

REAP THEM AND KEEP THEM!

“HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER—EVEN IN A CITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY” APPEARED IN THE JANUARY – MARCH 2011 *ELDER’S DIGEST*. THIS ARTICLE PROPOSED “TEN FARMING COMMANDMENTS” WHICH SYSTEMATIZED JESUS’ MINISTRY METHOD INTO 10 INTENTIONAL ACTION STEPS FOR OUR TIME¹ AND SERVED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A SERIES OF *ELDER’S DIGEST* ARTICLES IN THE COMING MONTHS THAT WOULD UNPACK THESE 10 COMMANDMENTS IN MORE DETAIL.² BELOW IS THE NINTH AND FINAL ARTICLE IN THE SERIES³. THIS ARTICLE WILL FOCUS ON THE ELEVENTH “FARMING COMMANDMENT.”

Why are we talking about an 11th Commandment in a series on “10 Farming Commandments?” Because “farming” leads to something equally important—*reaping* and *keeping*. It’s obvious that reaping where you have farmed is necessary—just like farming before you reap is common sense (or is it that common—in ministry?). Here is the 11th Commandment: “Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to reap where thou hast farmed and keep what [who] thou doest reap (disciple—preserve the harvest)!”

SEOUL JOONG-ANG GOSPEL CENTER

Let’s “visit” a sample church that demonstrates the whole cycle of evangelism: farming, reaping, and keeping. The Seoul Joong-ang Gospel Center in Seoul, Korea, is in the business district of Seoul. Years ago, when Pastor Kim, Dae Sung was the pastor of this Adventist congregation he caught an idea from Ellen White’s writings to have a vegetarian restaurant in his church’s neighborhood. However, first he chose to interview community leaders in his territory to determine if *they* felt that this idea would meet a real need, and, if so, would they support it.

Pastor Kim, Dae Sung visited the businesses around the church and explained his idea, asking for their input. From these interviews he acquired pledges of support and money from them to start the restaurant, for they indicated that it would meet a real need. The neighborhood had many Buddhists and needed good vegetarian restaurants for employees to have a place to eat during their noon hour. The Buddhist temple across the street also wanted the restaurant and they pledged their support and donated money.

Members of Seoul Joong-ang Gospel Center started the requested vegetarian restaurant in their church building in 2002. The restaurant is open from Monday to Friday, and an ongoing goal is that it will continuously provide an opportunity for the church to connect with their community. One hundred fifty to 200 people continue to eat at the restaurant each day.



The church uses the income from the restaurant to support the neighborhood. The customers know that and are happy. In addition to the good food, comprehensive health (physical, mental, spiritual) resources such as books and healthy foods are available for the customers to buy.

Through this restaurant, the church has demonstrated the process of Gospel farming: preparing the soil, planting seeds, and cultivating the resulting crop. The reaping part is especially illustrated in another of Seoul Joong-ang Gospel Center’s community-based ministries—their ministry to senior citizens.

The church has two separate worship services—one for seniors (downstairs) – with approximately 300 attendees—



and one for regular church members (upstairs) with approximately 300 attendees. An associate pastor of the church is in charge of the senior citizen congregation.

On Sabbaths the senior ministry looks like this: During Sabbath School time a generic program is presented—generally an educational video on health. Worship service is from 10-11:00 am. From 11-11:30 four different kinds of activities are offered: (1) Bible Study, (2) Singing time – Gospel music, (3) English class, and (4) Health class. Then the seniors enjoy a delicious lunch in the vegetarian restaurant. In addition, on the first Sabbath of each month there are free medical services (visits with a physician, etc.), free oriental treatments, and beauty services (free haircuts, etc.). On the third Sabbath of each month the church provides free shots (injections).

Two times per year the church holds reaping meetings for those to whom they minister. The meetings are held after lunch four Sabbaths in a row during the reaping times, with a baptism on the fifth Sabbath. There are an average of 90 baptisms per year at Seoul Joong-ang Gospel Center—approximately 80 of which are from the senior citizens group. The growing congregation for senior citizens continues to disciple the seniors who were baptized. They have a Bible study class for new members.

HOW ABOUT YOUR CHURCH?

Church leaders, is your church following the whole cycle of “Gospel Farming?” Do you prepare the soil, plant seeds, cultivate/nurture the “crops” (people) with ministries that connect with the community and meet *their* felt needs? In so doing, do you help those whom you serve to discover that they have another need they might not have felt before—Jesus? Holding regular reaping meetings will provide intentional opportunities for those whom you serve to follow Jesus.

