topics. Very few denominations have investigated specifically how young adults within their membership feel about the official beliefs or doctrines of their church organization. Given the potential answers young adults may provide, and that it is often difficult or even impossible for religious denominations to change their official beliefs or doctrines, it becomes understandable why research of this nature has not taken place.

The Seventh-day Adventist church is a global religious denomination that does not have immutable beliefs, but rather, through a specified process is able to add to, expand, or revise core beliefs as advances in biblical scholarship and church needs arise.¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has invested significant effort, and resources into retaining youth and young adult members. Like other denominations, its research efforts have focused predominantly on sociocultural attitudes and general religious topics. While some of this research was valid² and its recommendations informative, it has been largely unsuccessful in arresting the

¹ The preamble to the statement of Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs reads: "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language to express the teachings of God's Holy Word" (Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* [2nd ed.; Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2005], v).

² Some Seventh-day Adventist research relating to young adults can only be regarded as anecdotal and becomes highly problematic as it was based on unsystematic casual conversations with individuals by clergy at youth events, had limited replicability, and data was collected outside of the regulations stipulated by the United States Federal Office of Human Research Protections and without approval by an authorized Institutional Review Board.

continuing decline of young adult membership within the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America. This is one of the reasons why this church's leadership was interested and supportive of the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

To date, it is still relatively unknown how young adults who identify as Seventh-day Adventists really feel about each of the official 28 Beliefs³ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, if indeed they have an adequate knowledge of them, and what aspects of these beliefs resonate most (both positively and negatively) with this demographic group. At present, it is only anecdotally assumed that their decision to continue to identify as Seventh-day Adventists as young adults is based on an informed knowledge and full agreement with the 28 Beliefs of Adventism.

The *Beyond Beliefs* study is a research project that wishes to identify how young adults really feel about each and every one of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, if they like or dislike them, if they believe they are important or not important, and if they feel these beliefs are relevant or irrelevant.⁴ This study is intended to objectively inform Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership, clergy and laity of the sentiments of young adults. The decision to act on findings and recommendations made in this research publication is entirely at the discretion of the church organization. The researchers wish to thank the School of Arts and Sciences at Andrews University for access to young adults within this denomination, and the Office for Strategic Planning, Research, and Assessment for the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church⁵ for their contribution in funding a small part of this study.

³ These 28 Beliefs have traditionally been referred to as the "Fundamental Doctrines" or "Fundamental Beliefs," however, due to the expansion of the word "fundamental" and "fundamentalism" in recent times to terms that can carry derogatory connotations (see: Judith Nagata, "Beyond Theology: Toward an Anthropology of 'Fundamentalism,'" *American Anthropologist* 103 [June 2001]: 481-498), this report will simply refer to them as the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, to avoid being perceived as pejorative and in the interest of brevity. Please note, "Adventist" in addition to "Seventh-day Adventist" are both trademarked names of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. See: Communication Department of the General Conference, "Statements, Guidelines and Other Documents," n.p. [cited 1 December, 2013]. Online: <http://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/Statements-2010-english.pdf>.

⁴ The study has been granted Institutional Review Board approval by Andrews University and data was collected within the regulations stipulated by the United States Federal Office of Human Research Protections.

⁵ The North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church serves the regions of Bermuda, Canada, Guam-Micronesia and the United States. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has collectively 1,135,233 members in these regions. See: North American Division, "Who are Seventh-day Adventists," [cited 2 October, 2013]. Online: <http://www.nadadventist.org/site/1/docs/Who%20are%20Seventh-day%20Adventists%208mgs.pdf>.

Why have the Beyond Beliefs Study?

Based on demographic data collected in the North American Division, the Millennial Generation (young adults born during or after 1981,⁶ who are also referred to as “Millennials”) is under-represented in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America when compared to the general population.⁷ This is also true of Generation X (adults born between 1965 and 1980, who are also referred to as “Xers”). Conversely, the Silent Generation (adults born between 1928 and 1945) and the Baby Boomers (adults born between 1946 and 1964) are both over-represented in the Seventh-day Adventist Church population in North America.

Even when combining Generation X and the Millennials together, they only constitute a mere 24% of the overall Seventh-day Adventist Church population in North America, while the Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation together constitute 61%. Based on these findings, one could speculate that the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s beliefs may resonate with Baby Boomers and Silent Generation members in this region, but to a much lesser degree with Generation Xers and Millennials who were all born during or after second-wave feminism, the social and human rights revolutions of the 1960’s, and grew up in a world influenced by the secularization of the Western world,⁸ globalization, and the information age.

The 28 Beliefs of Adventism and their associated commentaries were predominantly shaped by the Silent Generation and the Baby Boomers,⁹ and may very well resonate with them, hence their over-representation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. This, when combined with the demographic discrepancies

⁶ The *Beyond Beliefs* study uses the same definition of the various generations as the report presented by the Pew Research Center. See: Pew Research Center, “The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change,” 4. [cited 15 July, 2013]. Online: <http://www.pewresearch.org/millennials>.

⁷ Millennials constitute only 14% of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America compared to general population percentages of 26% in the United States and 27% in Canada. All the demographic data relating to the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is sourced from: Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson, *Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile* (Milton Freewater, Oreg.: Center for Creative Ministry, 2008), 5-6; and idem., *Seventh-day Adventists in Canada: Survey of Church Members* (Milton Freewater, Oreg.: Center for Creative Ministry, 2011), 22-23.

⁸ Ronald Lawson and Ryan T. Cragun conclude that secularization has had the greatest negative effect on church growth and retention of membership (see: “Comparing the Geographic Distributions and Growth of Mormons, Adventists, and Witnesses,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51 [2012]: 220-240).

⁹ The publication, *Seventh-day Adventist’s Believe*, was first published in 1988 when the oldest Millennials would have been seven years old and even most Xers were still under 18 years of age. The belief statements themselves developed from the first official list of statements from 1872 to a list of 27 statements of beliefs which were accepted at the General Conference Session in 1980. It underwent a small revision in 2005 when an additional belief (*Belief 11 – Growing in Christ*) was added to bring the total number to 28. See: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, v-vi.

mentioned above, makes it timely to investigate whether these 28 Beliefs, the language used to describe them, and their associated commentaries resonate with especially Millennial young adults.

Additional Considerations made by the Beyond Beliefs Study

The *Beyond Beliefs* study is unique from many other studies undertaken on Adventist young adult populations in that it collected extensive written responses from the young adults themselves, and in doing so, gave them a real voice to express their reactions and responses to every one of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism in their own words and language.

Given the generational demographic discrepancy mentioned above, it may become easy for the voice of young adults to not be heard over such an overwhelming majority of people who are often the parents and grandparents of Millennial adults, and as such, may be susceptible to paternalism¹⁰ or adultism. Paternalism is a behavior where an authority figure (male and/or female), organization, or state makes recommendations or decisions for another individual or group of individuals, often without consultation and consideration for the short and long-term interests of those individuals. Adultism is similar to paternalism but refers specifically to paternalism towards younger people by older adults. Both are rationalized by a claim that these individuals will be better off by having someone else make decisions for them. Both paternalism and adultism may become problematic with relation to Millennial young adults since many of these individuals are, in fact, highly educated adults¹¹ and may resent older persons making decisions for them, particularly when older persons will suffer few direct consequences if those decisions were ill-informed or erroneous.

Even research is subject to a measure of paternalism in that data collection instruments may only investigate specific issues a non-Millennial researcher has deemed important and this may not comprehensively consider all the factors contributing to the religious beliefs of a young adult. Data collection on religious groups is often entirely funded by religious organizations and thus, may only report findings that show support for their beliefs or portray the religious organization in a favorable light. Unfavorable findings may be selectively unreported. Data collection instruments may also use language, terminology and concepts Millennials are unfamiliar with. Recommendations, while well intentioned and made as a result of initial empirical evidence may also warrant further study to safeguard ongoing efficacy, especially over time, and ensure in an attempt to do good, no harm is inadvertently done. Therefore, researchers outside of the Millennial generation, particularly those who have

¹⁰ Paternalism should not be confused with patriarchy, which is a social system that inherently provides males with authority. See Gerald Dworkin's article, "Paternalism" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2010 Edition)*. Online at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paternalism>.

¹¹ The Pew Research report states that the Millennial Generation "are on track to become the most educated generation in American history" (Pew Research Center, "The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change," 1).

Millennial children or grandchildren, are advised to proceed with caution to safeguard against paternalism or any accusation of the same.

To minimize the risk of paternalism and maximize objectivity, several strategies were implemented in the current study. The members of the research team do not have children or grandchildren belonging to the Millennial generation. There was equitable input from both male and female researchers. Researchers included individuals who were not employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church or any of its subsidiaries. Funding from the Seventh-day Adventist Church to date constitutes only 2% of overall research project costs to date. The research team consisted not only of Baby Boomers, but also included primary researchers who were born after 1970 and identify as Generation Xers. Those born in the 1970's were the first people to spend the majority of their childhood growing up in the emerging information age, globalization, secularization of the Western World, and were born after second-wave feminism as well as the social and human rights revolutions of the 1960's. They share similar experiences to Millennials without being a part of that demographic group. The *Beyond Beliefs* study predominantly asked open ended questions to determine what resonated with young adults regarding the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. Open ended questions allowed participants to use their own voice and language to describe what they liked/disliked about the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, what they felt was relevant/irrelevant, and if they felt these 28 Beliefs were important/not important. These strategies allowed the researchers to make recommendations that were often the direct responses of the Millennials themselves. The study will also be expanded with each subsequent cohort (Cohort 2 and Cohort 3) to include issues young adults raised in the previous cohort, allowing the researchers to explore a range of factors important to young adults. Thus, it is the young adults, not the researchers, who drive this study and identify topics for further investigation in subsequent cohorts. Also, in the interest of transparency, all of the 920 (containing 150+ words each) responses assessed in this report (Cohort 1) have been made available for anyone to read.¹² This transparent, collaborative, multi-generational strategy may provide a new perspective to research undertaken on young adults in Adventism (as well as other denominations), and could be a model future research may like to employ.

¹² See: Sigvartsen, Leanne. M., Jan. A. Sigvartsen, and Paul. B. Petersen. *Beyond Beliefs 1: Cohort 1, Full Report*. Berrien Springs, Mich.: ClergyEd.com & Andrews University Religion and Biblical Languages Department, 2014.

Chapter Two

Method & Limitations

Participants

Young adults from the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who were studying RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith in Spring 2013 at Andrews University were invited to participate in Cohort 1 of this study. All participants provided their consent to participate by signing the *Beyond Beliefs* disclosure statement and consent form. Participants needed to be aged 18-32 years of age and identify as Seventh-day Adventists at the commencement of the study. Only Cohort 1 results are reported in this publication. Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 results of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will be reported in subsequent publications due for release in 2014.

There were 37 participants from the North American Division who agreed to participate in Cohort 1 and it is their 920 150+ word responses which are described and examined in this report. The participants were all young adults aged 18 – 26. While 37 participants may seem small, Bertaux¹³ and Charmaz¹⁴ suggest saturation in studies of this nature is often reached at 15 or 25 participants and suggest that no less than these numbers be used. This fits well with this sample, where few new themes were identified after 15 participants, and if they were, they were very minor themes, only mentioned by one or two participants. Perceived credibility given to studies containing thousands of participants is often associated with an unfamiliarity with the concept of saturation within a qualitative data set. Thus, although written response studies containing large numbers of participants may seem

¹³ Daniel Bertaux, "From the Life-History Approach to the Transformation of Sociological Practice," in *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences* (ed. Daniel Bertaux; London: Sage, 1981), 29-45.

¹⁴ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2006).

more credible, the reality is, large numbers of participants often only equates to a larger cost to conduct the study.

To address concerns some may have with relation to such a large data set being generated from 37 participants, the study will be replicated in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 with Cohorts 2 and 3 which should generate over 3,000 200+ word responses from over 100 participants. Additional data will be collected in Cohorts 2 and 3 from a further 600 participants to also assess the efficacy of a university Chapel service program at Andrews University which will address the 28 Beliefs of Adventism during the 2013-2014 academic year. By the conclusion of the *Beyond Beliefs* study, over 600 Millennial young adults would have taken part in North America. Again, the results of Cohorts 2 and 3 will be reported in subsequent publications due for release in 2014.

Further demographic details relating to the Cohort 1 sample of participants is outlined in the Demographic Data section of this report.

Materials and Procedure

All data was collected in accordance with the regulations stipulated for research on human subjects by the United States Federal Office for Human Research Protections and data collection methodologies were approved by the Andrews University Institutional Review Board (No: 13-010) prior to the commencement of data collection.

Participants were asked to complete two anonymous inventories, one at the commencement of their cohort and one at its conclusion. Participants were asked to generate their own unique participation number (using a provided formula which could be replicated in the future) so these two inventories could be matched at the conclusion of the study. These inventories asked participants to provide a range of demographic, sociocultural and religious data. Copies of these two inventories are attached to this report as Appendix 1. Data obtained from these two inventories are overviewed in the Demographic Data section of this report. These inventories will be expanded in Cohort 2 (Fall 2013) and Cohort 3 (Spring 2014) to further investigate issues identified in Cohort 1.

All participants of Cohort 1 were undertaking RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith, and as a part of this class, they were required to read each of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and their associated commentary as outlined in the publication *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* and attend a class relating to each belief. All students of this class were also asked to write a 150 word reflection statement relating to their reaction to each belief, what they liked and/or disliked about it, if it was important or unimportant, and it was relevant and or irrelevant. This reflection statement was submitted prior to undertaking a class related to that belief in order to minimize teacher and peer influence. Reflection statements were collected over a series of 15 weeks. A copy of the syllabus for this class is attached as Appendix 2. An electronic copy can be obtained by visiting the online Syllabus Bank at www.ClergyEd.com.

Young adults in this class were invited to provide their consent to allow the *Beyond Beliefs* researchers to use these 28 responses in their analysis and reporting. Only the responses of the young adults who gave their consent in writing, were citizens or permanent residents of the geographical region under the jurisdiction of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist church,¹⁵ were aged between 18-32, and identified as Seventh-day Adventists at the commencement of the study were used. This totaled 37 participants of the 53 young adults in this class. Young adults undertaking RELT225 did not receive any extra credit for participating in the *Beyond Beliefs* study, nor were any penalized in any way for not participating. All students in the RELT225 class, regardless of whether they participated in this study or not, were offered a chocolate or health bar (depending on their dietary choices) as a thank you for giving the *Beyond Beliefs* research team access to the class. Not all consenting young adults submitted a response for every belief, however, most did. In total, 920 responses were collected as a part of Cohort 1 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

The researchers acknowledge that this data collection method may result in a participant maturation process due to the length of the data collection period; however, it may not equate to an adverse effect given young adults were being asked to articulate a personal response.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topics being dealt with, this methodology of data collection provided the least risk to participants, allowing them to raise any questions or any emotional response they had relating to the belief they had just read in a supportive class setting among peers, of whom all were undertaking the same task. All students, regardless of whether they were participating in the *Beyond Beliefs* study or not, were advised that should they need to talk to a counselor or chaplain, the university provided these services free of charge. If they were uncomfortable approaching these services on their own, they were advised that they only needed to ask and the researchers would be happy to facilitate a referral. No student requested this service.

The advantage of submitting their reflection responses prior to class was not only to minimize peer and teacher influence, but also so the lecturer could read through the responses before teaching the class and would be able to facilitate discussion pertaining to issues that were raised in the responses, thus, maintaining a safe environment where all questions were welcome and discussion encouraged.

While this method only allows for convenience sampling, given the spiritual and psychological risk factors in a study of this nature, true random sampling may have proven impractical and even irresponsible. It still remains that each of these diverse participants were young adults, and as such, is from the target population being studied. Thus, despite the convenience of the sampling procedure, their responses still have merit.

¹⁵ A further five participants who were citizens of countries outside of North America also consented to take part. Cohort 1 was primarily interested in the results of North American participants due to funding from the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These five participants along with other international participants will be considered in Cohorts 2 and 3. A further 11 RELT225 students did not consent to take part in Cohort 1, namely because they transferred out or into the class after the study had commenced.

Analysis

The 920 responses collected from participants were read by the *Beyond Beliefs* researchers and prominent themes were identified/mined for each belief. These themes are listed in the following report in the section pertaining to their associated belief. In addition to themes, discussion of findings, recommendations for future research, as well as issues to address and positive areas to reinforce with young adults were also identified and are listed in the following report.

The demographic inventories raw data are also reported in the Demographic Data section of this report. Extensive quantitative statistical analysis of this data will be undertaken at the conclusion of Cohort 3 after more than 600 participants have completed the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

Limitations

Data Collection

The most significant shortcoming of this study is the subjective nature of data mining and identifying themes, which was adopted to be consistent with initial funding requirements. The researchers recognize this, and to account for this, they have made all participant responses available. In making these responses publically available, the researchers wish to foster an environment of transparency and demonstrate the reliability of their inference.

While quantitative methods of data analysis may provide more stringency, the shortcoming of that type of research is that so few people have a thorough understanding of these methodologies, and how to interpret and critically review their findings. Quantitative research is also limited by the factors/issues that are assessed in the study. If current literature or a researcher is not aware of all of the factors/issues that may be influencing a population, the findings, while robust, may not provide a comprehensive consideration of all the factors that may be contributing to an issue. Correlation between factors, while interesting, is not evidence of causation. Data collection undertaken in this study provides a richness to the data where a number of themes can be mined and young adults are given a voice to articulate what they appreciate and do not appreciate with relation to the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. These themes then become valuable in future quantitative research, allowing for the exploration of sufficient factors that may be influencing an outcome. Explorative qualitative research of this nature however, needs to be undertaken in a systematic and consistent way, where participants are aware of what they are commenting on, are free of researcher influence, have provided consent to participate, their responses are sufficiently anonymous, and they are protected as human research subjects.

Anecdotal evidence, on the other hand, which also can provide a number of factors to explore and, too often, drives our views of the world, may be subject to too much influence. For example, a minister may believe he/she has a good knowledge of how young people feel about the 28 Beliefs of Adventism because they are regular speakers at youth events and have the opportunity to talk to perhaps thousands of young people. This type of inference, while interesting, is highly problematic because its method of data collection is not replicable, questions/methodology may be inconsistent, data cannot be reviewed by others, and because of the power imbalance this minister may have over the young adults they are talking to. The ministers themselves may only take note of responses that support their own world views and it is unknown if in fact the participant gave their consent to participate or were even aware they were participating in “research.” The publication of such findings as research may also be a legal issue for a church organization in the United States because this method of data collection does not comply with the requirements outlined by the Federal Office for Human Research Protections and does not have Institutional Review Board approval to ensure the rights of human research subjects are protected.

The *Beyond Beliefs* study provides a balance between these two methodologies. It allows for a collection of a range of ideas, opinions, and issues that may be influencing young adults, but in doing so, is transparent, systematic, consistent, replicable, and undertaken with the full disclosure and consent of the participants. It has Institutional Review Board approval and was carried out within the regulations stipulated by the Federal Office for Human Research Protections. It collects data that can be explored quantitatively in later studies and while the researchers agree this study is not perfect, every consideration has been given to ensure it is a good place to start.

Limited Participants

There were 42 young adults who participated in Cohort 1 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study. From these, 37 participants were from the geographical region administered by the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As already stated (see footnote 14), only these responses were analyzed for the purposes of *Beyond Beliefs* Cohort 1. These participants may not represent every single perspective held by young adults in the North American Division. However, these participants are all still Millennial young adults and, as such, the 920 150+ word responses they submitted that filled over 300 pages, are responses from the intended research target population. This study will be replicated in Fall 2013 (Cohort 2) and Spring 2014 (Cohort 3), again with the class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith, which is offered every semester at Andrews University. This should attract a further 80 participants, and when combined with the original 42 should generate over 3000 150+ responses relating to the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. Cohorts 2 and 3 will also investigate the attitudes of a further 600 participants in order to assess the efficacy of a university Chapel service program that addresses the 28 Beliefs of

Adventism during the 2013-2014 academic year. It is the goal of the *Beyond Beliefs* study to replicate the study in other institutions worldwide, and within other denominations.

Even with a small sample group, it becomes apparent that specific themes relating to the 28 Beliefs of Adventism are more prominent than others. Also, while 37 people may seem small, in studies of this nature, saturation point, the point where no further new themes are identified, must be taken into consideration. While studies that contain more participants may seem more reliable, the proverbial reality is, “more is not often more.” As previously mentioned, saturation point in data mining studies is often reached well before 37 participants. A recent study of more than 500 Doctor of Philosophy research dissertations identified that the majority of these studies did not exceed 30 participants.¹⁶ Dissertations submitted for the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University, a qualification many Seventh-day Adventist church leaders hold in North America, often contain research that has only assessed similar numbers of participants.

This study only captures the feelings and attitudes of young adults who are studying at a Seventh-day Adventist university in the Midwest region of the United States, although the North American sample contained individuals from a number of ethnic groups, from all over the United States and Canada. While Andrews University is the second most culturally diverse campus in the United States,¹⁷ the researchers are still unsure of factors that influenced a young adult’s decision to attend this university and if those decisions would also influence their responses. In Cohort 2 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study, the researchers will specifically explore this issue to identify why young adults choose Andrews University and identify the reason and, if indeed, conservative or liberal ideology played any part in their selection of this institution.

Cohort 1 is intended to be a preliminary study, or a “fishing expedition” if you will, in order to determine what areas are in need of further investigation to ensure the attitudes and perspectives of young adults become the basis of programs and recommendations made concerning them. It is the desire of the *Beyond Beliefs* researchers to share their data and recommendations for further research with other researchers, particularly those who are pursuing graduate study. In doing so, they wish to contribute to a collaborative and vibrant academic community where transparent research is undertaken by a wide range of competent individuals without regard to race, gender, legacy, or social status.

Limitations of Open Ended Questions

¹⁶ Mark Mason, “Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 11, no. 3 (September 2010): n.p. Cited 11 September 2013. Online: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/3027>.

¹⁷ U.S. News and World Report, “Campus Ethnic Diversity: National Universities,” n.p. [cited 12 January 2014]. Online: <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/campus-ethnic-diversity>.

For the purpose of this study, there are no “right” answers, views, or perspectives relating to the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, as this study was undertaken to determine the various feelings and attitudes held by young adults towards the 28 Beliefs. Allowing participants to broadly respond to each belief provided them the freedom to express their ideas and questions without feeling they needed to give the researcher the “right answer.” However, because of the open-ended nature of the research questions, just because a participant did not articulate a specific theme in their response to a certain belief, does not indicate that he/she would disagree or agree with that specific aspect of that belief if he/she was asked. That being said, what participants do write is still salient because it denotes the issues that readily come to mind when responding to a certain belief and may indicate what is of most importance to them. Personally interviewing young adults may yield a more comprehensive answer, however, that method also has its shortcomings in that it affords too much potential for the interviewer to influence or lead the participant with the specificity of their questions. Also, when multiple people are emphasizing a certain theme, that theme is most likely something they feel is significant. Thus, it becomes relevant for the researchers to consider and is therefore inside the scope of the current report.

This method of data collection may not work in all classroom settings due to the influence of the teacher. A didactic teacher who fails to create an environment that welcomes questions and non-polemic discussion may be inefficient in collecting data in this way. In this instance, this does not seem to be the case given the nature of the responses contained in this study. Participants expressed personal feelings, experiences, positive and negative attributes, controversial questions, and disagreement to a number of aspects of Adventist faith. This would seem to indicate they were not writing what they felt a dogmatic teacher wanted to hear. The purpose of RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith is not indoctrination, but rather a learning environment that allows young adult students to explore the relevancy of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and identify how these may be important in their lives. This class also encourages students to ask questions, especially “hard” ones, as questions promote engagement, provide the opportunity to learn, deal with aspects that are meaningful to them, provide an opportunity for students in a class setting to hear the experiences of a number of other young adults, and vicariously learn from those experiences. This is why it was necessary to collect responses prior to participants undertaking a class on the related belief, and also to minimize the spiritual and psychological risk to young adults participating in the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

Age of Participants

The average age of participants is a shortcoming of this study, as is the fact that they are all still students. This study did not capture the responses of older young adults and those who may be working, married or starting a family. Data collection on groups outside of educational institutions may prove problematic given the risk factors outlined above, and the amount of time required to write a 150 word response to each 28 beliefs. The attitudes of these other groups may be different as they have different challenges, life experiences, marital status, living conditions, and financial situations to those who are still at University. However, given that an educational setting at an Adventist institution is often the last time a large group of Seventh-day Adventist young adults will be in one place for an extended period of time, this becomes the most convenient and cost effective place to capture the opinions of a group of young adult participants.

Maturation Process of Participants

As previously stated, the researchers acknowledge that collecting data over a period of 15 weeks may result in a participant maturation process due to the extended length of the data collection period; however, this may not equate to an adverse effect given young adults are being asked to articulate a personal response. Rather, the responses demonstrated that participants did not lose interest in the study, and as the study progressed, continued to provide articulate and thoughtful responses.

Chapter Three

Demographic Data

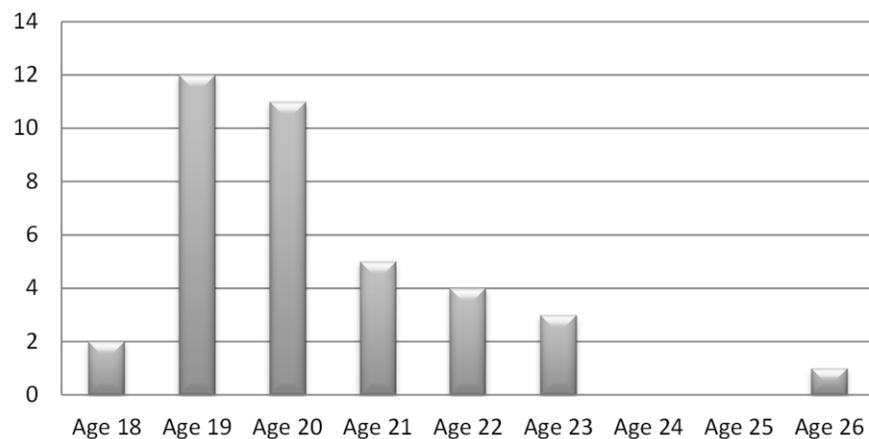
Cohort 1 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study included the administration of two anonymous demographic inventories. The goal of these inventories was to describe the sample rather than undertake analysis exploring variance for which a much larger sample would be required. The first inventory was administered at the commencement of the cohort and the second at its conclusion. Copies of these inventories are attached as Appendix 1. The two inventories together asked 30 questions relating to a range of demographic, sociocultural, and religious topics.¹⁸ The results of the inventories for Cohort 1 are as follows:

General Demographics

The mean age of Cohort 1 participants was 20.86 (n=37). This is not surprising as this is an undergraduate level class. Future cohorts of the *Beyond Beliefs* study may yield a wider cross section of ages within the young adult

age range. The participants (n=37) consisted of 59% female and 41% male. Participants were also asked to

Age of Participant



¹⁸ These questions will form the bases of quantitative investigation when more participant responses have been collected from future cohorts. While not strictly demographic questions were included in these two inventories, it was entitled a “demographic inventory” for no other reason than convenience. If participants did not wish to answer any questions in these two inventories, they were welcome to withdraw from the study without penalty at any given time during data collection.

identify if they were Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning. Only one participant responded affirmatively.

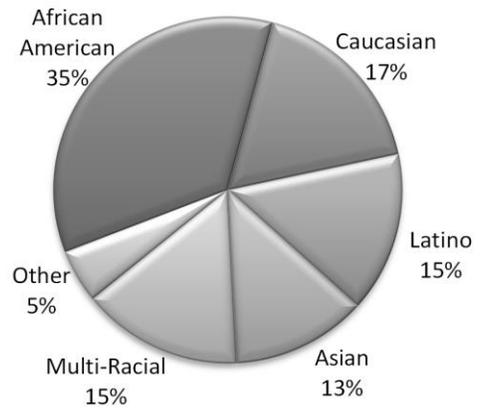
Ethnicity

There were twice as many African American participants than any other ethnic group. All participants were citizens or permanent residents of the United States or Canada.

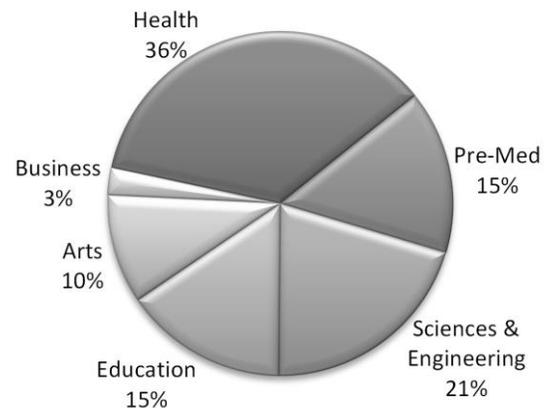
Major

Each year at Andrews University all students must undertake a General Education class in Religion. RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith is one of the choices available to students. This sample does not contain Religion and Theology majors as they are not required to take this class. Since the majority of Seventh-day Adventist young adults do not pursue ministry as a career, this class provides an excellent opportunity to undertake exploratory research with young adults who are pursuing a range of careers from a number of disciplines. Specific disciplines captured in this study included nursing, psychology, social work, biology, engineering, languages, music, all levels of school teaching, physical therapy, wellness, biology and medical laboratory sciences. Majors have been grouped to provide sufficient anonymity for participants. Future cohorts of the *Beyond Beliefs* study may capture additional majors, and provide sufficient numbers for some to be grouped individually.

Ethnicity



University Major



Relationship Status

None of the participants were married, in a common-law marriage or in a LGBT¹⁹ union. This is not surprising given they are young adults still studying at university and the mean age for this sample was 20.86. Participants

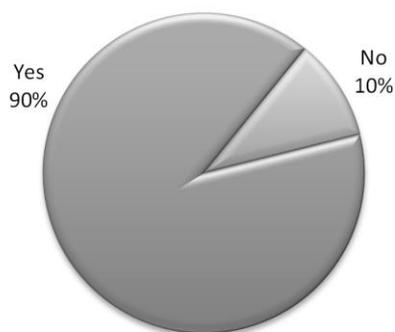
¹⁹ LGBT is an acronym of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender.

identified as being either single (67%) or in a relationship (33%). Cohort 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study may reveal a wider variation in relationship status, however, given the age of Millennials overall, this may not be a significant variation.

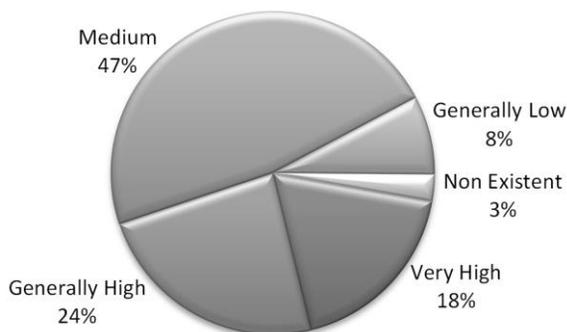
Church Membership

All of the participants identified as Seventh-day Adventists, however, only 90% were baptized members. Only 8% felt they did not have a sense of ownership of the Seventh-day Adventist church. For more information about baptism see *Belief 15 – Baptism*, in the following report. Ownership of the church is defined as an invested interest,²⁰ of which 92% felt they possessed. This is reassuring as it suggests that the majority of participants do wish to be a part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and feel concern for its wellbeing.

Are you a Baptized Member?



Ownership of the Church Level of Spiritual Commitment



Spiritual Commitment

Participants were asked to self-report their level of spiritual commitment ranging from very high, generally high, medium, generally low, very low or nonexistent. Very few participants were in the low to nonexistent range, while 42% identified in the high range. However, almost half of the participants identified in the medium range. It would be interesting to identify how young adults specifically define spiritual commitment and what factors play into their perception of whether theirs is high, medium, or low. This will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

²⁰ "Ownership" should not be confused with an attitude where young adults feel they "own" the church exclusively or perceive a sense of entitled dominance.

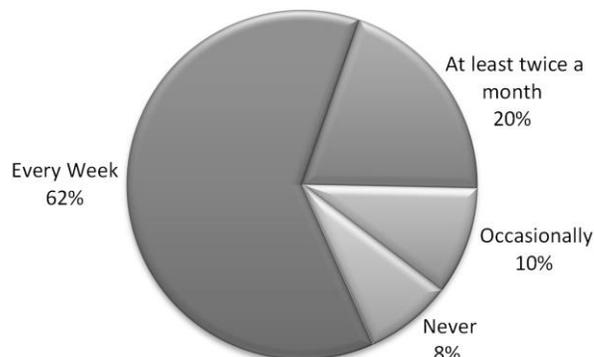
Church Attendance

The majority of this sample attended church every week. However, 8% never attend church, and a further 10% only attend occasionally (making 18% altogether), yet these participants still identify as a Seventh-day Adventist and attend a Seventh-day Adventist university. Of this 18%, more than half were baptized (all prior to age 14 with the exception of one participant) and all were at least a third generation Seventh-day Adventist. This issue will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of

the *Beyond Beliefs* study. The emergence of “Secular Adventists” similar to “Secular Jews” (individuals who are born into Judaism, identify as Jewish, but do not practice Judaism) and “Nonpracticing Catholics” (individuals who identify as Catholic, but do not participate in church services or sacraments) may be an emerging phenomenon of Adventist Millennial young adults and warrants further investigation by the Seventh-day Adventist church, particularly in regions where multi-generational Adventists predominate. For additional information relating to this topic, please see *Belief 12 – The Church*, in the following report.

Church Attendance Beyond Beliefs Study

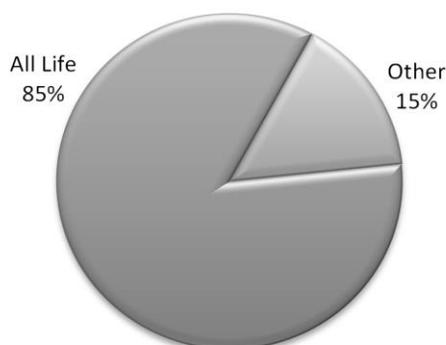
Cohort 1, Spring 2013



Membership Length

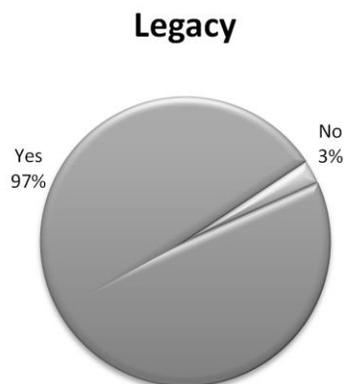
The majority of participants identified as being a part of the Seventh-day Adventist church all of their lives. An additional 15% identified as being a part of Seventh-day Adventism for a portion of their lives. Interestingly, all but one of the latter group (this single participant did not answer the question) identified as at least a third generation Seventh-day Adventist suggesting that these young adults may have spent some time outside of the Adventist church, either by their own choice, or as the result of a parent who may have left the denomination for a time or permanently.

How long have you been an Adventist?



Legacy in Adventism

The majority of young adults identified as having both a parent and a grandparent who are/were members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The 3% without legacy, still indicated that they themselves had been an Adventist all of their life, which suggests a parent who may also be a Seventh-day Adventist, but not a grandparent.



Challenging Life Experience

Participants were also able to identify in the demographics inventory if they had experienced any challenging life experience like sexual abuse, domestic violence, assault/rape, divorce, physical abuse, or a hate/race crime. These factors were all represented in a sample of just 37 participants, which should be concerning for the Seventh-day Adventist church. Participants were also asked to identify if they were HIV positive; if they had ever had an abortion; or if they supported the theory of evolution. No one answered affirmatively to the first two questions, while one participant stated that they supported the theory of evolution.²¹



Adventist Faith Demographics

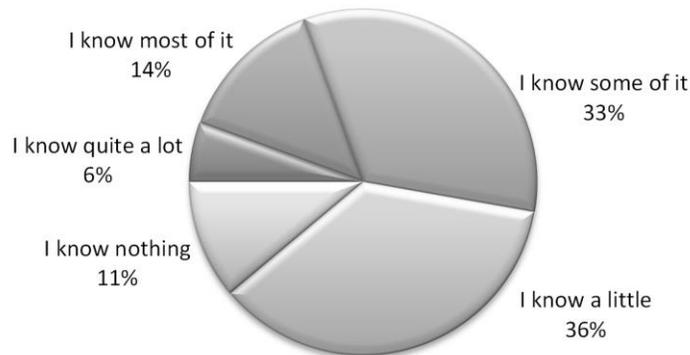
²¹ Support for evolution was not displayed on the graph in this report because it was not considered a challenging life experience. Creating a separate graph for just one participant was deemed superfluous and the researchers elected to report it verbally. The evolutionary question was included in this section of the demographics inventory due to space limitations on the inventory document. The term "Challenging Life Experience" is used in this report, but was not used on the inventory.

The following data relates to the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and the practice of Seventh-day Adventism. These are all self-report responses, again for the purposes of describing this population rather than undertaking quantitative analysis, which will be undertaken at the conclusion of Cohort 3 after a much larger sample of data has been collected.

Knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism

The demographic inventory administered at the commencement of the *Beyond Beliefs* study had participants self-report their overall knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and found the results represented in the following chart.

Knowledge of 28 Beliefs – Beginning of the Study



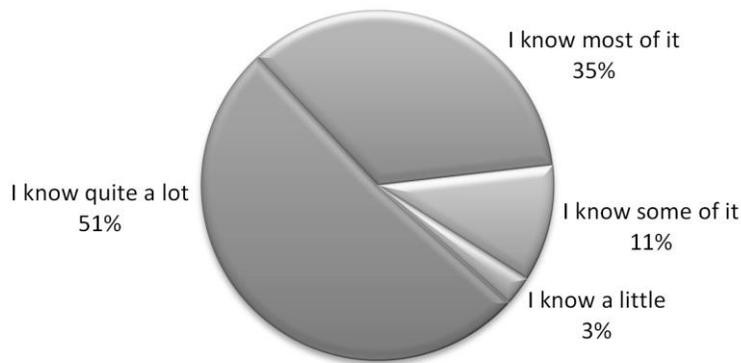
It is noteworthy that only 20% identified as knowing “most of it” or “quite a lot” given two thirds of all the participants in the study attended Seventh-day Adventist schools in varying degrees, 90% of participants were baptized members, and all but one were at least a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist. The remaining 80% identified as only knowing “some of it,” “a little” and “nothing.” No participants indicated they knew “everything” which was an additional option in the inventory.

It would seem that baptismal preparation where the 28 Beliefs of Adventism are studied has not adequately covered the beliefs. Alternatively the participant may have been baptized at such an early age that their comprehension and/or retention of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism was limited, and therefore impacted their self-report perception. This, however, still does not explain the role of parents and grandparents, who in this cohort were all Seventh-day Adventists, except the parents/grandparents of

one participant. It would seem that, despite apparent shortcomings in teaching the 28 Beliefs of Adventism in baptismal preparation and Adventist education, parents and grandparents do not seem to be taking a proactive role in ensuring young people know the beliefs. However, it could well be many parents may not possess a thorough knowledge of the beliefs either. This poses an interesting question. Is it the responsibility of the church/pastor, the church school/teacher, or the parent/grandparent to comprehensively communicate the 28 Beliefs of Adventism? Should all three take part or is there one group who may be more efficacious than the others in communicating beliefs to young people? This issue will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

Participants were also asked to self-report their knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism at the conclusion of the study which was undertaken in conjunction with the class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith at Andrews University. The results are represented in the following chart and demonstrate a dramatic shift in self-report knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. Participant representation in the “know most of it” and “know quite a lot” categories changed from 20% to 86%. The “know nothing” category disappeared altogether.

Knowledge of 28 Beliefs – End of the Study



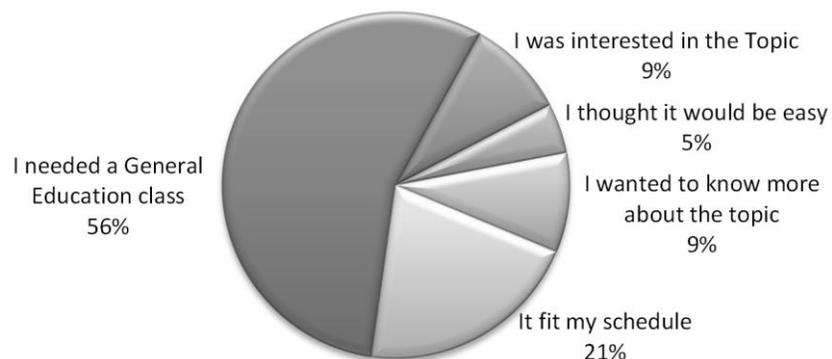
The chart above is the self-report result participants gave after completing the 15 week RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith class. There was a significant shift in the knowledge base of young adults, and none identified as knowing nothing. This shift may be the result of the class structure for this particular class. Learning environment, the teacher, and the teaching methodology may have also

played a significant part. However, given this enormous shift, this class seems to serve as an efficacious tool in teaching young adults the 28 Beliefs of Adventism.

More research needs to be undertaken to identify how this class can be replicated in other settings such as elementary, middle, and high schools as well as other university or college settings. It may even be modified to be utilized as a tool that can be used by clergy and parents to ensure young adults are aware of the beliefs of the Adventist church. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will investigate the efficacy of the Andrews University Chapel program which will cover the 28 Beliefs of Adventism during the 2013-2014 academic year. It will be useful to identify if a university campus chapel service is as efficacious in communicating the 28 Beliefs of Adventism as an academic class like RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith and if a range of clergy (many of whom are youth pastors), as opposed to a single academic teacher, can achieve similar learning outcomes in a Chapel program.

The demographics inventory administered as a part of the *Beyond Beliefs* study asked participants why they signed up for this course, since it is not a required course. Some may argue that this data is skewed as only individuals who undertook the class RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith were invited to participate in the study. They may suggest that only students who wanted to know more about this topic, because of a lack of knowledge of these beliefs, would sign up for such a class. Others may argue that because these young people are Seventh-day Adventists it should be assumed they possess a strong knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and, thus, only signed up for this class because they thought it would be easy. It would seem both of these concerns have little support given the outcome as described in the following chart.

Reasons for taking RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith



Only 9% wanted to know more about the topic, another 9% were interested in the topic, 5% thought it would be easy, 21% selected the class because it fit their schedule, but the overwhelming majority stated they only took this class because they needed a Religion General Education class for that semester (56%). This is salient because despite the nonchalant motivation for taking this class, the class had efficacy in contributing to a dramatic shift in the self-report knowledge base of young adults regarding the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. This result may also suggest that young adults could have had a better knowledge of the beliefs than they were prepared to admit at the beginning of the study. However, if this was the case, it seems taking this class has most certainly reinforced their confidence that they know more than they initially thought they did, and this aspect is still a positive one. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will ask participants to not only self-report their knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism at the beginning and conclusion of their cohort, but will also ask at the conclusion if they were to look back at how much they knew at the beginning of the semester and compare it to what they know now, how would they re-rate their knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism at the beginning of the study. This should indicate whether a participant has the tendency to overstate or understate their knowledge of the beliefs at the beginning of the cohort.

Peter Conner of Colorado State University suggests: "Millennials are fast, multi-tasking, high achievers who have led highly-paced, highly-structured, helicopter-parent driven lives involving plenty of positive multi-cultural exposure, group activity, and shared family time. Computer literate and techno-savvy, how they live and learn is quite different than their predecessors."²² This observation may also hold true for any highly educated, computer literate group of people including Generation Xers.

Pursuant with this observation, RELT225 traded a lecture style class with a highly interactive format between teacher, student, and multimedia (a style that resonates with Millennials) where many perspectives can be expressed and critical thought is valued and encouraged. This approach is engaging and, given Millennials are a generation of multi-taskers, if they are not engaged they quickly tune out. The emphasis of this class was to allow young adults to not only explore every belief and comment on it for the purposes of the *Beyond Beliefs* study, but also to provide them an opportunity to openly discuss the 28 Beliefs of Adventism in a non-polemic environment with other young adults. Additionally, it also allowed them to articulate how each belief is relevant to their lives and how they would describe them to other young adults in age appropriate language. This is why it becomes important to identify if the

²² Peter Conner, "Teaching Millennials: First, Who Are They?" n.p. [cited 18 July 2013]. Online: <http://teaching.colostate.edu/tips/tip.cfm?tipid=48>.

Chapel service can achieve the same results in teaching the 28 Beliefs of Adventism given young adults are passive during a Chapel service, are not asked to individually assess or articulate their response to a belief, and they are delivered a sermon with little interaction from the audience. The findings of Cohorts 2 and 3 may provide helpful insights for how evangelism to this demographic group should be conducted.

