



**GROWING TOGETHER  
(Sabbath School Program)**

**June 17, 2017**

**Fylvia Kline**

**MORNING SCRIPTURE READING**

Romans 12:1-2

**SUGGESTED SONGS**

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal No. 350	Blest Be the Tie That Binds
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal No. 370	Christ for the World
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal No. 539	I Will Early Seek the Savior
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal No. 572	Give of Your Best to the Master

*[First, show this video (<https://vimeo.com/195256690>). If you are unable to show the video, you may read the summary of the video below]*

By the time a child is thirteen years old, there is a fifty percent chance he will have decided to not return to church. When Patty Vidales heard this statistic, she was struck. Reminded of her own two children, she thought to herself, “Which one would I want to be saved?”

Learning that fifty percent of adolescents turn away from church was the catalyst for Patty’s decision to get involved with youth ministry. As a mother, Patty understands the importance of nurturing young Christians to grow with God. And as the youth director for Paradise Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church, she actively works toward that goal.

Youth Pastor Wally Peralta explains that the vibrant, enthusiastic youth group they’ve developed at Paradise Valley is more than a social group: “We had games, activities, and vespers, but we felt we needed to do something beyond the building—beyond what we do in church.” Today, their youth group ministers to homeless people in their local community, passing out clothes and hygiene kits with supplies such as toothbrushes and floss. It was a shock to youth member Holly to discover how many people were suffering and lacking basic necessities. She says, “You never think about what you have until it’s gone from you. [Our ministry] reminds you to be thankful for what you have.”

Patty and Pastor Wally believe their work contributes to greater retention of Paradise Valley's younger members. As a youth group member, Jesse describes the personal challenge and reward he has found in this service, "It sometimes scares me, but I want to still help them. It helps me, too, to grow in Christ." But Patty emphasizes that their remarkable success relies on the nurture and care of a larger community: "Youth ministries is a group effort. It's not just the parents. It's not just the kids. It's not just the pastor. It's the whole church."

Patty says that she sometimes has to beg young people in the congregation to attend youth group meetings, attracting them with the promise of snacks and entertainment. But "when they see what they get out of it and what it brings to other people, they fall in love with it. And the next time, we don't have to beg so much!"

*[Second, read the following to emphasize the effect of community service projects on the growth and wellbeing of your congregation.]*

Members of a healthy church exemplify Jesus in their community service projects, and through this service they are rewarded with a two-fold effect: 1) meeting the needs of the people they serve and 2) bringing them closer to one another and to God through a shared ministry. When church members do more than worship together, they grow to know each other better and create friendships that last beyond the Sabbath hours. And a family with friends at church is less likely to withdraw from the congregation. In other words, the more things we do together as small groups of this church, the better chance we have of nurturing one another's spiritual and personal needs. Community service projects are a great way to not just make new friends outside the church but to bond with each other inside the church.

A church where a majority of members are actively involved in projects in their community is a church with a higher member retention than the average church. It is a church that not only grows together but also has a transformational effect on its community.

Romans 12:1–2 (Message) reads: "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him." The apostle Paul is telling us that the key to having a transformational effect on each other, our community, and our neighborhood is to make witnessing—sharing Jesus and being like Jesus—a part of our everyday life. Not as a once-in-a-while thing, but as a regular habit. "Take your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life and place it before God as an offering."

Let us identify the needs of our community and find ways to embed our lives into theirs, nurturing a Christ-like character within our congregation through shared service to others. Let's think outside the box—beyond the traditional ways a church serves a community—and like the youth of the Paradise Valley Church, we will find that the benefit to ourselves is immeasurable. We will grow closer to one another and develop connections that last beyond the worship service.

Over the next week, think of three different ways you can be involved—something you can do by yourself, something you can do as a family, and something you can do as a small group from church.

Here are three examples: As an individual, I can offer free English tutoring. As a family, we can join a minor league sports team (that's not affiliated with our church). As a Sabbath School class, we can start a Parents' Night Out evening once a month for the young families in our community.

*[Print out sheets of paper with the following service project ideas, along with some blank space for members to brainstorm their own ideas. Depending on the time you have, you can either hand out the sheets for later use or you can divide the congregation into groups to consider these community activities and think of others.]*

1. Sponsor a classroom's school supplies
2. Host a family movie night
3. Organize a music concert
4. Host a Super Bowl party
5. Put on a community talent show
6. Host a block party
7. Open a community garden
8. Organize a parents' night out
9. Host a mothers' breakfast
10. Open day camps for kids
11. Offer English as a Second Language classes
12. Organize a community yard sale
13. Offer free car washes
14. Create crafting, scrapbooking, or quilt-making groups
15. Give out report card rewards to local children
16. Run a food, clothing, and cleaning supplies pantry
17. Offer diet and cooking classes
18. Create newborn gift bags
19. Offer financial peace courses
20. Make bag lunches for the community (bags containing food snacks and Word snacks)

*[Conclude by reading again Romans 12:1–2 from the Message Bible, and encourage the congregation to practice Christian fellowship and service to others in their “sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life,” as Jesus did.]*