Keeping whom you reap needs as much intentionality as the farming and reaping.⁴ Small groups are an effective way to preserve your harvest. Actually, small groups are also an important part of the farming process of planting seeds

and cultivating, as well as preserving the harvest. In small groups, deeper relationships can be formed with the Family of God before decisions to follow Jesus are actually made.

There are various types of small groups:

Small groups for general Bible study for people who you meet via community outreach programs - Gerson Santos,⁵ who has had much experience with discipling through small groups, suggests a process for developing small groups from the people who are not Adventists who attend our community outreach programs: (1) Winsomely invite them to study the Bible to meet their spiritual needs. (2) Hold these groups at convenient times, such as during lunch hour. (3) Do not teach a doctrinal series in these small groups—for a person may join later and come for the first time during a study on the Mark of the Beast. Rather, do more generic Bible studies, such as the life of Jesus, etc. The *Serendipity Bible*⁶ is an example of a useful tool for leading general small groups. Small group activities, icebreakers and discussion questions are included with the words of Scripture. (4) If someone in the group asks questions about Bible doctrines the group leader can say that after the program we can make an appointment for another day to study that issue with some Bible texts that deal with this subject. (5) There are many options for doctrinal Bible study lessons, such as *Discover, Amazing Facts*, etc. What is the best lesson series? Gerson Santos says, “The best Bible study series is the one you use.” (6) Those who are baptized should join a small group within your church. If you don’t already have small groups organized in your church, a good place to start is Sabbath School classes, which are built-in small groups that already exist in your church.

New members’ Sabbath School class - The *New Members’ Bible Study Guide*, entitled *In Step With Jesus*, has been prepared by the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department to assist in the task of making disciples. This series contains 52 lessons, and is a valuable resource for assisting new members to connect

with church members and with God. It will help them understand and follow God's Word, will demonstrate how to minister to others, and will equip them for discipleship during that all important first year of church membership.

Regular Sabbath School Classes – If your classes are large, you may want to consider dividing them into smaller groups. Each class should not only study the Bible, but have a care coordinator who organizes care and follow up for missing class members. Also each class should have a community outreach project.

Your neighborhood/community is waiting for your church to make a difference in their lives. Go and farm, reap, and keep, using Christ's ministry method, for His method never fails!

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¹ The 10 Farming Commandments are: (1) Thou shalt study Jesus' ministry method and pray for...; (2) Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church; (3) Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT); (4) Thou shalt choose and narrow down thy territory; (5) Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory; (6) Thou shalt drive or walk around the chosen territory and note the homes, businesses, churches, people, etc.; (7) Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them; (8) Thou shalt earn "Social Capital;" (9) Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church; (10) Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate.... AND an 11th Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10,

and thou shalt remember to Reap where thou hast farmed and keep what thou doest reap (disciple–preserve the harvest)!

² So far, these follow-up articles have appeared in *Elder's Digest*: (1) "Once a Month Jesus Comes and Holds My Hand..." (Oct.-Dec. 2011); (2) "Our Community Does Not Know Us..." (Jan.-March 2012); (3) "Help, Lord! I've Been Asked to Plant a Church!" (July-Sept. 2012); (4) "As I Walked Around and Looked Carefully..." (Jan.-March 2013); (5) "You're the First Church That Ever Asked..." (July-Sept. 2013); and (6) "We Can't Afford Not to Have Someone Like This in Our Community..." (Oct.-Dec. 2013); (7) "Strategic Ministry Planning So Your Church Will Make a Difference" (Jan.-March 2014); and (8) "Where Is God Already Active in Your Community?" (Oct.-Dec. 2014). To access these articles online, go to www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org. Click on Adventist Community Services, and "Articles & Media." To access a comprehensive curriculum about community outreach, click on "Resources" and "ICM Community Services & Urban Ministry Certification Program Curriculum." For a direct link, go to www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs_iicm

³ Some of the articles in the series covered more than one "Farming Commandment."

⁴ To access effective tools for discipling whom you reap, go to: www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com.

⁵ Gerson Santos is Director of the Global Mission Urban Mission Center for General Conference Office of Adventist Mission.

⁶ The *Serendipity Bible* can be ordered online.

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