One of the outcomes of the *Beyond Beliefs* study is to further develop the RELT 225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith program and determine its efficacy in other educational institutions, high schools and as a tool for ministers/parents to use in effectively communicating the 28 Beliefs of Adventism to young adults. This includes a textbook and also a new 28 Beliefs commentary specifically targeting Millennial young adults (ages 18-32). Given the results of the class listed above, RELT 225 in its current format seems to result in an enormous shift in the self-reported knowledge level of young adults. The written responses given in this study are also further evidence that this process is one that participants embraced enthusiastically, even over an extended period of time.

Knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and Adventist Education

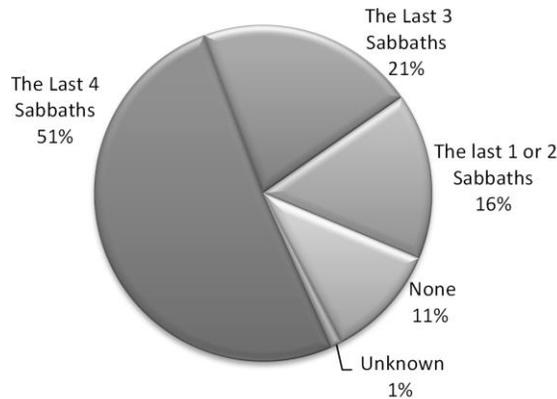
The following charts outline how often young adults who participated in this study attended church and is compared to the results found in the 2008 North American Division report entitled *Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile*.²³ When comparing these two charts, it appears young adults attend church on a more regular basis than the general Seventh-day Adventist in the North American Division (62% for young adults compared to 51% for the general church population). One explanation for this difference may be these participants attend an Adventist university where church options are plentiful and provide easy access (walking or car) to church. It could also be assumed that a person who is not interested in attending church may not elect to attend an Adventist university. The motivation for why a participant elected to attend an Adventist university is unknown and was outside the scope of data collection at this point in the study. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will investigate why young adults elected to attend Andrews University and may also identify if this institution is associated with "liberal" or "conservative" ideologies and if this played any part in why they selected this specific institution. Future cohorts may also reveal if the following results regarding

²³ Sahlin and Richardson, *Seventh-day Adventists in North America*, 1.

church attendance and Seventh-day Adventist education is unique to the Spring 2013 cohort or if it also holds true for additional cohorts, thus suggesting a larger trend.

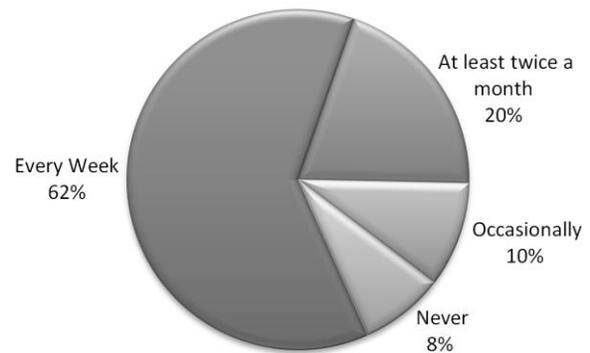
NAD Church Attendance Report

From Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile



Church Attendance Beyond Beliefs Study

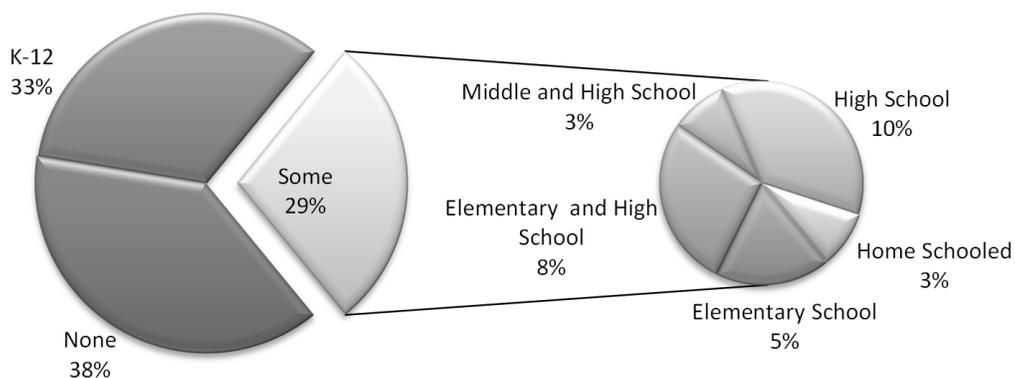
Cohort 1, Spring 2013



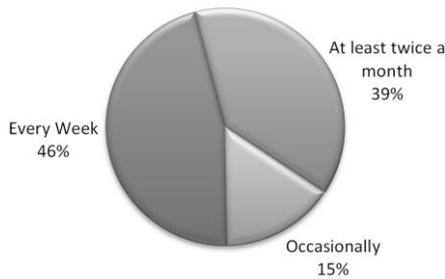
It must be noted that the North American Division church attendance report asked participants to report their church attendance during the previous four Sabbaths and interviewed church members of all ages, not just young adults. The *Beyond Beliefs* study asked Millennial young adult participants to report their overall church attendance and included options like “never.” Thus, the inclusion of “never” poses an interesting dilemma which will be discussed later in this report.

A more complex picture emerges when church attendance was considered in light of Adventist school attendance prior to coming to an Adventist university. These results are as follows:

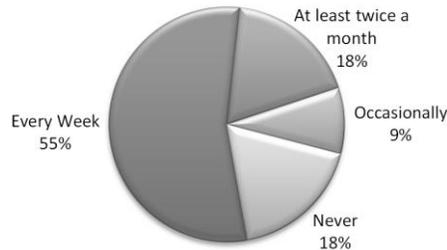
Seventh-day Adventist Education



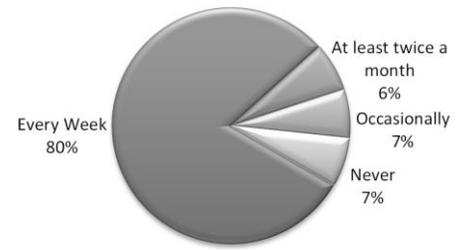
Church Attendance
(Attended SDA Schools K-12)



Church Attendance
(Attended Some SDA Schooling)



Church Attendance
(Did not attend any SDA Schools before college)



The most conspicuous difference was the weekly church attendance of those who did not attend a Seventh-day Adventist school (80%) prior to attending an Adventist university compared with those who had (46%). This finding could suggest that those who do not attend Adventist schools have a higher propensity to attend church weekly upon reaching young adulthood. It could be that young adults who had not attended any Adventist schooling prior to attending an Adventist university may have a different experience with church than those participants who did attend Adventist schools. These results could also reflect that young adults participated in this study in the second half of the academic year after living independently at university for many months and were free to make their own decisions regarding church attendance. Data collected in the first semester of an academic year may be different as young adults may have just spent their summer with their families and, due to this, regular church attendance may have been required by their families. This aspect will be investigated further in Cohorts 2 and 3 and will identify why young adults do not attend church. Attendance at Sabbath School and the reasons why they attend/do not attend will also be explored. The finding above may also be an anomaly which may not replicate itself in future cohorts that contain a larger sample size. It is important to note that none of the participants who had undertaken all of their schooling in the Adventist school system identified as never attending church. Those who did attend some Adventist schooling had the largest group of participants who never attended church – yet still identify as Seventh-day Adventists which was a requirement for participation in this study. Again, these results are preliminary and may not replicate themselves in future cohorts which will contain a much larger sample of participants.

Given that these numbers represent those who have ready access to a number of church services on an Adventist university campus that cater for range of young adult needs, it may be necessary to identify what these results may look like when young adults enter the workforce and no longer live in a

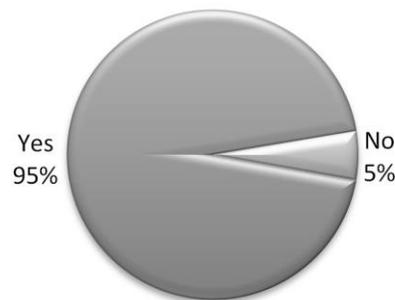
predominantly Adventist campus community. It may also be timely to investigate the church attendance levels of these three education groups in that context to see if participants who had no Adventist schooling prior to university retain a higher rate of weekly church attendance, since they already have significant experience in spending the majority of their week in a non-Adventist environment. Additionally, why are 8% of participants in this study still identifying as Seventh-day Adventists when they state they never attend church? Is this evidence of “Cultural Adventism” or something entirely different? This issue will be discussed further in *Belief 12 – The Church*. Cohorts 2 and 3 will also investigate if this 8% which was captured in such a small sample is replicated in larger samples, or if indeed, an even larger percentage manifests itself.

Reasons for taking RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith

As previously determined, the majority of participants stated that they signed up for RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith because they needed a General Education class or it fit their schedule. This provides a preliminary answer to accrediting organizations who question if teaching Adventist beliefs in an Adventist university to students who identify as Seventh-day Adventists is necessary. It would seem it is necessary, particularly since many of the participants in this sample did not possess a strong knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism at the commencement of the class.

At the conclusion of this class, 95% of participants identified that this class was necessary, the prominent reason being that Seventh-day Adventists should know what they believe and this class provided an opportunity to explore the 28 Beliefs of Adventism in an academic and non-polemic environment.

Is Teaching RELT225 Necessary?

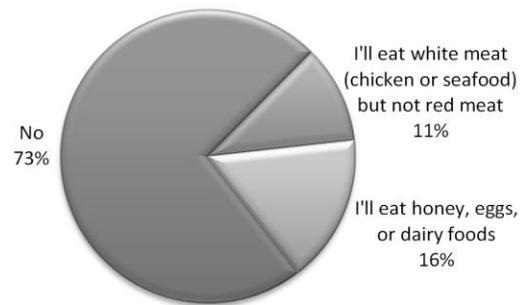


Vegetarianism

The majority of participants in this sample identified as not being vegetarian. No participants identified as being Vegan. This is an interesting finding, given the emphasis Seventh-day Adventists place on vegetarianism. Cohorts 2 and 3 will compare this finding with more participants to identify if this is an anomaly or if it is an indication of a larger trend.

This could well be an indication of Cultural or Secular Adventism where practices of the Seventh-day Adventist church such as vegetarianism or regular church attendance is perceived as optional. Or it could be that vegetarianism as it is currently presented in Adventism does not resonate with young adults. Other factors may be contributing to this as well. Further study may be warranted given the significant numbers of non-vegetarians identified in such a small sample at an Adventist university like Andrews University.

I am a Vegetarian



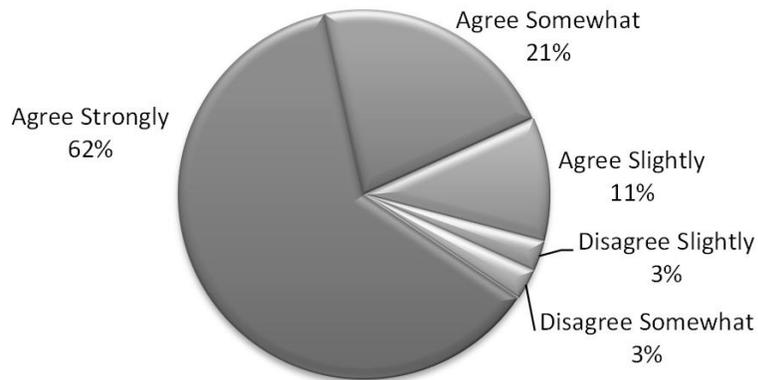
Women In Ministry

The majority of young adults stated that they strongly agree with the Commissioning and Ordination of women to ministry. No participants "disagree strongly" with commissioning, but 3% did "disagree strongly" with relation to ordination. However, ordination also saw a rise in "agree strongly" by the same percentage (3%).

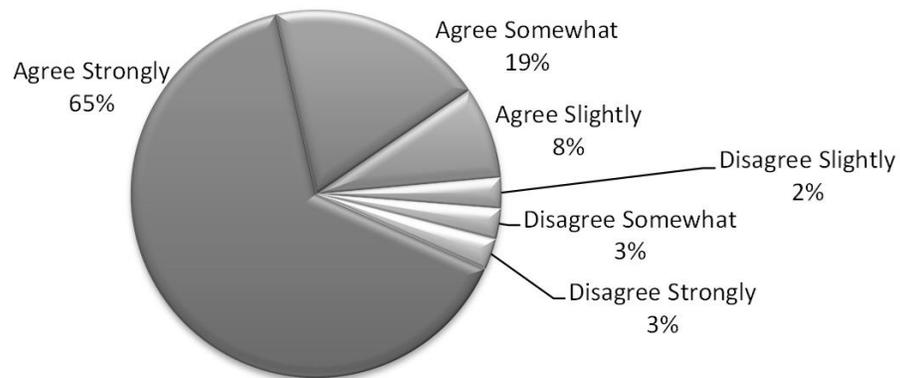
Identifying why they agreed or disagreed was outside the scope of this study and this issue will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3. While a small sample, this group indicates that 92% of young adults identify in the "agreement" range for the ordination of women. This is noteworthy as the Seventh-day Adventist church is currently deciding whether or not to ordain women clergy. Given the finding above, Cohorts 2 and 3 will also investigate how young adults would react if the decision is made not to ordain women. If indeed young adults are more "Cultural Adventists" they may not care, however, if they have a strong sense of justice and equality that they link with their faith, such a decision may influence retention and harmony within the Seventh-day Adventist church in the future.

Data was also collected regarding attitudes toward Ellen G. White²⁴ and how frequently young adults read her writings. These results are reported in *Belief 18 – The Gift of Prophecy*, in the following report.

I support the Commissioning of Women to Ministry



I support the Ordination of Women to Ministry



²⁴ Ellen G. White was a foundation member of the Seventh-day Adventist church and wrote extensively with relation to spirituality, theology and Christian living and, in doing so, established many of the practices of the Seventh-day Adventist church. She is regarded by a number of members within the Seventh-day Adventist church as a prophet who received visions from God.

Chapter Four

Summary of Results

What do young adults really think of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism?

In brief, Seventh-day Adventist young adults from North America predominantly liked the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and, when they had a comprehensive knowledge of them, claimed to endorse them favorably. The beliefs which provided either a real or abstract benefit for them personally were very well received, as were beliefs that had a relevant application for their life here and now. Thus, the challenge for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, when addressing young adults, is not primarily to convince them of the strengths of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, but rather, to demonstrate how each belief benefits them and can be applied in their lives right now.

To exemplify this, consider *Belief 10 – The Experience of Salvation*, which, since it delivers them from sin, provides a highly regarded benefit to young adults. Likewise, *Belief 4 – The Son of God*, identified Jesus as the standout favorite among the Trinity, mainly because He was the one who actually saved them from their sins and provided them a practical example for how to live. Additionally, *Belief 1 – The Word of God*, which was described as a guide for life, was something that really resonated with young adults since they are just commencing the journey of their adult lives. By far, however, the most prominent theme of the study was *Belief 20 – The Sabbath*, where 82% of the participants associated the Sabbath with “rest,” many citing it as a guilt-free day they could take off from their busy lives.

Beliefs that did not provide any easily identifiable personal benefit included *Belief 27 – The Millennium and the End of Sin*, while not denigrated, did pose the question of “so what?” In the case of that belief, it would seem that the focus of young adults is getting to heaven – what happens after that seemed to be secondary and bore little relevance to their lives today. Interestingly, young adult participants who questioned this belief did not call for it to be deleted, but rather, suggested it could be amalgamated with other beliefs, namely *Belief 26 – Death and Resurrection* and *Belief 28 – The New Earth*.

But wait, there's a catch...

While personal benefit and relevance were associated with a positive regard for the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, these benefits and relevant applications also had to be believable, consistent with the compassionate and tolerant sociocultural attitudes of young adults, and able to withstand the application of informed critical thought. *Belief 11 – Growing in Christ*, revealed that young adults, especially from the North American Division, may not be that concerned about an ongoing “spiritual warfare.” This could be because they live in a society where anomalies in behavior have rational explanations like substance use, mental illness, malingering behaviors, somatoform disorders, suggestibility, or neurological conditions which present better explanations and responsible treatment outcomes than simply attributing such behavior to demonic possession and the need for “exorcism.”

Young adults are not opposed to being given advice on how to live and do appreciate that Christians need to behave in a certain way; however, there may be resistance to advice that is based on personal taste or dogma, rather than efficacy for living. For example, in *Belief 22 – Christian Behavior*, participants wrote:

“What is simple dress? Although we believe that our bodies are the temple of God, this does not mean we will all view the same things as funny, entertaining or amusing. There are just going to be some people who find things more hard funny, than those who don't like it. It comes down to a matter of preference and who you choose to hang around. Although this doctrine is important to how we Seventh-day Adventists carry ourselves, it can be one of the biggest turn offs to our religion for some people - which is probably why we were/are considered a cult because we try to involve our opinions into other's lives.”

“I want to know who told church leaders that shoulders were sexy. Now whenever I wear tank tops some old lady asks me if I'm cold. I'm a young person, I like wearing bright colors, high heels and skirts that are on the shorter side. I'm not going to wear a burlap sack because Ellen White says that's how a Christian dresses.”

“I like doing zumba. That helps me to exercise, relaxes me, de-stresses me. How can that be wrong? It is important when they tell us how to be careful with stuff. Personally, I don't like it when they start putting up rules. No this. No that. No, no, no... as years go thru, things change. We can't be so closed minded. We need to get to the bottom of the situation. What is the context in which Ellen G. White wrote stuff? Not just because she said it, it has to be that way.”

“I feel a lot of things such as cardplay, theater, and music was meant in a different context when the church laid out these foundations. I do believe that for Seventh-day Adventists this fundamental is important especially since the world is so secular today and most people need a close guide to stick by or else they will be ignorant. At the end of the day though, I feel as though if you truly loved Jesus and followed all of the other principles and foundations this wouldn't be as needed.”

Young adults will not just accept what others tell them. Given they are a highly educated demographic, they will apply the process of critical thought to advice they are given and will often be able to identify inconsistencies, irrelevancies, or even hypocrisy.

While the participants in this group are legally considered adults and are physically identifiable as young adults who are able to demonstrate the ability to think critically and articulate their opinions and feelings, there were several participants who still expressed childlike perceptions, particularly with regard to *Belief 28 – The New Earth*. These included, “I can’t wait to wrestle with lions, race cheetahs and ride hippos;” and “I want to play baseball with the planets and ride a drop of rain and go planet hopping.” There were, however, some who took a much more serious outlook with regard to the New Earth, like, “there will be no more need for the human race to depend on our own hard work and determination to succeed” and, “we will not have fatigue and weariness.” Clearly, this is an interesting age group where the realities of their emerging adult life and the narratives of their childhood overlap.

Be careful what you say...

Young adults feel as though their opinions are largely unheard by older adults. Some perceive older adults may want to make their decisions for them without consultation or regard to how these decisions may impact a young adult’s spiritual walk or their life in the contemporary world. This was evidenced in *Belief 15 – Baptism*, where many participants took issue with early baptism and how this practice may have some unforeseen consequences despite being encouraged with good intentions. This issue is discussed in more detail in *Belief 15 – Baptism* later in this report. Thus, it is a recommendation of the *Beyond Beliefs* study that when attempting to communicate beliefs, leadership and clergy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church should take greater efforts and responsibility to explore and ensure that recommendations concerning young people are not causing spiritual or psychological harm. Consultation with a wide range of young adults from differing socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and educational backgrounds (rather than just the adult children of church leadership or young adult clergy) may provide a more comprehensive overview of the opinions of young adults that could inform future decision making and recommendations.

With regard to *Belief 25 - The Second Coming of Christ*, 18% of the participants voiced some fear with regard to this belief. This fear was largely related to a fear of the persecution of believers that would precede the Second Coming, or that loved ones would not be a part of the righteous who would be resurrected and/or taken to heaven. Leadership and clergy should bear in mind that young adults have images of news reports, documentaries, modern genocide, and the holocaust (something early Adventists did not have) with which to reference persecution. Thus, there is little wonder there is, for some, a very real fear associated with the Second

Coming of Christ. This “fear factor” was also captured in one of the responses for *Belief 24 – Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary*, where a participant verbalized being “terrified” of the investigative judgment. This may indicate that, perhaps, for a small group of Seventh-day Adventist young adults in North America, the investigative judgment and the second coming of Christ are associated with terror rather than hope. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will investigate the “fear factor” associated with certain beliefs, and future research may wish to identify if this fear is motivating the retention of a young adult’s faith. This may not be the desired outcome of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who emphasize in *Belief 3 – God the Father*, that God is a deity associated with “steadfast love.” It may even be timely to include an investigation into faith-instigated fears of teens, tweens, and children to determine how such fears may affect their faith and even their mental health.

While young adults seem unconcerned with demonic possession, the concept of ghosts, however, was a theme that arose in *Belief 26 – Death and Resurrection*. Ghosts were mentioned by 19% of participants, often in the context of ghosts being demons who are masquerading as deceased loved ones. It is interesting that a group of this size specifically expressed the existence of ghosts and, in one case, zombies, even though none related an experience of ever seeing either a ghost or zombie. Some expressed fear with relation to ghosts as though they anticipated that one day they might see one. Given this fear and anticipation of seeing a ghost, could focusing on demons and Satan being behind “ghosts” be causing a much greater problem than it solves? This issue will be explored in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study. Further study needs to be undertaken to determine the extent of this real fear of demon-ghosts and its effects on a young adult’s functionality, particularly with regard to sleep issues. It may be necessary to include adolescents and younger children in such a study because if this issue is troubling for young adults, how much more so for a young child. Exposing young Adventists to concepts like demonic forces in a scary way, as well as showing them multimedia and literature focusing on the occult, may have the same detrimental psychological effect as showing them a horror movie or reading them a horror novel. Interestingly, the current commentary for the 28 Beliefs of Adventism does not discuss the explicable and elaborate methods used by celebrity mediums, magicians, hypnotists, and illusionists; nor does it discuss how many of these types of entertainers or confidence men/women (sometimes colloquially referred to as con-artists, con-men/women) have been exposed, or have willingly revealed their methods. Fraudulent and opportunistic behavior, mental illness, drug related psychotic episodes, or even the power of suggestion and the propensity of some to embellish the truth, are also not discussed, which future commentaries should address. If young adults are not advised to question supernatural stories, they may become vulnerable to manipulative individuals who may take advantage of that religious suggestibility and introduce them to unsound beliefs. Again, more study may be required to explore the potential psychological harm that exposing all young people, particularly children, to the concepts of demonic forces in a scary way, may have on their wellbeing and retention in religiosity.

So what didn't they like?

Young adults consistently expressed concern relating to belief statements primarily when they felt the statement was too long, poorly worded, or used overly technical theological jargon which was not readily understood. *Belief 24 – Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary* provided the best example of this. It is the longest belief statement (252 words) and is multifaceted, so it is no surprise that it revealed a large number of themes (24) that were only expressed by relatively low numbers of individuals. Unlike other beliefs which were less detailed and/or more succinct, multifaceted beliefs seem to lack prominent themes that resonate with a large number of participants. This may be problematic if young adults are required to communicate these beliefs to others, particularly those who do not share their faith. What facet of this belief should or would they focus on? A component of this belief that one young adult may feel is essential to communicate to others, may not be the same component another young adult may choose to emphasize when communicating their faith. This may result in an inconsistent message being conveyed to those who are not Seventh-day Adventists or even to those who are.

Young adults also expressed concern with beliefs that were ambiguous like *Belief 2 – The Trinity*, which states there is "one God" but also mentions "three co-eternal persons" which was questioned by some participants as intentionally leaving room for two conflicting theological models of the Trinity. Predictably, both theological concepts were described. There were 44% of participants who described "God" as three components of one person and an additional 31% of participants who described the Trinity as three people with three purposes, working together to achieve a common goal.²⁵ While 31% of participants dismissed any uncertainty related to "God" with a belief that God is so complex we could never understand Him, 34% of participants suggested that if humans are expected to worship, adore and serve God, shouldn't they be permitted to understand Him? This is a good point, particularly if God provides instances of "self-revelation" as the belief states. One participant also suggested that if there are in fact three separate individuals in the Trinity, can a religious group who endorses this really call themselves monotheistic? Another participant also asked why, if Seventh-day Adventists believe in a single deity made of up three components, do they open their prayers with "Dear Heavenly Father" but conclude them "in the name of Jesus." This belief does not clarify if an egalitarian or hierarchical ranking exists among the Trinity. Even though many young adults expressed difficulty in understanding this belief, they were able to express this and attempted to emphasize aspects that they did understand or had prior knowledge of. This is reassuring for Seventh-day Adventist leadership as it would indicate that young adults, while they may not understand everything, certainly desire to and attempt to articulate what they do understand.

²⁵ The remaining participants did not describe a model of the Trinity in their response.

Interestingly, when presented the concept of the Trinity, young adults tended to favor a Godhead consisting of one God with three components. However, when presented individual beliefs relating to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit separately, young adults tended to favor a Godhead of three separate deities each with their own part to play. These two theological models are by no means comprehensive of the many models describing the Trinity;²⁶ however, they seem to be the models young adults derived from the wording of this belief. Thus, *Belief 2 – The Trinity* may need clarification, and in doing so, promote a more consistent belief among young adult believers who are, at present, attempting to describe a belief they are unsure about. It may also address the dissonance some young adults raised regarding Adventism being a true monotheistic faith, if in fact they believe in three separate individual members of the Godhead. Given one participant associated the Trinity with a model for marriage, if the Godhead is indeed three separate deities, a ranking or egalitarian relationship within this Trinity needs to be defined - particularly if Adventism would want to endorse a marriage equality model and the equality of women which is a very important factor for Millennial young adults. Participant demographic data found that 92% of participants identified in the agreement range for the ordination of women clergy (67% agreed strongly, 19% agreed somewhat and 8% agreed slightly). Attitudes towards the ordination of women will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

Participants also felt there was overlap in many of the beliefs and suggested that some could be amalgamated for ease of remembering them all.

What young adults largely took issue with in their responses was the examples and commentary used to describe beliefs and how they were implemented (or not implemented) by church members. Young adults in this study seem to place a very strong emphasis on treating people well and dislike how the 28 Beliefs of Adventism may be used to police the behavior of other believers. Due to their exposure to a number of media platforms, they live in a world where they have ready access to a wide range of perspectives and world views that are outside of their own experience and the experience of their family/community. Combine this with participation in higher education, where teaching the concept of critical thought is the underlying purpose, Millennial young adults may have a wider, more compassionate perspective, and differing solutions for addressing issues than that of their predecessors.

The following pages individually identify the themes and reactions of young adults for each of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. They include the associated official belief statement at the beginning of each section so readers

²⁶ It must be reiterated that these responses are the result of the participant's reading of the Trinity belief statement and commentary. They had not participated in a class discussion on the topic prior to writing this statement or their statements for God the Father, God the Son or God the Holy Spirit. All four beliefs were combined as a unit. This was so the teacher would not have any influence on their interpretation and understanding of the belief statements and commentary. In class, after participant statements were submitted, a number of models for the Trinity were presented and discussed.

unfamiliar with the 28 Beliefs of Adventism will be able to compare findings to the belief statement. The authors wish to stress that these findings are preliminary, as Cohorts 2 and 3 may reveal slightly different outcomes. Quantitative analysis will also be undertaken at the conclusion of Cohort 3 when a sufficient number of participant responses have been collected for this type of analysis.

28

BELIEFS of ADVENTISM *Analysis*

Each belief outlined in the following pages was quoted from the Seventh-day Adventist Church's official website. These official beliefs can be viewed online at:

www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28Beliefs-English.pdf

1

The Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.

2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.

Belief 1

The Holy Scriptures

Number of Responses for this Belief = 32

This belief was generally regarded by participants as important and relevant for a number of reasons. Primarily it was perceived as being the basis of Adventism and the foundation upon which all other beliefs rested.

Other themes that emerged were that the Bible was useful because it could be used as a guide to give insight into one's life and purpose, and could also provide counsel for life circumstances. One participant even described the Bible as "basic instructions before leaving earth." Additionally, the Bible was perceived by many as a means for how God revealed his character. Thus, if the reader desired to know God better, reading the Bible was a good place to start.

The majority of the participants accepted the Bible as God's inspired word, although nearly half did not articulate how this inspiration took place²⁷ and 6% openly admitted that they were confused by the concept of divine revelation. Exactly 50% articulated that inspiration was the result of God inspiring selected humans to write his thoughts, but allowing them to use their own words and personalities to express this inspiration. Alternatively, 16% described a belief that God dictated the Bible and biblical writers wrote this dictation verbatim. This may be an aspect of Adventist faith that the Seventh-day Adventist church may like to address more clearly with young adults.

A small number of participants expressed dissonance associated with the practice of using evidence in the Bible to prove that the Bible is true. Conversely, 31% of participants stated that the Bible was true and used the Bible as a source of verifying this. This is interesting given that these were university students who are encouraged to seek support for a perspective from several sources rather than just the source that is advocating its own authenticity. Very few participants associated a belief in the accuracy of the Bible with an individual faith decision.²⁸ This may be problematic, particularly if at some point a person has reason to question the authenticity of the Bible, or if they encounter individuals who have not/cannot make this initial faith decision and require external supporting evidence.

There was also one participant who related an experience of being auspiciously directed to a biblical verse that fulfilled a question they had at that particular point in time. This practice may yield limited ongoing efficacy, and

²⁷ This does not necessarily mean that they did not understand this concept, but rather, they did not articulate it in their response.

²⁸ An individual faith decision is when a person accepts a concept or world view in good faith, rather than requiring supporting evidence.

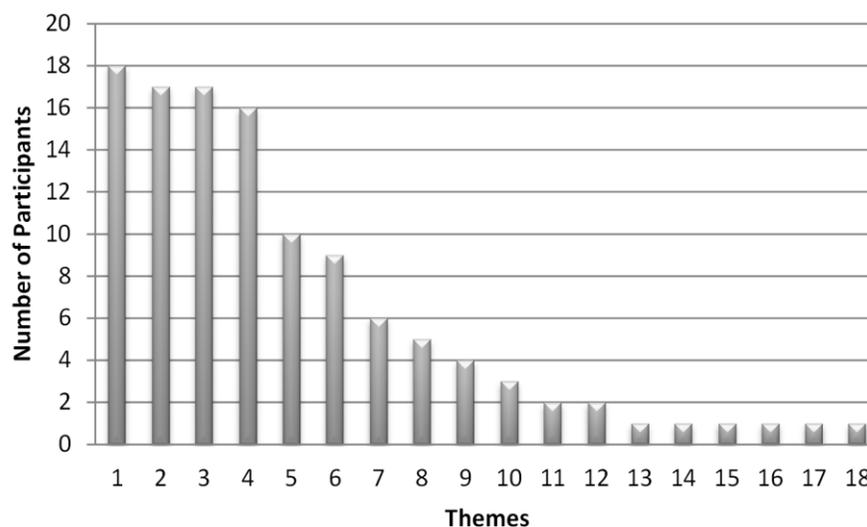
suggests that this participant may be using the Bible as a proverbial “horoscope.” Again, this is an issue which the Seventh-day Adventist church may wish to address with young adult target groups.

Only 6% of participants used the terminology of “sola scriptura.” It would seem they are unfamiliar or may not have understood the parameters of this terminology and it may be helpful for young adults to be exposed to salient terms, particularly those that form the basis of their religious practice. A small group of participants also mentioned that inconsistencies in the Bible, inappropriate use of the Bible, outdatedness of the Bible, and reading the Bible out of its original cultural context was a challenge for them. While a small group, this issue too may need to be addressed by church leadership.

No participants described the process of exegesis, suggesting they may not be familiar with this methodology of Biblical scholarship and the part it plays in determining the biblical author’s intended message. It could also be assumed that they are unaware that exegesis is the research methodology used by leading academics within the Seventh-day Adventist church and the scholarly Biblical research community worldwide. As a tertiary educated demographic who are taught stringent research methods in their own disciplines of specialty, awareness of the concept of exegesis may prove beneficial and even appealing to young adults.

All in all, this belief was not a controversial topic and received predominantly positive responses from participants. Given its close association with Adventism by participants, this is not surprising, as this belief may have been frequently addressed in church services, church meetings, or baptism classes.

The Holy Scriptures - Themes



THEMES

1	The Bible is the foundation of Adventism	56 %
2	It reveals God's character	53 %
3	It is a guide for life	53 %
4	It was inspired by God, but written down in the words of the writers	50 %
5	The Bible is accurate	31 %
6	It is a source of inspiration and comfort	28 %
7	It was inspired by the Holy Spirit	19 %
8	Bible writers wrote down the dictation of God verbatim	16 %
9	Can be used to prove one's faith	13 %
10	Is a special book	9 %
11	Participant was confused by the inspiration concept	6 %
12	Participant referred to Sola Scriptura	6 %
13	The Bible is used inappropriately	3 %
14	The Bible causes disagreement	3 %
15	The Bible is outdated	3 %
16	The Bible should not be blindly accepted without question	3 %
17	Referred to the cultural context of the Bible and how this may not be transferrable	3 %
18	The Bible is the source of eternal life	3 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **THE BIBLE IS THE FOUNDATION OF ADVENTISM**

While a large number of participants saw this as a major theme, not all articulated the connection between Adventism and the Bible.

- **REVEALS GOD'S CHARACTER**

A large number articulated this theme, however, an almost equal number did not.

- **A GUIDE FOR LIFE**

Many did articulate that the Bible was a guide for life, however, an almost equal number did not. Of those who did identify that the Bible was a guide for life, many did not give a specific example. (Responses had a minimum word limit, 150 words, and no maximum word limit.) Caution is advised to ensure that in communicating that the Bible is a guide for life, it is not used as a horoscope or talisman.

- **A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND COMFORT**

Was an identified theme, however, it was not a strong theme. More research is required to identify if this target group does/could use the Bible as a source of inspiration and comfort.

- **CAN BE USED TO SUPPORT ONE'S FAITH**

"Prove" may be a strong word, given acceptance of the Bible as truth is based on an initial decision of faith by an individual. The Bible being a means of "supporting" one's faith may be a more suitable word to use with a tertiary educated group like young adults who are discouraged from using strong declarative words in academic writing. Use of strong declarative words like "prove" or "correct" may inadvertently produce suspicion in young adults or tertiary educated people in general.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **USING THE BIBLE TO PROVE THE BIBLE IS TRUE**

Emphasize more that a decision of faith precedes a belief that the Bible is an accurate revelation from God. Not acknowledging this faith decision may prove problematic, particularly if at some point a person has reason to question the authenticity of the Bible, or if they encounter individuals who have not/cannot make this initial faith decision and require supporting evidence.

- **USING THE BIBLE AS A TALISMAN OR HOROSCOPE**

May yield limited efficacy over time which may disappoint some young adults.

- **UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE PROCESS OF INSPIRATION**

Articulate more clearly the process of inspiration and defining what role of the Holy Spirit played in this process.

- **OUTDATED INCONSISTENCIES IN THE BIBLE**

Focus on the application of the principle of the text rather than a reading taken out of its exegetical context. Interestingly, no participants described the process of exegesis suggesting they may not be familiar with this process. As a tertiary educated demographic who are taught stringent research methods in their own disciplines of specialty, awareness of the concept of exegesis may prove beneficial and even appealing to young adults.

- **UNCERTAINTY ABOUT SOLA SCRIPTURA**

Very few participants mentioned the concept of sola scriptura. This terminology may be unfamiliar to them and may be necessary as it forms the basis of their religious belief.

2

The Trinity

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.

*Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17;
Rev. 14:7*

Belief 2

The Trinity

Number of Responses for this Belief = 32

One of the presiding themes of this belief was that it was confusing and difficult to understand which was stated by 44% of participants.²⁹ When one reads the official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist church, it is not hard to understand why. The belief itself is potentially ambiguous (it states there is “one God” but also mentions “three co-eternal persons”) and seems to intentionally leave room for multiple conflicting theological concepts of the Trinity. Predictably, two theological concepts were described with 44% of participants interpreting this statement as three components of one person and an additional 31% of participants who described the Trinity as three people with three purposes, working together to achieve a common goal, which only 13% of participants articulated as saving the lost.

While 31% of participants dismissed this uncertainty with a belief that God is so complex we could never understand him, 34% of participants suggested that if humans are expected to worship, adore and serve God, shouldn't they be permitted to understand him. This is a good point, particularly if God provides instances of “self-revelation” as the belief states. One participant also suggested that if there are in fact three separate individuals in the Trinity, can a religious group who endorses this really call themselves monotheistic? Another participant also asked why, if Seventh-day Adventists believe in a single deity made of up three aspects, do they open their prayers with “Dear Heavenly Father” but conclude them with “in the name of Jesus.”

Participants also suggested that nature, creation and scripture could be used to prove God's existence. Two even suggested that in light of the above, atheists had no grounds for their beliefs. Again, only three participants articulated that a decision of faith precedes a decision that nature, creation and scripture could be used to prove God's existence – a decision of faith that is problematic for atheists, by definition.

Three participants used marriage as an analogy for the Trinity, which has been closely related to a headship model for marriage. Conversely, one participant expressed uncertainty regarding the ranking of the Trinity, and another stated that they are all equal.

The response to this belief was generally favorable, with only two participants stating that they disliked it. One suggested this was because it didn't provide enough detail to understand it, and the other disliked that no mention of God's eternal love is stated in the belief statement, something he/she felt should also be stated. Two

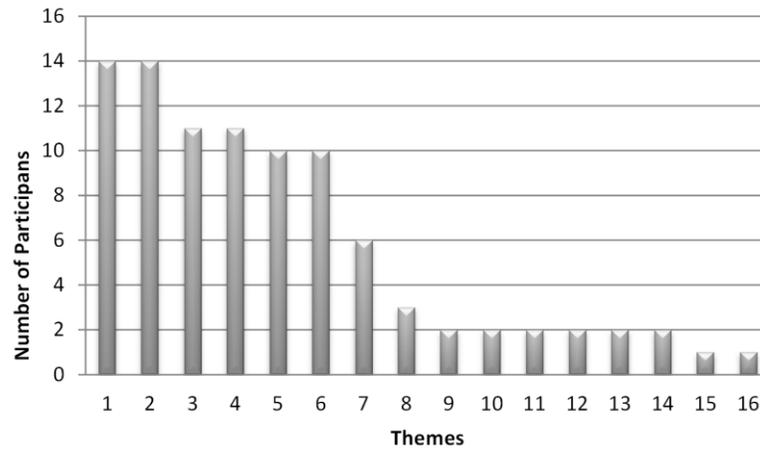
²⁹ Some of these participants still attempted to describe their understanding of the Trinity, but still expressed confusion, suggesting an uneasy understanding.

participants indicated that this belief was irrelevant, because it didn't matter if there was one God or three because belief in either/or did not determine salvation.

In favor of the Trinity, two participants suggested that the Trinity concept makes it easy to understand an incomprehensible God, however, neither articulated how. Some felt it was crucial to Adventism (19%). Two participants felt it supported other beliefs, and two felt that the Trinity was an example of how Christians should work together to achieve a common goal.

In conclusion, the wording of this belief seems to be problematic in its current form, as it leads to too many diverse outcomes and opinions by young adults who seem to be grappling with and inconsistently defining this concept for themselves. There may be dissonance in advocating an incomprehensible God, who at the same time is known. Mention is given of the rewards God receives for being God, however, no mention is made of the rewards humans receive for revering God, like eternal love, which was suggested by one participant.

The Trinity - Themes



THEMES

1	The belief is confusing and difficult to understand	44 %
2	The Trinity is one God of which there are three components	44 %
3	If God wants to be worshiped, we should be able to understand him	34 %
4	Creation or Nature or Scripture can be used to prove the existence of God	34 %
5	The Trinity is three separate Gods	31 %
6	God is so complex humans could never understand him	31 %
7	This belief is critical to Adventism	19 %
8	Faith precedes a decision to accept nature, creation or scripture as proof of God	9 %
9	Atheists have no grounds for their beliefs	6 %
10	This belief is irrelevant	6 %
11	Did not like this belief	6 %
12	This belief supports other beliefs	6 %
13	The Trinity provides an example of how Christians should work together	6 %
14	The Trinity makes it easy to understand God	6 %
15	If the Trinity is three separate Gods, is an assertion of monotheism accurate?	3 %
16	If the Trinity is a single deity then why open prayer to the Father and conclude it in the Son's name?	3 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **THE TRINITY IS AN EXAMPLE FOR HOW CHRISTIANS CAN WORK TOGETHER**
This is provided the Trinity is defined as three separate deities.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE GOD**
While this may be a convenient way of addressing a complex issue, it is problematic for some young adults. For them it raises more questions than it addresses and leads to enormous diversity and explanations of the Trinity.
- **IS THERE ONE GOD OR THREE?**
The current writing of the belief is ambiguous and confusing to young adults. The net effect is that young people are creating diverse and inconsistent perceptions about God in what could be an effort to make sense of this ambiguity. Such differences in beliefs may make it difficult to achieve overall cohesion within a religious organization, particularly with regard to a belief which some young people (19%) find crucial to their faith.
- **IS THERE A RANKING WITHIN THE TRINITY?**
Given the Trinity was used as an analogy for marriage, a ranking or egalitarian relationship within the Trinity may need to be defined - particularly if a religious organization endorses a marriage equality model, and the equality of women.
- **A BELIEF IN GOD IS BASED ON FAITH**
Again, only a few participants identified that a decision of faith was associated with using nature, scripture and creation to prove the existence of God.

3

God the Father

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father.

*Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17;
Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9*

Belief 3

God the Father

Number of Responses for this Belief = 30

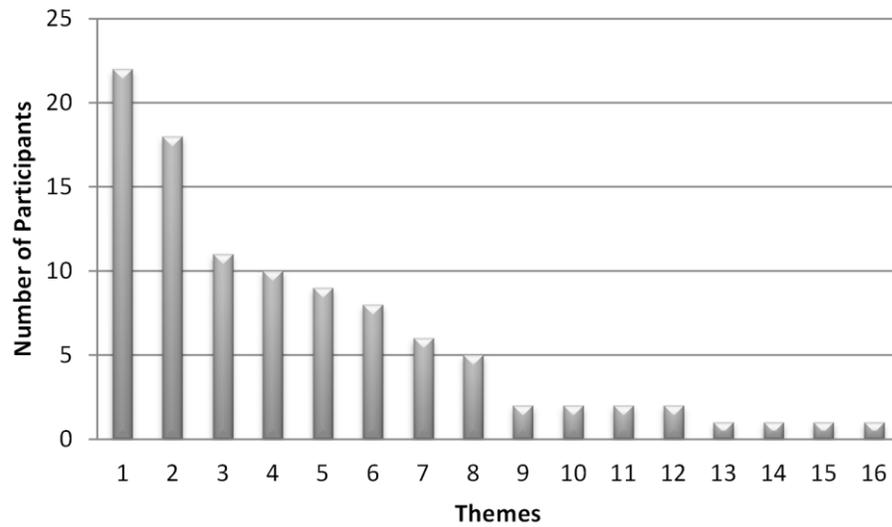
The overall response to this belief was positive as many participants felt it appropriately described God the Father. Twenty-two participants suggested that this belief described and emphasized the positive traits of God the Father, traits that one participant said “made him worthy of worship.” However, there was still some remaining confusion as to what God the Father was and how he fit into the Trinity. When considering God the Father separate to the Trinity, 37% of participants eluded to him being a different person to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Only 17% alluded to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit being one person – this is a significant drop in the numbers who previously stated they subscribed to this Trinity model. Only one participant stated that they were still unsure about the separation and unity concept relating to the Trinity. Many participants did not articulate any Trinity model, suggesting that perhaps they were still unsure, or identifying one way or the other was not a concern for them. It could even be they felt they had stated it in the previous belief or they had changed their mind since the previous chapter. We do not know, but given there was a majority shift in models endorsed by participants, further attention in articulating the nature of the Trinity may be necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A personal connection with God the Father was also a prominent theme with 60% of participants suggesting that God wished to have a personal relationship and connection with his followers and cared what happened in their lives. There were 33% of participants who commented on the difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. Exactly 30% discussed the negative perception of God the Father in the Old Testament, but only one participant stated that reconciling that perception with a loving Father God is problematic. Two participants suggested that God the Father was the head of the Trinity, but only one stated that the Godhead was equal. The inclination to rank or equalize the authority of the Trinity may be synonymous with a belief that the Trinity is three separate persons. In this case it was, but given the low numbers who articulated this, further study may be timely as ranking/equalizing the Trinity has allegorical implications for other aspects of faith, such as marriage, as discussed in the previous belief regarding the Trinity.

While most participants used the term “God the Father” in their responses, only 27% commented on the analogy of God being a father. Two participants compared this to the discipline and training of a child to describe how God interacted with believers. One described him as being someone they could talk to when their “earthly father” was not around. None expressed problems with the analogy, suggesting that participants may have had positive experiences with an “earthly father.” It would be interesting to identify in the future if negative experiences with an “earthly father” can produce a negative perception of God when he is described as a father – or does the opposite occur? If negative experiences with an “earthly father” are found to produce negative perceptions of a “heavenly father” this analogy, while appealing for some, may inadvertently be doing more harm than good for some members.

Two participants reiterated that God the Father was incomprehensible to humans, but another two also stated that if God wants us to worship him, why is he so mysterious and unknowable. Only 20% of participants stated that this belief is crucial and important for Adventism as God is a major component of their religiosity. One has to wonder why more participants did not articulate this association. This may be an aspect of development that leadership may wish to emphasize with young adults, along with a clearer definition of the Trinity.

The Father - Themes



THEMES

1	Participants articulated that the belief describes the positive traits of God the Father	73%
2	This belief emphasizes a personal connection with God	60%
3	There are three separate people in the Trinity	37%
4	There is a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament	33%
5	The God of the Old Testament may be perceived as difficult	30%
6	Liked the analogy of God being a father	23%
7	Belief is crucial for Adventism	20%
8	There is one person in the Trinity who is made up of three parts	17%
9	God the Father is the head of the Trinity	7%
10	God the Father disciplines and trains us	7%
11	God is incomprehensible to humans	7%
12	Why is God so mysterious if he wants us to worship him?	7%
13	Participant was confused by the concept of the Trinity	3%
14	Struggled to reconcile the Old Testament God with a loving God the Father	3%
15	The Trinity is equal	3%
16	Believers can talk to God the Father when their earthly father is not around	3%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF GOD**

This belief described positive aspects of God which were favorably received by this young adult sample.

- **GOD IS A FATHER**

Some participants liked the analogy of God being a Father, however, caution is advised until future research can ascertain if this is due to positive experiences with an “earthly father.”

If negative experiences with an “earthly father” are found to produce negative perceptions of a “heavenly father” this analogy, while appealing for some, may inadvertently be doing more harm than good for some members. Future research may like to investigate if God being a friend, counselor, or other positive role model provides a better universal analogy for God. While it may be tempting to simply suggest to individuals with a less than ideal earthly father to adopt God as their father, this too may be problematic, as they may have a limited or unrealistic perception of a father – one that God could never fulfill. Comprehensive further research needs to be carried out with relation to this concept so that the Seventh-day Adventist church in its efforts to do good, does not accidentally do harm.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **CLEARLY ARTICULATE THE NATURE OF THE TRINITY**

This belief does not clarify the ambiguous nature of the previous belief regarding the Trinity.

- **YOUNG ADULTS DO NOT ARTICULATE GOD THE FATHER AS BEING AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF ADVENTISM**

Why is this so? Maybe they do, and didn't state it in this study? Perhaps they do not identify with a “father” given many young adults are not yet fathers? Do they identify with or prefer another Trinity member? More research is required to identify why so few participants articulated God the Father as being an important aspect of Adventism.

- **HOW THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CAN BE A LOVING GOD**

One participant felt dissonance between the God of the Old Testament and the God being depicted in this belief. This may be an isolated case, however, it may not be. A “father knows best” explanation may be insufficient for some young adults who may apply critical thought to this issue.

4

God the Son

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things.

John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3

Belief 4

God the Son

Number of Responses for this Belief = 30

Jesus is clearly the stand out favorite among the Trinity. There was an energy in these responses that was not evident in responses regarding God the Father. One participant describes Jesus this way,

“It is easier to tell your friend about this guy who loves you so much that they would die for you than about this guy who killed thousands of people on a regular basis, or a guy who’s not really a guy but a spirit.”

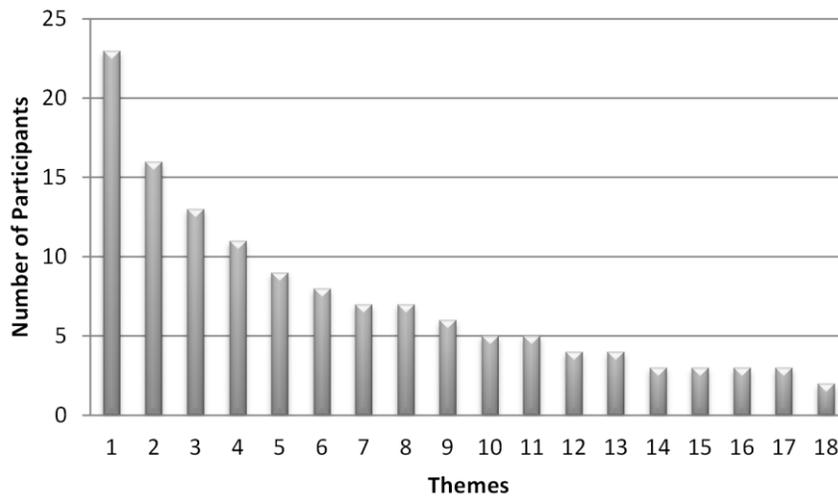
The most popular theme, identified within the responses of 80% of the participants, was the view that Jesus is a savior who died for the sins of the world. Many participants who articulated this theme emphasized their appreciation of this gift. This suggests that when a deity is proactive in doing something significant, specifically for young adults, this deity is perceived more favorably. Thus, a religiosity/deity that emphasizes what significant benefits it/him/they can do for a young adult, rather than didactic requirements the young adult has to do for the religion/deity, may be an approach that the Seventh-day Adventist church could incorporate into their belief commentaries and ministries for young adults.

Additionally, 53% of participants also discussed Jesus as being a human with 43% also mentioning that because he was tempted he knows what they go through when they are tempted. Young adults in this study seem to identify with Jesus more than with other figures of the Trinity. Interestingly, only 10% stated that Christ was an important aspect of Adventism, but 37% stated that he was an important aspect of Christianity, giving Christ a larger relevancy than just Adventism. In this sample, 30% of participants stated that Christ was an example for living that should be followed and, surprisingly, only 20% mentioned the need to have a “relationship” with Christ.

There were different roles Jesus was perceived as fulfilling and they are as follows: 27% stated that he was the forgiver of sins; 23% stated he was the means by which believers can know God the Father; 13% stated that a belief in Jesus was the path to eternal life.

In this belief, 23% of responses indicated that God the Father and God the Son were two different people. Only 10% alluded to God being one person. This is an interesting finding as it could indicate that young adults may perceive the Trinity as one person when presented with the concept of a Trinity. However, if presented separate conceptual information about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, there may be more of a tendency to regard them as three separate people rather than just one. The next belief regarding the Holy Spirit may provide further insight into whether this is the case.

The Son - Themes



THEMES

1	Jesus is a savior who died for the sins of the world	80%
2	Jesus was human	53%
3	Jesus was tempted so he knows what we go through	43%
4	Christ is the most important aspect of spiritual life	37%
5	The character of Christ is an example for believers to follow	30%
6	Christ forgives sins	27%
7	Believers can know God the Father through Jesus' life and actions	23%
8	Believers need to have a relationship with Christ	23%
9	God and Jesus are separate people, one who sent the other to earth	20%
10	Jesus fulfills prophecy and is the Messiah	17%
11	Jesus loves me/I love Jesus statements	17%
12	A belief in Jesus is the path to eternal life	13%
13	The resurrection of Jesus is important	13%
14	God is one person – Jesus is a part of that person	10%
15	Jesus was tortured/humiliated for the world	10%
16	Jesus overturned Judaism	10%
17	Christ is important to Adventism	10%
18	Jesus is a powerful King/Ruler	7%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **EMPHASIZE WHAT RELIGION/DEITY CAN DO FOR THE YOUNG ADULT**
Young adults responded well to a reward/benefit they can receive from a religion or deity, rather than a focus on what they should and shouldn't do.
- **YOUNG ADULTS PREFER JESUS**
Of all the Trinity members, young adults seem to prefer Jesus. Some stated this was because he was human, and was tempted. More research may be necessary to identify why this is the case and if other factors are contributing to Jesus appeal to young adults.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **CLEARLY ARTICULATE THE NATURE OF THE TRINITY**
This belief does not clarify the ambiguous nature of the previous belief regarding the Trinity. Presenting each Trinity member/aspect individually as their own belief seems to make young adults lean towards a three separate people concept of the Trinity.
- **A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS**
When articulating a relationship with "God," a focus on Jesus may be most efficacious to young adults given they seem to identify with and prefer him most. More research may be necessary to explore this finding further, given only 20% of participants articulated a need to have a "relationship" with Jesus.

5

God the Holy Spirit

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth.

Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13

Belief 5

God the Holy Spirit

Number of Responses for this Belief = 27

Only two participants stated that they disliked this belief, otherwise it was well received. What they disliked was largely associated with continuing confusion between a one God with three components Trinity model, and a three separate persons Trinity model. No other Trinity models were expressed by the young adult participants. In this case, 52% alluded to the Trinity being three separate persons, but only 26% stated that the Trinity was one person with three components. Again, a three separate person Trinity was more prevalent when Trinity members/components are described and discussed individually, as was the case in this belief which was about the Holy Spirit.

Two participants also stated that they were surprised that the Holy Spirit was described as a person in the belief's commentary, and two stated that if this was the case, "spirit" wasn't a good word to describe this person, because they wondered how a person was supposed to "fill you" in relation to being "filled with the spirit." Paradoxically, having Jesus "in their hearts," whom young adults also perceived as not only a person but also as human, was not questioned in the previous belief. Perhaps this dissonance may be due to unfamiliarity with the Holy Spirit or insufficient narratives associated with this member of the Trinity. Additionally, 11% of participants raised the issue of the Holy Spirit being female, presumably because they had discovered that in ancient Hebrew scripture, the Hebrew word for Holy Spirit is feminine. More research into how young adults perceive and relate specifically to the Holy Spirit may prove interesting and timely given the dissonance expressed above.

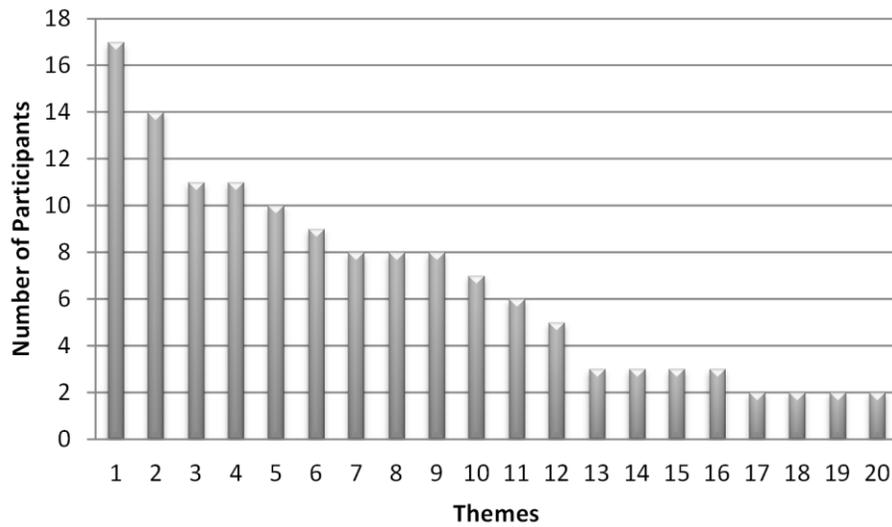
Despite this, many participants stated that the Holy Spirit was something that 63% of participants described they could be "filled by" or have in their life. They did not, however, articulate that they needed to have a relationship with this deity, as they had stated with God the Father and God the Son. More than a third of the participants (37%) expressed that they liked that the Holy Spirit was always with them and that they were never alone. Two other participants mentioned that they were concerned about a concept called the "unpardonable sin" which was described as grieving the Holy Spirit. One of the participants stated,

"I am absolutely terrified of doing so, whether it is accidentally or on purpose. I don't even have a full grasp of what grieving the Holy Spirit means. I just know I don't want to do it because I want to go to heaven."

Given statements like this, it may be timely for the Seventh-day Adventist church to focus on the attributes of the Holy Spirit with young adults and alleviate issues like those raised by the participant above.

The Holy Spirit was cited as having a number of roles, the most prevalent being a guide to help people determine right from wrong and was instrumental in the divine inspiration of the Bible. Other roles included someone who helps individuals find salvation, brings the truth about Jesus, bestows special gifts, helps believers with their spirituality, is the vehicle used by God to talk to believers, helps proclaim the gospel, assisted with creation, and guides the church.

The Holy Spirit - Themes



THEMES

1	You can be filled with the Holy Spirit and have it in your life	63%
2	God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are separate people	52%
3	The Holy Spirit is a guide/helper	41%
4	The Holy Spirit was instrumental in the inspiration of the Bible	41%
5	Is always with believers – they are never alone	37%
6	Helps with the salvation process	33%
7	Helps believers with their spiritual walk	30%
8	Brings the truth about Jesus	30%
9	Bestows special gifts on believers	30%
10	God is one person – the Holy Spirit is a component of that person	26%
11	The Holy Spirit helps God talk to believers	22%
12	Helps proclaim the gospel	19%
13	This belief is confusing	11%
14	Is the Holy Spirit a he or a she?	11%
15	Helped with creation	11%
16	Guides the Church	11%
17	The Holy Spirit is not a good name because he is a person not a spirit	7%
18	Is equal with God and Jesus	7%
19	Participant was confronted by the Holy Spirit being a person	7%
20	Does not like the Holy Spirit belief	7%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS WELL RECEIVED**
The Holy Spirit seems to be well received by young adults who are not confused by conflicting concepts of the Trinity.
- **A SOURCE OF GUIDANCE**
This is the most prominent role young adults associate with the Holy Spirit and is one that can directly benefit young adults. As established in the previous belief regarding Jesus, a belief that is relevant and can directly benefit a young adult is often one that is readily accepted. Articulating the benefits each belief can provide a young adult may make them more appealing and readily accepted.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **CLEARLY ARTICULATE THE NATURE OF THE TRINITY**
This belief does not clarify the ambiguous nature of the second belief regarding the Trinity. Again, presenting each Trinity member/aspect individually as their own belief seems to make young adults lean towards a three separate persons model of the Trinity.
- **CLEARLY ARTICULATE THE "UNPARDONABLE SIN"**
A small group of participants expressed a fear of committing the "unpardonable sin" without their knowledge. Clarification of this concept needs to be considered.

6

Creation

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God.

Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3

Belief 6

Creation

Number of Responses for this Belief = 32

Just half of the participants (exactly 50 %) specifically articulated that the world was created in six days. None articulated anything to the contrary in the response section.³⁹ However, one participant did identify as endorsing the theory of evolution in the demographics inventory. This individual majored in a Science and Engineering discipline. There were 16% who felt that faith and science need and should be reconciled, however, they were unsure of how to achieve this. A little more than a third (37%) mentioned either evolution or a “Big Bang” concept, and in some of these responses there was a distinct aversion toward those who endorse these theories. Aversion was often associated with no explanation as to why the participant themselves disagreed with these theories. It would seem these participants had a lack of knowledge of evolutionary theory and as such resorted to antipathy towards those who endorse it rather than articulating the shortcomings of those theories. Lack of knowledge combined with antipathy may not be the best methodology for expressing a view of an opposing theoretical concept. Those who were able to articulate shortcomings were less hostile which may be more conducive for developing constructive dialogue between faith and science.

The most prominent theme was that the creation story provided the basis for the Sabbath (53%). As students, the participants in this study appreciated the Sabbath as it allowed them time away from their studies to rest, develop their spirituality, and socialize with friends. Another prominent theme of creation was that God was a creative God, which 44% of participants discussed, and this resonated with some who alluded to creativity within their own lives. Some of these individuals questioned why, given God’s creativity, creative individuals were not more readily endorsed or appreciated by church organizations. An additional theme was that young adults appreciated that they were created by a God who loved them (44%) and because they were specially created, they had worth and a purpose (34%).

Another important theme that was expressed was humans had a responsibility to protect and live harmoniously with the earth, its flora, and its fauna (25%) because God had created them all. This is an interesting finding given Seventh-day Adventists endorse vegetarianism and healthy living, a practice which goes hand in hand with the protection of animals and responsible farming. Yet, 84% of participants identified in the demographics inventory as eating red or white meat. Young adults are increasingly aware of conservation, animal rights and sustainable living and a sizable proportion incorporate this into their belief system. However, there seems to be a disconnect in this sample between this concept and vegetarianism. In the Baby Boomer era, conservation and animal rights may have been associated with an activist movement, however, given the appreciation of these issues by these Millennial participants in both this belief and others, it would seem that this association with activism may no

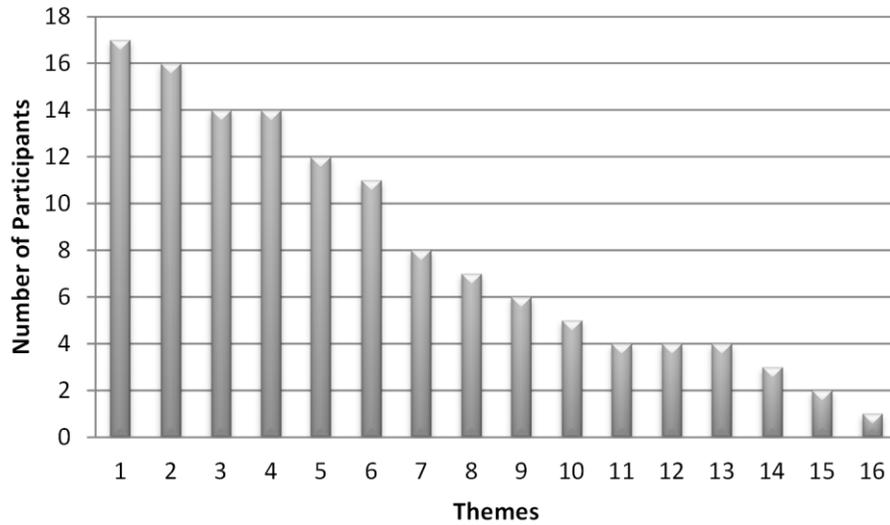
³⁹ This may not be indicative that they do not endorse alternative perspectives, rather, they did not articulate them in the context of this study.

longer exist and may instead be regarded very positively. Further study for how vegetarianism, a practice important to Adventism, can be better promoted to young adult members of the Seventh-day Adventist church via a conservation and animal rights theme may reveal why this disconnect occurs, and how it could be resolved. It may also reveal if an association with conservation and animal rights may present an evangelistic opportunity for the Seventh-day Adventist church as a whole.

One participant expressed that they were unsure of why God would create so much that is “good” but then place a forbidden tree in this “good” environment. This is an interesting point in that young adults may see inconsistencies in commonly accepted narratives. This dissonance is not intended to be confrontational, but rather may be an opportunity for the Seventh-day Adventist church to revisit some of its narratives relating to the creation story and expand on them to ensure they cater for those who are developing or have developed the skill of critical thought. Only two participants stated that the creation story was proof that there was a God. They did not articulate how, or that their acceptance of the Biblical account was based on a faith decision.

In conclusion, the focus of young adults with relation to the creation story seems to be on themes that provide some benefit to them, like the Sabbath, creativity, a healthy earth, peace with others and animals, and that they are loved by God and have a purpose.

Creation - Themes



THEMES

1	Creation provides the basis for the Sabbath	53 %
2	The earth was made in six days	50 %
3	God is creative and was involved in all aspects of creation	44 %
4	Humans were created by a God who loved them	44 %
5	Participants mentions evolution or the Big Bang Theory	37 %
6	Humans were created special, thus they have a purpose	34 %
7	Believers have a responsibility to care for the earth, plants and animals	25 %
8	God is powerful	22 %
9	This belief is important to Adventism	19 %
10	Faith and Science could or should be reconciled	16 %
11	A created world has order	12 %
12	God made humans in his image	12 %
13	Creation provides the basis for marriage	12 %
14	Discounting creation discounts the fall and, thus, there is no need for salvation	9 %
15	Proves there is a God	6 %
16	Why place a forbidden tree in an environment that was "good"	3 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **CREATIVITY**
Some young adults are creative people and identify with a creative God. Providing more outlets for creative individuals within church life may prove beneficial.
- **THE SABBATH**
Young adults enjoy the concept of the Sabbath, a guilt-free day off that they can relax, socialize and develop spiritually.
- **HUMANS WERE CREATED**
Humans were perceived as created beings that have worth and purpose.
- **CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION**
Young adults expressed a responsibility to care for all of God's creation. This ideology is consistent with vegetarianism, something Seventh-day Adventists endorse.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **EVOLUTIONARY EDUCATION**
A lack of knowledge of evolutionary and scientific theory may result in young adults resorting to antipathy rather than constructive dialogue with those who hold differing opinions regarding creation.
- **DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ARE GOOD**
Young adults who are developing strong abilities for critical thought should be encouraged to ask difficult questions and should not be chastised or ostracized for doing so. Such questions provide insight into shortcomings of belief narratives that should be addressed rather than ignored.
- **CARE FOR THE EARTH**
Young adults expressed a responsibility to care for all creation - the earth, its flora and its fauna. More study is required to identify if this belief system may be a more efficacious method of communicating vegetarianism to young adults. Further research may determine if this approach has the potential to be a successful evangelism tool for the Seventh-day Adventist church, given the appreciation young adults have of these ideologies.

7

Nature of Man

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment.

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15

Belief 7

Nature of Man

Number of Responses for this Belief = 33

The primary theme for this belief was God created humans in his image, which 58% of participants noted. While this theme was mentioned often, very few expanded on this theme in any great detail. This could indicate a rote learned response rather than a statement that is meaningful for young adults. It could also indicate that while young adults accept this concept, they are nonchalant about it. Whatever the reason, further research may identify why so many young adults articulate a theme of this nature using very similar language, but provide no or very limited emotional or intellectual dialogue relating to this concept. A greater focus on humans being created in God's image and being special or having worth for that reason, may address human prejudices such as racism, sexism as well as social inequality and class structure. Further research is required to identify if emphasizing being created in God's image and likeness correlates with low levels racism, sexism and social elitism with this target group. If it does, a church organization may be able to capitalize on the larger implication of this concept and perhaps increase the appeal of their organization.

The second most prominent theme was that humans are sinful (48%), which created some interesting discussion. One participant stated that they didn't like that humans were inherently "fallen." Two participants expressed that humans needed to sin so God could rescue them through salvation. Yet, two others stated that death wasn't a part of God's plan. Another participant asked why would God create humans in the first place if they were destined to fall? And yet another questioned if Adam and Eve were really given a fair chance to not sin. From his/her reading of the text it seemed that Adam and Eve had not been alive for very long, thus, being rather inexperienced human beings the expectation that they would not eat from the forbidden tree was unreasonable. Thus, there seems to be some confusion and skepticism regarding this belief and it may require further development by the Seventh-day Adventist church, or further efforts to ensure that young adults possess an accurate understanding of what this belief is advocating.

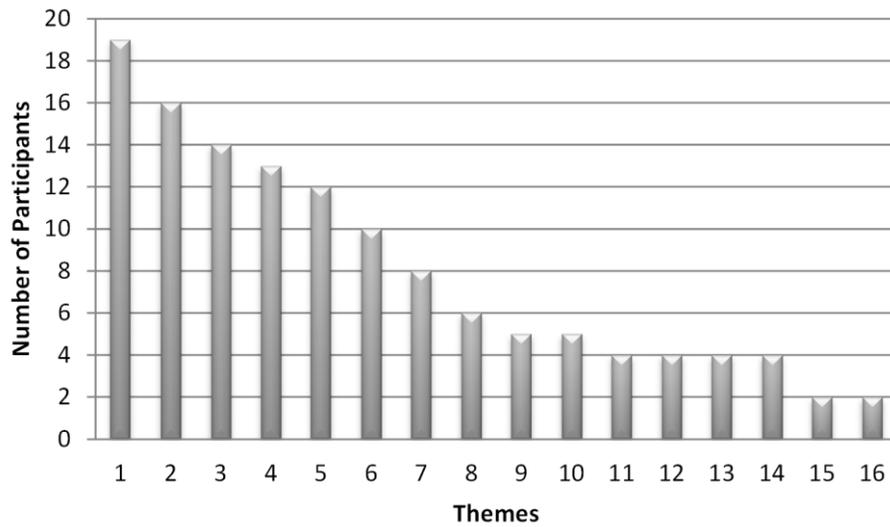
The theme of salvation was also mentioned by 39% participants of this group, and nearly as many (36%) stated that humans have the power to choose between being a believer or not. Young adults also articulated that God created humans (39%),³¹ and that humans were special (30%) mainly because God physically made humans (12%) rather than creating them through merely speaking as he did with animals and plants. This course of thinking is questionable, as Genesis 2 does state that God formed humans (Gen 2:7), however, it also states in Gen 2:8 that God "planted" a garden and in Gen 2:19 that God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air "out of the ground" (the same Hebrew verb is used in the description of the creation of humans). All cases illustrating that the "Lord God" of Genesis 2 gets physically involved in the creation process, while the creator "God" in

³¹ This percentage pertains to the number of participants who articulated in their response that God created humans. No participant stated or indicated that they did not believe God created humans.

Genesis 1 speaks rather than does. Young adults also stated that because humans were created differently, not only were they special, they were also valuable and had a purpose (24%). This was not based on the way they were created, but rather because they were created in God's image and likeness – a concept, as previously discussed, that young adults are rather nonchalant toward. Some participants also articulated that humans had a responsibility to care for the earth, plants, and animals in an appropriate way (18%).

Other small themes included humans needed to strive to be like God (15%); humans sinned which was their fault, not God's (12%); and humans are now separated from God as a result of the fall (12%). One shortcoming regarding this belief expressed by a participant was the belief didn't state if men and women were equal, given both were fallen. Another shortcoming that was conveyed was that this belief sidesteps a specific position regarding the fall of humans and evolution.

Nature of Man - Themes



THEMES

1	God created humans in his image	58 %
2	Humans are inherently sinful	48 %
3	Salvation theme articulated	42 %
4	God created humans	39 %
5	Humans have the power of choice to become believers or not	36 %
6	Humans are special to God, created with love	30 %
7	God has a purpose for our life	24 %
8	Humans have dominion over the world and have a responsibility to take care of it	18 %
9	Humans need to strive to be like God	15 %
10	Men and women are individuals with their own personalities	15 %
11	Humans have sinned which is their fault, not Gods	12 %
12	Humans were made by God from the dust of the ground	12 %
13	Spirit, Soul and Body themes articulated	12 %
14	Humans have been separated from God through sin	12 %
15	Death was not a part of God's original plan	6 %
16	Humans were destined to fall	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE**
This was the most prominent theme, however, participants were nonchalant towards it and often did not expand on this theme other than to mention it. This may be a topic that requires further study as to why so many young adults would mention this theme, but be almost blasé regarding the concept.
- **HUMANS WERE CREATED**
Humans were perceived as created beings who have worth and purpose.
- **CARE FOR THE EARTH**
Young adults expressed that dominion over the earth involved a responsibility to care for the earth, flora and fauna.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **WHY ARE HUMANS SPECIAL?**
Some young adults indicated that because humans were physically formed by God, they are in some way special. This represents an inaccurate reading of Genesis 1 and 2 where animals were also formed from the ground (Gen 2:19) and a garden was "planted" by God (Gen 2:8). While it may be tempting to emphasize human specialness themes because we assume they were created differently to the animals and plants, there seems to be little support for this in the creation narratives.

Perhaps to overcome this inconsistency, the Seventh-day Adventist Church may need to place greater emphasis on the concept that humans were created in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27), unlike the flora and fauna. At present, however, young adults seem to be rather nonchalant towards being created in God's image and likeness and this may be due to the emphasis on the inaccurate assertion that only humans were physically formed by God.
- **CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE**
While a prominent theme, and expressed as a topic young adults identified as beneficial in the column to the left, this theme is a problematic area which requires some development. The potential of this theme may not currently be capitalized by the Seventh-day Adventist church. By focusing on humans, who are created in God's image and are special or having worth for that reason, a church organization may be able to capitalize on the larger implication of this concept. It may potentially address human prejudices such as racism, social inequality or class structure, and sexism (Gal 3:28). More research is required to identify if emphasizing being created in God's image and likeness is correlated low levels racism, sexism and social elitism.
- **DID HUMANS HAVE TO FALL?**
There seems to be some confusion and skepticism relating to the fall of humans. Young adults who are developing strong abilities for critical thought will ask difficult questions relating to inconsistencies or unfairness they identify in information given them. Caution is advised in retaining religious narratives that prove consistently problematic. It may be timely to rework such narratives to incorporate and adequately explain the issues young adults raise.

8

The Great Controversy

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation.

Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14

Belief 8

The Great Controversy

Number of Responses for this Belief = 36

The major themes articulated by participants with relation to this belief included an explanation for how sin came into existence (56%); that humans are involved in the Great Controversy (56%) between God and Satan; and that Salvation through Jesus will bring the controversy to a conclusion (50%).

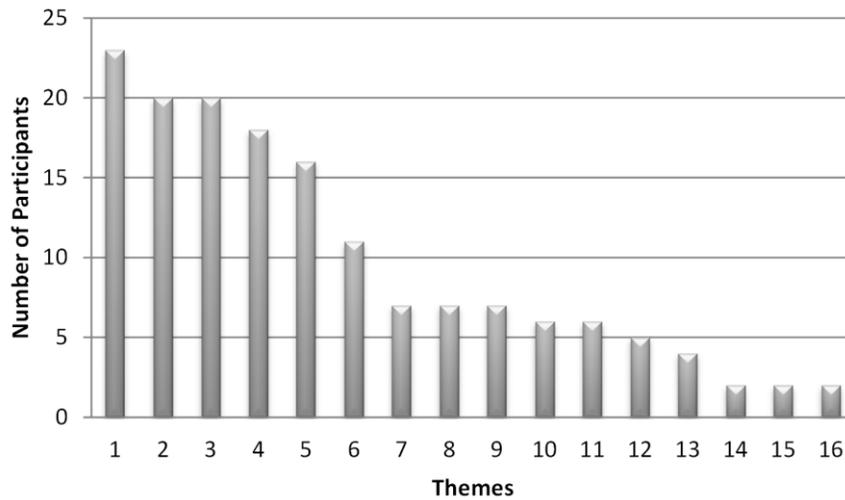
The majority of participants felt that this belief was important, however, there were some who expressed they were uneasy with components of it. One even stated that they did not hold a concrete agreement with this belief, namely with the concept regarding the origin of sin and the freedom of humans to side with God or Satan. This participant did not elaborate further than this. Of those who were uneasy with this belief (which amounted to 17%) they stated they struggled with how an all knowing God could have created Lucifer when he knew Lucifer would rebel and bring sin into existence. Another questioned that if God knew Lucifer would sin, why would he give him such a high position? Given 17% of participants expressed concerns about this element of the belief, it seems to indicate a need to explain the Great Controversy perspective more elegantly and in a way that intelligently considers the rationale expressed above.

The issue of the freedom to choose between good and evil was a theme that was also expressed by 31% of the participants (but was also a theme one participant expressed disagreement with). Given the finding outlined in the previous paragraph, it is interesting that approximately one third of young adults in this sample expressed that they do not struggle with the concept of freedom of choice for humans, but 17% seem to be unable to apply this same concept to angels, like Lucifer who also was provided this choice. One participant stated, "I believe if he [Satan] truly knew his master, he would not have led the devastation that happened in heaven." In other words, not understanding God was equated with a choice for evil. If this is the case, *Belief 3 – God the Father*, which asserts that God is beyond human comprehension, becomes very problematic as a lack of knowledge about God results in a choice for evil. If the most highly ranked angel who presumably was constantly in God's presence chose evil, because of a lack of knowledge about God, how more likely for humans who have no physical contact with God and are told God is beyond their comprehension. A simplistic conclusion which equates sin with a lack of knowledge of God may result in some problematic views of non-believers and an overly sympathetic view of believers. One could argue that only one participant made this comment, thus, it may not be widely held. However, given the limited numbers of participants in this study, the fact that this attitude was captured in such a small sample, may suggest this view may be held within the Seventh-day Adventist church population.

The most prominent theme for this belief was that it explains why the world is the way it is today (64%). However, one participant suggested there must be more reasons than what the belief presented, but did not elaborate.

Another participant suggested the Great Controversy concept seems to imply that humans are not responsible for their actions and another participant stated that if Satan had not sinned, Adam and Eve would never have been tempted and hence, sin would never have entered the world. Yet another participant asked why a battle between God and Satan was required, if God is indeed all powerful. These are all good questions, thus, a more elegant and succinct response regarding this belief may be required to address these additional concerns expressed by some young adult participants.

The Great Controversy - Themes



THEMES

1	Explains why the world, in this day and age, is the way it is	64 %
2	Provides a background for how sin came into existence	56 %
3	Humans are in the middle of the Great Controversy	56 %
4	Participant mentioned a Salvation theme	50 %
5	There is a battle between God and Satan	44 %
6	Humans were given the power to choose between God and Satan	31 %
7	The Great Controversy concerns God's character	19 %
8	The Holy Spirit and the good angels are advocating and protecting believers	19%
9	Satan is trying to take people away from God through temptation	19 %
10	God still created Satan even though he knew he would rebel	17 %
11	Humans are examples for the universe	17 %
12	Humans need to be vigilant so as to avoid sin and temptation	14 %
13	God's love theme	11 %
14	God is helping humans overcome temptation	6 %
15	Reference to Ellen G. White	6 %
16	Humans are vulnerable to temptation	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **FREEDOM TO ASK HARD QUESTIONS**

Young adults, unlike children, are often very good at articulating intelligent questions that surely deserve equally articulate and intelligent answers.

In the context of this study, participants were provided the freedom to ask hard questions or comment on where their religion may have problematic narratives. It is interesting that this particular belief produced so many comments where participants were able to express issues they experienced with commonly held beliefs regarding the Great Controversy.

This is encouraging because only through the free expression of concerns without retribution will a religious organization become aware of these concerns, be able to address them, and strengthen their position.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **FREEDOM TO CHOOSE GOOD OR EVIL**

This concept needs to be more elegantly explained in a way that intelligently considers the issues raised by participants i.e. that angels also have the opportunity to choose.

- **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD
EQUATES WITH A CHOICE TO SIN**

This view is too simplistic and may result in some problematic views of non-believers and an overly sympathetic view of believers by Seventh-day Adventists.

9

The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ

In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow.

John 3:16; Isa. 53; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:6-11

Belief 9

The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ

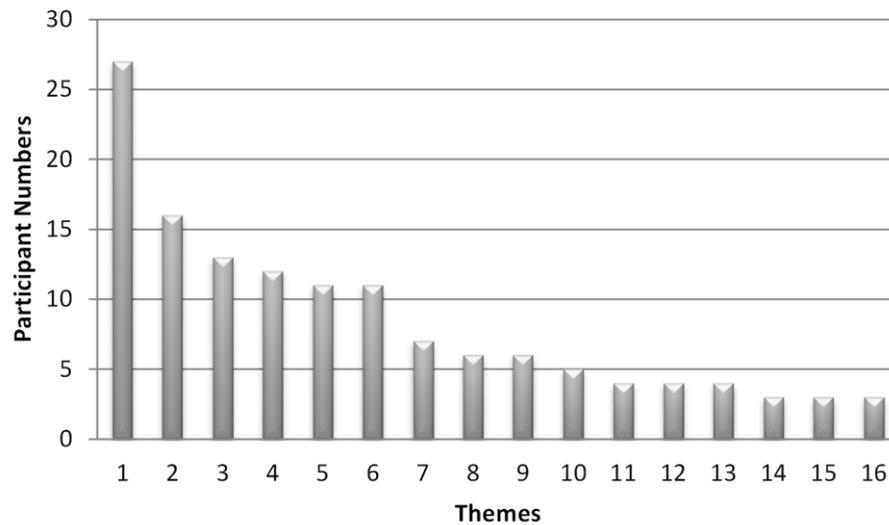
Number of Responses for this Belief = 36

As previously mentioned, Jesus is the most popular member of the Trinity. As such, this belief regarding Jesus' life, death and resurrection resonated well with the participants. Only three participants (8%) disliked this belief and this was for reasons such as, "How is it that God came down, died once, and took the punishment of death for everyone? In ancient times the practice was that every time you sinned you had to take an animal with no blemish and sacrifice it." Another suggested that the wording of the belief statement was "vague and redundant" and concentrated on Jesus death and resurrection as opposed to his life. The final participant who disliked this belief struggled with Jesus being 100% man and 100% God at the same time. He/she questioned if Jesus' ability to live a sinless life was the result of him being fully "God" rather than being fully human as is claimed in the belief. A fourth participant expressed that while they liked this belief he/she felt the statement was, "a little cluttered and the words seemed almost too academic to be personal; this is a belief which, I believe, needs to be personal." Another stated that he/she had no prior knowledge of this belief before being a part of the Andrews University Passion play that year. This was surprising given this individual identified as a Seventh-day Adventist and was attending a Seventh-day Adventist University. Yet another participant expressed that, "many of us have become numb to the story of the cross. We read it and hear about it so much that we forget how much it truly means." It would seem that the means utilized by the Seventh-day Adventist church of communicating this belief to young adults (if indeed there is one) may need to be reviewed. Further investigation into efficacious methodologies which consider the issues raised above may be timely.

The theme of Jesus dying on the cross for a human's sins was the most prominent theme expressed by participants (75%). Nearly half (44%) expressed an association between this belief and eternal life and approximately a third (36%) identified this belief with portraying God's character. A third of participants (33%) expressed that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus provided them with a specific benefit, namely eternal life (44%) and an example for living that humans can follow (33%). This is consistent with earlier findings which suggested young adults respond to religious beliefs that provide them with some specific benefit, rather than just requiring action/obedience from them.

There is some overlap in this belief with themes in the fourth belief regarding God the Son. These overlapping themes were namely that Jesus was human and understands what we as humans experience, that he died for the sins of the world, his character is an example for humans to follow, that he forgives sins, and that eternal life is associated with his death. This being the case, this belief may be able to be amalgamated into the fourth belief.

The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ - Themes



THEMES

1	Jesus died on the cross for my sins	75 %
2	Eternal life theme	44 %
3	This belief shows God's character	36 %
4	Jesus was doing something for me (I personally gained from Christ's sacrifice)	33 %
5	Jesus' death was sufficient for my salvation	31 %
6	Jesus understands believers' plight and is an example to humans	31 %
7	Salvation comes through grace not works / righteousness by faith theme	19 %
8	God sent his son to this earth	17 %
9	Jesus was fully human and lived a perfect life	17 %
10	Jesus defeated the Devil	14 %
11	Jesus died for all sins – past/present/future	11 %
12	Jesus forgives sins	11 %
13	There is a separation gap between God and humankind	11 %
14	Humans have the power to choose to accept Jesus sacrifice or not	8 %
15	Jesus' resurrection proves divinity	8 %
16	Participant disliked aspects of this belief	8 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **MOST YOUNG ADULTS UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF JESUS' LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION**

The majority of the young adults in this study were able to articulate the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. And this is a positive outcome given this concept is a key component of Christianity and more specifically, Adventism.

However, there was one participant who despite identifying as a Seventh-day Adventist disclosed that he/she had, until recently, been unaware of this concept. Interestingly, another participant stated that this concept had been communicated so frequently it had lost its meaning.

Perhaps geographical factors played a part, or the methodology used to communicate this belief was inefficacious. Whatever the reason, given that this is a belief integral to the Seventh-day Adventist church, more research into how to effectively communicate this concept so it is not missed by some, while being heard repetitiously by others may warrant further investigation.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **ADDRESS THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

The first paragraph of this section identified some shortcomings of this belief which the Seventh-day Adventist church may like to address.

- **COMBINE THIS BELIEF WITH *BELIEF 4 – GOD THE SON***

This belief shared many themes with the fourth belief – God the Son. This being the case, it may be beneficial to amalgamate it succinctly with *Belief 4 – God the Son*, rather than have multiple beliefs addressing similar topics.

10

The Experience of Salvation

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment.

2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10

Belief 10

The Experience of Salvation

Number of Responses for this Belief = 35

The participants noted that salvation was obtained through Christ (60%) and felt that salvation was important to them (51%). They appreciated that this belief explained the salvation process (43%) and the meaning and importance of Jesus death (40%).

Limited participants stated the salvation belief was what gave them meaning and purpose in life (20%). This result was surprising, given a young adult's propensity to be drawn to religious concepts that provide them some benefit.³² Perhaps the type of meaning and purpose in life is not perceived as a positive attribute by young adults; salvation just may not play an important role in their day to day life; or maybe those who articulated this theme have internalized the salvation experience while those who did not mention it may still perceive it as a mere theoretical concept. It could be that many young adults have just not made this connection; or it has not been communicated to them in a germane way. Whatever the reason, given this lower association between salvation and meaning/purpose in one's life, further investigation may provide some answers and may prove helpful in communicating this concept to young adults in a more applicable way.

The participants made several associations with salvation, the most prevalent being salvation changes a person into a "new person" (31%) but they did not really expand on this theme. Many also noted that salvation is a free gift (40%) although only 31% specified that an individual had to take initiative in order to receive that free gift. Those who stated that salvation was a free gift, but did not articulate any initiative on the part of the individual, may not fully understand this concept. For example, one participant wrote, "This fundamental is important because salvation is just a done deal and you don't need to worry about asking for forgiveness or changing because Christ died for you." Similarly, participants who noted that an individual must do their part may also be unsure of how this process works as well. For example, one participant wrote, "When a person is trying to get salvation, they have to get rid of the things that draw them away from God" which suggests that this process may precede salvation rather than proceed it. Another wrote,

"I know a lot of young Adventists who have been raised in the Adventist church who still are confused on this topic, specifically justification and sanctification. What I didn't enjoy so much about this chapter was how it focused so much on the topic of perfection, since many of us get so hung up on this point and often get discouraged and beat themselves up. I think we should be living up to the best that we can, working with Christ every day to be better humans."

³² Again, it must be taken into consideration that other participants may share the same sentiment, but it was not a prominent theme that they readily expressed in their journals.

This may suggest the balance between faith and the part the individual should play when it comes to salvation needs to be more clearly articulated to young adults.

One interesting finding regarding this belief was 31% emphasized that salvation was deliverance from sin while 26% emphasized the heavenly reward aspect of salvation. From this, it would seem that some young adults are focused on the reward aspect, while others are focused on the redemptive aspect. It would be interesting to know what makes the difference, personality, past life experiences, “sinful” life experiences, or even depression, as this may be useful in allowing clergy to know how to best communicate salvation to young adults in their churches. For young adults who do not consider themselves all that sinful, a focus on the reward aspect may be more appealing, however, for young adults who do consider themselves sinful, a focus on the redemptive aspect may prove efficacious. It seems a focus on just one aspect may potentially be inefficacious and miss addressing the needs of some young adults. Thus, both should be expressed in sermons, presentations, baptismal classes, and Bible studies. Further study exploring the experience of salvation in young adults is critical – due in part to the issues raised in this report and particularly when young adults write the following sentences,

“I felt deep sorrow and I was so sorry to God for neglecting him that I started to cry because the sin that I struggle with, I was so tired of disappointing God, so I made myself stay away, forgetting that I serve a God who specializes in forgiving sins and changing people.”

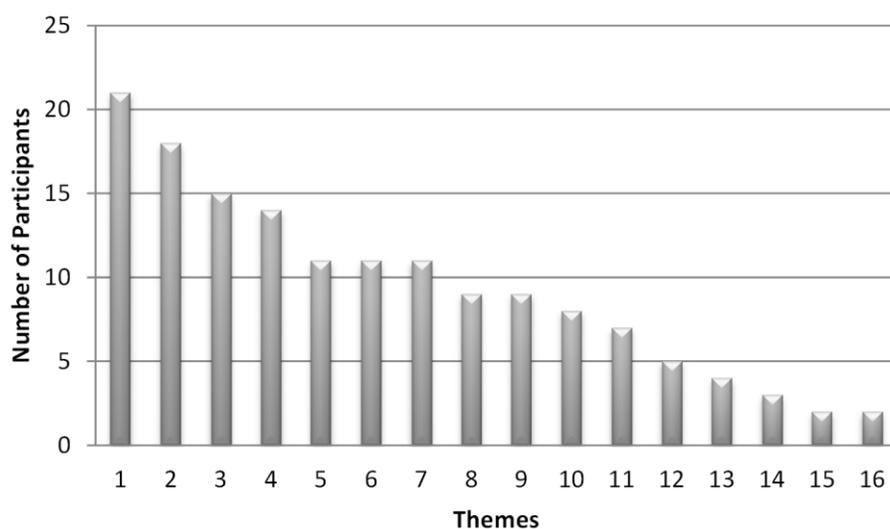
Even though there was a positive response to salvation, it seems that many participants did not understand the actual wording and terminology used in this belief statement, but rather, based their responses on the commentary section or predetermined ideas they already held regarding salvation. This resulted in a diversity of responses. A similar result was found in the responses of *Belief 2 - The Trinity* which would seem to indicate that when a belief statement is inarticulate, ambiguous, or uses overly complicated terminology, young adults have a difficult time understanding the concept and, as a result, verbalize the belief in a number of ways that are often very different from each other. This may be problematic for church leaders who seek unity in belief structures. Also, because it is difficult to understand, some participants expressed difficulty in relating to it and hence, may not see the full value of it. One participant stated,

“I believe that this belief is important, but not as important as many of the other ones. Maybe it’s just that I don’t fully understand it yet, but I feel that this is one of the least important things for us to know in order to be truly called a Christian.”

It is recommended that the Seventh-day Adventist church revise the wording of this belief for reasons that are best summed up by the response of one participant, who wrote,

“I do not really like the wording of this doctrine. The entire thing is composed of compound sentences, some of which are on the border of grammatical correctness. The message that the belief is trying to declare is very good though, so it should be reformulated so that it makes more sense upon first reading.”

The Experience of Salvation - Themes



THEMES

1	Salvation is through Christ/God	60%
2	Salvation is important	51%
3	The belief explains the salvation process	43%
4	The belief explains the meaning/reason/importance of Jesus' death	40%
5	Salvation changes you/makes you into a new being	31%
6	Salvation is a free gift, but a believer needs to do their part	31%
7	Salvation is from sin	31%
8	Salvation is a life-long process	26%
9	Salvation leads to the reward of Heaven	26%
10	The Holy Spirit has an important part in the salvation process	23%
11	Salvation gives meaning/motivation to life	20%
12	Participant liked that the belief explains terminology	14%
13	Participant liked that the belief explains the relationship between faith and works	11%
14	Participant stated Jesus took their place so they could be saved	9%
15	The Bible is important in the salvation process	6%
16	God made/created Jesus	6%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT SALVATION IS IMPORTANT**
Young adults are able to identify that salvation is through Christ and that it is important. Most are positive to this belief but have difficulty with the terminology with which it is expressed.
- **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND WORKS**
Many young adults appreciated that the relationship between faith and works was explained. They accepted that salvation was a free gift and that the individual needs to play a part in this process, however, there remains some confusion as to what that part is.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **SALVATION IS BOTH REWARD AND REDEMPTIVE**
Young adults seemed to focus on salvation being either a reward or being redemptive from sin. As such, both aspects need to be addressed when relating this belief to young adults to ensure that both groups are catered to. Further research may identify factors that influence the tendency by young adults to endorse one or the other aspect.
- **TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS BELIEF IS DIFFICULT FOR YOUNG ADULTS TO UNDERSTAND**
Some of the young adults expressed that they had difficulty in understanding the terminology used in this belief statement and given the remaining responses, it seems the majority of the participants relied on the commentary or predetermined ideas relating to the topic to express their response to it which resulted in a noteworthy number of explanations and conceptions relating to the topic, rather than a shared cohesive understanding. This may be problematic for church leaders who seek unity in belief structures. This being the case, it is recommended that this belief statement be reworded to use language that can be easily understood by laity, particularly young adults.

11

Growing in Christ

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.

Ps 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Col 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil 3:7-14; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Matt 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal 5:22-25; Rom 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb 10:25

Belief 11

Growing in Christ

Number of Responses for this Belief = 33

This belief is a relatively new belief as it was only added in 2005 to address the issue of “spiritual warfare” raised by Seventh-day Adventists living in the developing world. While older Adventists may be unfamiliar with the content of this “new” belief, 67% of participants noted an appreciation for the belief because it revealed how one should live after becoming a follower of Jesus. It should be no surprise that this belief resonated with young adults because it attempts to provide practical ways of how to implement their faith into their lives. It also provides a personal benefit to a young adult who may be in the process of determining their adult identity, who they are and what values and codes of behavior they endorse. Given this positivity towards being given advice on life, it could be deduced that any young adult resistance to being told how to live their lives by older people may not be due to them taking issue with the act of being told how to live. Rather, the responses seem to indicate that they may be taking issue with the content of how that older person is advocating how to live, which may be vastly inconsistent with the values young adults have which often place a high emphasis on compassion and justice. Young adults will not just accept what others tell them. Given they are a highly educated demographic, they will apply the process of critical thought and a range of worldviews to advice they are given and will often be able to identify inconsistencies and agendas.

There was, however, a marked drop in the number of participants who articulated the second and third most prominent themes, “giving your life to Jesus and growing your faith is more than a one-time commitment” (33%) and “the Holy Spirit dwells within us and guides us” (27%). The remaining themes were also not as prominent and were topically varied.

The themes related to the issue of “spiritual warfare,” which was the main reason for why this belief was created in the first place, did not seem to resonate to the same degree with the participants as the need for living a Christian life and having an ongoing relationship with God. For example, 24% of the participants mentioned that “Jesus gives us victory over evil/sin,” 15% noted that “Jesus triumphed over evil on the cross,” while only 12% of the participants even mentioned “evil spirits.” One participant articulated his/her skepticism regarding the powers of the evil forces as follows:

“To say evil forces had power over us before Christ died and rose also makes me skeptical about the understanding of Jesus day, and our understanding today of evil. I can’t say for certain but I’m almost sure that we were always in control of ourselves.”

Young adults, especially from the North American Division, may not be overly concerned about an ongoing “spiritual warfare” because in their society there are often rational reasons for anomalies in behavior like the power of suggestion, substance abuse, malingering behaviors, somatoform disorders, neurological conditions, or a range of mental illnesses which present better explanations and responsible treatment outcomes than simply

attributing such behavior to demonic possession and the need for “exorcism.” It is noteworthy that 36% of participants were studying a health discipline, another 15% were Pre-Med, and another 21% were studying Science or Engineering disciplines. It could also be that due to the scary nature of how demonic forces are portrayed in churches, to cope with this, young adults may choose to ignore them. More study is required to explore the potential psychological harm that exposing young people (and children) to the concepts of demonic forces in a scary way, may have on their wellbeing and retention in religiosity. It may well be that presenting the concept of demons in a scary way produces similar reactions as showing them a horror movie or a graphic novel. Thus, such research should be prioritized as critical. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will endeavor to identify some perceptions young adults have of evil forces.

Given the above observations, this may explain why this belief may not have received a strong focus in sermons, Bible studies etc. by clergy within the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America where mental health services are readily available, illicit substances are illegal, and malingering behaviors are not condoned by a largely educated and informed member base. Hence, why that component of the belief was largely ignored by the participants.

There is such variability in opinion relating to how a Christian should live after accepting Christ. This belief may be subjective in nature because it focuses on growth, which most young adults appreciated, but the belief gives no means for measuring that growth. One participant writes:

“I like this belief because it reminds me that I shouldn’t get comfortable in my level of Christianity. As a Christian I should be growing more and more in Christ, and more and more like Christ every day. However, what I don’t like about this fundamental belief is its subjective nature. I am a very objective person so this growth confuses me if it is not measureable. If it is not measurable then how do you know you’re really growing? You might think that you are growing but in someone else’s eyes you are staying at the same height, you might even be shrinking. I think it is important to study this belief because people need to be reminded to grow and not stay stagnant in the same position.”

Another participant noted the potential danger of this belief, which could make a person become self-focused in their attempt to grow, and in the process, he/she could lose the focus on their relationship with Christ. He/she remarks:

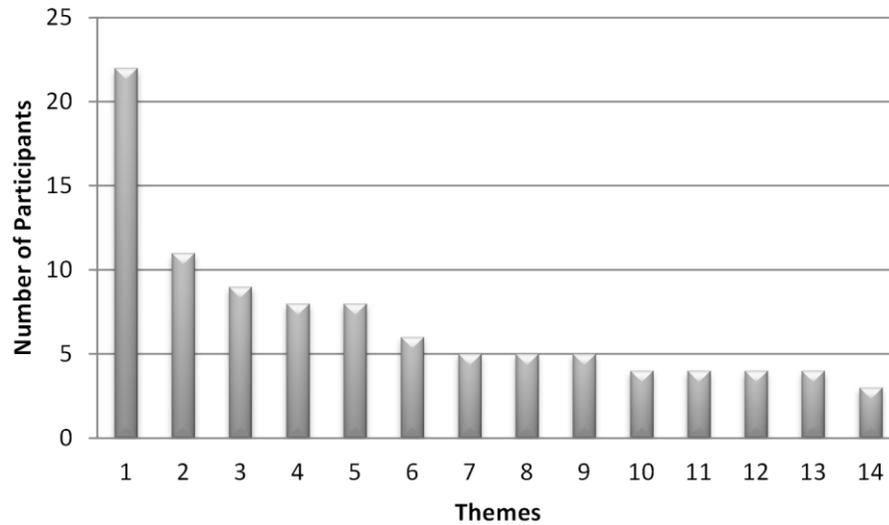
“This fundamental is relevant to me because I have been focusing on how I can live a selfless life and I decided I would try and deny self this week by putting God and others before myself. While trying to do this I found that it was so hard and I was getting more selfish. I forgot that I cannot make myself selfless, it’s like saying I will make myself righteous and that is impossible for a sinner like me to do. I was reminded by this fundamental to let God and let the workings of the Holy Spirit change me as I focus on Christ. I should not have been so focused on my sin and trying to fix myself, when I am incapable of it. Rather, I should keep my focus on God and He indeed will supply the rest.”

Another participant broadened the growth concept and emphasized that growing in Christ may also be a communal experience with one’s fellow church members. They challenge the Seventh-day Adventist church body to adopt a similar expectation and emphasis on growth, particularly growth in Christ. He/she writes:

“I think that as a church we have failed tremendously in living up to this doctrine. We have ignored the parts of the doctrine that talk about dying of self and living a life of unity and love, and have disputes in the church over types of worship, who should and should not be members of the church. We shun

outsiders by treating them unkindly when they visit and we even have racially divided conferences. Growing in Christ is not just an individual experience; it is also a communal one. This is exactly why this doctrine is relevant and important for us today because it discusses the way in which believers should live and what God requires of us. It also opens our eyes to how we have failed and shows us the standards every Christian believer should hold near to their heart.”

Growing in Christ - Themes



THEMES

1	Reveals how one should live after becoming a follower of Jesus	67%
2	Giving your life to Jesus and growing your faith is more than a one-time commitment	33%
3	The Holy Spirit dwells within a believer and guides them	27%
4	Jesus gives us victory over evil/sin	24%
5	Believers will grow into the likeness of Jesus character	24%
6	A Christian life/walk starts with "death to self/sin"	18%
7	Jesus triumphed over evil on the cross	15%
8	Believers can influence others	15%
9	Believers will have personal struggles in daily life	15%
10	Believers need to serve others in love	12%
11	Growing in Christ has to do with a friendship and relationship with Jesus	12%
12	Believers don't have to dwell on the past	12%
13	Participant mentioned evil spirits	12%
14	Participant mentioned the concept of being born again	9%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS WANT INPUT ON HOW TO LIVE... IT JUST HAS TO BE A PLAUSIBLE WAY TO LIVE**

A young adult's resistance to being told how to live their lives by older people may not be due to them taking issue with the act of being told how to live. Rather, it seems they are taking issue with the content of how that older person is advocating how to live, which may be vastly inconsistent with the values young adults have which often place a high emphasis on compassion and justice. Young adults will not just accept what others tell them. Given they are a highly educated demographic, they will apply the process of critical thought to advice they are given and will often be able to identify inconsistencies and hypocrisy.

- **YOUNG ADULTS LIKE THE IDEA OF GROWTH**
Young adults appreciate that they can develop their faith, but expressed concerns as to how this can be achieved and measured.
- **GROWTH IS A COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE**
One young adult expressed that growing in Christ and the act of becoming more Christ-like is not just a personal endeavor, but is also a communal one. They challenge the Seventh-day Adventist church to adopt a similar expectation and emphasis on growth, particularly growth in Christ as outlined in the belief.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **SUPERNATURAL EXPERIENCES**

It seems that young adults, especially from the North American Division, may not be that concerned about an ongoing "spiritual warfare" because in their society there are often rational reasons for anomalies in behavior like the power of suggestion, substance abuse, malingering behaviors, somatoform disorders, neurological conditions, or a range of mental illnesses which present better explanations and responsible treatment outcomes than simply attributing such behavior to demonic possession and the need for "exorcism."

- **MORE HARM THAN GOOD**

More study is required to explore the potential psychological harm that exposing young people, particularly children, to the concepts of demonic forces in a scary way, may have on their wellbeing and retention in religiosity. It may well be that presenting the concept of demons in a scary way produces similar reactions as showing them a horror movie or a graphic novel. Thus, such research should be prioritized as critical. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will endeavor to identify some perceptions young adults have of evil forces.

- **THE SUBJECTIVE NATURE OF "GROWTH"**

Young adults expressed a concern that "growth" cannot be measured and is very subjective in nature. A focus on this personal growth too may cause a person to become inwardly focused and neglect the communal experience of growth within a church community.

12

The Church

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish.

Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11-15; 3:8-11; Matt. 28:19, 20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22, 23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18

Belief 12

The Church

Number of Responses for this Belief = 35

The prominent themes articulated by the young adult participants in this study specific to *Belief 12 – The Church*, were: “The church is a community of believers who believe in Jesus” (56%); “church members should support and uplift one another with kindness” (50%); and “church members should help others, and in doing so, grow in Christ” (41%). The church as a place of worship (35%); and fellowship (26%), contextualized as socialization, received slightly less emphasis. This would indicate that Seventh-day Adventist young adults in North America perceive their church to be a community where they can develop interpersonally munificent relationships that build one another up with kindness, not tear each other down. Two participants described it this way, “The fundamental belief is important because church provides a support system where Christ followers can gather and talk or study,” and “God knows humans crave companionship and draw strength from each other. He was very wise to set up the church for His children.”

Overall, the response to *Belief 12 – The Church*, was very positive, however, there were a number of participants who expressed concerns that this belief, while good, is currently not reflected in the actual practice of the church. One participant described it like this:

“Here is where things tend to get a little bit murky. The Church. Now please don’t get me wrong, I am a strong and secure part of the SDA church, I’m involved and I fully believe in it. The thing is, this is where believers start to lose themselves and can very easily become self-righteous. I do like and believe in this belief, however, I’ve had too many friends with tough experiences with elders, deacons, co-pastors, pastors etc. to let this belief just be another “everything is OK with it” story. The church is SUPPOSED to be just what this belief states. A community! A place of service to all mankind! God’s family! All too often though, people get caught up in titles, traditions, and their own agendas and end up turning away (whether intentionally or unintentionally) those broken souls who truly need the Lord! We need to go back to the basics of what this belief presents and truly live out the pure good that comes from being “The Church” in Christ. This belief is important because of exactly what I talked about before. People start to get too comfortable with the way things are. They start to become judgmental and too set in their ways and “the church” very quickly becomes a place that turns outsiders away. If you look in today’s media, the way the church is parodied is stuffy and judgmental. This belief is important because it steers us as believers away from those types of actions and ways of thinking. The church should be a place of love and kindness and we need to get back to that much more. I’m not trying to sound like I’m bragging, I tend not to be a very judgmental person at all. I’m not perfect in any way and I don’t expect anyone else to be. This belief is very relevant to me because it reminds me who I need to be as a believer who is part of the church; an example of Christ who is willing to be a shining light for Him and His word!”

This sentiment was also expressed by other participants who expressed themes such as, “Church members engaged in anti-social behaviors such as pettiness, sneakiness, and judgment of others” (26%); that “Members engage in self-centered behaviors like hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and monopolize opportunities/leadership” (12 %); and some participants even expressed that young adults “do not have a voice in their church and felt judged” (9%). They write:

“The church is important because in this day and age people stray from God because the church is not doing its part to help believers. And this is not the way that God meant for it to be. The church is supposed to be a home for the healing. But now, it has turned into a place where people who are sick are sometimes condemned.”

“There are days when I don’t like the church. It mainly has to do with some of the members and situations that have occurred in the church. I have seen things that I can honestly understand why people may leave the church or think that Christians are mean people.”

“The Church fundamental is relevant to my life no matter how annoyed I can become with my Church. I still go every Sabbath to learn about Christ and for Him and I to meet up together and worship.”

“What I don’t like is how other denominations can perceive our church as something that is sneaky and judgmental, almost as a cult.”

“I was surprised to read that the act of dismembering people because of adultery was Biblically supported so precisely. I do not agree that we should remove the membership of women who get pregnant because that has only led to worse results and those women leaving the church. Instead, we should help them in their situation. They are already being punished by having to take care of a child, so I think as a church we should help them stray from their adulterous attitude, but still treat them as a member with love and care.”

Often the term “conservative” and “liberal” are used to describe religious people, with young adults often being referred to as “liberal.”³³ The researchers of this study however, suspect that this predominantly United States sociopolitical terminology may not always be transferable to church organizations – and even less so outside of the United States. From the responses expressed in this study, it would seem that the majority of individual participants hold opinions that would actually place them in both camps. In some areas, particularly theological perspectives, they would be deemed “conservative” and yet, with regard to their treatment of others, they would be deemed “liberal.” An example of this can be seen in the final quote listed above where one of the participants expresses concern for removing membership from unmarried women who become pregnant. He/she identifies the behavior as a less than ideal “adulterous attitude” (which could make the participant “conservative”), however, he/she proposes that such an individual should be treated with love and care and be helped in their situation (which could be perceived as a “liberal” attitude) and suggests this provides the best environment for influencing that person’s behavior. This dichotomy occurs throughout the responses in the *Beyond Beliefs* study, not just in *Belief 12 – The Church*, and suggests the occurrence of multifaceted critical thought. This is not surprising given Millennials are often a highly educated demographic group who have been exposed vicariously (particularly through a range of media) to a wide scope of experiences and/or opinions outside of their own, and

³³ “Liberal” is one of the terms used to describe the Millennials in a report by the Pew Research Center. See: Pew Research Center, “The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change.,” 73. Church members may also find themselves using this term when referring to the young adults in their church.

of those of their immediate family/community. Rather than be labeled as a “conservative” or “liberal,” this participant may simply be a person who endorses a particular religiously based moral code, who also places a high value on compassion towards others.

Another participant, who was quoted in the section above, expressed that he/she is “not a judgmental person,” not because of identifiable allegiance to a liberal ideology, but rather, because they recognize that they themselves are not perfect – a belief that is consistent with *Belief 7 – Nature of Man*. Thus, the broad terminology of “conservative” or “liberal” may be expressly inadequate for describing young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. This terminology was rarely used in the participant responses, suggesting these are not words of choice for this demographic group. Labeling young adults as one or the other may inadvertently neutralize their developed, multifaceted opinions and inhibit finding some common ground with older adults (which they often hold), the net effect being they are rendered voiceless. Also, the sometimes derogatory undertones associated with these labels may inhibit the creation of a supportive, kind church community that so many young people envision for their church. This being the case, the Seventh-day Adventist Church should consider abandoning these terms, particularly with regard to young adults. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will investigate the concept of “conservative” and “liberal” labels to identify if these ideologies play any part in their selection of Andrews University as the tertiary institution they chose to attend. It will also investigate if young adults themselves identify as one or the other, neither or both, if they even know what these terms mean, and if they even like these terms.

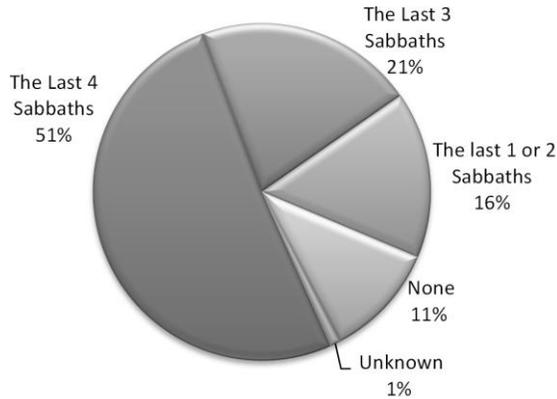
Church Attendance

The following charts outline how often young adults who participated in this study attended church and is compared to the results found in the 2008 North American Division report entitled *Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile*.³⁴ When comparing these two charts, it appears young adults attend church on a more regular basis than the general Seventh-day Adventist in the North American Division (62% for young adults compared to 51% for the general population). This may be accounted for because these participants attend an Adventist university where church options are plentiful and provide easy access (walking or car) to church. It could also be assumed that a person who is not interested in attending church may not elect to attend an Adventist university. The motivation for why a participant elected to attend an Adventist university is unknown and was outside the scope of data collection at this point in the study. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will investigate why young adults elected to attend Andrews University and may also identify if this institution is associated with “liberal” or “conservative” ideologies and if this played any part in why they selected this institution. Cohorts 2 and 3 may also reveal if the results outlined below regarding church attendance and Seventh-day Adventist education is unique to the Spring 2013 cohort or if it also holds true for additional cohorts, thus suggesting a larger trend.

³⁴ Sahlin and Richardson, *Seventh-day Adventists in North America*, 1.

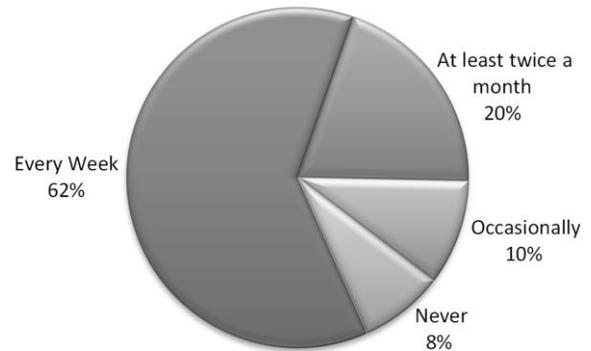
NAD Church Attendance Report

From Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile



Church Attendance Beyond Beliefs Study

Cohort 1, Spring 2013

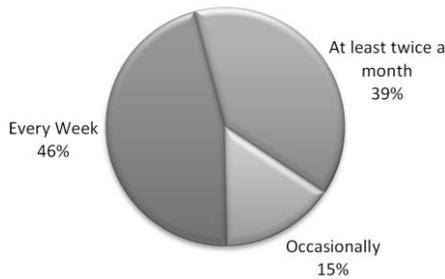


It must be noted that the North American Division Church Attendance Report asked participants to report their church attendance during the previous four Sabbaths and interviewed church members of all ages, not just young adults. The *Beyond Beliefs* study asked only Millennial young adult participants to report their overall church attendance. Thus, the result of "never" poses an interesting dilemma which will be discussed later in this report.

A more complex picture emerges when church attendance was considered in light of Adventist school attendance prior to coming to an Adventist university. These results are as follows:

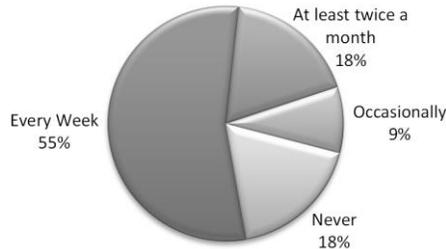
Church Attendance

(Attended SDA Schools K-12)



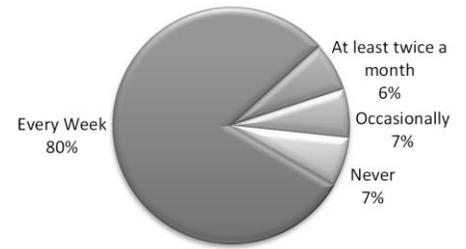
Church Attendance

(Attended Some SDA Schooling)

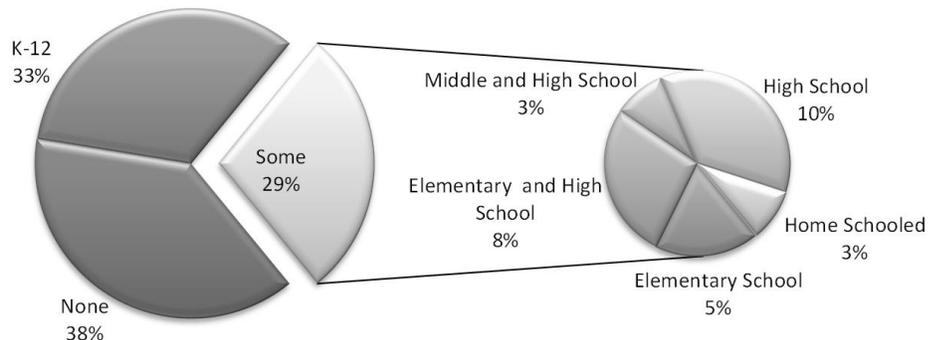


Church Attendance

(Did not attend any SDA Schools before college)



Seventh-day Adventist Education



The most glaring difference is the weekly church attendance of those who did not attend a Seventh-day Adventist school (80%) prior to attending an Adventist university compared with those who had (46%). This finding could suggest that those who do not attend Adventist schools have a higher propensity to attend church weekly upon reaching young adulthood. However, it could be that young adults who had not attended any Adventist schooling prior to attending an Adventist university may have a different experience with church than those participants who did attend Adventist schools. This finding may also be an anomaly which may not replicate itself in future cohorts. Cohorts 2 and 3 will endeavor to identify if church attendance among young adults decreases during the semester. This could indicate if the abundance of chapel and worship services, vespers, campus ministries events (some of which require compulsory attendance) may be leading young people to believe they have been sufficiently spiritually engaged for the week and feel comfortable missing church, which is not compulsory. If so, this nonattendance of church may be inadvertently putting in place a habit that may remain (and may be difficult to break) after they leave the Adventist university campus. Compulsory spiritual engagement at Seventh-day Adventist schools may also explain why participants in this study who attended such schools currently attended church less regularly than those who did not.

It is important to note that none of the participants who had undertaken all of their schooling in the Adventist school system identified as never attending church. Those who did attend some Adventist schooling had the largest group of participants who never attended church – yet still identify as Seventh-day Adventists which was a requirement for participation in this study. Again, these results are preliminary and may not replicate themselves in future cohorts. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will also endeavor to identify Sabbath School attendance and the reasons why/why not a young adult would attend church and Sabbath School. It will also assess the efficacy of the weekly chapel services to identify how successful they are in communicating the 28 Beliefs of Adventism compared to a class like RELT225 in teaching the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. It will also establish if youth pastors or academic teachers can play a role in influencing their spirituality.

Given that these numbers represent those who have ready access to a number of church services on an Adventist university campus that cater for range of young adult needs, it may be necessary to identify what these results may look like when young adults enter the workforce and no longer live in a predominantly Adventist campus community. It would also be timely to investigate the church attendance levels of these three groups in that context to see if participants who had no Adventist schooling prior to university retain a higher rate of weekly church attendance, since they have already had significant experience in spending the majority of their week in a non-Adventist environment. Also, why are 8% of participants in this study still identifying as Seventh-day Adventists when they state they never attend church? Is this evidence of “Cultural Adventism,” or something entirely different?

Cultural Adventism, Secular Adventism or Something Else?

The demographics inventory identified that 92% of this sample of participants felt a sense of ownership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as seen in the following chart.

This is reassuring for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America as it suggests that young adults do wish to be an invested part of the denomination and feel concern for its wellbeing – even those who do not attend

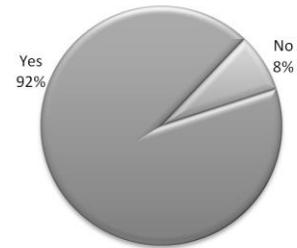
church regularly or at all. It becomes easy to infer a broad and loosely defined label like “Cultural Adventism” on those who do not attend church regularly or see things differently. There seems to be, however, another group of young adults who never attend church yet continue to identify as Seventh-day Adventists, for which the term “Cultural Adventism” may be imprecise.

After a 150 year history in the United States, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America may be seeing the emergence of an entirely non-practicing member base similar to Judaism or Catholicism where an individual may identify as a Seventh-day Adventist but never attend church. They may do so because of the sense of “ownership” and a vested interest they have in the church organization as evidenced in the chart above. It may also be that they are multi-generational Adventists, as all but one of the participants in this study were, and Adventism may be viewed as an extended family or a “tribal” group rather than a religious organization. It may be because they wish to still be a part of something bigger, which 15% of participants in this study suggested the church provided. It could even be that any emphasis placed on retention of young adults within the Seventh-day Adventist church, without a similar emphasis on ensuring they know what the church actually believes, may have inadvertently created a generation of young people who have fond memories of church sponsored activities like camps, schooling, cruises, mission trips, youth rallies, or baptism at a young age, and who continue to identify as a Seventh-day Adventist, even though they may not be practicing the faith or attending church. This previous proposition is not entirely unwarranted given many of the young adults in this study were baptized, multi-generational Adventists, and approximately two thirds had attended Adventist schooling, but largely self-reported a limited knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism at the beginning of this study.

Whatever the reason (and there could be many more contributing to this issue), this phenomenon warrants further empirical investigation, as simply deferring any such behavior to a broad term like “Cultural Adventism” may result in the church organization ignoring the emergence of what could be more appropriately termed “Secular Adventism” or a “Non-Practicing Adventist,” which are terms similar to those used to describe the same phenomenon in Judaism and Catholicism. Ignoring this phenomenon, and especially the part seemingly well intentioned church strategies and retention programs for youth may have potentially played in contributing to it, does little to address or remedy this issue.

From the overall responses in this study, young adults have a very positive response to the theological beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when they were presented to them in a non-polemic environment that permitted critical thought. The results showed that there was a significant shift in their knowledge base of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism after participating in the *Beyond Beliefs* study and completing the class RELT225. What they expressed negatively focused mainly on items covered in the commentary, lack of evidence provided for supposition/speculation in the commentary that was presented as fact, as well as the pronounced emphasis on non-salvation issues in the commentary. Additionally, young adults’ standards for interpersonal behavior and the just treatment of others is very high, and as such, they expressed concern in their responses relating to the anti-social behaviors of others within the church organization and the reluctance of leadership to address these behaviors. When the belief is exemplified in a way that is relevant to them or provides them some benefit, the

Ownership of the Church



beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are very positively appraised by young adults, even those who reported low levels of spirituality and church attendance.

This being the case, the *Beyond Beliefs* study proposes that “Cultural Adventism,” “Liberalism,” “Progressive” or “Disconnected” may be unhelpful labels to apply to young adults. While it is apparent that young adults in this study endorse the theological beliefs of the church, it appears their standards for interpersonal behavior and the just treatment of others may exceed that of older Adventists.³⁵ This is evidenced in their support of a church community that is kind and uplifting of one another (50%), that church members should help others and in doing so grow in Christ (41%), that church members should serve other people even if these people do not accept Adventism (15%), and in their support of women in ministry which the demographic inventory indicated 92% of young adults identified in the “agreement” range for the ordination of women. Throughout the responses of the *Beyond Beliefs* study there is a call for greater transparency/accountability in church/employee activities, sensitivity expressed towards the treatment of homosexuals, and people who have had challenging life experiences like bullying, divorce, domestic violence, and towards people who are not Seventh-day Adventists.

Rather than mere labels, what may in fact be occurring is genuine discontent with church social culture, but given the sense of ownership young adult members feel, as indicated in the chart above, and their endorsement of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, they may be reluctant to leave altogether and due to their minority numbers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, they are powerless to make any change, as one participated articulated:

“My voice and the voices of my peers are not heard among the loud, clamoring voices of the adults.”

Powerlessness and Paternalism

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, powerlessness due to lack of numbers may not be the only issue facing young adults in Adventism. The afore mentioned participant response, “My voice and the voices of my peers are not heard among the loud, clamoring voices of the adults” raises an interesting question. All the individuals in this study were legally adults themselves (mean=20.86, range=18-26) and yet, in this context, this participant did not perceive him/herself or their peers as such. Why is this? Could this be an indication that older adults in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America have a tendency towards paternalism and adultism concerning young adults to the point that a young adult still perceives themselves as separate from adulthood despite his/her age? Or is it that young adults transition into adulthood later because of financial dependency on their parents while they are university students, as all the participants in this study were? If the latter, do older adults exchange financial benevolence towards young adults with paternalism/adultism? Do young adults accept this exchange or are they left with no choice, given viable income options for this age group are limited, especially if they do not possess a completed university education? Is “helicopter baptism” an example of paternalism? (See discussion in *Belief 15 – Baptism*.)

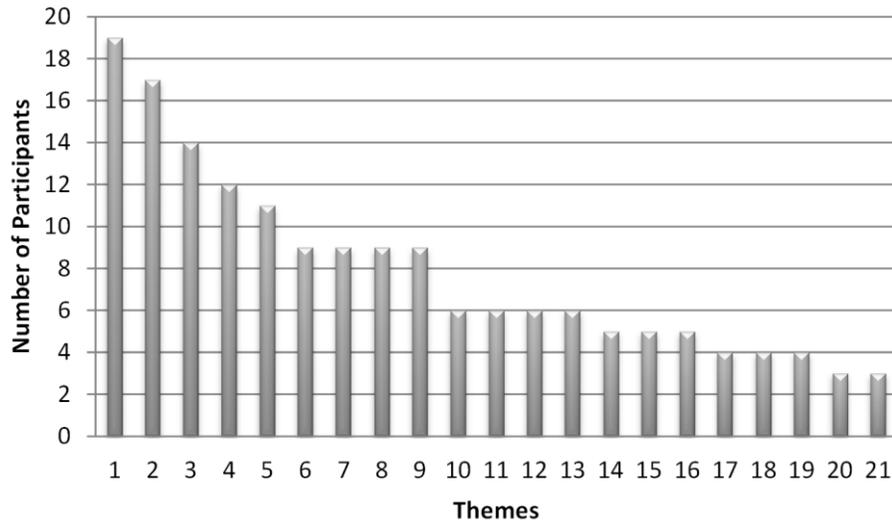
While it may be tempting to focus church efforts on the mere retention of young adults, to what end? What sort of Adventist is being retained? Has the Seventh-day Adventist Church succeeded in helping these young adults,

³⁵ Older Adventists may also share these high standards of interpersonal behavior and justice. It would seem from the responses in this study, however, that young adults have not heard these older voices strong and clear, or seen consistent action associated with such standards.

in their spiritual walk, to grow into “God’s image and likeness?” Have recommendations for programs and what is best for Millennials been made with extensive and replicable consultation with a broad spectrum of young adults from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, family groups, and ethnicities? Were the suggestions of young adults implemented or was consultation just pageantry or undertaken almost exclusively among young adults related to prominent Adventists or current leadership? Are older adults trying to recreate young adults into their own image and likeness without considering that contemporary young adults live in an entirely different world than the one older adults grew up in? (See discussion in *Belief 22 – Christian Behavior*.)

Research undertaken on young adults in Seventh-day Adventist populations also needs to consider the long term effects of their recommendations, that may seem good to older Adventists, but may have unforeseen consequences or may potentially be perceived as paternalistic. There may be a hesitancy to candidly investigate issues like paternalism given its motivations are well intentioned and much of the research undertaken on young adults in Seventh-day Adventist populations to date has been mostly by white males of the Baby Boomer and Silent Generation. Thus, to safeguard against paternalism or any accusation of the same, future research should be undertaken by a variety of individuals, both male and female from a range of ethnicities, and include principle researchers from Generation X and/or the Millennial Generation.

Church - Themes



THEMES

1	The church is a community of believers who believe in Jesus	56 %
2	Church members should support and uplift one another with kindness	50 %
3	Church members should help others, and in doing so grow in Christ	41 %
4	Church is a place for worship and for praising God	35 %
5	The church is like a body, of which Jesus is the head	32 %
6	Church is a place for fellowship	26 %
7	The church can proclaim the Gospel	26 %
8	Church members engage in anti-social behaviors such as pettiness, sneakiness, and judgment of others	26 %
9	Participants metaphorically described the Church as God's bride	26 %
10	The church is a place where you can learn more about the Bible	18 %
11	The church uses the Bible and/or Jesus as its authority	18 %
12	The church is God's family	18 %
13	You do not have to be an Adventist to be saved	18 %
14	Church members should serve other people, even if these people do not accept Adventism	15 %
15	The church allows members to be a part of something "bigger"	15 %
16	Every believer is a part of the church	15 %
17	Believers are called to be separate from the world	12 %
18	Members engage in self-centered behaviors, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and monopolize opportunities/leadership	12 %
19	The church is a place where the Holy Spirit dwells	12 %
20	Participants expressed that they do not have a voice in their church and felt judged	9 %
21	The church is more than just a building	9 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **A KIND COMMUNITY**
Young adults want their church to be a community where they can develop interpersonally munificent relationships that build one another up with kindness, not tear each other down.
- **CHURCH ATTENDANCE**
This sample reported a higher percentage of weekly church attendance than the general North American Division congregation. However, this may be in part due to participants attending a Seventh-day Adventist university where options for young adult worship services are plentiful.
- **A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP**
Young adults express a very high level of ownership of the Seventh-day Adventist church. This may be a reason for why they continue to identify as Seventh-day Adventists even though they may attend church irregularly, or not at all.
- **HIGH STANDARDS**
Young adults in this study seem to endorse the theological beliefs of the church, however, it appears their standards for interpersonal behavior and the just treatment of others may exceed that of many older Adventists. This is evidenced in their support of a church community that is kind and uplifting of one another (50%), that church members should help others and in doing so grow in Christ (41%) that church members should serve other people, even if these people do not accept Adventism (15%), and in their support of women in ministry which the demographic inventory indicated 92% of young adults identified in the “agreement” range for the ordination of women. Throughout the responses of the *Beyond Beliefs* study there is a call for greater transparency/accountability in church/employee activities, sensitivity expressed towards the treatment of homosexuals, and people who have had challenging life experiences like bullying, divorce, domestic violence, and towards people who are not Seventh-day Adventists.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **A KIND COMMUNITY**
The reactions of young adults to this belief was very positive, however, there were a number of participants who expressed concerns that this belief, while good, is currently not reflected in the actual practice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- **LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE?**
Labeling young adults either liberal or conservative may neutralize their developed, multifaceted opinions and inhibit finding some common ground with older adults (which they often hold), the net effect being they are rendered voiceless. The derogatory undertones of these terms does little to create the supportive, kind community described above that so many young people envisage for their church. This being the case, Seventh-day Adventist church members should consider abandoning these terms.
- **CHURCH ATTENDANCE**
Church attendance regularity seems to vary significantly based on participants’ educational background in Adventist education at an elementary, middle and high school level. Further research is required to identify if this finding was unique to this cohort, or if this is actually an indication of a larger trend. Given that the church attendance numbers presented in this chapter represent those who have ready access to a number of church services on an Adventist university campus that cater for range of young adult needs, it may be necessary to identify what these results may look like when young adults enter the workforce and no longer live in a predominantly Adventist campus community. It would also be interesting to investigate the church attendance levels of these three groups in that context to see if participants who had no Adventist schooling prior to university retain a higher rate of weekly church attendance, since they already had significant experience in spending the majority of their week in a non-Adventist environment.
- **CULTURAL OR SECULAR ADVENTISTS?**
A broad term like “Cultural Adventism” may result in the church organization ignoring the emergence of what could be more appropriately termed “Secular Adventism” or a “Non-Practicing Adventist” which are terms similar to those used to describe the same phenomenon in Judaism and Catholicism. Ignoring this phenomenon, and especially the part seemingly well intentioned church strategies may have potentially played in contributing to it, does little to address and remedy this issue.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS (CONT)

- **VOICELESS?**

While it may be tempting to focus church efforts on the mere retention of young adults, to what end? What sort of Adventist is being retained, particularly when they are insouciantly labeled “Cultural Adventists” and “Liberals” by some church members? Has the Seventh-day Adventist church succeeded in helping these young adults in their spiritual walk to grow into “God’s image and likeness?” Have recommendations for programs and what is best for Millennials been made with extensive and replicable consultation with a broad spectrum of young adults from a range of backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, family groups, and ethnicities? Were the suggestions of young adults implemented or was consultation just for show or undertaken almost exclusively among young adults biologically related to prominent Adventists or leadership? Are older adults trying to recreate young adults into their own image and likeness without considering that contemporary young adults live in an entirely different world to the one older adults grew up in?

- **PATERNALISM?**

It is proposed that future research undertaken on young adults in Seventh-day Adventist populations also needs to consider the long term effects of their recommendations, that may seem good to older researchers, but may have unforeseen consequences or be perceived as paternalistic. There may be a hesitancy to candidly investigate issues like paternalism given its motivations are well intentioned and much of the published research undertaken on young adults in Seventh-day Adventist populations has been mostly by white males of the baby boomer and silent generation. Thus, to safeguard against paternalism or any accusation of the same, future research should be undertaken by a variety of individuals, both male and female from a range of ethnicities, and include principle researchers from Generation X and/or the Millennial Generation.

13

Remnant and its Mission

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness.

*Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19;
2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1-14*

Belief 13

The Remnant and its Mission

Number of Responses for this Belief = 34

The majority of the participants articulated that the remnant church has a mission to the world (58%) with almost a third noting the mission of the remnant is to spread the gospel, be a witness for God (30%), and “to spread the message about the second coming/Heaven (30%). Several participants appreciated that the belief reveals what will happen in the future (21%) and 12% noted the remnant will experience trials, hardship, and persecution. However, only 18% articulated an association between the remnant and the three angels’ message which is surprising given the emphasis placed on this concept by the Seventh-day Adventist church from its conception. This may have been because it has not been presented to young adults in a relevant way, or maybe because young adults expressed unease regarding Seventh-day Adventist believers being the exclusive remnant. Only 12% mentioned the judgment aspect and 6% mentioned the remnant should call God’s people out of apostasy or “Babylon.”

Regarding the identity of the remnant, 21% of the participants stated that the Seventh-day Adventist church is the remnant church or constitutes the majority of it, while 12% noted that the remnant are all believers in Christ. However, a third of the participants (33%) were uncomfortable with aspects of this belief. This focused on the exclusivity of the remnant to those who were Seventh-day Adventists, derogatory comments about other religious faiths, that it is short and not well defined, and that the commentary focuses more on history and old symbolism that participants felt was not readily transferred to the contemporary church. One participant suggests:

“I think this fundamental is a little confusing. It encompasses a lot of information, and the belief itself is basically like “hey, look at all this stuff” rather than a clearly defined statement of a belief. I think it is important that we understand what this statement is trying to say however, as it is our special job to carry out the mission of the last days.”

Approximately a quarter (24%) of participants stated that they did not find this belief important or relevant, suggesting it was not presented in a way that resonated with some young adults. Also, those who stated it was not relevant suggested it was due to the notion implied in the commentary that Seventh-day Adventists would be the exclusive remnant, yet this is not what is stated in the actual belief statement. One writes:

“I like that it mentions how while the universal Church believes in Christ, there is a remnant that will be called out of it to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. I also like how it doesn’t specify who the remnant will be, so that there is not a certain church that says that they are better than anybody else. I think that

the only reason it is important is because it says that there will be a remnant that will announce the hour of Jesus' coming. I don't think it is very important because it then basically says that the Adventist church is the chosen remnant, which I don't think it will be just the Adventist church, but many people from all different churches around the world. It is relevant because it calls each believer to have a part in telling the world about the coming of Jesus."

Some, who did like the remnant concept and its exclusive association with Seventh-day Adventism, also expressed concern with relation to how other denominations may be treated as a result of this attitude. One wrote:

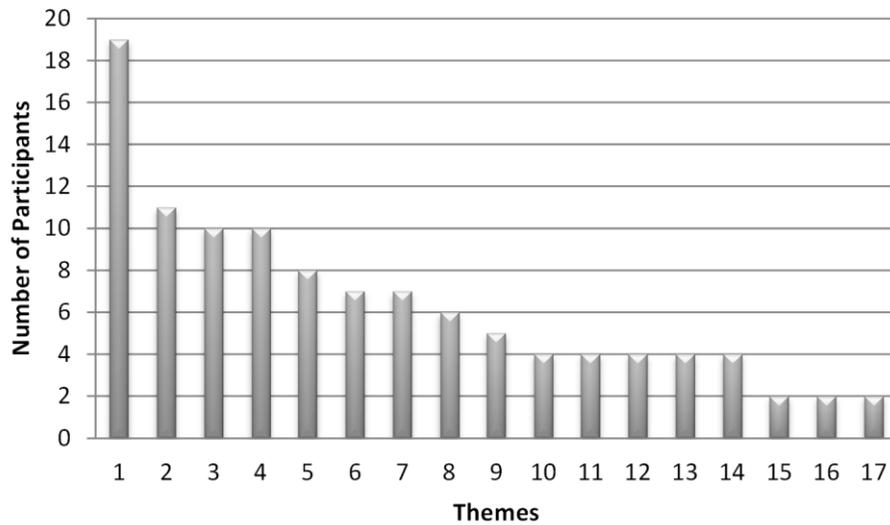
"I did not fully understand everything written in this doctrine concerning the Remnant. However, I do acknowledge the SDA church's willingness to declare what they believe and provide biblical proof for their assumptions. Of course, we are unable to understand all. Nonetheless, I did not really appreciate the way the doctrine seems to attack the Catholic church. Indeed, there are many Catholic practices that oppose our own, and Biblically these practices and beliefs are wrong, but I'm not sure why so much time is spent specifically on Catholicism."

Another writes:

"Another thing that I had an issue with was why are not all Christians considered the remnant if they have the same foundational belief. I do believe that this topic is important but only to Adventists because they are saying they themselves are the remnant. Since they believe that they are the remnant, other churches cannot embrace this belief as well so much... Lastly, why I don't think this is that important right now is because the church should be focusing on others and not so much on itself per say."

This could indicate that perceiving Seventh-day Adventism as the exclusive remnant may have an unforeseen consequence in that some may develop a sense of self-righteousness as a result - something young adults may perceive as counterproductive in achieving the actual goal of the remnant church, which is to proclaim the gospel.

Remnant and its Mission - Themes



THEMES

1	The remnant church has a mission to the world	58 %
2	Participants who were uncomfortable with aspects of this belief	33 %
3	The mission of the remnant is to spread the gospel and be a witness for God	30 %
4	The mission of the remnant is to spread the message about the second coming/heaven	30 %
5	Participants who didn't find this belief important or relevant	24 %
6	Participants who appreciated that the belief reveals what will happen in the future	21 %
7	Participants who stated that the Seventh-day Adventist is the remnant church or constituted the majority of it	21 %
8	Participants who articulated an association between the remnant and the three angels message	18 %
9	The remnant keeps God's commandments	15 %
10	Participants who appreciated that the belief commentary gave a "history" lesson	12 %
11	The remnant members are all believers in Christ	12 %
12	The remnant proclaims God's judgment to others	12 %
13	The remnant will experience trials, hardship, and persecution	12 %
14	Participants who appreciated that the commentary explained the prophecies expressed in the belief statement	12 %
15	The remnant should call God's people out of apostasy or "Babylon"	6 %
16	Satan attacks the remnant church	6 %
17	The remnant are God's loyal people	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS LIKE THE REMNANT CONCEPT**
Young adults appreciate that there is a remnant who have a mission to spread the gospel in preparation for the second coming.
- **FUTURE EVENTS**
Young adults appreciated that this belief outlines what may happen in the future.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE TRAITS OF THE REMNANT**
Young adults appreciate that the Seventh-day Adventist church is a part of the remnant and that there is a mission to proclaim the gospel. However, they do not seem to like condemnation of other religious faiths, suggesting that "slinging mud" at others detracts from their mission and should not be necessary for a church organization that purports to have the truth.
- **THE COMMENTARY NEEDS TO BE MORE CONCISE AND IN LINE WITH THE BELIEF STATEMENT**
Young adults who felt this belief was not relevant suggested that it was due to the implication in the commentary that Seventh-day Adventists would be the exclusive remnant, which is not stated in the actual belief statement
- **THE THREE ANGELS MESSAGE**
This theme was not expressed very often by participants in this study which was surprising given the concept of the Three Angels Message is a defining marker of the Seventh-day Adventist church. This may have been because they are uneasy about Adventism being the exclusive remnant.

14

Unity in the Body of Christ

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children.

Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17:20-23

Belief 14

Unity in the Body of Christ

Number of Responses for this Belief = 36

The participant responses expressed agreement with the Unity in the Body of Christ concept, noting that believers are all equal (31%), and that there is one church with many members with different roles to play (14%) all working towards the same goal or sharing the same purpose (14%), who are unified through faith, hope, love, and the worship of God (14%).

Several participants stated that the church cannot fulfill the work of God (i.e. spreading the gospel) if they are divided (25%) and stated that without unity, God's church would fall apart (14%). However, 19% wrote that unity can be achieved through diversity, adding that unity makes the church function more effectively (14%).

Overall, participants liked the belief itself, but 28% expressed the Seventh-day Adventist church does not adhere to this belief. Here are some of their comments regarding this issue.

"I like this doctrine a lot in its entirety. The whole message of equality is a very important one. Unfortunately, the church does not usually hold this standard, so I think it is cute that it is included in Adventist doctrine. Oftentimes, Adventism as a whole is highly judgmental and so seems to defy this entire doctrine. Some incredibly obvious and sad examples of harsh judgment on the part of Adventists are the treatment of women and homosexuals, but also things like jewelry and dancing. I think it is highly contradictory and pathetic that this is one of the fundamentals of Adventism and it tends to be completely ignored. I think this fundamental is immensely important because as Christians, we are commissioned to spread Jesus' love to everyone. Nowhere in the Bible does it say this love is only for heterosexual white men. This fundamental is important in my life because I find equality to be highly important and I think the church should prescribe to it more."

"A lot of people don't speak up because they don't want to rock the boat and cause a problem in the unity. Another, reason why people don't speak up is because the dissenting opinion might be an "Adventist celebrity." I remember my friends and I got into a "biblical discussion" with another group. One of the members was [*Identifying Information Removed – Name of person*]. I felt like a lot of people who shared his position only had that position because it was shared by [*Identifying Information Removed – Name of person*]. Obviously, his opinions aren't perfect because the man was disfellowshipped. I'm not trying to judge the man, I'm just saying that everyone is a part of the body of the church of Christ. We all have valuable input in the church. The church is made of many different kinds of people, men, women, children, black, white, rich, and poor. No one is like you and no one thinks like you. I hate when someone discards

their opinion because a so called “celebrity” says otherwise. We as a church need to find unity in our diversity. A tree might have many branches, but they all lead down to the same trunk.”

“I liked this doctrine a lot. I especially liked the wording of it. We are one in Christ, we are a united Church with one purpose, to love God and spread His love to the world. It doesn’t matter what we’ve been through, what we’ve done. It only matters that we are Christ’s and He is ours. This is so important because in a day like today there is so much prejudice. There are so many stereotypes, and it causes people to build up more walls every day. If we can’t show love to everybody, no matter who they are or what they’ve done, how are they supposed to see Christ in us? He loves everybody, with no reserve. The more we profess to be Christians and yet slack on our duties to be an example of Christ to everyone, the less people are willing to hear the Good News. This fundamental is important because I need to be loving to everyone no matter what!”

“This fundamental I believe is so important for the Adventist church to adhere to, and I really like what it had to say. The Adventist church today is so divided, especially racially. I noticed that the way an “African American” Adventist church do not like how the Caucasians worship and vice versa. The Adventist conferences are segregated, there’s a white conference, black conference, Hispanic conference, and although it is not labeled that way a majority, if not all of the members, within each conference stick with their own race. Stressing the fundamental of unity is so needed today because Satan has corrupted all our minds into believing that there is one way to worship and as a result we’ve closed our minds to other forms of worship. The church is divided between the youth and the adults because we are not letting our diversity in worship shine and no one wants to come together and compromise within the Adventist church. This is relevant to me because my church is divided between the youth and adults and most of the youth I grew up with are now out of the church. Even the conference that my church is in is divided and we’re letting division distract us from unity and proclaiming the gospel to the world, and this is sad.”

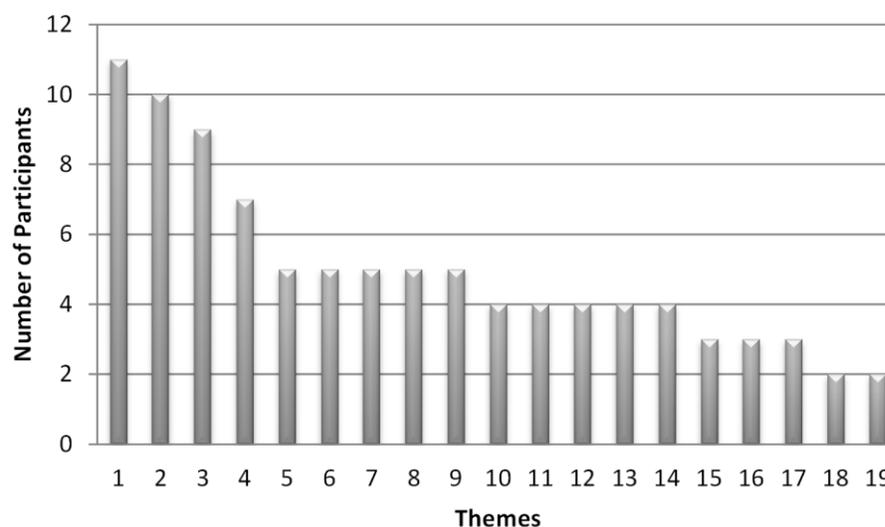
“I liked that this fundamental explained where unity in the church comes from and how we know that there is unity in the church. I liked that it emphasized that unity is not uniformity. There are different ways to do things and accomplish the goal of the church. We should embrace each other and our differences and accept each as people with love and respect. I think this fundamental is very important. Even though this topic of unity is one of our fundamentals, I think we as a church may “talk the talk” but we don’t always “walk the walk.” Unfortunately, there are still divides that you can clearly see in the Adventist church (race, age, etc). We don’t officially have a stance on ordaining women to be pastors. This fundamental say that we should let everyone in the church exercise their spiritual gifts. What if you are a woman and your gift is to be a pastor? I think this fundamental is relevant to my life because it is a reminder to continually ask God to keep me open and loving to other people. Sometimes, you can have hidden biases you don’t know about that affect the way you treat people.”

It would seem that young people resonate with this belief and want it to be implemented, but a number of them are becoming discouraged because it is not being implemented within the Seventh-day Adventist church. The desire for unity may not be the idealism of youth, but rather, a signifier of low levels of prejudice, which could be a significant marker of the Millennial generation in North America who are tolerant of diversity due to their exposure to so many diverse world views, experiences, and multiculturalism (via tertiary education, media and social media) that are outside their own experience and that of their immediate family/community etc.

It may be salient to investigate levels of prejudice (racial, socioeconomic, and gender), not just in Millennial young adults, but in all Seventh-day Adventists in North America to identify if indeed nonchalance to diversity by Adventists is correlated with higher levels of prejudice. It would also be relevant to identify the impact prejudice

has on the retention of Millennials. A lack of unity may well be the result of high prejudice levels, rather than mere disunity. As such, this issue should be investigated empirically, and given prejudice is a destructive and socially objectionable practice, such investigation should be given critical priority by the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Unity in the Body of Christ - Themes



THEMES

1	Believers are all equal	31 %
2	Participants who liked the belief, but expressed that the Seventh-day Adventist church does not follow it	28 %
3	The church cannot fulfill the work of God (i.e. spreading the gospel) if they are divided	25 %
4	Unity can be achieved through diversity	19 %
5	There is one church with many members with different roles to play	14 %
6	All believers are working towards the same goal or purpose	14 %
7	Without unity, God's church will fall apart	14 %
8	Unity makes the church function more effectively	14 %
9	The church is unified through faith, hope, love, and the worship of God	14 %
10	The church is the "Body of Christ"	11 %
11	All people are sinners and thus, all need Christ	11 %
12	Unity on earth illustrates the unity that will exist in heaven	11 %
13	Everyone is a part of the "Body of Christ"	11 %
14	God created everyone, thus, everyone are his sons/daughters, created in his image	11 %
15	Each person fits into God's ultimate plan or has a function in the church	8 %
16	Homosexuals should be included in the unity of the church	8 %
17	Believers should serve each other	8 %
18	Participant asked why anyone would want to join a divided group	6 %
19	All parts, duties and functions of the church are equally important	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS LIKE THE CONCEPT OF UNITY AND EQUALITY**

It would seem this belief resonates with young adults and they want unity and equality to be fully implemented. However, a number of them are becoming discouraged because it is not being implemented within the Seventh-day Adventist church.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **EXPOSURE TO MANY WALKS OF LIFE**

The desire for unity may not be the idealism of youth, but rather, a signifier of low levels of prejudice, which could be a significant marker of the Millennial generation in North America who are tolerant of diversity due to their exposure to so many diverse world views, experiences, and multiculturalism (via tertiary education, media, and social media) that are outside their own experience and that of their immediate family/community.

- **DISUNITY OR PREJUDICE?**

It may be salient to investigate levels of prejudice (racial, socioeconomic, and gender), not just in Millennial young adults, but in all Seventh-day Adventists in North America to identify if indeed nonchalance to diversity by Adventists is correlated with higher levels of prejudice. It would also be relevant to identify the impact prejudice has on the retention of Millennials. A lack of unity may well be the result of high prejudice levels, rather than mere disunity. As such, this issue should be investigated empirically, and given prejudice is a destructive and socially objectionable practice, such investigation should be given critical priority by the Seventh-day Adventist church.

15

Baptism

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings.

Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20

Belief 15

Baptism

Number of Responses for this Belief = 36

The participants felt it was important to emphasize that life after baptism will not necessarily be easier and this is expressed in a number of themes. It would seem that even though a person may accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior (42%), they become a new creation (33%), their sins are forgiven (28%), they become a part of the unity of the church (14%), and that baptism is linked to salvation (22%) (even though 17% stated it did not guarantee it), the devil will still try to get you (6%). They expressed that baptism is a covenant, similar to marriage, between the baptized person and God (25%) and is thus, the beginning of a journey (11%) in which Christ becomes the guide (33%). Only 11% actually articulated that baptism was a part of a spiritual journey and not an end point. This journey may be something to reiterate with young adults as it provides a succinct illustration of many of the numerous and often successive themes listed above.

Most participants in Cohort 1 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study expressed in their responses that they liked *Belief 15 – Baptism*, and nearly all (90%) were baptized members. However, more than a third (36%) of the participants specifically expressed some reservations and concerns regarding how baptism is being practiced within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. One participant suggested, “I have seen people be treated differently in a negative way because they aren’t baptized and they are looked down upon by other members of the church.” The sentiment of the remaining participants focused predominantly on the practice of baptizing people at an early age, prior to early adulthood. Given the most prominent theme identified in the *Beyond Beliefs* participant responses regarding *Belief 15 – Baptism*, was “baptismal candidates must be able to understand this decision and its importance,” (44%) this sentiment is not surprising. Some other participant comments relating to this issue are as follows:

“I personally wished that I would have waited to be baptized until I was the about the age that I currently am. I feel like so many kids are shoved into the baptismal pools at churches because their parents want them to be ‘saved’ or because it is ‘time.’”

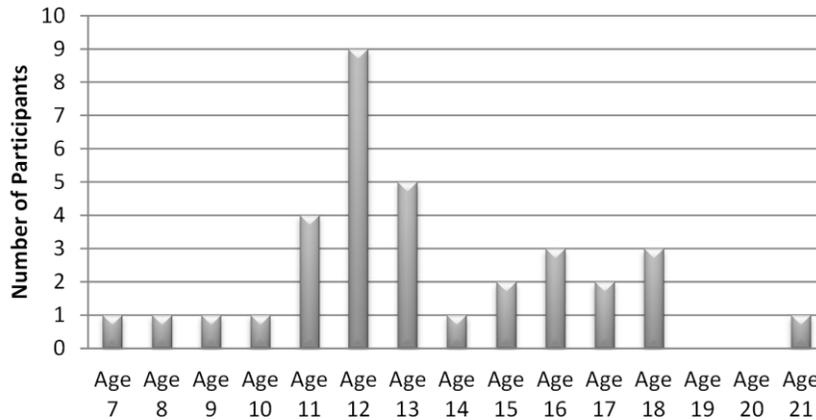
“I took a class from my pastor about baptism and he explained to me why I was getting baptized, but honestly, I don’t think I was ready.”

“I got baptized when I was 13 years old and I realize now that I was too young. I didn’t really understand life (not that I completely understand life) but at 13 years old there isn’t much I understood about life. If I could rewind and get baptized again, I would do it in late high school or even in college.”

“What I don’t like about this concept is how it is pushed for in the Adventist church while people have no clue about it. I feel as though people do this just because of the pressure from parents or others, especially at a young age and then wonder why they left the church or why Adventism really did not attract them.”

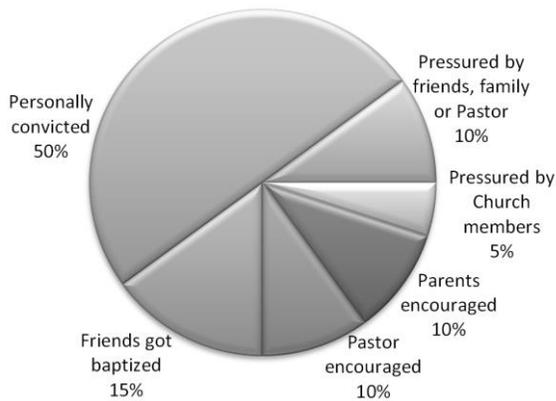
In Cohort 1 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study there seems to be a peak at age 11-13 and again, to a lesser extent, from age 16-18.

Age of Baptizim

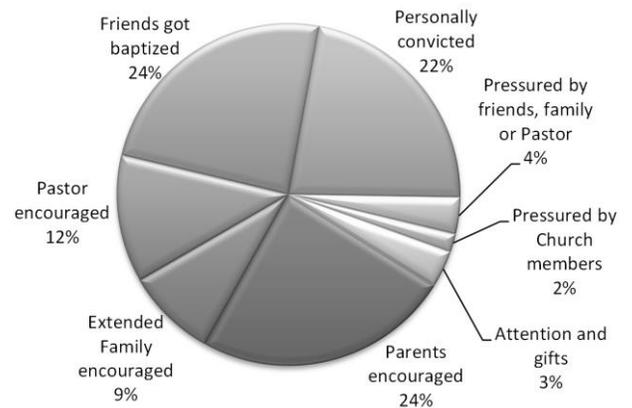


The majority of participants were baptized before age 14, prior to entering high school. There are a number of reasons participants gave for why they decided to be baptized. For comparison and to look more closely at the two identified age group clusters, the researchers have divided participants into two groups – those who were baptized at age 14 or more and those who were baptized at age 13 or less. The results are as follows:

Age 14 or more



Age 13 or Less



The most prominent difference in these two charts is the disparity between personal conviction with regard to a baptism decision. For those who were aged 13 or less, personal conviction only accounted for 22% of the reason given for why they decided to be baptized, while for those who were aged 14 or more, it accounted for 50%. The influence adults have on the decision to be baptized for those aged 13 or less (45% from parents, family and pastors) could be evidence of “helicopter-baptism,”³⁶ where a young person is propelled into baptism by

³⁶ Helicopter baptism derives from the term “Helicopter Parenting” where parents micromanage their child’s life and make important decisions for them. While done with good intentions, it often disallows a young person from making their own

influential adults because it is “time” or they believe early baptism is correlated with retention within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While well intentioned, there is often little regard for personal conviction, or consideration for how helicopter-baptism may impact the long-term spiritual walk of that young person and the development of their spiritual maturity. Interestingly, pressure to be baptized from others increased with those aged 14 or more, and encouragement decreased. Because of this, baptizing early may seem advantageous, even easier, but given personal conviction accounted for so little of the decision process, this practice may be highly questionable – particularly when the most prominent theme expressed by participants for the Baptism belief was “baptismal candidates must understand the meaning of this decision and its importance.”

It would seem a significant number of young adults in this sample wished they had not been baptized so early because they were unaware of what they were committing to. This focus on numbers was even described in one participant response as though others “don’t care for each individual’s relationship and walk with Christ.” One of the reasons the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not practice infant baptism is due to their belief that a person has the right to make an informed choice about their faith, endorsement of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism and membership within the church organization. However, the practice of helicopter-baptism might be negating this belief. Cohorts 2 and 3 will explore if young adults believe they were baptized too young along with a number of other aspects relating to baptism.

It may be suggested that it is efficacious to baptize children, tweens, and teens, even though they may not have an adequate understanding of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, contending that they can always learn these things later in “post baptism nurture.” This attitude may be perceived as paternalistic and is highly problematic as the self-reported knowledge of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism reported in the section above indicates that this type of nurture has either not taken place, or has been largely ineffective. After baptism there is little benefit or motivation for a busy church pastor to conduct this type of nurture as they have already received a statistical reward for baptizing a new member, and must spread his/her limited time among a number of members of their church. The young adult may not have any incentive either, as they have already been baptized and may not possess the maturity to perceive the need for further study. Even at a university level very few young adults signed up for RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith in order to learn more about the 28 Beliefs of Adventism. The demographic inventory showed that the overwhelming majority took the class simply because they needed a Religion General Education class that fit their schedule.

“Post baptism nurture” contradicts the predominant theme expressed by young adults in relation to *Belief 15 – Baptism*, which is “baptismal candidates must understand the meaning of this decision and its importance.” Also, if “post baptism nurture” is the current strategy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, some may wonder why not practice infant baptism? Making a mature and informed choice resonated with young adults, and early baptism may contradict this and cause suspicion that numbers or paternalism is the motivating factor, rather than personal conviction and what is best for an individual’s long term spiritual experience. Thus, it may also be timely to investigate the issue of paternalism within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, focusing on its actual efficacy, ethical considerations, and the potential negative ramifications it can have, particularly with regard to the retention of young adults in North America. Some of these issues will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

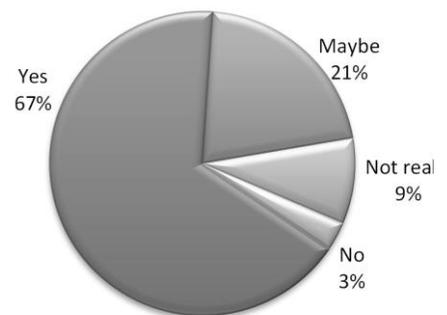
decisions – something a young person may later resent or inhibit them from developing independent decision making skills.

It may be appropriate for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to perhaps consider introducing a different symbolic practice for children or tweens other than baptism, one that would allow them to feel included, make a public declaration of their commitment to God/Jesus,³⁷ while still respecting that they may not be at an age where they fully understand the ramifications and rationale of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism.³⁸ While some may ask, “When will a young person, or any church member for that matter, be able to understand the 28 Beliefs of Adventism?” Conversely, if written in clear language with examples and a focus on an application in everyday life, one could also ask, “Why wouldn’t a literate adult understand them?” If literate adult church members of any age are unable to understand the 28 Beliefs of Adventism, this would suggest that, in their current form, they are unintelligible and may require revision. Such revision may also have the added benefit of making them more understandable to children, tweens, and teens, with personal conviction perhaps becoming a more prominent part of their decision to be baptized.

Given the issue of paternalism discussed above, if an additional symbolic practice other than baptism is introduced for younger Seventh-day Adventists, it is done in transparent consultation with a number of children, tweens and teens from a diverse range of ethnic, family and social backgrounds so as to identify a practice that is meaningful to them and their spiritual walk - not necessarily what their parents or church leaders believe should be meaningful to them.

The *Beyond Beliefs* demographic inventory also asked participants if they could do it again, would they still have chosen to be baptized. The results are represented in the chart to the right.

Would you do it again?

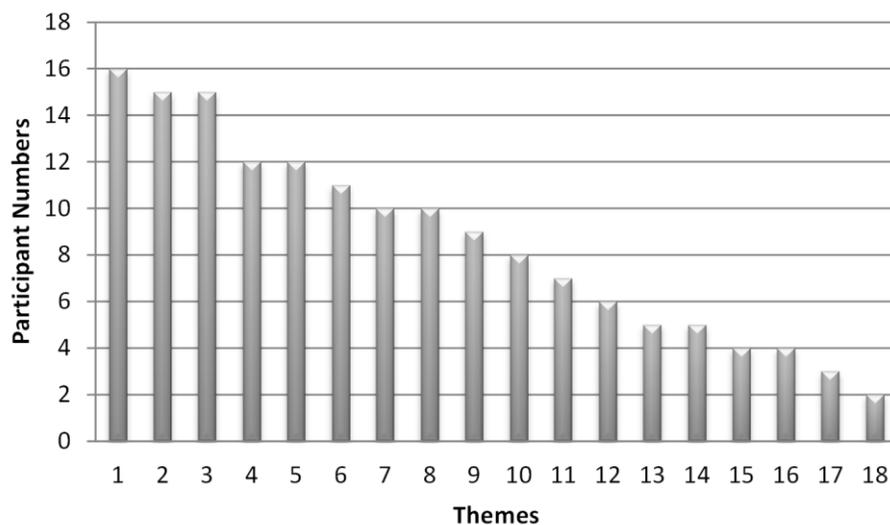


This outcome is interesting as it would seem the majority would choose again to be baptized or would at least consider it. Thus, early baptism may not be as necessary as once thought. More study regarding baptism and young people that investigates factors other than its correlation with retention may be timely. The focus of future researchers, given the findings of this study and the issue of paternalism, should always be the spiritual wellbeing of that young person; respect for their personal walk with God, both now and in the future; and their right to make an informed decision regarding baptism and membership within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

³⁷ See *Belief 4 – God the Son* which suggests that Jesus is the preferred member of the Godhead by young adults and may be the Godhead figure young people may like to commit to. This finding, however, should only be implemented after further consultation with a range of young people to determine if it is consistent across cultures, ethnicities, gender and socioeconomic groups.

³⁸ It must be noted that Jesus was not baptized until age 30 (Luke 3:1-22), at the beginning of his ministry (this should not be confused with the regular practice of Mikvah performed multiple times during a Jewish person’s life). He was however, presented at the temple as an infant by his parents (Luke 2:22-40), a practice that is mirrored in the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baby dedications. We can also assume that at age 12 he participated in a bar mitzvah (an event alluded to in the Gospels when Jesus impressed the religious leaders in the Temple, Luke 2:41-52), which is when a Jewish child makes a personal commitment to adhere to God’s laws and does so publically. Thus, a symbolic practice for Seventh-day Adventist children or tweens, other than baptism, may mirror Christ’s life while reserving baptism for an age when they can make a mature decision regarding their faith and their endorsement of the 28 Beliefs of Adventism.

Baptism - Themes



THEMES

1	Baptismal candidates must be able to understand the meaning of this decision and its importance	44 %
2	Baptism is a public expression of commitment	42 %
3	Baptism is associated with accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior	42 %
4	Christ becomes my guide after baptism	33 %
5	Baptism symbolizes death to old ways and becoming a new person	33 %
6	Baptism entails full emersion in water	31 %
7	Associated with the forgiveness of sins	28 %
8	Believers should follow Jesus' example and be baptized	28 %
9	Baptism is a covenant between the candidate and God	25 %
10	Linked to Salvation	22 %
11	Symbolizes Christ's death and resurrection	19 %
12	Baptism is not a guarantee for salvation	17 %
13	The baptized person becomes a part of the unity of the church	14 %
14	Baptized into Adventist membership	14 %
15	It felt good to be baptized	11 %
16	Beginning of a metaphoric journey	11 %
17	Should be an intimate experience rather than a public one	8 %
18	Makes no difference to a believers spiritual life	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS LIKE THE CONCEPT OF BAPTISM**

Young adults in this study were very positive about the concept of baptism, however, 36% expressed reservations about how it was practiced - namely that people were baptized who did not fully understand the meaning and importance of this practice.

- **IT IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY**

Only 11% actually articulated that baptism was a part of a spiritual journey and not an end point. This may be something to reiterate with young adults as the "journey" provides a succinct illustration of many of the themes young adults associate with baptism.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **HELICOPTER-BAPTISM**

A number of young adults in this study stated they were too young when they were baptized and did not really understand the meaning and importance of baptism. This study also found that personal conviction among those who were aged 13 or less when they were baptized accounted for only 22%. More research into the consequences of early baptism needs to be explored as this practice may run the risk of making young adults feel that they are just a number to their church rather than a human being whose walk with God was respected enough to provide them the opportunity to make a mature and informed decision about their faith and their association with the Seventh-day Adventist church. This concept and other baptism related issues will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study.

- **"A RIGHT OF PASSAGE"**

Given the feedback relating to helicopter-baptism and the importance that young adults place (44%) on baptismal candidates being able to understand the meaning of this decision and its importance, perhaps rather than baptizing preteens, the Seventh-day Adventist church may like to implement another symbolic practice (like the bar/bat mitzvah in Judaism or confirmation in Catholicism/Lutheranism) for this age group.

16

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Savior. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christ-like humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians.

*1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Matt. 26:17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6:48-63;
13:1-17*

Belief 16

The Lord's Supper

Number of Responses for this Belief = 34

The participants noted that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic practice (32%) in memory of Jesus' death on the cross (32%) and points forward to the Second Coming and the Heavenly feast (26%). They also recognize the symbolic nature of foot washing which symbolizes a willingness to serve one another (32%) and signifies a renewed cleansing of the heart (15%). Several participants take part in the Lord's Supper to follow Jesus' example (18%) and consider the ordinance as an opportunity to renew relationships between church members in unity (18%) and is a time for self-examination, reflection, confession of sin, and repentance (15%).

Differing perspectives emerge with 18% of the participants articulating that they found the communion service relevant since this was an ordinance they had taken part in, although 18% of the sample stated that they did not find this belief important to their life. One participant writes:

"I think it is a pretty belief – a time to confess sin, to be reminded of Jesus' sacrifice for us. It is a lovely thing. The last supper had great significance to Jesus' story, it was a very personal thing for Him and His disciples, and so it should be for us. I think this is an odd fundamental. I believe communion and all its parts are good, but it seems a bit odd that it's in the fundamentals. Why is it a belief? What's there to believe? It is not so much a statement of "this is what we think" but "this is a thing we do" which is mostly about things you should be doing anyway, confession, serving others. The only unusual thing is the bread and "wine", but since we don't believe them to be the actual body why do we bother with that? Church communion is not relevant to my life at this point. I am open to that changing, but to this point I haven't been involved with it often. I believe in confession, and that it is good to remember Christ's sacrifice, but I do not see why communion is any more special than any other church function."

There also seems to be some confusion among the participants regarding who can participate in this ordinance, 15% note that all Christians can participate, while 9% state that only baptized members can do so. One participant goes so far as to state:

"This fundamental is very important because it is something that God takes very seriously. I have even heard stories of people who tried to sneak and take part in the Lord's Supper even though they were not baptized. It is said that once they took a bite out of the bread they fell over, dead."

The Seventh-day Adventist church may need to clarify who can participate in the Lord's Supper as a point of urgency as clearly extreme dogmas exist and this may create a menacing association with the practice. The inclusion of non-baptized people, particularly children, in the Lord's Supper service may be an instrument that can be used by the Seventh-day Adventist church to communicate the message of Christianity to young members. A similar practice is used in Judaism where children actively participate in the Passover meal (the

origin of the Lord's Supper) and is considered a way of communicating God's act of deliverance to the next generation.

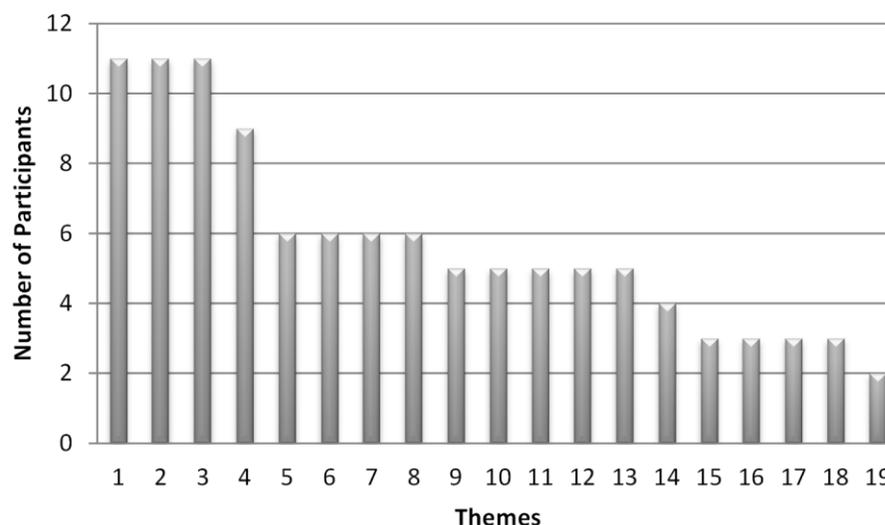
Another participant writes that he/she feels judged when not participating:

"I also hated being judged by people in the church or by my own parents for not always participating in communion. It really is not relevant to my life. I do not mind this being in our fundamental beliefs though. It only affects my life when it goes on in church and if I decide whether or not I want to stay. I just dislike being judged for not doing it, because it seems like I do not want to have anything to do with God to other people."

Another sentiment expressed was the danger of this ordinance becoming a ritual that church members participate in without keeping in mind its deeper meaning, what it is supposed to teach, and its association with baptism, as noted in the following quote:

"What I didn't like about this chapter is how it has become just another thing that we do in the Adventist church. The reason I say this is because if Adventists truly believed in the foot washing, a lot of the fighting and juvenile things would be put away, but the Adventist church still struggles with this. I do believe that this fundamental is important though for Adventists. I feel as though this will help them grow together instead of pushing them further apart. In the ways that I feel that it isn't important is that it give us a sense of repetition in the Adventist church and other Christian dominations, and the true meaning can often be forgotten just like baptism. If it is truly remembered and upheld as a sacred thing I believe it can be very powerful. Lastly, I think that this is relevant in my life due to the fact that I know about it and have been raised up with this information and that I have performed it once at a summer camp. Other than that it's not really relevant to my life and has very little meaning."

The Lord's Supper - Themes



THEMES

1	The Lord's Supper is a symbolic practice	32 %
2	The Lord's Supper is in memory of Jesus' death on the cross	32 %
3	The act of foot washing symbolizes a willingness to serve one another	32 %
4	The Lord's Supper points forward to the second coming/the heavenly feast	26 %
5	Participants only find the communion service relevant because they have participated in it	18 %
6	Not a very important belief	18 %
7	Participants take part in the Lord's Supper since Jesus did, and they want to follow his example	18 %
8	The Lord's Supper acts to renew relationships between church members and unify them	18 %
9	Foot washing signifies a renewed cleansing of the heart	15 %
10	The Lord's Supper is open to all believers	15 %
11	The Lord's Supper creates a fellowship of forgiveness	15 %
12	The Lord's Supper reminds believers what Jesus did for them	15 %
13	The Lord's Supper is a time for self-examination/reflection/confession of sin/repentance	15 %
14	Participants articulated that they express their faith in Jesus through the Lord's Supper	12 %
15	Only baptized members can participate in the last supper	9 %
16	The Lord's Supper is a time to renew a personal commitment with God	9 %
17	The Lord's Supper should be a happy occasion	9 %
18	The Lord's Supper is a "mini baptism" because it points back to when a believer was first baptized	9 %
19	A person has to prepare him/herself before participating in the Lord's Supper	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **RECOGNIZE THE SYMBOLISM**
Some young adults recognize the symbolism associated with the Lord's Supper. Approximately a third identified the symbolism of Jesus' death (32%) and a third identified the symbolism of foot washing in serving others (32%). To a lesser extent, they recognized the symbolism associated with the Second Coming and the Heavenly feast (26%) and a renewed cleansing of the heart (15%).
- **FOLLOWS JESUS' EXAMPLE**
Some young adults take part in the Lord's Supper because this was a ritual instigated and undertaken by Jesus himself.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **MAY BECOME A RITUAL**
One participant expressed concern that this practice may become a ritual that church members participate in without keeping in mind its deeper meaning and what it is supposed to teach. Also, the connection between the Lord's Supper and baptism was not readily expressed by participants.
- **JUDGED**
Some young adults expressed they felt judged if they do not participate. Perhaps greater emphasis needs to be placed on the voluntary aspect of the practice.
- **WHO CAN PARTICIPATE**
Participation in the Lord's Supper needs to be clarified urgently as extreme dogmas exist and may create a menacing association with the practice. Including children in this practice may be a way to communicate the message of Christianity with young members.

17

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love.

Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11

Belief 17

Spiritual Gifts & Ministries

Number of Responses for this Belief = 36

The theme, “God gives spiritual gifts to everyone,” was one of the most prevalent themes in the *Beyond Beliefs* study with 75% of participants articulating this theme in their response. Participants also stated that these gifts build up the church and further its mission (47%) and note it is the Holy Spirit who distributes these gifts (33%) to glorify God (33%). Also, 36% suggested spiritual gifts are given to win souls for God by spreading the gospel and to minister and serve others (22%).

Young adults recognize that there are different types of spiritual gifts (31%) and they are required to use them (28%). However, only a relative few emphasized that no one person or gift should be considered more important than another (14%), although 6% disclosed that they felt that the church/some people seem to value some gifts more than others. One participant writes:

“What I dislike about this fundamental is that there are some people who feel that they are superior than others because the talents they were given are idolized or deemed necessary in church. I feel that this way of thinking is not healthy and needs to be changed. This fundamental is important because it teaches us that God has given us all a gift that we need to utilize in bringing people closer to him and spreading his gospel. Many people feel that they do not have a talent or that their talent is insignificant compared to other people, but this is not true. No matter how small you may think your talent is, you should use it to glorify God.”

Another participant suggested that pride may be associated with some gifts:

“Another point that the chapter made out was that God gave these gifts and that they should be used to his glory and that all the praise belongs to him. I feel that this is important in one small area. When gifts are involved I feel as though pride often follows in the Adventist church. I feel that this chapter is important to them especially since we live in such a prideful age today. It’s important for us to remember that we are all a part of a body, and that all of us are needed and that all of us are equal just different roles.”

There were some who also stated that they didn’t know what their spiritual gift or talent was (14%), some even expressed that they were afraid that they would lose their spiritual gift (11%) and a small number wished they had been given a different set of gifts (6%). Two participants expressed their frustration this way:

“What I don’t like about this gift is that I don’t know what my spiritual gift is. I feel like I don’t really have a gift. I’m just intelligent. The second thing I don’t like about this fundamental belief is that if my gift is

intelligence, I don't know how to use it in the church. It's not like I can get on the pulpit and spout facts at the congregation. The third thing I don't like about spiritual gifts is that I'm absolutely terrified that I might not use the gift and get it taken away, or even worse, use it for the devil instead of God."

"I like that this fundamental says that all members of the church are given gifts, because I think this is an often over-looked truth. The part that I do not like though, is that it says "functions recognized by the church." This implies that some callings are not recognized by the church, which is a sentiment that does not sit well with me. If God has given someone a gift, why should the church not recognize it? I think that this is a fault of the church, and that the church should be responsible for finding ways to use everyone's God-given gifts. I think this fundamental is important because it explains the importance of using our God-given gifts. This fundamental is relevant in my life because I have my own God-given gifts. The reason I am unsettled by part of it is because I do not feel like I fit into the list of acceptable functions, which I think is incorrect."

With a slightly different nuance, some participants expressed that if one didn't use their spiritual gift, God would take it away from them and give it to someone else (11%), 6% stated that they really didn't know how they could use their spiritual gifts. It would seem the issue of spiritual gifts is not sufficiently defined by the Seventh-day Adventist church and for some young people this is unsettling. It would seem some would like to use their gifts, but do not feel they are given the opportunity, are outshined by others who share their gift, or feel they may be evaluated if they share their gift.

"I was struggling on deciding whether to perform something at church or not because I was afraid that people would think that I am not "good" or "holy" enough to be sharing something spiritual with others. However, after reading this doctrine I can see that I should use my gifts from God for my own spiritual well-being and not to please others. It's hard for people to use their gifts in church because everyone likes to judge what is done and rate it based on their own preferences. The talents we are given can be easily used for prideful purposes, which must be avoided or else there is no point in having a gift. I like the goal of this doctrine as it speaks heavily on the harmony of the church and using our spiritual gifts to enhance spiritual growth. I also appreciated the part of the doctrine that spoke about discovering gifts as some people may think they have a gift which they do not possess. I believe everyone has a spiritual gift, but the church tends to value some gifts over others. This is why this doctrine is important and relevant because it reminds believers of why we have gifts and how they should be correctly used."

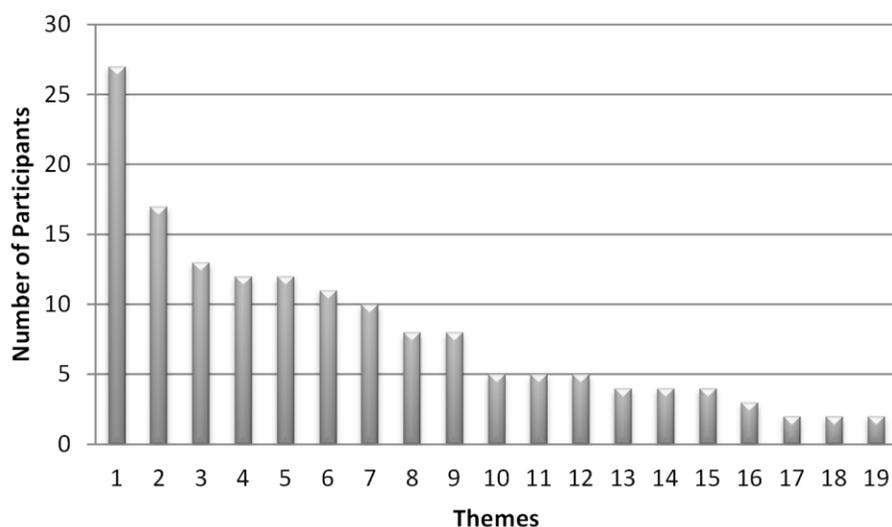
There also seems to be some confusion between spiritual gifts and talents and how those gifts are received, developed, and distributed, as the two following participant responses demonstrate:

"I do not believe that God bestows gifts upon us and the Holy Spirit is the one who divvies it up. I think we are either born with natural abilities and others learn their abilities. There is no gift that was given to you, otherwise you would not have to spend some/all of your life trying to find it. And there are those autistic savants, their gifts are in one area and they are lacking in all other areas. Do you mean to tell me that God gave them that gift at the sake of a manageable life? It is important to the Adventist view in that it helps give us an explanation of what happens when some people perform better than others at a given skill, however, it can be either dumbed down to luck, or practice, and the capability to do that skill - such as, you can only walk if you have legs."

"I did not like the fact that the commentary implied that only those in the church are given these gifts. If that was so, how does one explain those who are extremely talented outside of the church? And if only

those in the church have said gifts, if you were not a part of the church but once you became a member of the church, does one magically gain those gifts as you come up from the water in the baptismal pool?"

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries - Themes



THEMES

1	God has given spiritual gifts to everyone	75 %
2	Spiritual gifts are given to build up the church/further it's mission	47 %
3	Spiritual gifts are given to win souls for God/spread the gospel	36 %
4	The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts	33 %
5	Spiritual gifts should be used to glorify God	33 %
6	There are different types of spiritual gifts	31 %
7	I need to use my spiritual gifts	28 %
8	The spiritual gifts should be used to minister/serve others	22 %
9	Each member has a part in God's church/work	22 %
10	A person/spiritual gift should not be considered more important than another	14 %
11	Participant expressed that they did not know what their spiritual gift or talent was	14 %
12	Believers are able to show people God's love through their spiritual gifts	14 %
13	If you don't use your spiritual gift God may take it from you and give it to someone else	11 %
14	The spiritual gift should help fulfill God's will in the world	11 %
15	A person should not benefit themselves from their spiritual gifts	11 %
16	Participant expressed that they were afraid they would lose their spiritual gift	8 %
17	The church/some people seem to value some gifts more than others	6 %
18	Participant wished that they had a different set of gifts	6 %
19	Participant does not know how they could use their spiritual gifts in the church	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **THEY HAVE SPIRITUAL GIFTS**
Young adults really resonated with the concept of spiritual gifts. In fact, it was one of the most prominent themes in the entire study. However, there was some confusion surrounding what they were, how they are obtained, and how to use them. There was also concern relating to how these spiritual gifts may be abused or used by some to compete with other church members.
- **SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE TO BE USED TO FURTHER THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**
Young adults recognized the pivotal role of spiritual gifts in furthering the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church and spreading the gospel. This may account for why there were also concerns for how they are bestowed and how they are used.
- **ONE SPIRITUAL GIFT IS NOT MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY OTHER**
Young adults recognize that some spiritual gifts are not more important than others and each person has a part to play in "God's plan."

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **DEFINE WHAT A SPIRITUAL GIFT IS**
Some young adults do not have a clear idea of what a spiritual gift is and how it is bestowed. This may need to be addressed to alleviate potential concerns young adults may have regarding the removal of gifts. There is also some confusion between a spiritual gift and a talent.
- **PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUNG PEOPLE TO USE THEIR GIFTS**
One may well ask if an individual is not encouraged or provided an opportunity to exercise one's gift, are they still in danger of having it removed because of lack of use? As this concept is still largely undefined, the nurturing of gifts may be required for shy young adults. The expectation that they should create their own opportunities may be unreasonable given the variability in personality types among young adults.
- **SAFEGUARD AGAINST "CELEBRITIES" ARISING DUE TO GIFTS**
Some of the young adults expressed concerns relating to the rise of a pseudo celebrity with relation to some spiritual gifts, or when a gift is used to compete with others. It is recommended, given the negative response young adults had to this behavior, that the Seventh-day Adventist church may like to be vigilant in proactively ensuring opportunities are distributed equally among all young adults (and older church members too) and not resigned to a few who may be prominent or may be the young adult children of prominent members/leadership.

18

The Gift of Prophecy

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.

Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10

Belief 18

The Gift of Prophecy

Number of Responses for this Belief = 34

This belief seems to be dealing primarily with Ellen G. White's role in the Seventh-day Adventist church, rather than the spiritual gift of prophecy in general. Despite this, only 68% of participants mentioned her (both positively and negatively) in their response, leaving 32% who did not mention her at all, but rather, discussed other aspects of this belief. Approximately a quarter (24%) of the participants voiced some concerns regarding this belief. These included concern that it concentrated on Ellen G. White rather than the spiritual gift of prophecy as is suggested by the title; that Seventh-day Adventists look to Ellen G. White rather than the Bible; that her writings are dated and some are irrelevant to this generation; there was not enough emphasis on future prophets; it overly glorifies Ellen G. White; and it focuses on one person rather than the church being a prophetic movement. From this it would seem that the young adults in this sample did not have a problem with Ellen G. White personally, or of her being perceived as a prophet, but rather, they took an issue with how her writings were applied and the persona some in the modern church have given her. The Seventh-day Adventist church may perceive that young adults may not know who Ellen G. White is, but from this sample, this does not seem to be the case.

It is interesting to note that 38% stated there would be more prophets, and were positive towards this concept. Thus, like any other spiritual gift, God could give this gift to anyone he chose and 9% of this sample stated that they were confident that they did not personally have this gift. However, one participant noted the following, "My sister, I believe, has the gift of prophecy. Every dream she has ever dreamt about something, someone or an event happening, has taken place. I believe that, that is a divine gift from God and believe it or not her dreams always come true." Participants also expressed that there was a process for identifying a prophet (24%), however, many did not articulate what it was, including the participant who is quoted above. They also expressed that there was difficulty in identifying who is a true prophet. Thus, it is recommended that when discussing prophetic gifts, it may also be salient to also reiterate the actual process for identifying a prophetic gift.

Another theme that was articulated by participants was that prophets/prophecies are important for the Christian church (35%) and that Ellen G. White's writings could help people understand the Bible or God better (32%). Having said that however, 24% emphasized that the Bible is more important than Ellen G. White's writings and that the Bible should be the standard for which everything should be tested (21%). However, some participants

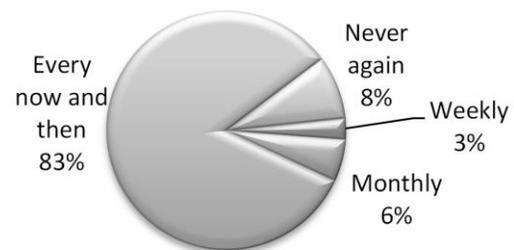
viewed Ellen G. White's writings as useful for guidance/instruction/correction (18%). Only 9% expressed that the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs are based on both Ellen G. White's writings and the Bible.

The demographic inventory which was administered to participants as a part of this study asked if they had read any of Ellen G. White's writings and how often they did this. It also asked them to identify their perception of her. The results are as follows:

Have you read any of Ellen G. White's writings?

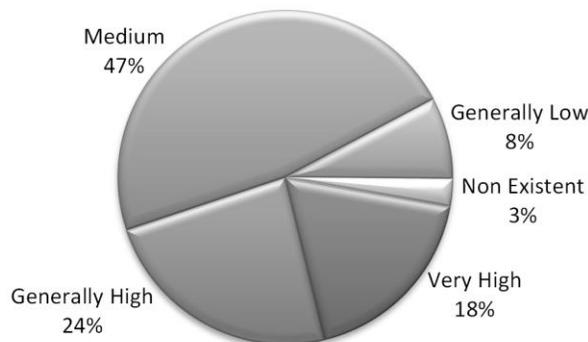


How often do you read Ellen G. White?



It must be noted that in Cohort 1 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study no participants stated in the demographics inventory that they read Ellen G. White's writings daily, even though this was among the options they could select. Interestingly, the infrequent reading of Ellen G. White seems to have little impact on their perceived levels of spiritual commitment. The spiritual commitment levels reported by this sample are as follows:

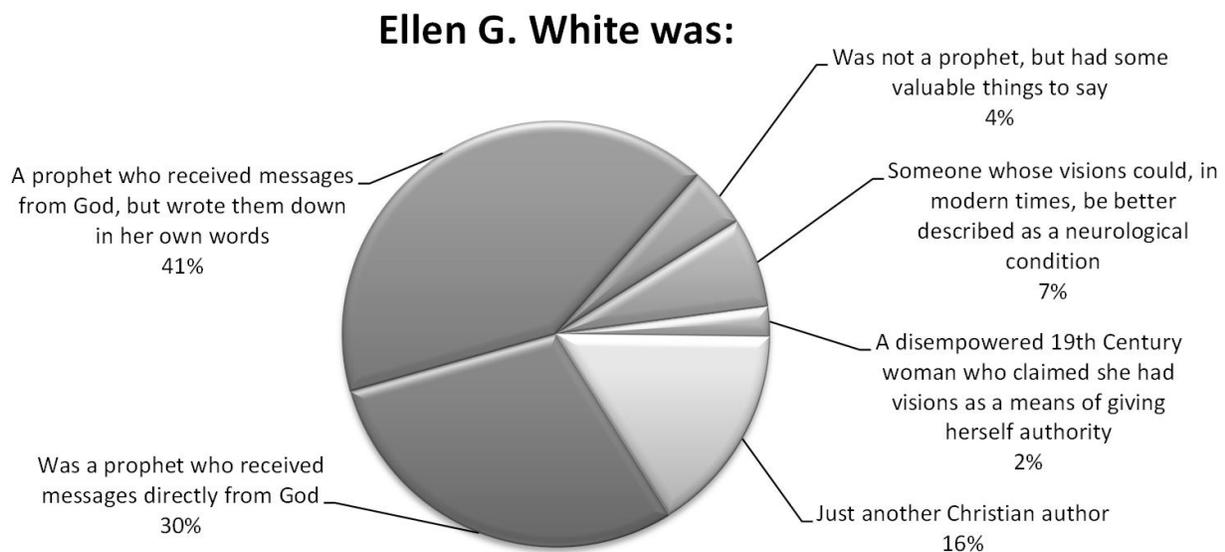
Level of Spiritual Commitment



It would be interesting to determine if there is a positive correlation between spiritual commitment and reading Ellen G. White's writings in young adult populations, although this type of data analysis may be impossible as the results in the previous charts seem to indicate very few young adults actually read her work on a regular basis. This correlation analysis was outside the scope of the Cohort 1 report and given the finding above, which seems to indicate that 42% of this sample identify with very high or generally high levels of spiritual commitment, it may be timely to undertake further study to determine to what extent reading Ellen G. White's writings influences the perceived levels of spiritual commitment among young adults, if in fact it does. It may also be

interesting to determine at the same time if a correlation exists between spiritual commitment and reading the Bible or even other Christian writers. It may also be salient to include a group who read no religious material and identify their levels of self-report spiritual commitment. It could well be that correlation may not be evidence of causation, and as such, a number of other potential contributing factors may need to be investigated in such a study like what factors influence a Millennial young adult when evaluating their own spiritual commitment. Given that no participant indicated that they read Ellen G. White daily, only 3% weekly, and only 6% monthly, it would seem, at present, that this factor has little or no impact on the perceived spiritual commitment of Millennial young adults in Cohort 1. This will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study with larger samples.

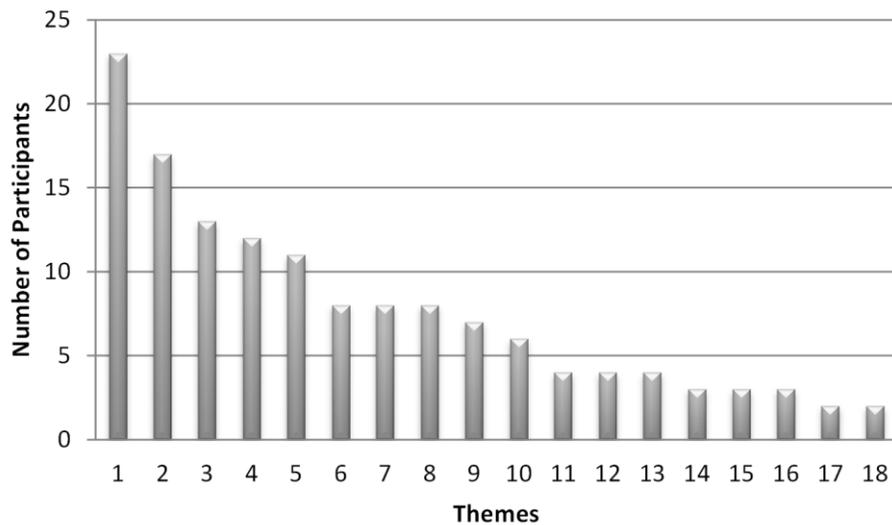
The demographic inventory also asked participants to identify their perception of Ellen White. These results are as follows:



None of the participants indicated that they believed Ellen G. White is no longer relevant, which was another option offered in the demographic inventory.

Given that Ellen G. White figures as an integral part of *Belief 18 – The Gift of Prophecy*, this finding presents the Seventh-day Adventist Church the challenge to represent her in a way which would resonate more with the current generation of young adults. A lack of regular reading of Ellen G. White’s writings does not seem to influence the participants’ perceived levels of spiritual commitment, thus, having her resonate with young adults may not be an immediate priority, but one the Ellen G. White Estate may like to consider in the future. Further research may identify what influences the spiritual commitment levels of young adults and may identify a part that Ellen G. White’s writings could play in this process.

The Gift of Prophecy - Themes



THEMES

1	Participants who mentioned Ellen G. White in their response	68 %
2	Ellen G. White is a prophet	50 %
3	There will be prophets in the last days/anyone may receive the prophetic gift	38 %
4	Prophets/prophesies are important for the Christian church	35 %
5	Ellen G. White helps believers understand the Bible and/or God better	32 %
6	Participants who voiced concerns regarding this belief	24 %
7	The Bible is more important than Ellen G. White's writings	24 %
8	Participants articulated that there was a process for identifying a prophet (they did not necessarily state what it was)	24 %
9	The Bible is the standard by which everything should be tested	21 %
10	Ellen G. White's writings provide guidance/instruction/correction	18 %
11	What Ellen G. White wrote is important	12 %
12	Participant stated they were not comfortable with Ellen G. White's role in the church	12 %
13	Participant noted that it was difficult to identify who is a true prophet	12 %
14	Participant identified that they do not possess the gift of prophecy	9 %
15	Seventh-day Adventist beliefs are based on both Ellen G. White's writings and the Bible	9 %
16	Ellen G. White proves that the Seventh-day Adventist church has the truth/is the remnant church	9 %
17	Participant stated this was not an important belief	6 %
18	Prophets are an identifier of God's church	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF ELLEN G. WHITE**
Young people are aware of Ellen G. White and do hold opinions about how she is portrayed and how her writings are applied by some. They did not articulate anything against her personally. The Seventh-day Adventist church may perceive that young people do not know who she is, but from this sample, this does not seem to be the case.
- **YOUNG ADULTS ARE AWARE THAT THERE IS DIFFICULTY IN DETERMINING A “TRUE” PROPHET**
Young adults stated that the prophetic gift may be given to anyone God chooses, are positive towards this process, and 9% of this sample identified that they did not personally have this gift. They also stated that there was a process for identifying a prophet, however, many did not articulate what it was. Thus, it is recommended that when discussing prophetic gifts, it may also be important to reiterate the actual process for identifying a prophetic gift.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **WHAT REALLY IMPACTS SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT LEVELS IN YOUNG ADULTS AND WHAT PART (IF ANY) ELLEN G. WHITE’S WRITINGS PLAY**
Further research may identify what influences the spiritual commitment levels of young adults and the part that Ellen G. White’s writings play in this process.
- **PRESENT ELLEN G. WHITE IN A WAY THAT RESONATES BETTER WITH YOUNG ADULTS**
Young adults do not read Ellen G. White’s writings extensively, yet, the majority believe she is a prophet. This may be because her writings are not presented in a way that resonates or is appealing to young adults. The Seventh-day Adventist church may like to consider rectifying this, however, it may not be an immediate priority given it does not seem to impact their levels of spiritual commitment.

19

The Law of God

The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness.

Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps.

19:7-14

Belief 19

The Law of God

Number of Responses for this Belief = 34

A number of participants noted that God's law is the Ten Commandments (53%) which functions as guidelines to show what behavior he desires from humanity (59%). Approximately a quarter (24%) articulated that God gave the Ten Commandments to humanity out of love and that they show his character and his ways (35%). Also, the participants felt that the Commandments explain what it means to love God (24%) and what it means to love your fellow human beings (24%). It was also noted that obedience to the Ten Commandments is the fruit of salvation (32%). Thus, a person cannot earn salvation (29%), but salvation comes through grace and faith (38%).

However, some participants emphasized that the Ten Commandments point out sin (26%), that followers of Christ keep the Ten Commandments (18%), and that they are the standard of the judgment (15%). Therefore, some young adults expressed that a person will not make it into heaven if he/she does not keep the Ten Commandments (12%). There clearly is one complication relating to the Commandments and that is, does one keep the commandments because they are a Christian, or because they want to become one? Two participants expressed it this way:

"This fundamental is relevant to me because I have the freedom of choice to obey these laws. It is my choice to follow these laws and how I follow these laws. My biggest struggle would probably be the difference of following these laws because I am a Christian or the fact that I am a Christian because I follow these laws."

"This fundamental is so relevant in my life because following God's law is something I strive for every day. Of course, there is a fine balance between obeying the Law BECAUSE one is saved and obeying the law TO be saved. The Pharisees, for example, were legalistic in that they made up their own rules and regulations to follow the Law rather than focusing on abiding by its principles and why each law was made in the first place. It's a constant battle, for many of us who have grown up in the church especially."

This issue may require further investigation by the Seventh-day Adventist church as it appears that young adults may perceive that the Ten Commandments are something you follow because of your faith, but feel some type of pressure (either real or imagined) that by keeping the Ten Commandments they obtain salvation. Some even feel that the Ten Commandments can be misused by some to judge others. One participant explained it this way:

"What I like about the Ten Commandments is that they bring structure to our world. It gives moral and spiritual guidance and the world absolutely needs it. To me it when I read the Ten Commandments it points out that I am sinner and should learn to do right. What I don't like about the Ten Commandments

is how some “Christians” throw it into people’s faces to constantly point out their sins when they should take a look at their own. The Ten Commandments are important because of what I said before, it brings structure. Also, the book says it’s a reflection of God’s character. The Ten Commandments are relevant in my life because, like before, it points out that I’m a sinner. They are guidelines for my spiritual life, although I feel some of the Commandments are common sense like “Thou shall not murder.” But I guess it wasn’t common sense to the people back then.”

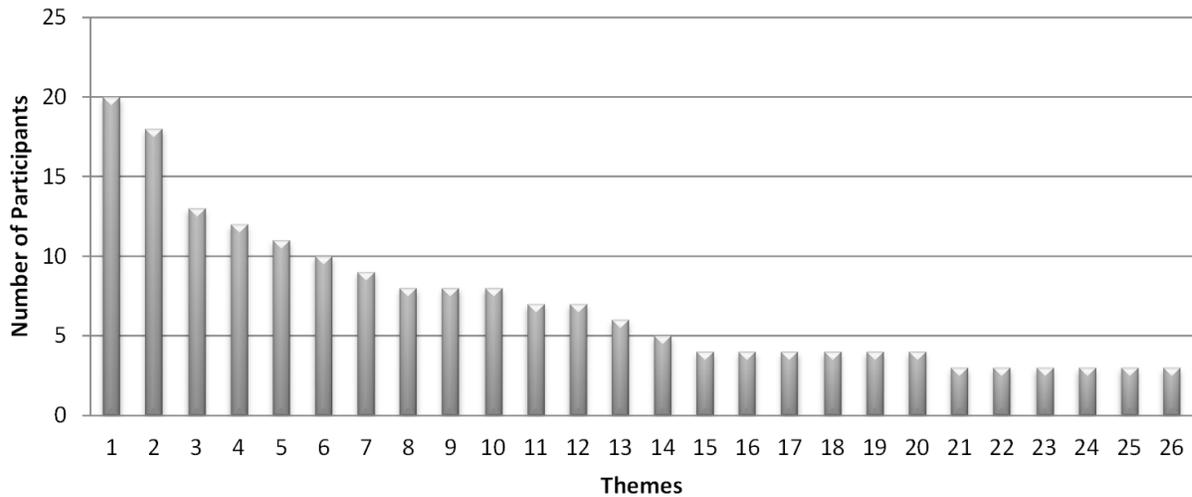
This belief generated the most number of themes, not because the participants disagree with the belief, but rather, it seems that they are attempting to express the relevance of the belief in their own lives. This is noteworthy as it is a recurring finding in the *Beyond Beliefs* study that young adults seem to gravitate towards making a belief relevant when it has a day to day application within their lives.

Two participants expressed surprise that this belief is not one of the first beliefs mentioned, due to the importance that is placed on it. They write:

“What I didn’t like so much about this chapter was how it was placed so late in the book. I think this should have been placed earlier with the topics such as baptism and repentance since they go hand in hand. This chapter doesn’t really have a purpose being read so late. I think that this fundamental is important in the Adventist church due to the fact that it gives the people some structure and somewhere to aim on their walk with Christ.”

“I was surprised that this doctrine was so late in the book, as I believe God’s Law is one of the foundations of Christianity. I think the Ten Commandments are simple, but we tend to make them complicated by adding exceptions and limitations, which is probably the devil’s way of trying to distract us from obeying the laws in the first place.”

The Law of God - Themes



THEMES

1	God's commandments show what He wants from humanity/they are guidelines	59%
2	God's Law is the 10 Commandments	53%
3	Salvation comes through grace/faith	38%
4	God's Law show His character/His way	35%
5	Obedience to the 10 Commandments is the fruit of salvation	32%
6	A person cannot earn salvation	29%
7	God's 10 Commandments point out sin	26%
8	The 10 Commandments explain what it means to love God	24%
9	The 10 Commandments explain what it means to love your fellow human being	24%
10	God gave/made the 10 Commandments / made them out of love	24%
11	God's Law makes life more enjoyable / makes life better	21%
12	The 10 Commandments help believers do God's will / be pleasing to God	21%
13	Followers of Christ keep the 10 Commandments	18%
14	The 10 Commandments are the standard of Judgment	15%
15	The 10 Commandments are kept out of love for God	12%
16	The 10 Commandments are exemplified in the life of Christ	12%
17	It is hard/difficult to follow the 10 Commandments	12%
18	A person will not make it into heaven if he/she does not keep the 10 Commandments	12%
19	We should try to understand and follow the 10 Commandments	12%
20	Faith and works go together when obtaining salvation	12%
21	God's Law is an agent in the conversion process	9%
22	Keeping the 10 Commandments makes us different from the people of the world	9%
23	The 10 Commandments gives freedom	9%
24	The 10 Commandments helps us develop a Christ-like character	9%
25	The definition of sin is the breaking God's Law	9%
26	The 10 Commandments are the basis of God's Covenant	9%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **THE PURPOSE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**
Young adults recognize that God's law is the Ten Commandments which functions as guidelines to show what behavior he desires from humanity.
- **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH LOVE**
Participants felt that the Commandments, which were given in love, explain what it means to love God and what it means to love your fellow human beings.
- **OBEDIENCE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE THE RESULT OF SALVATION**
Participants expressed that obedience to the Ten Commandments are the fruit of salvation and are not obeyed in order to gain salvation.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **EMPHASIZE THAT OBEDIENCE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE THE RESULT OF SALVATION**
Some participants suggested that there is a fine balance between obeying the Law because one is saved and obeying the law to be saved.
- **EMPHASIZE THE PURPOSE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**
Ten Commandments can be misused by some to judge others. Misuse and abuse of religious faith is not a practice that young adults are willing to ignore or live with.
- **THIS BELIEF SHOULD APPEAR SOONER IN THE LIST OF 28 BELIEFS OF ADVENTISM**
Two participants expressed surprise that this belief appeared as Belief 19. The Seventh-day Adventist church may like to consider an earlier placement given the significance placed on this belief by young adults.

20

The Sabbath

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts.

Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32

Belief 20

The Sabbath

Number of Responses for this Belief = 33

This is a belief that resonated strongly with the young adult participants with 27% noting that this belief was one of the most important Seventh-day Adventist beliefs; 39% stated it was what makes Seventh-day Adventists different from other Christian faiths, and is also reflected in the name of the church (15%). Most participants emphasized that the Sabbath is a day of rest (82%), a day to worship/spend time with God (73%), and to a lesser extent, a day to spend time with family and friends (33%). Participants also noted that the Sabbath was a memorial of the creation (46%) and felt that since God rested on the Sabbath, at the conclusion of the creation week, this was an example for believers follow (30%).

The most prominent theme of this belief was also the theme that garnered the most reference in the entire study. An enormous 82% of young adults emphasized that the Sabbath was a day of rest. When examining participant responses, they contextualized “rest” as a time not to do study, school work, or chores. This result may be representative of this group of university aged young adults, however, it would be interesting to know if this sentiment regarding the Sabbath is expressed by young adults who have completed their schooling and joined the workforce. This may be a crucial topic for further investigation in the future. Such research may yield an opposite result given young adults in the workforce are often attempting to establish themselves financially and develop their careers - and taking a day off from work may result in lost income and opportunities. Or perhaps another aspect such as spending time with family and friends may be more prominent as they move away from being around their friends in a university or dormitory setting. Potential religious overload from numerous religious services on an Adventist university campus that may have put in place a habit of not attending non-compulsory church services should also be considered. Further research may even reveal an entirely different factor that may influence the attitudes young adults have toward the Sabbath and having an evidenced based, rather than anecdotal knowledge of this may prove instrumental in meeting the needs of these members as they transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Only 9% of participants stated Sabbath was a day to do good things for others. Given the finding stated in the previous paragraph, this may not be due to selfishness among young adults, but rather because of the enormous workload and stress they are under as they pursue university level education. The expectation that this type of individual should also be involved in community work or “programs” on Sabbath may be unreasonable. There may be benefits for young adults to take time to focus on others. However, it seems this is at the risk of placing more obligations into their already heavy schedule and may result in them associating doing good for others as

just another chore that demands their time. Again, this aspect could be investigated in the context of the research suggested above.

It is interesting to note that dictating to young adults what is good to do on the Sabbath and what is not good to do, may potentially create negative associations with the Sabbath and unreasonable expectations. Didactic instruction for young adults with regard to the Sabbath may not even be necessary. For example, one participant noted:

“Right now, this fundamental is very important because I don’t have my parents telling me what is right and what is wrong. They can’t force me to go to church and they aren’t around telling me what I cannot watch on Sabbath. I still follow their rules that they had when I was younger, but I feel as though I am making my own decision regarding the Sabbath, thus the Sabbath is a lot more enjoyable now than it ever was.”

Another wrote,

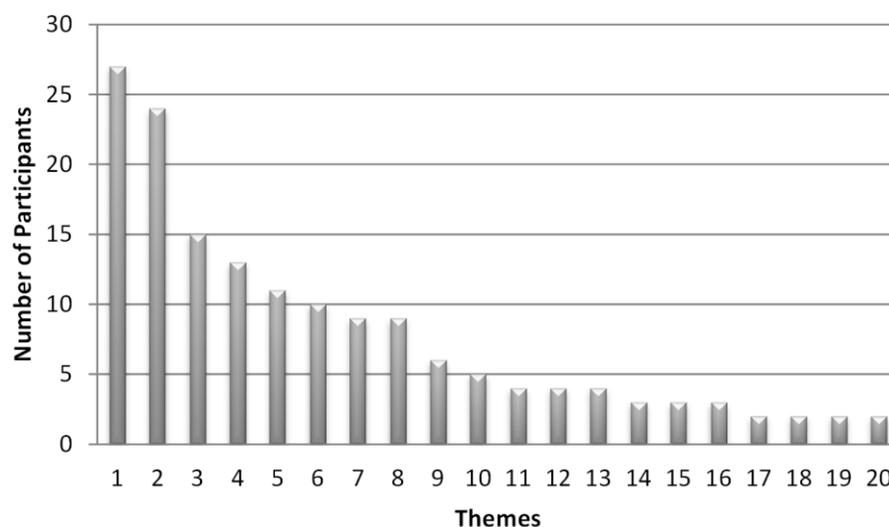
“What I dislike about this fundamental is that many people are a little extreme when it comes to observance of the Sabbath. For example, there are some extremely conservative Christians who would even say that going for a walk is breaking the Sabbath because it is a form of personal pleasure and takes your mind away from God. Because of that, many Christian kids feel as though the Sabbath is a day to be a prisoner in your own home.”

Yet another stated,

“The Sabbath! That day that as a child you think is just made to squash your precious time with your Disney videos, Dr. Seuss books, or non-Bible toys, but then when you grow up you realize it’s the most wonderful thing ever created! This is one of my favorite beliefs that we have in our church. Reason being, we can truly just drop everything and rest!”

As stated previously, it would seem when there is an advantageous reward associated with a belief, young adults are very positive towards that belief – particularly in this case where it is directly relevant to their daily life.

The Sabbath - Themes



THEMES

1	The Sabbath is a day of rest	82%
2	A day to worship God/spend time with God	73%
3	A memorial of the creation	46%
4	The keeping of the Sabbath (Saturday) makes Seventh-day Adventists different from other Christians	39%
5	A day to spend with family and friends	33%
6	God rested on the Sabbath and so should we	30%
7	One of the most important beliefs	27%
8	A day of celebration and/or joy	27%
9	A part of the 10 Commandments	18%
10	A part of the Seventh-day Adventist name	15%
11	A gift from God	12%
12	A sign of sanctification	12%
13	Eternal covenant with God	12%
14	A day to do good things for others	9%
15	A symbol of redemption in Christ	9%
16	A test during the end-time/salvation depends on it	9%
17	Participant mentioned Sunday laws/Mark of the beast in association with this belief	6%
18	You cannot have fun on the Sabbath	6%
19	Participant has been tempted to break the Sabbath	6%
20	Sabbath will also be celebrated in Heaven	6%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS ARE VERY POSITIVE TOWARDS THE "REST" ASPECT OF THE SABBATH**

The Seventh-day Adventist church has been successful in presenting the Sabbath as a day of rest to young adults. Young adults appreciate having a day when they can recuperate and spend time reconnecting with God, and spending time with family and friends with good conscience.

- **YOUNG ADULTS ASSOCIATE THE SABBATH WITH BEING A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST**

Many young adults believe the "Seventh-day" Sabbath is a belief that makes the Seventh-day Adventist church different from other Christian denominations. They show an appreciation for a day on which they can fully rest – something that is not proactively promoted in all other Christian denominations.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **DIDACTIC INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH REGARD TO THE SABBATH MAY NOT BE NECESSARY**

Young adults are no longer children, but are legal adults. There may be resentment towards older adults who still try to treat them as children and didactically tell them what to do. It may be a challenge for parents and leadership to resist this practice, but the responses in Cohort 1 seem to suggest that young adults are able to make good decisions regarding their faith and in doing so, they internalize it and it becomes more meaningful to them.

- **FURTHER RESEARCH INTO HOW YOUNG ADULTS WHO ARE IN THE WORKFORCE RESPOND TO THE SABBATH MAY BE NECESSARY/BENEFICIAL**

This study was only able to collect data from young adults in a university setting. Future research of young adults in the workforce may yield various other results.

21

Stewardship

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness.

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:26, 27

Belief 21

Stewardship

Number of Responses for this Belief = 35

Two thirds (66%) of the young adults articulated that stewardship is more than tithe and offerings, noting that all we have comes from God (46%) and believers should share their blessings with others (37%). Stewardship was viewed by some (17%) as a way of giving back to God and others wrote that stewardship can result in a life lived wisely and unselfishly (23%). One participant explains it this way:

“We make a choice when we follow God, but it doesn’t stop there. We have to demonstrate how “shallow our commitment” will be. That’s when stewardship takes place. Usually this topic includes only money, but I liked that we should be stewards in everything; our time, our money, our goods, abilities, body, everything. I liked when it started to talk about tithe. It explains how beautiful is the system for tithing. God made it just perfect for the rich and the poor. It’s equal. It’s very important in our lives, specially the tithing part. God said that in this, we would be stealing from Him. It’s relevant in my life because, I’m not going to lie, sometimes is hard to give full tithe. When in college, working, there’s little income for me. I can only spend what I get from working at [removed – place of employment]. That is not enough. Especially when having so many fees that I can’t charge to my account. I wish I could be more loyal. I know if I am loyal, God will bless me. Also, if I am loyal in the small things, then it should be easier to be loyal in the future when I have a more stable income.”

Although it was voiced that stewardship includes more than giving tithe, 46% noted that believers should pay tithe. However, only 11% expressed they would be blessed if they did so. There were also a few participants who expressed difficulties in paying tithe (14%), a sentiment which was not made easier when some church leaders are seen exploiting or stealing tithe money (6%).

“I’m going to be completely honest, I want to say I love stewardship, but I don’t really like it all that much. I view it as more of a necessary evil. The reason why I don’t like it is because, I’m a broke college student. Ten percent of a dollar plus additional money for offering is a lot of money that I could be using to eat or do laundry. Also, I’m kind of wary of giving the little money I have to people who I don’t really know. What are these people doing with my money? I’ve had the treasurer of my own church run away with a lot of my church’s money which really irritated me because I’m broke. What I do like about stewardship is that God always gives back what I give. If I want to be completely practical, money that is given to the church can be written off taxes. Therefore, you get 100% of what you give to the church. However, you get back more than 100% because the Lord blesses you in other ways when you give tithe and offering. Stewardship isn’t just tithe and offering, but it also includes using your gifts and time for God’s glory. Stewardship is very important in regards to money because it is what gives pastors their salaries. If a pastor wasn’t getting money from the conference he would have to get a job and his full focus wouldn’t be on leading the church.

If I didn't use my gifts the way God intended then I wouldn't be bringing people into God's church and God would eventually take it away. This "use it or lose it" principle applies to everything God gives me including time and possessions. Though I don't have much because I'm broke, I try to use what God has given me wisely."

None of the participants questioned whether or not a believer should pay tithe, but rather expressed financial hardship despite paying tithe. There was also a very limited number who stated that they would be blessed if they paid tithe (11%). The above quote states, "I'm kind of wary of giving the little money I have to people who I don't really know. What are these people doing with my money?" This is an important element as it suggests there is an apprehensive aspect to the tithing experience, particularly when tithe is such a significant sacrifice given a young adult's limited and oftentimes small income. The adage that it is "God's money" and a member should give it to the church without regard for how it is being spent, either wisely or unwisely, by a church organization, seems to be an inconsistent model of stewardship at a corporate level that some young adults may question, and may be at the root of this apprehension. This response could suggest that young adults may hold their church to the same standards of responsible stewardship that their church holds its members to. Thus, it may be germane to investigate if inconsistencies between responsible stewardship expectations placed on members and those placed on the corporate church have any impact on the propensity to tithe, and to what extent. The Seventh-day Adventist church may lessen this apprehension mentioned above through financial transparency and accountable financial decisions, rather than merely emphasizing that tithe is "God's money" and members, therefore, should not question how church organizations spend it. It may also help to publicize the qualifications, wages, position descriptions, and recruitment protocol of those who handle tithe money, those who make decisions concerning it, and those who are beneficiaries of tithe money. This may lessen the mystery of who these people are and lessen the apprehensive aspect of tithing as outlined by the participant above. Financial and employee transparency too may lessen the opportunity for fraudulent behavior. Cohort 2 and 3 will explore tithing further with Millennial young adults.

More than a third (37%) of the respondents emphasized that stewardship included taking care of God's creation (37%), that believers should use their talents to be good stewards (37%), and stewardship even included taking good care of one's body since a believer's body is a temple of God (34%). One participant wrote:

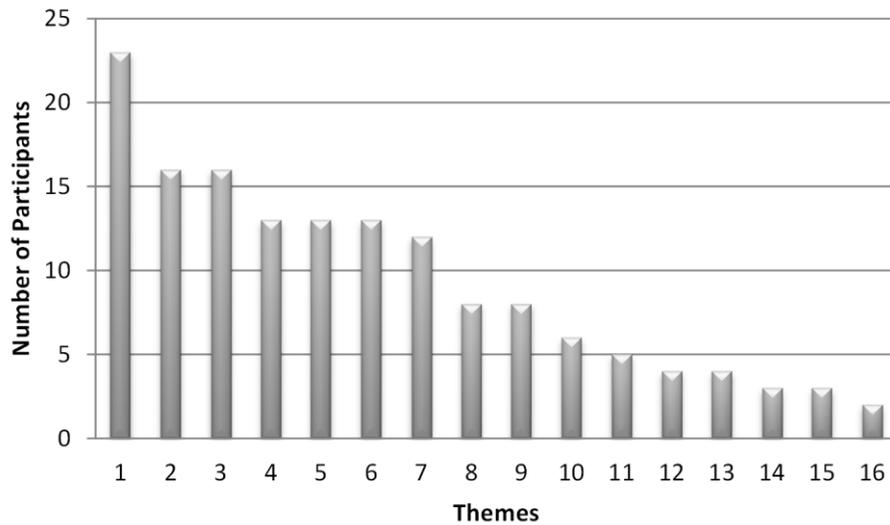
"I like the idea that all we have is from God and we are stewards, not only of money but also of the earth that God created for us, as well as everything in it. I like that this is in our beliefs but it can become skewed and turn into something very legalistic. We should not waste the things we have. People think stewardship is just about frivolously spending money, but I think it also has to do with wasting our earth's natural resources and polluting it with our modernization. Well, I have been called to be a steward of this earth and whatever else God has given me. So before I do this or that, I need to stop and think about whether it is me being a good steward or not."

Another means of promoting good stewardship habits among young adults may be to emphasize stewardship towards the earth, God's creation, as this is an important issue to them and may give a relevant meaning to the doctrine. One participant explains it this way:

"I like this doctrine. [Identifying Information Removed – Reference to career]. I just don't think that there is a proper use of nature, except to keep it healthy. I also don't think I agree with stewardship being a privilege but of a human right and necessity for us to live on this world we call Earth. And I don't know if I like the language of "rejoices in blessings." But this is one of the few doctrines that actually touch my being

and means more than anything else. How else can I follow my belief and make life better for the people around, and after me. This is one of the most important doctrines that I take to heart more than any of the rest because it actually means something to me.”

Stewardship - Themes



THEMES

1	Stewardship is more than tithe	66 %
2	All that we have comes from God	46 %
3	Believers should pay tithe	46 %
4	Believers should share their blessings	37 %
5	Believers should take care of God's creation	37 %
6	Believers should use their talents to be stewards	37 %
7	A believer's body is the temple of God and they have a responsibility to take care of it	34 %
8	Endorsing stewardship can result in a life lived wisely and unselfishly	23 %
9	Believers can use their gifts to tell others about Christ	23 %
10	Stewardship is a way of giving back to God	17 %
11	Participant expressed difficulty in paying tithe	14 %
12	Participant expressed they would be blessed if they paid tithe	11 %
13	Salvation is offered to believers, so they should in turn engage in stewardship	11 %
14	All individuals have a purpose and they should use the principles of stewardship to fulfill that purpose	9 %
15	God will remove blessings from individuals who squander them	9 %
16	Church leadership can exploit or steal tithe money	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **STEWARDSHIP IS MORE THAN JUST TITHE AND OFFERINGS**

Two thirds (66%) of participants stated that stewardship is more than tithe and offerings. Almost half noted that everything believers have comes from God, thus, stewardship encompasses everything in life.

- **STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH IS IMPORTANT TO YOUNG ADULTS**

Good stewardship habits may be promoted to young adults by emphasizing stewardship of the Earth, a theme that resonates with many young adults.

- **YOUNG ADULTS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PAYING TITHE**

Even though it may be difficult due to limited income, young adults still express that it is important to pay tithe, even though few expressed an expectation of a "blessing" through paying tithe. However, it would seem some young adults may hold their church to the same standards of responsible stewardship to which their church holds its members. Cohorts 2 and 3 will further explore issues relating to tithe.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH NEEDS TO BE A GOOD STEWARD TOO**

The adage that it is "God's money" and a member should hand tithe over to the church without regard for how it is being spent, either wisely or unwisely, seems to be an inconsistent model of stewardship at a corporate level that some young adults may question and cause some apprehension with paying tithe. It would seem some young adults may hold their church to the same standards of responsible stewardship to which their church holds its members. Further research may identify if inconsistencies between responsible stewardship expectations placed on members and those placed on the corporate church have any impact on the propensity to tithe and to what extent.

- **APPREHENSION REGARDING TITHING**

Young people may experience an apprehensive aspect of his/her tithing experience, particularly since tithing is such a significant sacrifice given a young adult's limited and oftentimes small income. The Seventh-day Adventist church may lessen this apprehension through financial transparency and accountable financial decisions. It may also help to publicize the qualifications, wages, position descriptions and recruitment protocol of those who handle tithe money, those who make decisions concerning it, and those who are beneficiaries of tithe money. This may lessen the mystery of who these people are and lessen the apprehensive aspect of tithing. Financial transparency too may lessen the opportunity for fraudulent behavior by leadership or individuals in positions of trust.

22

Christian Behavior

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christ-like purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness.

Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; 3 John 2

Belief 22

Christian Behavior

Number of Responses for this Belief = 29

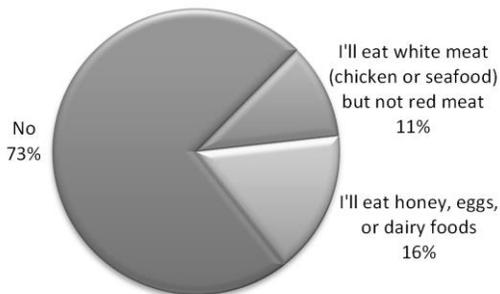
Almost half of the participants (47%) emphasized that believers are an example to others through their behavior and action, thus a believer should endorse Christ-like behavior (40%) and act in line with the principles of Heaven (23%). Several participants embraced the idea that believers need to live in this world, but not be a part of the popular culture (17%).

It was also noted that a believer's body is a "temple" and should be cared for (33%). As such, he/she should eat good food and avoid "unclean" food (23%), not drink/take alcohol, drugs, or narcotics (23%), and engage in exercise (17%). A small group added that it was also important to rest and get enough sleep (10%). One participant writes:

"I really enjoyed reading this fundamental because it instructs us how we are to live as Adventists, and it basically had the main points of what sets us apart as Adventists and followers of Christ. I know that this entire world does the opposite of what this fundamental has called us to do. People prefer drinking alcohol, taking drugs, and watching things that are harmful to the body and soul, and it's sad because most people use these methods as an escape. This world is hard to live in and everyone wants an escape and a way to live through it, but what is important about this fundamental is that it shows the Christ centered escape routes out of this world, just by getting adequate rest and exercise, meditating on God's words, and living a simple modest life, with all of these things comes peace, joy and hope for the future. This fundamental is relevant to me because I struggle with exercising and sleeping regularly, and it has had the most negative impact on my life, my grades, sociality, and health have suffered so greatly because of it. But this year God has really been helping me get my life and health back together in order to succeed in this university, and although it's hard at times because I forget and I just want to go back into my old lazy ways, God keeps pushing me and using His words and my friends to keep reminding me that I am living for God and not myself and I must carry myself in a noble way."

Despite the great emphasis the Seventh-day Adventist church places on vegetarianism, only 16% of the young adult participants in the demographics inventory identified as a vegetarian. None identified as a vegan, which was also an option. The chart to the right suggests that 84% of the young adult participants in this study who are studying at an Seventh-day Adventist university, most of whom are baptized, are at least third generation Seventh-day Adventists, of which 42% self-report high range spiritual commitment levels and 47% self-report medium levels, actually eat meat and are not inhibited from disclosing this in a study of this nature. This finding

I am a Vegetarian



may be representative of this sample only and may not replicate itself in future cohorts of the *Beyond Beliefs* study. Thus, this issue will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study to identify if this is a trend among young adults. If so, the Seventh-day Adventist church may be presently failing at making aspects of their health message, like vegetarianism, relevant to young adults. Further investigation into efficacious methodologies to better promote the Adventist health message to this demographic may be necessary. Given the emphasis participants placed on stewardship of the earth and caring for creation, perhaps highlighting the mass commercialization of

animals and the cruelty associated with meat production may be an aspect to explore with this demographic group.

Some young adults stated that following the principles outlined in the belief is hard (27%), and 20% perceived the belief as didactic and an example of how not to behave towards others (20%). In fact, 50% of the participants commented that this belief may have too much potential to become a legalistic way to judge or police one another's behavior. They write:

"What I don't like about this fundamental is that Christians tend to focus on these different aspects of behaviors excessively and seem to place it over the idea of accepting Jesus as your Savior and being saved by His grace and love. People can also take advantage of God's grace, but a lot of the time Christians hate others Christians or do not accept non-believers because of the type of food someone eats, drugs, etc. This fundamental is still critically important because a Christian's behavior should reflect his or her beliefs. When people see Christians, they get turned off by the idea of Christianity because of the behavior of these so-called "Christians." It is important to have good Christian behavior, so people will not be so turned off. This fundamental is relevant to me because since I have the opportunity to be a Christian and to know the truth, I need to make the right life decisions so my behavior brings more people to Christ rather than pushing them away."

"I think this fundamental belief has good intentions. It reminds us that we are to strive for a Christ-like behavior. Not to draw attention towards ourselves and stay away from anything that will take our full attention away from God. But when reading this fundamental statement, I am afraid that this doctrine will give people a reason to judge others because they are not exactly following what this doctrine says to do. As humans, we do not have the right authority to judge and to tell others what to do. I also feel that there are many things that may make me feel closer to God when that same thing may be different for someone else. We all have different ways to praise God and we have different ways to connect with God. I do believe that there are obvious movies, video games, and music that we should stay away from and that we should take care of our bodies as the temple of God. But I am afraid of this doctrine being used for judgment when it is not our part to tell people how they should act."

"I do not really like this fundamental at all. To me, it just seems super legalistic. This doctrine is one that shows that Adventists can be very good at alienating people. While I am all for living in "harmony with the principles of Heaven," but I think many Adventists take this too far, thus alienating people. Popular culture is one area where people can be too extreme. I have friends who will not involve themselves with any aspect of pop culture, and they constantly tell people about how evil it is. For others, non-Adventists

especially, this gives my friends a self-righteous appearance, giving them reasons to avoid them because they feel like they will be judged harshly for their interests. I think the bit about living in harmony with Heaven is important, but I think all other aspects of this doctrine are detractors from what our mission in life is, which is to reach those who are not already a part of the church. This fundamental is relevant in my life because it can serve as a reminder of how not to appear self-righteous.”

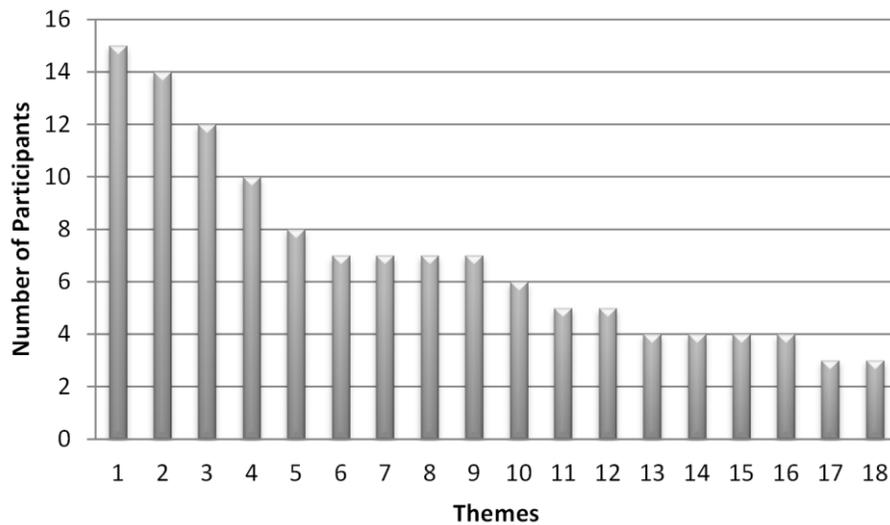
“I do not think I like this doctrine so much. Yes, it’s one defining characteristics of Seventh-day Adventists, but it’s begging to make the religion seem more stuffy and more legalistic than spiritual, as it should be. How can what I find funny and entertaining mean anything to other peoples’ rule books? What is simple dress? Although we believe that our bodies are the temple of God, does not mean we will all view the same things as funny, entertaining or amusing. There are just going to be some people who find things more hard funny, than those who don’t like it. It comes down to a matter of preference and who you choose to hang around. Although this doctrine is important to how we Seventh-day Adventists carry ourselves, it can be one of the biggest turn offs to our religion for some people - which is probably why we were/are considered a cult because we try to involve our opinions into other’s lives.”

It would seem that these respondents are not negative towards standards of behavior, but rather, do not like how these standards are implemented or enforced. It is interesting to note that the responses in favor of this belief predominantly focused on the health aspect (exercise, diet, sleep, fresh air etc.) but did not mention, or only mentioned in scant detail the behavioral aspect. Behaviorally, being an example is something these young adults seem to be quite happy to be and they are aware that their behavior impacts others around them both positively and negatively. However, they also recognize that some behaviors are subjective and contextual. What they seem to take issue with is the abusive or antisocial behavior like righteous condemnation, religious bullying or ostracism they receive from members who feel justified in policing the actions of young adults, when they question non-salvation related “Christian behaviors.” This sometimes harsh or passive aggressive policing behavior (which many members may even justify as being in the best interests of young adults) is perceived by some young adults as just as counter-productive in the mission of the church (which is to spread the gospel) or just as bad an example for others (or even worse) of Christian behavior, than any transgression of the original non-salvation related behavior.

The Seventh-day Adventist church may need to revisit this belief and come to an agreement on what principles should be emphasized when it comes to “Christian behavior” as it would seem every new generation of Seventh-day Adventists may battle with this issue. Perhaps there should be greater focus on the underlying principle, rather than specific behaviors themselves, which would allow each emerging generation to implement these principles to best suit the culture and the world that they live in, which can be very different to the world their parents and grandparents grew up in.

More research needs to be undertaken to identify if emphasizing principles rather than set behaviors may be the catalyst for allowing young adults to make good cross-culturally tolerant and generation specific choices with regard to behavior, without being subjected to religious bullying by others. Also, it may be timely to investigate if policing or punishing behaviors have the potential to be a greater negative example to potential converts and child/teen members than non-salvation related “Christian behaviors” and what element that may play in the retention of young adults.

Christian Behavior - Themes



THEMES

1	This belief has too much potential to become a legalistic way to judge/police one another's behavior	50 %
2	Believers are an example to others through behavior and actions	47 %
3	Believers should endorse Christ-like behavior	40 %
4	A believer's body is a temple and should be cared for	33 %
5	Following the principles outlined in this belief is hard	27 %
6	Clothes believers wear should be simple, modest, and neat	23 %
7	We should act in line with principles of heaven	23 %
8	Believers should eat good food and avoid "unclean" foods	23 %
9	Believers should not take alcohol, drugs, or narcotics	23 %
10	This belief was perceived as didactic and an example of how not to behave towards others	20 %
11	Believers should engage in exercise	17 %
12	Believers need to live in this world, but not be a part of the common culture	17 %
13	Christ-like behavior pleases God and he rewards us for it	13 %
14	Entertainment and amusement which believers engage in should be tasteful and beautiful	13 %
15	Believers should live a simple, modest life	13 %
16	Participant questioned what was wrong with jewelry or dancing	13 %
17	Rest and enough sleep is important	10 %
18	Believers should not be hypocrites	10 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **BELEIVERS ARE EXAMPLES TO OTHERS**
Almost half of the young adults participants (47%) emphasized that believers are an example to others through their behavior and action, thus, a believer should endorse Christ-like behavior (40%) and act in line with the principles of Heaven (23%).
- **A BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD**
Young adults stated that a believer's body is a "temple" and should be cared for (33%). As such, he/she should eat good food and avoid "unclean" food (23%), not drink/take alcohol, drugs, or narcotics (23%), and engage in exercise (17%). A small group (10%) also added that it was also important to rest and get enough sleep.
- **YOUNG ADULTS LIKE THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR**
When addressing young adults it may be helpful to focus on the underlying principles for why a behavior is endorsed and let young adults decide for themselves how to best implement these principles in their own lives, and in doing so, it may become more meaningful to them. More research needs to be undertaken to identify if emphasizing principles will result in young adults making good choices or poor choices, and if so, to what extent?

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **VEGETARIANISM**
Despite the great emphasis the Seventh-day Adventist church places on vegetarianism, only 16% of the young adult participants identified as a vegetarian. None identified as a vegan.
- **LEGALISM AND DIDACTIC EXPECTATION**
Some young adults stated that following the principles outlined in the belief is hard (27%), and 20% perceived the belief as didactic and an example of how not to behave towards others. In fact, 50% of the participants commented that this belief may have too much potential to become a legalistic way to judge or police one another's behavior.
- **PUNISHING NON CONFORMIST BEHAVIOR**
Behaviorally, being an example is something these young adults seem quite happy to be and they are aware that their behavior impacts others around them both positively and negatively. However, they also recognize that some behavior or standards are subjective and contextual. What they seem to take issue with is when others impose subjective standards on them and, if they do not conform for reasons of conscience or critical thought, the abusive or antisocial behavior like righteous condemnation, or ostracism that others perpetrate as a result. This often justified anti-social behavior of "punishing" non-conformity is perceived by some as just as counter-productive in the mission of the church which is to spread the gospel, or just as bad an example for others, or perhaps even worse, than the original non-conformist behavior.
- **WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF RETRIBUTIVE BEAHVIOR**
It may be timely to investigate if retributive or punishing behaviors towards those who do not endorse "Christian behaviors" may have the potential to be a greater negative example to potential converts and child/teen members than the original act of not endorsing imposed "Christian behaviors." Its relationship with regard to the retention of young adults may also be salient to investigate.

23

Marriage and the Family

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message.

*Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33;
Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12;
Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6*

Belief 23

Marriage & the Family

Number of Responses for this Belief = 31

More than half (52%) of the participants noted that God should be at the center of a marriage, God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden (32%), and it is often used to symbolize the relationship God wants to have with humans (26%). Although 29% of the young adults expressed that marriage is a lifelong commitment, the same numbers stated that in today's society nobody respects marriage any more (29%). Thus, 19% wrote that sin has negatively affected marriage. It should be noted that no one in Cohort 1 was married; only 33% were in a relationship, while the remaining participants (67%) were all single.

In this cohort, 16% of the young adults who filled out the demographic inventory indicated that they had divorced parents. It is unknown how much experience the remaining has had with divorce and if they are obtaining their experience of divorce from fictional sources like movies, books and TV. Empirical research suggests divorce is often a traumatic, emotionally painful, and financially devastating experience and a naive belief that individuals who pursue a divorce do so for trivial reasons may seriously affect the way a young adult treats a person who is divorced. This may result in disunity among church membership and render evangelism efforts useless among populations with high divorce rates. Further research needs to be undertaken to identify how young adults formulate their world views of divorce. When nearly a third (29%) suggests that nobody respects marriage anymore one has to wonder what sources they are basing this belief on.

Regarding divorce, 16% noted³⁹ that abuse and breakdown of a relationship should be a legitimate reason for divorce. Two of the participants wrote:

"The fundamental belief, Marriage and Family, talks about exactly how the ideal Christian couple and family should be. God should be put first in your relationships and I feel that many Christians forget about that. What I don't like about this fundamental is that one is only allowed to divorce their spouse if their spouse committed adultery against them. What about if your spouse beats you? Then maybe, yes, you can divorce them but then you are not allowed to marry another person because in God's eyes you are still married. That does not make sense to me. Due to the rise of divorce and broken families in the church this fundamental is important. This fundamental explains how those who are in a relationship should act.

³⁹ Since the participants completed the demographic inventory anonymously, it is unknown if the 16% who indicated that they had divorced parents were the same participants who questioned adultery to be the only acceptable cause for divorce. In the first quote above, the participant mentions his/her parents are married, so we can assume that this attitude is not exclusive to young adults whose parents are divorced.

I grew up with my parents always putting God first in their relationship. When I was younger they use to argue a lot but now that the years have gone by they seem to put God first and their relationship has gotten better.”

“This doctrine spoke about relationships and issues that almost all could relate to, whether married or considering marriage. It is so sad how the world has deemphasized the sacredness and importance of marriage and has encouraged divorce for any minor issue between the couple. However, one part of the doctrine that I am in disagreement with is the part that speaks about being equally yoked. I interpret this part to be referring to sameness of spiritual beliefs, values and religious practices, but I know that some might wrongfully interpret this to mean that people of different race, financial status or culture should not get married. Thus, I think this statement should be clarified. I was surprised when I read the section on divorce. Jesus gave permission for divorce if adultery was involved in the marriage. However, there is nothing on abuse or other severe acts. In fact, the doctrine talks about how even cheating should be forgiven. Then I thought about how we cheat on God all the time and He forgives us and still wants to be with us. However, I would not like to think He wants to see His children being hurt physically or mentally, and if one would do such things in a marriage does that not make them unequally yoked in the sense that God is not the basis for their actions? Relationships and marriage are a huge part of life and society and is something relevant for all believers, for we all hope to be married one day or at least are part of a family. It is essential that believers know how to involve their Seventh-day Adventist teachings into their families and relationships, in order to make these bonds stronger and healthier.”

Almost a quarter (23%) emphasized that parents should be an example of what a good marriage is and 13% noted that a marriage should be based on mutual love, honor, respect, and shared responsibility. Only 10% mentioned that the parents should teach their children to obey God, however, 23% wrote that family members should all work together to achieve growth and maturity. One participant had the following comment regarding his/her parents and the parents’ role in helping their kids on their spiritual walk with God:

“I appreciate that God has blessed me with a loving mother and father to teach me about life so I can avoid a lot of pain in my life. I also was blessed to be the youngest child of four children. It’s like having five parents that I can learn from... and have buy me stuff. The thing I don’t like about marriage and family is that sometimes in my opinion my parents are not always right. Unfortunately, because I’m their child, I have to listen to them on the rare occasions that they’re wrong... I was raised to believe that it is the family’s job to raise strong Christians, not the church or academies. Oftentimes, parents will enroll their kids into Adventist academies and universities thinking they will become strong Christians but usually this isn’t the case. Another frequent occurrence is that parents will have no family worship, but will send their kids to church and Sabbath school every Saturday. This usually leads to nominal Christians with little to no personal relationship with Christ.”

There were 13% who questioned the gender roles outlined in the belief commentary. One of these participants disagreed that only the mother should be responsible for shaping the child’s character:

“I like the fact that it pointed out the fact that the cleaving part of “leave and cleave” was meant by God to be a reflection of what He wanted for the relationship between Himself and humans. I did not like the fact that when it came to the family section, the responsibility for shaping the child’s character was laid solely on the shoulders of the mother. If there is a husband/father in the picture it is also their responsibility. I think that this doctrine is important because the family is the reflection of the relationship that God wants to have with humans so if that is distorted, then for many the picture of God will also be

distorted. I think that this doctrine is especially important due to the multiple conversations occurring presently over homosexuality and divorce.”

Several young adults (16%) mentioned that marriage is between a man and a woman, and 19% mentioned homosexuality, while 16% outrightly disapproved of it, one participant presented a more complex view.

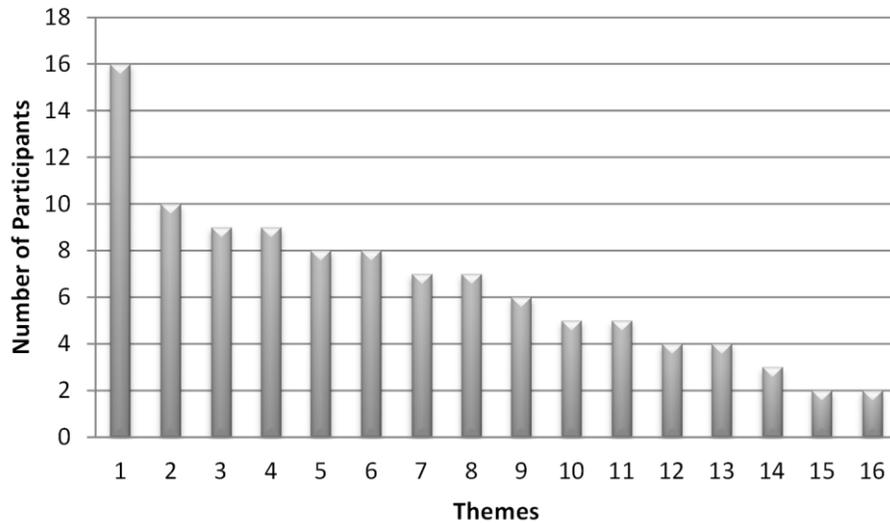
“I like this fundamental a lot because marriage is one of my favorite institutions and I can’t wait to get married myself. I don’t really understand what this fundamental is saying about divorce. While I certainly don’t think divorce is a good thing, sometimes it is necessary for at least one member of a marriage who may be suffering from abuse. Because of this, I don’t think it should be condemned so directly. One thing I really dislike about this fundamental is the little blip in the commentary about homosexuality. While I am not arguing that it deviates from God’s original plan, I do not think it is a sin. Death also deviates from God’s original plan, but we don’t condemn those who die. The biggest issue I have with this is the fact that homosexuality is equated with sexual immorality. Homosexuals can be monogamous and sexually moral as well as heterosexual people.”

One participant voiced the need of updating the belief and its commentary to make it more relevant for young adults. He/she wrote:

“I really like the idea of this belief. Family is really important to me and I am very close to even distant family members. I do not particularly care for the wording of this belief however, it sounds a little old fashioned. I agree with its principles but thinks it needs an update for young people to be able to relate to it more. I think it is very important. People today have so many wrong ideas about marriage and so little appreciation for its value and the importance of family. Family is where we first learn about the world, and that should include a firm foundation in Christ. Without a solid family structure the ability to ground a child in faith is damaged. It is very relevant. I credit my parents with giving me the strength of character to hold to the beliefs they have instilled in me when I go out into the “real” world. I have been given an excellent basis for faith but have also developed my own ideas and beliefs that do not simply parrot my parents. I am very grateful for the growing up experience I have had.”

It may be critical to investigate these above issues, particularly with relation to sexism and traditional gender roles promoted in the commentary that may not produce the idyllic outcomes stated. More research is required to determine how to present this belief more sensitively in cultures where egalitarianism, and the equality of men and women, is the cultural and legal requirement. Both these issues will be explored in more detail in Cohort 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study where participants will be asked to identify roles they feel men and women should hold and their attitudes towards gay marriage.

Marriage and the Family - Themes



THEMES

1	God is at the center of a marriage	52 %
2	Marriage was instituted by God in Eden	32 %
3	Marriage is a lifelong commitment	29 %
4	Nobody respects marriage anymore	29 %
5	Marriage is symbolic of the relationship God wants to have with humans	26 %
6	Family members should all work together to achieve growth and maturity	26 %
7	It is not good for people to be alone, they should leave their parents and cleave to their spouse	23 %
8	Parents should be an example of a good marriage	23 %
9	Sin has negatively affected marriage	19 %
10	Marriage is between a man and a woman	16 %
11	Abuse and breakdown of a relationship should be legitimate reasons for divorce	16 %
12	Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the foundation of marriage	13 %
13	Participant questioned the gender roles outlined in the belief	13 %
14	Parents should teach their children to obey God	10 %
15	Marriage should be between people who share a common faith	6 %
16	Marriage is an institution of loving companionship	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE AND THE PART GOD PLAYS IN IT**
More than half (50%) of the participants noted that God should be at the center of a marriage, that God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden (32%), and is often used to symbolize the relationship God wants to have with humans (26%).
- **MARRIAGE IS ASSOCIATED WITH CREATION**
Nearly a third (32%) suggested that marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden. It would be interesting to explore if an emphasis on marriage, particularly a heterosexual one, is strongly associated with a creationist world view, and if so, to what extent.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **OTHER LIGITIMATE REASONS FOR DIVORCE**
In Cohort 1, 16% of the young adults who filled out the demographic inventory indicated that they had divorced parents. Regarding divorce, 16% noted that abuse and breakdown of a relationship should be a legitimate reason for divorce.
- **HOW DO YOUNG ADULTS FORMULATE THEIR WORLDVIEW OF DIVORCE?**
It is unknown how much experience 84% of participants had with divorce and if they are obtaining their experience of divorce from fictional sources like movies, books and TV. A naive belief that individuals who pursue a divorce do so for trivial reasons may seriously affect the way a young adult treats a person who is divorced. This may result in disunity among church membership and render evangelism efforts useless among populations with high divorce rates. Further research needs to be undertaken to identify how young adults formulate their world views of divorce. When nearly a third (29%) suggests that nobody respects marriage anymore one has to wonder what they are basing this belief on.
- **QUESTIONED GENDER ROLES AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE BELIEF COMMENTARY**
There were 13% who questioned the gender roles outlined in the belief commentary and a number of participants expressed concern with relation to how homosexuals were treated. Both these issues will be explored in more detail in Cohort 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study where participants will be asked to identify roles they feel men and women should hold and their attitudes towards gay marriage.
- **FURTHER RESEARCH AND UPDATING REQUIRED**
There were a number of issues raised by participants relating to this belief. It may be critical to investigate these issues, particularly with relation to sexism and traditional gender roles promoted in the commentary that may not produce the idyllic outcomes stated. More research is required to determine how to present this belief more sensitively in cultures where egalitarianism and the equality of men and women is the cultural and legal requirement.

24

Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent.

Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12

Belief 24

Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

Number of Responses for this Belief = 31

Several participants expressed an appreciation for how this belief described the symbolic meaning of the Old Testament sacrificial system (19%) as it relates to the Salvation plan. It was noted that all the sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed forward to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice on the cross (13%), and the work of the earthly high-priest pointed toward Jesus' current work (32%) in the Heavenly Sanctuary (35%), where he is an advocate/mediator (13%) interceding on the behalf of humanity (26%) as the great high-priest (23%). Approximately a third of the participants noted that God's people needed to be ready for the second coming (35%), since Jesus' heavenly ministry could end any day (13%) and his second coming will then take place (23%).

This belief statement is the longest belief statement (252 words) and is multifaceted, so it is no surprise that it revealed a large number of themes (24) that were only expressed by relatively low numbers of individuals. Unlike other belief statements which are less detailed or more succinct, multifaceted beliefs seem to lack prominent themes that resonate with a large number of participants. This may be problematic if young adults are required to communicate these beliefs to others, particularly those who do not share their faith. What facet of this belief should or would they focus on? A component of this belief that one young adult may feel is essential to communicate to others, may not be the same component another young adult may choose to emphasize when communicating their faith. This may result in an inconsistent message being conveyed to those who are not Seventh-day Adventists or even to those who are. One could argue that by this stage in the study the participants were tiring of the project and were just writing anything which may account for the diversity in themes. However, a cursory glance at the responses would suggest this was not the case, given the articulate nature of the responses and some of the issues participants raised.

This belief makes use of technical theological narratives which may not be easily understood by young adults. One participant noted, "This doctrine has a lot of big words that a person may not understand or misunderstand such as investigative judgment." Interestingly, 35% of participants mentioned the investigative judgment, but only one participant noted that this judgment pertained to the vindication of God's character. Another stated, "It could potentially be very confusing to a non-Adventist or someone who is unfamiliar with our beliefs and the layout of the earthly sanctuary, so I think it could be simplified a little further... I just don't know how to do that." Perhaps the multitude of themes represented by small numbers of participants may be a reflection of comprehension, or lack thereof. The participants commented on what parts they personally understood and just

ignored that which they did not. Following is a participant response that illustrates the sheer difficulty young adults face when presented a belief statement that is written in language difficult to understand.

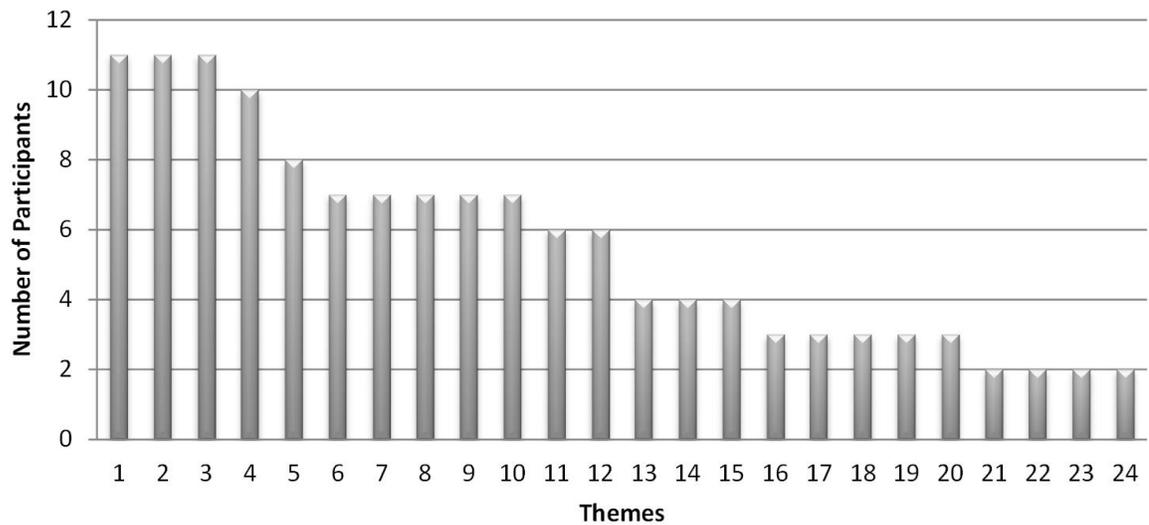
“To be completely honest, after reading this fundamental belief I do not really understand it. I suppose it has some special purpose for being in our fundamental beliefs but I do not see it at the current time. So I guess I do not “like” or “dislike” this belief, but I am rather neutral on it. I have no idea why it is important to have it in our beliefs. I understand it mentions things about Christ in the sanctuary and... I do not really know actually. I am definitely wanting to talk about this in class because I do not understand it. The only relevant thing I can take out of this is, Christ died for my sins and because of Him I can live. He is up there in heaven doing his thing to make sure I get to live with him forever. Also, that the dead in Christ shall rise again.”

It is recommended that this belief needs to be revisited by leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist church to ensure it is easily understood by young adults. In its current format, there seems to be too much confusion. The response above also reiterates the need to present beliefs as concepts relevant to an individual’s everyday life, particularly in the case of young adults, rather than as verbal acrobatics in theological terminology.

Historically, Silent Generation, Baby Boomer and even Generation Xers born in the early 1960’s spent a lot of energy discussing the 2300 day prophecy that culminated in 1844. In fact, this was rather a contentious issue in the Seventh-day Adventist church. In light of this, it is noteworthy that only 6% of participants in this study even mentioned the prophecy and 23% mentioned 1844.

Only one participant verbalized being “terrified” of the investigative judgment. Given this sentiment was captured within the limited sample of this study, this may indicate that for some young adults, this belief is associated with terror rather than hope. This response may be indicative of a greater issue not fully seen in *Belief 11 – Growing in Christ*, but may be present in *Belief 25 – The Second Coming of Christ*. More research needs to be undertaken on the potential harm scary beliefs can have, and if there is a more compassionate and efficacious way of communicating these beliefs without causing psychological harm. Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study will investigate these issues further.

Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary - Themes



THEMES

1	There is a Sanctuary/Temple located in heaven	35 %
2	There will be an investigative judgment prior to the second coming of Jesus	35 %
3	Need to be ready for the second coming of Jesus	35 %
4	This belief explains what is happening right now in heaven	32 %
5	Jesus pleading/interceding on our behalf	26 %
6	Jesus is the high priest in the heavenly sanctuary	23 %
7	Participants referred to 1844	23 %
8	This is the second/last phase of Jesus' atoning ministry	23 %
9	Time is short before the second coming	23 %
10	Believers have to spread the gospel, as well as information regarding the judgment	23 %
11	The biblical sanctuary services depicted in the Old Testament is symbolic of the salvation plan	19 %
12	Christ died for my/our sins	19%
13	Old Testament sanctuary sacrifices point to Jesus death and salvation	13 %
14	There is an advocate/mediator in heaven	13 %
15	Do not know when Jesus' ministry in the heavenly sanctuary ends (it could be any day)	13 %
16	Participant referred to the Day of Atonement	10 %
17	Participant referred to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary	10 %
18	This belief is unique to Adventism/ it is a pillar of the faith	10 %
19	This belief is difficult to understand	10 %
20	Christ is deciding who will inherit eternal life	10 %
21	Participant referred to the 2300 days prophecy	6 %
22	At the end of probation, tribulation/time of trouble begins	6 %
23	Satan is the scapegoat on the day of atonement	6 %
24	The heavenly sanctuary is a place of worship in heaven	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS ARE ARTICULATE**
Even though many young adults expressed difficulty in understanding this belief, they were able to articulate this lack of understanding. They did, however, attempt to emphasize aspects they did understand, or had prior knowledge of. This is reassuring for church leadership as it would indicate that young adults, while they may not understand everything, certainly desire to and attempt to articulate what they do understand.
- **MEANING OF THE OLD TESTAMNET SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM**
Several participants expressed an appreciation for how this belief described the symbolic meaning of the Old Testament sacrificial system (19%) as it relates to the Salvation plan.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **THIS BELIEF STATEMENT NEEDS TO BE SIMPLIFIED**
Simplifying the wording of this belief may make it easier for young adults to understand and communicate their beliefs to others. It may also result in more consistent beliefs among believers, who are at present attempting to describe a belief they are unsure about.
- **INVESTIGATE THE POTENTIAL HARM SOME BELIEFS CAN CAUSE**
Only one participant verbalized being “terrified” of the investigative judgment. However, given this sentiment was captured within the limited sample of this study, this may indicate that for some young adults, this belief is associated with terror rather than hope. More research needs to be undertaken on the potential harm beliefs can have, and if there is a more compassionate and efficacious way of communicating beliefs without causing psychological harm.

25

Second Coming of Christ

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Savior's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times.

Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:1-6

Belief 25

Second Coming of Christ

Number of Responses for this Belief = 34

The Second Coming of Christ is described by young adults as a visible and audible (26%), literal and personal (21%), worldwide event (18%) in which the righteous will be taken to heaven (50%) upon the resurrection of the righteous dead (21%). Since no one knows the time of the second coming and it will be an unexpected event (24%), the participants noted the importance of the need to be ready at all times (24%), and, with a slightly different nuance, the need to be prepared for the Second Coming (41%), since Jesus will be coming soon (32%).

Almost a quarter (24%) of the participants mentioned that this belief gives them assurance and hope, but only 15% noted that this belief was one of the most important beliefs, or that it gave them a purpose in life (12%). Only 12% remarked that this belief is reflected in the name of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Some of the participants (18%) acknowledge that the second coming is something that many Christians are also waiting for and that this event is the climax of the gospel and the salvation plan (15%). This is relatively low representation, and the reason for this may be exemplified in the following participant response:

"I love this fundamental a lot, because it is a super exciting one. One problem that I have with it is that it really does not sound all that excited. It calls it "the grand climax of the Gospel," but in its entirety it just does not sound as excited as it should. Also, I do not think homosexuality is a sign of the end times, but I have already ranted about this similar topic in a previous journal. I think this fundamental is one of the most important because as a church we should always have the thought of Jesus' return in our minds. This does not mean not thinking about the possible future on Earth, or wondering around the streets with "The end is nigh" posters, but it should be at the forefront of our minds, affecting our decisions at least a little bit. This fundamental is relevant in my life because I also need to remember to always be thinking about Jesus' return."

Participants expressed that they liked this belief, however, 18% of the participants voiced some fear with regard to this belief. This fear was largely related to a fear of the persecution of believers that would precede the Second Coming, or that loved ones would not be a part of the righteous who were resurrected and/or taken to heaven.

"I like that Jesus is coming back personally and that we'll all know at once. It seems highly appropriate that the whole world should know in the same moment. This belief is the fulfillment of all the others. It is the goal, why would we bother with the others if not for this one. So I think this belief is the most

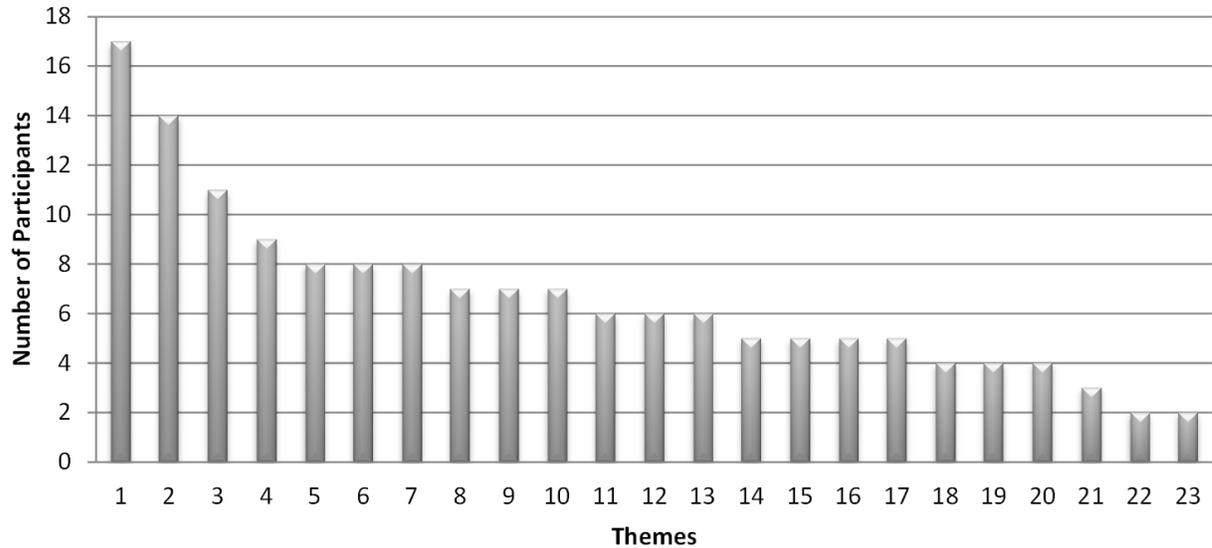
important, after the belief in Christ's sacrifice. It is obviously very relevant, although I don't think about it all the time. It is easy to get caught up in my every day activities and not think about the ultimate future. It is also something I have mixed feelings about. I want it, but I also do not want it to come and am afraid of it."

"The one sign of Christ's return that scares me is the one about the mark of the beast. I want to believe that I have enough faith and trust in God to stand up for Him wherever, whenever, but I am scared of pain and being persecuted. It is hard for me to tell myself that being beaten or shot or something horrible would be all worth it when Jesus returns because all I know are the pleasures I experience on earth. I pray to be more grounded in Christ; I do not want to fail or deny Him. I think everything I just said proves why this doctrine is so relevant and important for believers. As Adventists, we need to be constantly reassured of Christ's coming and what to look out for before He returns. These times are our true test of faith."

"I like this fundamental because I personally cannot wait for Christ to return again. This world is absolutely a horrific place and Jesus needs to return soon. What I don't like is that those who died unrighteous will remain dead. I completely understand why that is, but I fear that some of my own family members will be one of them. Also, I am not excited for the end times because persecution will be happening, but I know our suffering will not last long. Still it's something to not look forward to."

The researchers of this study are curious as to whether there may be a means of addressing this fear? While it seems to be only 18% who are articulating this type of fear, given these individuals have images of news reports, documentaries, and the holocaust (something early Adventism did not have) to reference persecution with, it is little wonder there is some very real fear associated with the Second Coming of Christ. Having such a fatalistic perspective may make young adults reluctant to form relationships or engage in evangelism with those outside of their faith, as there may be a perception that this person may one day persecute them. It may even be something that prevents them from hoping for the second coming since there are so many negative events associated with it. More in depth study needs to be done on the "fear factor" of the second coming on young adults, particularly with regard to the implications it has on the retention of their faith. It may even be salient to also investigate the fears of teens, tweens, and children too and how it affects their faith or even their mental health.

Second Coming of Christ - Themes



THEMES

1	The righteous will be taken to Heaven	50%
2	People need to prepare for the Second Coming	41%
3	Jesus is coming soon	32%
4	The Second Coming will be visible/audible	26%
5	No one knows the time/it will be unexpected	24%
6	Believers need to be ready at all times	24%
7	This belief provides assurance/hope	24%
8	The Second Coming is a Literal/personal experience	21%
9	There will be a resurrection of the righteous	21%
10	There will be a time of trouble/turmoil	21%
11	The Second Coming will be a worldwide event	18%
12	The Second Coming is something that all/many Christians are waiting for	18%
13	There are signs pointing to the Second Coming	18%
14	The Second Coming of Jesus is the climax of the gospel/salvation plan	15%
15	Heaven is our home	15%
16	This belief is one of the most important beliefs	15%
17	It is important for believers to spread the gospel	15%
18	Prophecies indicate the soon coming of Christ	12%
19	Advent – is a part of the Seventh-day Adventist name	12%
20	This belief gives purpose to life	12%
21	The first coming of Christ guarantees the Second Coming	9%
22	The righteous will be transformed	6%
23	The unrighteous will die	6%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF THE SECOND COMING**

The Second Coming of Christ is described by young adults as a visible and audible (26%), literal and personal (21%), worldwide event (18%) in which the righteous will be taken to heaven (50%) upon the resurrection of the righteous dead (21%). Since no one knows the time of the second coming, and it will be an unexpected event (24%), the participants noted the importance of the need to be ready at all times (24%), and, with a slightly different nuance, the need to be prepared for the Second Coming (41%), since Jesus will be coming soon (32%).

- **THIS BELIEF PROVIDES ASSURANCE AND HOPE TO SOME YOUNG ADULTS**

Almost a quarter (24%) of the participants mentioned that this belief gives them assurance and hope.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **"ADVENT" MAY NOT BE READILY ASSOCIATED WITH "ADVENTIST"**

Only 15% noted that this belief was one of the most important beliefs to the Seventh-day Adventist church, or that it gave them a purpose in life (12%). Only 12% remarked that this belief is reflected in the name of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Only 15% articulated the Sabbath with the first half of the church's name, "Seventh-day" (see *Belief 20 – The Sabbath*).

- **FEAR OF THE SECOND COMING**

Participants expressed they liked this belief, however, 18% of the participants voiced some fear with regard to this belief. This fear was largely related to a fear of the persecution of believers that would precede the Second Coming, or loved ones would not be a part of the righteous who were resurrected and taken to heaven.

- **FURTHER RESEARCH REQUIRED INTO THE FEAR FACTOR**

The researchers of this study are curious as to whether there may be a means of addressing this fear? While it seems to be only 18% who are articulating this type of fear, given these individuals have images of news reports, documentaries, and the holocaust (something early Adventism did not have) to reference persecution with, it is little wonder there is some very real fear associated with the Second Coming of Christ.

Having such a fatalistic perspective may make young adults reluctant to form relationships or engage in evangelism with those outside of their faith, as there may be a perception that this person may one day persecute them. It may even be something that prevents them from hoping for the second coming since there are so many negative events associated with it. More in depth study needs to be done on the "fear factor" of the second coming on young adults, particularly with regard to the implications it has on the retention of a young adult's faith. It may even be salient to also investigate the fears of teens, tweens, and children too and how it affects their faith or even their mental health.

26

Death and Resurrection

The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later.

Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11-14; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1-10

Belief 26

Death & Resurrection

Number of Responses for this Belief = 31

The most prominent aspect noted by the participants was that upon death, a person enters an unconscious state much like a sleep (68%) which will last until he/she “awakens” on the day of resurrection (35%). Participants also emphasized the difference between Seventh-day Adventist perspectives on the resurrection and those of other Christian groups who believes a person goes straight to heaven upon death (42%), or Hell/Purgatory (19%). Thus, the belief that death was a metaphorical sleep until the resurrection, was stated by 19% of the participants as a belief unique to Adventism.

A number of participants expressed comfort in the belief that their deceased loved ones were not “watching over them” (19%). As one participant stated:

“Many people think that when we die, our spirit goes to heaven to be with Jesus. This can be a comforting thought, to think that their loved ones can hear them for reconciliation and whatnot, but it is so untrue. This way, the dead don’t have to go to heaven and witness all the sin and corruption in the world. They go to sleep in the grave, Christ wakes them up when he comes back, and the next thing they see is the face of Jesus.”

Another wrote: “When someone dies, we don’t have to worry about them eternally burning in hell or watching us continue to suffer on earth from heaven.” For nearly half of this sample (48%), the resurrection belief gave them hope and comfort, because they don’t have to worry about deceased loved ones (35%) and that there was something more than this life (26%).

Death was expressed as something not to be afraid of or feel depressed about by 16%, which is a surprisingly low result, given the 48% who expressed hope and comfort by the Seventh-day Adventist resurrection belief. This low result may indicate that despite the hope and comfort provided by the resurrection belief, many may still be a little fearful of death. It may also be due to the fact that these participants are still relatively young and have not had too many close relatives or friends pass away, so articulating fear or sadness with relation to death may not be something that is at the forefront of their minds. However, one participant makes an interesting statement that seems to support both explanations. He/she wrote:

“This belief is not very relevant in my life because I don’t know anyone who has died. However, I have a Grandma who is pretty old and I am terrified for the day I get the news that she has died. Also, I might be unfortunate to have a sudden death of a loved one, however, when that happens I’ll be comforted by the fact that I will see her again in heaven.”

Thus, it may not be the fear of death of a loved one, but rather, a fear of having to go through the experience of loss, despite having a belief that is supposed to promote hope and comfort in young adults. Further research into the experience of loss in young adults with relation to the Seventh-day Adventist resurrection belief may provide further insights into this issue.

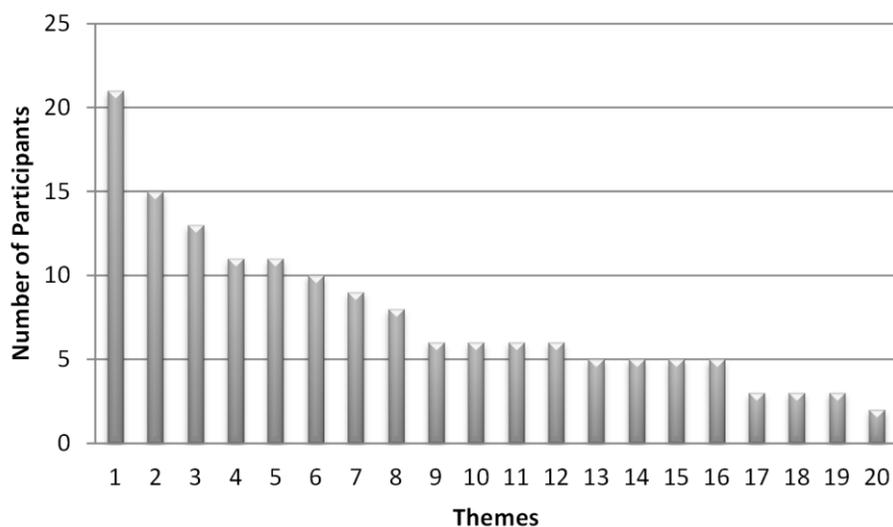
While young adults seem unconcerned with demonic possession, the concept of ghosts, however, was a theme that was mentioned by 19% of participants, often in the context of ghosts being demons who are masquerading as deceased loved ones. It is interesting that a group of this size specifically expressed the existence of ghosts, and in one case, zombies, even though none related an experience of ever seeing one. Some expressed fear with relation to ghosts as though they anticipated that one day they might see one. Given this fear and anticipation of seeing a ghost, could focusing on demons and Satan being behind “ghosts” be causing a much greater problem than it solves? Similar concerns were raised in *Belief 11 – Growing in Christ*. This being the case, this issue will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study. Further study needs to be undertaken to determine the extent of this real fear of demons, its effects on a young adult’s functionality, particularly with regard to sleep. It may be necessary to include adolescents and younger children in such a study because if this issue is troubling young adults, how much more so a young child. Exposing young Adventists to such beliefs at an early age, as well as multimedia and literature focusing on the occult may have the same outcome as showing them a horror movie or horror novel. Interestingly, the current belief commentary does not discuss the explicable and elaborate methods used by celebrity mediums, magicians, hypnotists, and illusionists, nor does it discuss how many of these types of entertainers or confidence men/women have been exposed, or have willingly revealed their methods. Fraudulent and opportunistic behavior, mental illness, drug related psychotic episodes, or even the power of suggestion, and the propensity of some to embellish the truth are also not discussed, which future publications should address. If young adults are not advised to question supernatural stories, they may become vulnerable to manipulative individuals who may take advantage of that gullibility and may introduce them to unsubstantiated beliefs.

One participant expressed an issue with this belief in that he/she felt it appeared vindictive in nature. They wrote,

“Another issue that I had with this is that it showed that there are basically two deaths for the wicked and three for the ones who killed Christ. I just think that one death should be enough.”

While one participant who felt this way may seem insignificant, it still remains that this perception was captured in such a small sample. The vindictive undertone relating to the multiple deaths of the wicked may warrant further investigation. If young adults perceive God to be vindictive, this may influence many facets of their religiosity and spirituality. Also, if God is perceived as vindictive, what motivation does a young adult (or any adult) have for not being the same?

Death and Resurrection - Themes



THEMES

1	Death is an unconscious state, similar to sleep	68 %
2	The resurrection belief gives hope and encouragement	48 %
3	A person does not go to heaven upon death	42 %
4	A person does not have to worry about dead loved ones, they will see them again	35 %
5	Resurrection will take place at the second coming of Christ	35 %
6	Sin leads to death	32 %
7	Resurrection of the righteous in Christ	29 %
8	There is something more than this life	26 %
9	This belief makes Seventh-day Adventists different from other Christians	19 %
10	Ghosts are not "real" - they are demons	19 %
11	People do not go to hell or purgatory upon death	19 %
12	Loved ones are not watching over us after they die	19 %
13	A person does not need to be afraid or depressed about death	16 %
14	Immortality is a gift from God	16 %
15	A person consists of a body from dust and the breath of life from God (soul is not a separate entity)	16 %
16	Participant expressed appreciation that this belief explains what happens when people die	16 %
17	The righteous will gain immortality upon resurrection	10 %
18	The righteous go to heaven upon resurrection	10 %
19	The wicked will also resurrect	10 %
20	This belief is not relevant in my life	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **DEATH IS A SLEEP**
The predominant theme that resonated with this group of young adults was that death was allegorized as a sleep. They felt this allegory elegantly illustrated how death and resurrection works.
- **HOPE AND COMFORT**
For nearly half of this sample, the resurrection belief of the Seventh-day Adventist church gave them hope and comfort, because they did not have to worry about deceased loved ones and there was something more than just this life.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **FEAR OF LOSS**
Young adults do not seem to fear death, but may fear loss. Further research is required to investigate how the experience of loss may impact young adults and how the Seventh-day Adventist church may proactively address this issue.
- **UNFORSEEN CONSEQUENCES OF FOCUSING ON SATAN AND DEMONS**
Focusing on Satan and demons as being an explanation for seemingly supernatural activities may have some unforeseen consequences for young adults and their wellbeing. Similar concerns were raised in *Belief 11 – Growing in Christ*. Further study is required to identify the full impact such explanations may have on young adults, and particularly children too. This issue will be explored further in Cohorts 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study. “Ghost” stories and fantastic testimonies involving the seemingly supernatural may have the same impact on young adults and children as showing them a horror movie or graphic novel.
- **ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITIES**
The current belief commentary does not discuss the explicable and elaborate methods used by celebrity mediums, magicians, hypnotists, and illusionists, nor does it discuss how many of these types of entertainers or confidence men/women (popularly referred to as con-men/con-women) have been exposed, or have willingly revealed their methods. Fraudulent and opportunistic behavior, mental illness, drug related psychotic episodes, or even the power of suggestion and the propensity of some to embellish the truth, is also not discussed, which future publications should address.
- **PERCEPTION OF GOD**
Some young adults may perceive some vindictive undertones in this belief relating to the multiple deaths of the wicked. If young adults perceive God to be vindictive, this may influence many facets of their religiosity and spirituality and may be something the Seventh-day Adventist church may need to address if they wish to present God as a loving Father. Also, if God is perceived as vindictive, what motivation does a young adult (or any adult) have for not being the same?

27

Millennium and the End of Sin

The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever.

Rev. 20; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Jer. 4:23-26; Rev. 21:1-5; Mal. 4:1; Eze. 28:18, 19

Belief 27

The Millennium & the End of Sin

Number of Responses for this Belief = 27

This belief resonated with young adults with three distinct themes being expressed by half or nearly half of the sample group. These included, the belief affects the behavior of the participants (50%), the righteous will live 1000 years in heaven (50%), and that sin will be gone forever (47%). Only 12% of participants suggested that this belief was irrelevant, mainly, because it does not really affect them right now and they expressed little concern for what will happen after the second coming since they will be with God. Approximately 12% of participants were uncomfortable with how this belief seemed to “have all the answers,” given they sensed this series of events was just speculation. Participants described it this way:

“I like the fiery end of sin bit. That is just lovely imagery, and something to look forward to. The absolute end of sin that is - not so much the destruction of everything else. One bit of discontent that I have with this is the fact that some of the assertions made are not known fact, but rather speculation and interpretation. Some of these things I just don't think should be asserted, because it seems kind of proud and arrogant, like someone has all of this God stuff all figured out. It takes a bit away from God if people can just figure everything out like that, because I believe God is incomprehensibly huge, and that we cannot possibly figure Him out completely. This fundamental is a bit less important than all of the others because ultimately, it doesn't really matter if we know what is going to happen after Jesus fetches us since He will have us, and that is all that matters. I feel the answer above covers this as well. This fundamental is relevant only inasmuch as the fact that it mentions that Jesus will have me, which is the ultimate in relevance.”

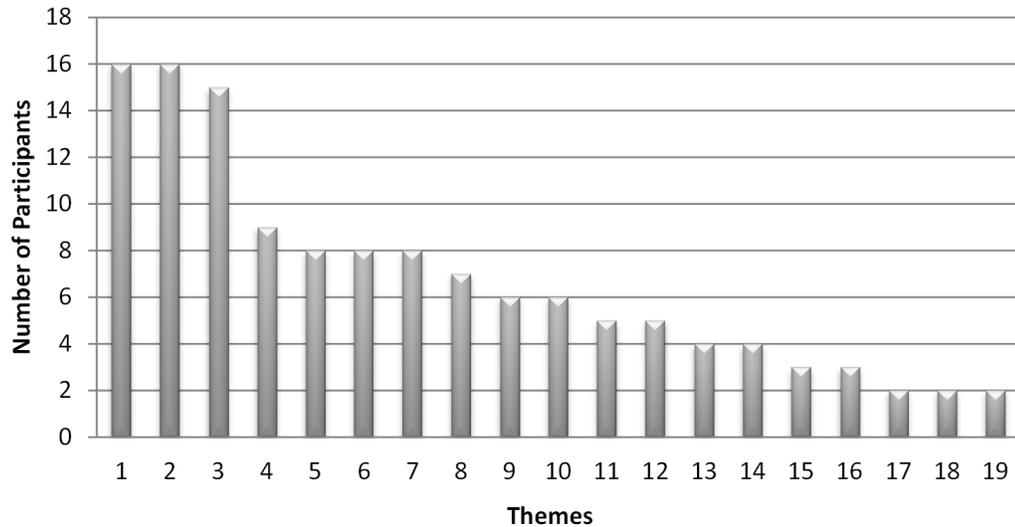
“This belief is a little weird to me. I have been raised with it but it just seems kind of odd. Like, why does it matter if I believe this will happen in this way? 1000 vs 10,000 years, when the unrighteous will be raised, it seems to me these are small details not relevant to being saved or knowing God. I don't think this fundamental is very important. I have no issues with it personally it just doesn't seem to matter when compared with the other beliefs. It is not relevant. I hardly ever think about it and when I do I find nothing that draws me to consider it or worry about it. I expect it will happen as it says, but it doesn't matter if it does or not to me.”

“This is another short doctrine which I'm not mad about. It seems like that last few doctrines are all nice and short - I wish all of the other ones were short. I like short doctrines as they make me feel as if it's a fact and that you are prepared to answer almost any question posed against it. I don't really have a problem with this. I just would like to know why we make it seem as if know even detail that will happen both on the last day and in the one thousand years. It makes me wonder will things go exactly as we expect. But I wonder if Satan knows Jesus' plan will he really just walk in the way it has been foretold? That would only tell me that this Satan who we say is so powerful is actually kind of stupid. This is a very important doctrine, it is what makes us Adventists because it shows how we use prophecy and how and what we are expecting to find in and after heaven. What I'm not so sure about is why are the wicked dead are being judged again?

Doesn't God know they are wicked and why would God resurrect them again to die? Why not just leave them alone."

It would seem that some young adults are questioning if this series of events is indeed going to happen and if this belief provides far too many details for events that have little impact or relevance for a young adult's life here and now. Their focus seems to be just on getting to heaven - what happens after seems to be secondary. Is this a case of a superfluous belief that doesn't really relate to a person in here and now and their relationship with God? While biblical, what is the overall goal of this belief? Is it to scare members into living a righteous life? Is that really productive or would a greater emphasis on the benefits of Heaven, the new earth, and a lack of sin be a better focus? It may be a controversial question to ask but what is the underlying rationale that necessitates the establishment of one of the 28 Beliefs, and does this belief meet that criterion? If so, it may be necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist church to emphasize this rationale better with relation to this belief, or perhaps amalgamate it with the preceding or proceeding beliefs.

Millennium and the End of Sin - Themes



THEMES

1	The belief affects the behavior of the participant	50%
2	The righteous will live 1000 years in Heaven	50%
3	Sin will be gone forever	47%
4	Christ will come and bring the righteous to Heaven	28%
5	Resurrection of the wicked at the end of the Millennium	25%
6	Satan and the angels will be destroyed	25%
7	The transparency of God's justice	25%
8	Fire will consume the wicked/the wicked will be destroyed	22%
9	The wicked will be judged	19%
10	The righteous will be with God forever	19%
11	The earth will only be occupied by Satan and his angels during the Millennium	16%
12	God's character and justice will be vindicated	16%
13	This belief is irrelevant	12%
14	A new earth for the righteous	12%
15	The wicked will attack the New Jerusalem	9%
16	The righteous will judge the wicked while in Heaven	9%
17	The heaven/hell mentality held by other Christians is wrong	6%
18	The two resurrections are separated by the Millennium	6%
19	Fire will cleanse/destroy the earth	6%

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **YOUNG ADULTS LIKED ASPECTS OF THIS BELIEF**

This belief resonated with young adults with three distinct themes being expressed by half or nearly half of the sample group. These included, the belief affects the behavior of the participants (50%), righteous will live 1000 years in heaven (50%), and that sin will be gone forever (47%).

- **IF YOU'RE WITH GOD, IT MIGHT NOT MATTER**

Only 12% of participants suggested that this belief was irrelevant, mainly, because it doesn't really affect them right now and they expressed little concern for what will happen after the second coming since they will be with God. As such, it may be worthwhile to amalgamate this belief with either the preceding or proceeding beliefs. It may even be helpful to combine all three.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **THIS BELIEF IS SPECULATIVE**

Approximately 12% of participants were uncomfortable with how this belief seemed to "have all the answers," given they sensed this series of events was just speculation.

- **WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS BELIEF?**

It would seem that some young adults are questioning if this series of events is indeed going to happen and if this belief provides far too many details for events that have little impact or relevance for a young adult's life here and now.

Their focus seems to be just on getting to heaven - what happens after seems to be secondary. Is this a case of a superfluous belief that doesn't really relate to a person in the here and now, and their relationship with God?

While biblical, what is the overall goal of this belief? Is it to scare members into living a righteous life? Is that really productive or would a greater emphasis on the benefits of Heaven, the new earth, and a lack of sin be a better focus? It may be a controversial question to ask but what is the underlying rationale that necessitates the establishment of one of the 28 Beliefs, and does this belief meet that criterion? If so, it may be necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist church to emphasize this rationale better with relation to this belief, or perhaps amalgamate it with the preceding or proceeding beliefs.

28

The New Earth

On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen.

² Peter 3:13; Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15

Belief 28

The New Earth

Number of Responses for this Belief = 33

All participants liked this belief and 64% specifically noted that they looked forward to living on the New Earth and living with God (61%) in a perfect world where no bad things would happen (48%). However, several participants expressed disagreement, shortcomings, or suggestions regarding aspects of this belief. One participant questioned if marriage would be a part of the New Earth because, like the Sabbath, it was an institution which was implemented prior to the fall of humans. Another participant suggested this belief should be amalgamated with *Belief 26 – Death and Resurrection* and not be a standalone belief. Perhaps one larger belief may be more appropriate for events relating to the second coming, heaven, and the New Earth (Beliefs 26-28).

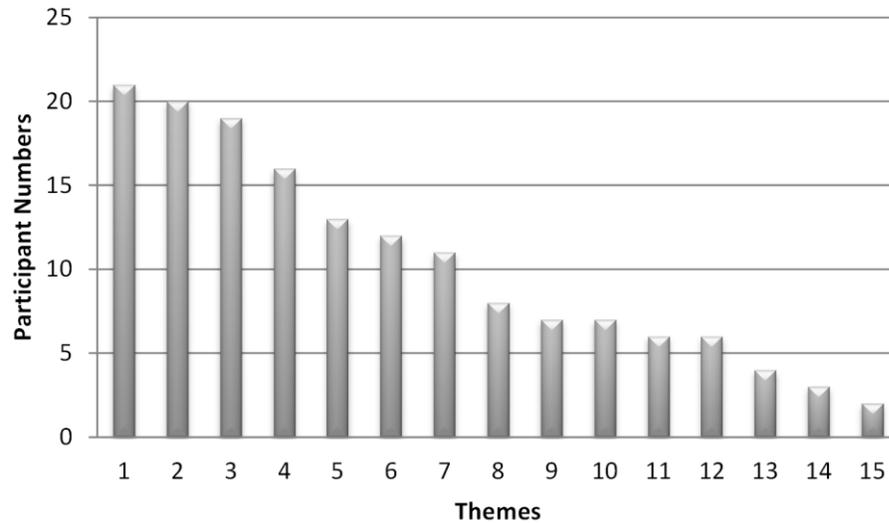
Another participant stated that there was too much speculation in the commentary section of this belief and questioned why it could not be accepted that “we don’t and won’t know everything.” A second participant felt there were not enough details given regarding the New Earth and a third participant stated, “I think more evidence should be provided for the conclusions made, or the authors should not draw any direct conclusions and simply state that they are unsure.” It would seem that frank honesty relating to what is biblical regarding the New Earth would be preferable to some young adults rather than, what could be perceived as, speculation.

It was interesting to note that some participants focused on the absence of sin, death, and suffering on the New Earth, while others focused on the presence of love, peace, and harmony. Very few mentioned both aspects, but rather, selected one or the other to emphasize. It would be very interesting to discover what motivates this choice (like personality, depression, life experiences, world views, educational specialty etc.) and may make for an interesting research topic in the future and provide insights into how Millennials experience their faith. From the findings of this study, 39% of participants expressed that this belief gave them purpose and motivation to maintain their faith when life was hard. Given this, it would seem young adults are no strangers to hardship and difficult circumstances, which may be contributing to this difference in perspectives.

While the participants in this group are legally considered adults and are physically identifiable as young adults, there were several participants who are still expressing childlike perceptions regarding the New Earth. These included “I can’t wait to wrestle with lions, race cheetahs and ride on hippos” and, “I want to play baseball with the planets and ride a drop of rain and go planet hopping.” However, there were some who took a more serious outlook like, “there will be no more need for the human race to depend on our own hard work and determination to succeed” and, “we will not have fatigue and weariness.” Clearly this is an interesting age group where the realities of their emerging adult life and the narratives of their childhood overlap. This is very important to keep in mind when addressing this group, that some are fully adults and are fully aware of the challenges of adulthood, while others have yet to fully make that transition. It would be interesting to discover what specific aspects influence that transition in Seventh-day Adventist young adults.

There was a small group (18%) that articulated that this belief is not unique to the Seventh-day Adventist church or that the New Earth would only be populated by Seventh-day Adventist believers. This does not mean that the remaining 82% do not share this view, but rather, did not readily state it in their response. Given the low report rate among this sample, this issue may require further investigation by Seventh-day Adventist church decision makers as this belief is one where there can be potential agreement and camaraderie with believers of other denominations, who presumably will share this New Earth.

New Earth - Themes



THEMES

1	The New Earth is something to look forward to	64 %
2	Be in the presence of God/Jesus	61 %
3	No sin/ Satan/ pain or suffering	58 %
4	Believers will live in a perfect world/no bad things will happen	48%
5	The hope of the New Earth gives purpose and motivation when this life is hard	39 %
6	Participant has an expectation/desire for eternal life	36 %
7	No more death – be reunited with loved ones who have died	33 %
8	There will be peace and love on the New Earth	24 %
9	There will be fun things to do in heaven/New Earth	21 %
10	Believers will live with loved ones and friends	21 %
11	Believers will learn more about God on the New Earth	18 %
12	This belief is not unique to Seventh-day Adventists – other faith groups will be a part of the New Earth	18 %
13	Having a relationship with God now is important for the future	12 %
14	The New Earth is a gift/reward from God	9 %
15	Believers will be able to meet biblical characters	6 %

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS IDENTIFIED AS BENEFICIAL

- **THIS BELIEF IS A PROVERBIAL CARROT**
All participants liked this belief with many specifically noting that they looked forward to living on the New Earth with God in a perfect world where no bad things would happen. A large percentage (39%) stated that the hope of the New Earth gave them purpose and motivation when this life is hard.
- **THE FOCUS ON EITHER THE ABSENCE OF BAD THINGS OR THE PRESENCE OF GOOD THINGS**
Some participants focused on the absence of sin, death, and suffering on the New Earth, while others focused on the presence of love, peace, and harmony. Very few mentioned both aspects, but rather, selected one or the other to emphasize. It would be very interesting to discover what motivates this choice (like personality, depression, life experiences, world views, educational specialty etc.) and may make for an interesting research topic in the future.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMATIC AREAS TO ADDRESS

- **SHOULD THIS BELIEF STAND ALONE, OR SHOULD IT BE COMBINED WITH PRECEDING BELIEFS**
This belief is brief and church leadership may like to consider combining it with preceding beliefs relating to the second coming of Christ, heaven, and the New Earth.
- **YOUNG ADULTS APPRECIATE HONESTY**
An honest admission of being unsure, rather than speculation presented as truth, seems to be preferable to Millennial young adults. It is recommended that unless there is biblical evidence to support a religious claim, an admission of "not knowing" would be preferable to Millennials. Not having all the answers does not seem to be threatening to this group, however, unsupported speculation presented as fact may very well be perceived as weakening one's case.
- **YOUNG ADULTS ARE TRANSITIONARY**
While the participants in this group are legally considered adults and are physically identifiable as young adults, there were several participants who are still expressing childlike perceptions regarding the New Earth. This is an interesting age group where the realities of their emerging adult life and the narratives of their childhood overlap. This is very important to keep in mind when addressing this group, that some are fully adults and are fully aware of the challenges of adulthood, while others have yet to fully make that transition. It would be interesting to discover what specific aspects influence that transition in Seventh-day Adventist young adults.
- **THIS BELIEF IS NOT UNIQUE TO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**
There was a small group (18%) that articulated that this belief is not unique to the Seventh-day Adventist church or that the New Earth would only be populated by Seventh-day Adventist believers. This does not mean that the remaining 82% do not share this view, but did not readily state it in their response. Given the low report rate among this sample, this issue may require further investigation by Seventh-day Adventist church decision makers as this belief is one where there can be potential agreement and camaraderie with believers of other denominations, who presumably will share this New Earth.

Chapter Five

Appendices

Appendix I - Demographic Inventories

- Entry Inventory
- Exit Inventory

The following inventories are subject to copyright and have been included in this publication in the interests of transparency. Unauthorized use, copying, or plagiarism of these inventories is strictly prohibited. Please contact the copyright owner at www.beyond-beliefs.com to obtain permission to use these inventories. Upon acceptance of your research proposal, high resolution electronic copies will be provided. The copyright owners encourage postgraduate, masters, and doctoral students to seek permission to use these inventories and will assist in any way possible in suggesting areas for further research. These inventories will be expanded significantly to more than 80 questions in Cohort 2 and 3 of the *Beyond Beliefs* study. These new inventories will be published in reports relating to Cohort 2 and 3.

Appendix II - Class Syllabus

- RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith Syllabus

The following syllabus is freely available for use by educators. A high resolution copy of the syllabus is available through the ClergyEd.com syllabus bank. See www.clergyed.com/christian-ministry-undergraduate.

BEYOND BELIEFS 2013

READ THIS FIRST

Welcome to RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith. I want to be able to present the content of this class to you so it is relevant to your current understanding of the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I also want to ensure our classes are safe, sensitive environments where you feel comfortable asking hard questions and discussing controversial topics. To assist me in this process, I would like to invite you to answer the following questions, however, you are under no obligation to do so—it will not affect your grade. Do not put your name or anything that may identify you on this questionnaire. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with. These questions are completely anonymous, and you will not be graded on them. Overall class statistical information generated by this demographics questionnaire may be used in a larger study that you may wish to participate in—but your individual responses will not. Thank you for your participation and I hope you enjoy this class.

QUESTION 1

How would you rate your knowledge of the 28 Fundamentals of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *(tick one)*

1	2	3	4	5	6
I know everything	I know quite a lot	I know most of it	I know some of it	I know a little	I know nothing

QUESTION 2

Are you, *(tick one)* Male Female

Do you identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning *(tick one)*
 Yes No

QUESTION 3

Do you primarily identify as: *(tick one)*

- Caucasian
- African American
- Native American
- Latino
- Asian
- Multi-racial
- Other _____

QUESTION 4

Were you born in the USA? Yes No
 If no, where were you born? _____

QUESTION 5

What is your major? _____

QUESTION 6

Do you identify as a Seventh-day Adventist. *(tick one)*
 Yes No

If no, please list your religious affiliation (if any) or if you identify as an atheist or agnostic.

QUESTION 7

Are you a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist church. *(tick one)*
 Yes No

QUESTION 8

If you answered YES to question 6, do you feel a sense of ownership or belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *(tick one)*
 Yes No

DEMOGRAPHICS INVENTORY CONTINUED

QUESTION 9

Which description best describes your marital status?
(tick one)

- Single, never married and not currently in a relationship
- Single, never married but in a relationship
- Married
- Same sex relationship and have had a lifetime commitment or wedding ceremony
- Widowed and currently single
- Widowed and currently seeing someone
- Widowed and remarried
- Separated but not divorced
- Separated, not divorced, but currently seeing someone
- Divorced and currently single
- Divorced and currently seeing someone
- Divorced and remarried

QUESTION 10

Do you attend church? (tick one)

- Every week
- At least twice a month
- Occasionally
- Never

QUESTION 11

What is your level of spiritual commitment? (tick one)

- Very high
- Generally High
- Medium
- Generally Low
- Very Low
- Non existent

QUESTION 12

What is your age? _____

QUESTION 13

If you identified as a Seventh-day Adventist earlier, how long have you been a part of this faith? (select one)

- All my life
- Number of Years _____

QUESTION 14

Do you have at least one parent AND one grandparent (alive or deceased) who are/were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? (tick one)

- Yes
- No

QUESTION 15

Are you: (tick as many as needed)

- A survivor of sexual abuse
- A survivor of domestic violence
- A survivor of sexual assault/rape
- Are you or your parents divorced
- A survivor of physical abuse
- A survivor of a hate/race crime
- A HIV positive person
- Someone who has had an abortion
- Someone who supports the theory of evolution

QUESTION 16

Before attending Andrews, did you attend a Seventh-day Adventist: (tick as many as you need to)

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School

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BEYOND BELIEFS 2013

Participant Number: _____

READ THIS FIRST

Thank you for taking RELT225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith this semester and being a part of the Beyond Beliefs study. You have made some excellent contributions and if you would like to receive the results and updates regarding the study, please sign up online at www.beyond-beliefs.com. To conclude the study we would like to invite you to answer the following questions, however, you are under no obligation to do so—it will not affect your grade. Do not put your name on this questionnaire—use your participant number. You do not have to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with. These questions are completely anonymous, and you will not be graded on them. Overall class statistical information generated by this questionnaire may be used in a larger study that you may wish to participate in—but your individual responses will not. Thank you for your participation.

QUESTION 1

How would you rate your knowledge of the 28 Fundamentals of the Seventh-day Adventist Church after taking this class. (tick one)

1	2	3	4	5	6
I know everything	I know quite a lot	I know most of it	I know some of it	I know a little	I know nothing

QUESTION 2

After taking this class, do you identify as a Seventh-day Adventist? (tick one)

Yes No

If no, please list your present religious affiliation (if any) or if you identify as an atheist or agnostic.

QUESTION 3

What was your main motivation for taking this class? (tick one)

I needed a General Education Class

I was interested in the topic

I thought it would be easy

I wanted to know more about the topic

It fit my schedule

Other: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

If you are baptized, go to questions 4–6.

If you are not baptized, turn over and go to questions 7-8.

QUESTION 4

What age were you when you were baptized? _____

QUESTION 5

Why did you decide to be baptized: (tick as many as needed)

Your parents encouraged you

Extended family encouraged you

Your Pastor encouraged you

Your friends were getting baptized

You felt personally convicted

You felt pressured by friends, family or Pastor

You felt pressured by church members

For the attention and gifts

Other: _____

QUESTION 6

If you could do it all again, would you have gotten baptized? (tick one)

1	2	3	4
Yes	Maybe	Not really	No

Go to question 9

DEMOGRAPHICS INVENTORY CONTINUED

QUESTION 7

If you are not baptized, which descriptions best describe why? (tick as many as needed)

- Your parents encouraged you not to
- Extended family encouraged you not to
- You didn't feel convicted
- Your friends encouraged you not to
- You were not interested in Adventism
- You were never given the opportunity
- You disagreed with some Adventist beliefs
- You didn't like some people at church

Other: _____

QUESTION 8

After taking this class, if someone asked if you wanted to be baptized, would you be interested? (tick one)

Please note, this is a hypothetical question. Your details will not be passed on to anyone for evangelistic purposes.

- 1 2 3 4
 Yes Maybe Not really No

QUESTION 9

Do you feel a class like REL225 Doctrines of Adventist Faith is a necessary class to offer students? (tick one)

- Yes No

Please explain why?

QUESTION 10

Do you identify as a vegetarian? (tick one)

- No I am a vegan
 I'll eat honey or eggs or dairy foods I'll eat white meat (like chicken or seafood) but not red meat

QUESTION 10

I support the *commissioning* of women to ministry, allowing them to work as recognised pastors in their respective Division? (tick one circle only—do not tick between two circles)

- 0 1 2 3 4 5
 Disagree Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Slightly Agree Slightly Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly

QUESTION 11

I support the *ordination* of women to ministry allowing them to work as recognised pastors throughout the world, receiving the same benefits and recognition as their male counterparts? (tick one circle only—do not tick between two circles)

- 0 1 2 3 4 5
 Disagree Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree Slightly Agree Slightly Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly

QUESTION 12

Have you read any of Ellen White's writings (either books or online excerpts of her books)? (tick one)

- Yes No

If yes, how often do you read Ellen White's writings?

- 0 1 2 3 4
 Daily Weekly Monthly Every now and then Never again

QUESTION 13

Do you believe Ellen G. White was: (tick one)

- A prophet who received messages directly from God
- A prophet who received messages from God, but wrote them down in her own words.
- Not a prophet, but had some valuable things to say
- Someone whose visions could, in modern times, be better described as a neurological condition
- A disempowered 19th Century woman who claimed she had visions as a means of giving herself authority
- I believe Ellen White is no longer relevant
- Just another Christian author



RELT225
DOCTRINES OF ADVENTIST FAITH
Spring 2013

JAN A. SIGVARTSEN

Andrews University

RELT225 DOCTRINES OF ADVENTIST FAITH SPRING 2013

GENERAL CLASS INFORMATION

Class acronym: RELT225
Class name: Doctrines of Adventist Faith
Semester & year: Spring 2013
Class location: Buller Hall – Room 108
Class time/day: Monday 2.00pm – 3.15pm and Wednesday 2.00pm – 3.15pm
Credits offered: 3

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT DETAILS

Instructor: Jan Sigvartsen BA (Theology); MA (Religion); Ph.D.c (Religion)
Telephone: 
Email: jsigvart@andrews.edu
Web: jansigvartsen.com
Office hours: By appointment only – please call the above phone number

BULLETIN CLASS DISCRIPTION

Defines and clarifies the Biblical doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, distinguishing them within the background of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

CLASS OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of this three credit class are:

- P1: To provide students with an overview of the 28 Fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventism and give them a safe opportunity to give their honest, personal response (either negative or positive or both) to each Fundamental and its published explanation as sanctioned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church;
- P2: To give students the opportunity to re-write an explanation to a fundamental so that it is relevant to young adults (18-30 years of age).

Secondary objectives include:

- S1: Allow students to see how a fundamental of this Christian religion is developed and articulated.
- S2: With students who give their permission, to seek publication of student responses so decision makers within the Seventh-day Adventist church can obtain feedback regarding perspectives of, primarily, young adults with relation to the 28 Fundamentals.

TEXTBOOKS & RECOMMENDED READINGS

Required:

Internet

1. General Conference Statement of Beliefs: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/index.html>
2. General Conference Fundamentals List: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>
3. General Conference Official Statements: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/index.html>
4. General Conference Guidelines: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/guidelines/index.html>
5. General Conference Supporting Documents: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/other-documents/index.html>

Book

6. Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005. (SDAB)
7. English Bible

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Passing Grades

It should be noted that a student will only receive a passing grade for the class if he or she has received a passing grade for each assessment category.

Assessment Submission

All assessment should be submitted via e-mail or Moodle. Hard copies will not be accepted.

Submission

All weekly submissions are graded as pass or fail. Failure to hand in an assessment on time will result in an automatic fail.

1.	Class Participation	20%
2.	Reflection Journal	50%
3.	Term Paper	30%
	Total	100%

Grading Percentages

A	=	94-100%	B	=	83-86%	C	=	64-74%
A-	=	90-93%	B-	=	80-82%	C-	=	60-64%
B+	=	87-89%	C+	=	75-79%	D	=	50-59%

1. **Class Participation** – Students are strongly encouraged to ask questions, even difficult ones, and get involved in class/group discussions. In order to be an informed and active participant, please read all handouts/tasks assigned to you and complete your required reading prior to class. (*Objective P1 and S1*).
2. **Weekly Reflection Journal** – Write a 300 word reflection statement about each fundamental assigned to you each week. Succinctly describe how you feel (positive or negative or both) about that fundamental and why. Discuss the strengths and shortcomings of the fundamental, why it is adequate or inadequate in its present form, and if needed, ways it may be made stronger or more relevant to young adults. You may even like to change its name/title if you like. (*Objective P1 and S2*)

Part A of the journal entry addresses the upcoming fundamental that will be discussed in class, and is due midnight the day before (Sunday/Tuesday) that fundamental will be discussed in class. Part B, addresses the fundamental that was discussed in the previous class and is due midnight before the next class (Sunday/Tuesday). See the outline for due dates and corresponding class topics.

With your permission, your responses will be anonymously compiled into a report for decision makers and leaders within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. You are under no obligation to

participate in the publication of your responses and your choice to participate or not will have no impact on your grade for the above journal. (*Objective P1 and S2*)

3. **Term Paper** – Write a 1000-1500 word explanation to a selected fundamental that is relevant to young adults (18-30 years of age). All students will need to select an available fundamental in the first week of class so all fundamentals are addressed by the class. If two students would like to work jointly on a fundamental explanation, they can, however, the paper will need to be 2000-2500 words long and the same grade for the paper will be given to both students. *This paper is due on Monday, April 15, 2013.*

With your permission, your completed term papers will be compiled into a manuscript for a potential online, hard copy or e-book of the 28 Fundamentals for Young Adults. You are under no obligation to participate in the publication of your paper and your choice to participate or not will have no impact on your grade for the class. (*Objective P2, S1 and S2*).

CLASS POLICIES

Classroom Seating

To facilitate the instructor in learning each student's name, please select a permanent seat (for at least the first half of the semester) in the classroom by **Wednesday, January 9, 2013**.

Disability Accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations under the American Disabilities Act, please see the instructor as soon as possible for referral and assistance in arranging such accommodations.

Class Attendance

"Regular attendance at all classes, laboratories and other academic appointments is required for each student. Faculty members are expected to keep regular attendance records."

"Whenever the number of absences exceeds 20% of the total course appointments, the teacher may give a failing grade. Merely being absent from campus does not exempt the student from this policy. Absences recorded because of late registration, suspension, and early/late vacation leaves are not excused. The class work missed may be made up only if the teacher allows. Three tardies are equal to one absence."

Andrews University Bulletin 2012, page 38

Excused Absence

"Excuses for absences due to illness are granted by the teacher. Proof of illness is required. Residence hall students are required to see a nurse on the first day of any illness which interferes with class attendance. Non-residence hall students should show written verification of illness obtained from their own physician. Excuses for absences not due to illness are issued directly to the dean's office. Excused absences do not remove the student's responsibility to complete all requirements of a course. Class work is made up by permission of the teacher."

Andrews University Bulletin 2012, page 38

Teacher Tardiness

“Teachers have the responsibility of getting to class on time. If a teacher is detained and will be late, the teacher must send a message to the class with directions. If after 10 minutes no message has been received, students may leave without penalty. If teacher tardiness persists, students have the right to notify the department chair, or if the teacher is the department chair, to notify the dean.”

Andrews University Bulletin 2012, page 38

Academic Integrity

Andrews University takes seriously all acts of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) falsifying official documents; plagiarizing; misusing copyrighted material; violating licensing agreements; using media from any source to mislead, deceive or defraud; presenting another's work as one's own; using materials during a quiz or examination other than those specifically allowed; stealing, accepting or studying from stolen examination materials; copying from another student; or falsifying attendance records. For more details see the Andrews University Bulletin 2012, page 38.

“Consequences may include denial of admission, revocation of admission, warning from a teacher with or without formal documentation, warning from a chair or academic dean with formal documentation, receipt of a reduced or failing grade with or without notation of the reason on the transcript, suspension or dismissal from the course, suspension or dismissal from the program, expulsion from the university or degree cancellation. Disciplinary action may be retroactive if academic dishonesty becomes apparent after the student leaves the course, program or university.”

Andrews University Bulletin 2012, page 38

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE

Jan Sigvartsen holds a Bachelors degree in Theology from Newbold College in Bracknell, England and a Masters in Religion from Andrews University, Michigan. He was a Visiting Research Fellow at Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel where for two years he studied Modern Hebrew and undertook class work for his Ph.D. minors in Jewish Studies and Archaeology. While living in Jerusalem, he participated in the Madaba Plains Project and had the opportunity to travel extensively within the Middle East, visiting and researching ancient biblical sites and culture.

Jan is currently concluding his Ph.D. (Religion) in Old Testament Studies at Andrews University, Michigan. His dissertation is investigating the use of the Hebrew scripture in the development of the resurrection concept within the literature of Second Temple Period Judaism.

He is also the creator of internet sites ClergyEd.com and ExegesisPaper.com, the later which is currently the most visited site on the internet relating to Exegesis Papers. He has authored a number of articles published in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals and has edited and peer-reviewed a number of books and articles for a many academics prior to their publication.

Jan was formerly a church pastor in Europe, and possesses extensive experience in literature evangelism. He has worked as an academic editor for several Biblical scholarship publications, and also as a research assistant for several prominent Old Testament academics. He has served as president of the Andrews University Doctoral Club for two years and has taught Pentateuch and Writings classes within the Master of Divinity Program and the Law and Writings class in the Religion Department at Andrews University. Originally from Norway, Jan now resides in Berrien Springs with his wife Leanne, who is from Australia.



OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Date	Class Topic	Assignments Due
1	Mon, Jan 7	Course orientation	
	Wed, Jan 9	Introduction	
2	Mon, Jan 14	#1 – Holy Scripture	SDAB 11-21 Reflection Journal 1A
	Wed, Jan 16	#2-5 – God (part. 1)	SDAB 23-77 Reflection Journal 2A – 5A; 1B
3	Mon, Jan 21	No Class: Martin Luther King Jr. Day	
	Wed, Jan 23	#2-5 – God (part. 2)	
4	Mon, Jan 28	#6 – Creation	SDAB 79-89 Reflection Journal 6A; 2B – 5B
	Wed, Jan 30	#7 – Nature of Man	SDAB 91-111 Reflection Journal 7A; 6B
5	Mon, Feb 4	#8 – Great Controversy	SDAB 113-120 Reflection Journal 8A; 7B
	Wed, Feb 6	#9 – Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ	SDAB 121-132 Reflection Journal 9A; 8B
6	Mon, Feb 11	#10 – Experience of Salvation	SDAB 133-147 Reflection Journal 10A; 9B
	Wed, Feb 13	#11 – Growing in Christ	SDAB 149-162 Reflection Journal 11A; 10B
7	Mon, Feb 18	No Class: President’s Day	
	Wed, Feb 20	#12 – Church	
8	Mon, Feb 25	#13 – Remnant and Its Mission	SDAB 181-199 Reflection Journal 13A; 12B
	Wed, Feb 27	#14 – Unity in the Body of Christ	SDAB 201-210 Reflection Journal 14A; 13B
9	Mon, Mar 4	#15 – Baptism	SDAB 211-224 Reflection Journal 15A; 14B
	Wed, Mar 6	#16 – Lord’s Supper	SDAB 225-236 Reflection Journal 16A; 15B

10	Mon, Mar 11	#17 – Spiritual Gifts and Ministries	SDAB 237-245 Reflection Journal 17A; 16B
	Wed, Mar 13	#18 – The Gift of Prophecy	SDAB 247-261 Reflection Journal 18A; 17B
11	Mon, Mar 18	No Classes: Spring Semester Break (Mar 15-24)	
	Wed, Mar 20		
12	Mon, Mar 25	#19 – Law of God	SDAB 263-279 Reflection Journal 19A; 18B
	Wed, Mar 27	#20 – Sabbath	SDAB 281-300 Reflection Journal 20A; 19B
13	Mon, April 1	#21 – Stewardship	SDAB 301-310 Reflection Journal 21A; 20B
	Wed, April 3	#22 – Christian Behavior	SDAB 311-328 Reflection Journal 22A; 21B
14	Mon, April 8	#23 – Marriage and the Family	SDAB 329-346 Reflection Journal 23A; 22B
	Wed, April 10	#24 – Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary	SDAB 347-370 Reflection Journal 24A; 23B
15	Mon, April 15	#25 – Second Coming of Christ	SDAB 371-386 Reflection Journal 25A; 24B Term Paper Due
	Wed, April 17	#26 – Death and Resurrection	SDAB 387-401 Reflection Journal 26A; 25B
16	Mon, April 22	#27 – Millennium and the End of Sin	SDAB 403-415 Reflection Journal 27A; 26B
	Wed, April 24	#28 – New Earth	SDAB 417-427 Reflection Journal 28A; 27B
17		No Final Exam	Reflection Journal 28B

APPENDIX 1

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

ADAPTED BY LEANNE M. SIGVARTSEN

THE B GRADE

We start with the B grade for a very specific reason. It is because a B grade is a sign that you have competently fulfilled all of the requirements stipulated for an assessment or competency evaluation. It is an excellent grade and demonstrates a high level of knowledge, insight, critique competence and professional written presentation standards essential for an individual wishing to pursue a career as a professional pastor.

THE A GRADE

An A grade is only given when a student not only fulfils the criteria stipulated above for a B grade, but in doing so demonstrates an advanced academic aptitude for content knowledge, critique, synthesis and independent insight, while exhibiting highly developed communication skills and professional publication standards that would allow them to pursue a highly competitive academic career.

THE C GRADE

The C grade differs only from a B grade in that the traits outlined in the B grade above are not consistently applied. However, with diligence and applying feedback from your lecturer, the academic process can provide a perfect opportunity for a student to improve their consistency, and hence, their grade.

THE D GRADE

The D grade exhibits a limited level of knowledge, insight and critique and poor written presentation standards. This may be because of a lack of time management on the part of the student, they may have difficulty grasping the concepts being taught, English may be their second language, or they may be experiencing a personal issue that is affecting their concentration and motivation levels. Again, with diligence, applying feedback from your lecturer, and seeking services offered by the University like the writing lab or the counseling centre, the academic process can provide an opportunity for a student to significantly improve their performance.

FAIL

The Fail grade is given when very limited or no discernable competency has been observed.

GRADING

Your assessments have been specifically designed to measure and provide evidence of your competency with relation to the subject matter and stipulated assessment criteria. This is to meet University accreditation standards. Thus, you will only be graded on the content of the assessments you submit. If it is not in your assessments, your lecturer will not have adequate evidence of your competency and will have no choice but to grade you accordingly. Please note the following:

- You cannot be graded on the type of paper you could have turned in if you had had more time.
- You cannot be graded or given credit in this class on extra-curricular activities you may be involved in.
- It is unreasonable to expect a better grade because you are a nice person or are friends with the lecturer.
- It is unreasonable to demand a better grade because you believe you have been called by God, and thus, should automatically be given good grades despite poor performance.
- It is unreasonable to request a better grade because you want to improve your overall GPA in order to gain entry into a graduate program. To do so is considered grade inflation, a dishonest practice which is strictly prohibited under University policy.
- Grades cannot be changed because they made you “sad”, “hurt your self-esteem”, “do not represent who you are as a person” or because you have received good grades in other unrelated/related classes. To do so is considered grade inflation, a dishonest practice which is strictly prohibited under University policy and is unfair to other students who submitted work that adequately fulfilled the stipulated assessment criteria.
- It is unreasonable to demand “grace” in order to obtain a higher grade. To do so is considered grade inflation, a dishonest practice which is strictly prohibited under University policy and is unfair to other students who submitted work that adequately fulfilled the stipulated assessment criteria.

You are at liberty to contest a grade if you can demonstrate that your lecturer has missed assessment criteria you have clearly fulfilled at the standard required. If you wish to contest a grade you must first make an appointment to see your lecturer in person and give him/her reasonable opportunity to resolve the issue. If your lecturer denies your request, and you feel you still have a case, you may then bring this issue to the Department Chair. If after reasonable opportunity, the Department Chair denies your request, and you feel you still have a case, you may then bring this issue to the Dean, whose decision is final. This is a peer-review process and is the succession policy stipulated by the *Andrews University Working Policy*.

PLAGIARISM

Replicating writing, cutting and pasting or moderately paraphrasing text from publications, internet sources, books, friends papers or publications, family members papers or publications, ghost writers papers or publications with the intent of passing it off as your own work, is strictly prohibited and unacceptable. Students found to be plagiarizing the work of others will receive an immediate Failing grade. Your actions will be reported to the University and your sponsor (if sponsored). You may even face expulsion from the University. Your lecturer will randomly sample sentences, phrases and paragraphs from your paper and compare them with papers from past students and with content on the internet. Your lecturer is also familiar with a lot of the publications and sources you will be using for your assessment and will also be able to identify any potential plagiarism.

LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

There is an expectation that a person who holds a Bachelor’s qualification will have advanced written language skills, particularly in the language in which their degree was taught. Thus, no special consideration will be given to students who speak English as a second language or native-English speakers who struggle with written English.

Such students are advised to seek the assistance of the campus writing lab or seek the services of a professional academic editor prior to the submission of their assessment.

Students are encouraged to have someone else read their assessments aloud to them prior to submission. This practice will provide you with immediate feedback as to how your written assessments sounds/reads to another person. You may even want to have a friend or a professional academic editor look over your assessments to identify any typing, spelling or punctuation errors too.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

Elements	A Range	B Range	C Range	D Range	F – Fail
Title and Paper Presentation	The title is creative, succinct, one that also hints at the scope, method and argument of the paper. The appearance and word-processing of the document is of a high professional standard.	The title is succinct and hints at the scope, method and argument of the paper. The appearance and word-processing of the document is of professional standard.	Contains elements of the topic, scope and purpose of the paper. The appearance and word-processing of the document is adequately presented, but lacks a professional standard.	Describes little about the content. The appearance and word-processing in the document is poor.	Does not describe the content. The appearance of the word-processing in the document is very poor and demonstrates a lack of commitment to the professional standards required of Masters recipients.
Introduction and Thesis	Presents the topic and purpose of the paper very clearly and succinctly. It is objective and demonstrates a high level of critical scholarship.	Presents the topic and purpose of the paper clearly and succinctly. It is objective and demonstrates critical scholarship.	The topic and purpose lacks some clarity. It tends to be overly wordy. Critical scholarship is lacking in some places.	The topic and purpose has limited clarity. It is not easily apparent what this paper is about. Critical scholarship is lacking in some places.	The topic is not clearly described nor is the purpose of the paper expressed. Critical scholarship is nonexistent.
Development	Your thesis is succinct, insightful, sophisticated, even exciting. It demonstrates independent insight and comprehensive reading and research of the topic. All ideas in the paper flow logically; your argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. You have excellent transitions. Your paragraphs have solid topics and each sentence clearly relates to that topic.	Your thesis is clear, insightful and demonstrates extensive reading and research of the topic. All ideas in the paper flow logically. Your argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. You have very good transitions. Your paragraphs have solid topics and each sentence clearly relates to that topic.	Your thesis is unclear at times, your references to scholarly literature is limited or, are irrelevant. Not all ideas in the paper flow logically, some are unsound. Your argument is difficult to identify at times. Your transitions require improvement. Your paragraphs have topics but often deviate from them.	Your thesis is frequently unclear, your references to scholarly literature is very limited or, is irrelevant. Ideas in the paper flow illogically. Your argument is very difficult to identify at times. Your transitions require significant improvement. Paragraphs do not stay on topic.	Your thesis is unclear, your references to scholarly literature is nonexistent or is irrelevant. Ideas in the paper flow illogically. Your argument cannot be identified. Your transitions require significant improvement. Paragraphs do not stay on topic.

Analysis	Supports every point with examples from a wide range of academic literature. Quoted material is expertly integrated into the body of your work. Your analysis suggests new ways to perceive the material or identifies gaps or shortcomings in the literature.	Supports every point with examples from a wide range of academic literature. Quoted material is well integrated into the body of work.	Does not support every point with examples from academic literature. Uses only old or out of date sources. Quoted material is sometimes irrelevant or poorly integrated into the body of work.	Points are not supported by academic literature. Uses non-scholarly sources or old, out of date sources. Quoted material is often irrelevant or poorly integrated into the body of work.	Does not support any point with examples from academic literature. Uses only non-scholarly sources. Quoted material is often irrelevant or poorly integrated into the body of work.
Communication and Language	Is very interesting, thought provoking and exciting to read. Uses language appropriately and articulately. No more than one spelling, grammatical or style mistake per page.	Is interesting and holds the reader's attention. Uses language appropriately and articulately. No more than two spelling, grammatical or style mistakes per page.	Paper is generally well written, but sometimes lacks purpose or relevance to the topic. Has up to four spelling, grammatical and style mistakes on every page.	Paper is generally well written, but often lacks purpose or relevance to the topic. Reader is easily distracted. Has up to 10 spelling, grammatical and style mistakes on every page.	Paper is poorly written, lacks purpose or relevance to the topic. Has multiple spelling, grammatical and style mistakes on every page.
Conclusion	Your conclusion is succinct and very persuasive. It is strongly evidence based, and your inference very sound.	Your conclusion is persuasive. It is evidence based and your inference is sound.	Your conclusion may have some merit but some of your evidence is weak or inference is questionable.	Your conclusion is not very persuasive. Your evidence is very weak and your inference very questionable.	Your conclusion is not persuasive at all. Your evidence is scant or non-existent. Your inference is highly questionable.
Referencing/ Bibliography	Perfectly adheres to SBL Style or Andrews University Standards for Written work. No mistakes are permitted	Adheres to SBL Style or Andrews University Standards for Written work. No more than three mistakes permitted.	Often adheres to SBL Style or Andrews University Standards for Written work. No more than 7 mistakes permitted.	Seldom adheres to SBL Style or Andrews University Standards for Written work. No more than 10 mistakes permitted.	Does not adhere to SBL Style or Andrews University Standards for Written work.

DOCUMENTS USED TO SOURCE CRITERIA:

- Derek Bok Centre for Learning, Harvard University. <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/GradingPapers.html>
- Nancy Langston and Steve Kantrowitz from the University of Wisconsin "Writing Across the Curriculum". http://mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC/page.jsp?id=101&c_type=article&c_id=4
- Chris Mayda from the Eastern Michigan University, "Grading Criteria". <http://www.enich.edu/public/geo/geography/Mayda/gradcriteria.htm>