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A Practical Guide to Evangelism: How to Win and Keep New Members

by Balvin B. Braham, Miami, FL: Inter-American Division Publishing Association, 2014.

If you are looking for a simple and clear resource on the “how to” of evangelism, I strongly recommend *A Practical Guide to Evangelism: How to Win and Keep New Members* by Balvin B. Braham.

The author coordinates evangelism and church growth for the burgeoning Inter-American Division. You will find biblically based and time-tested strategies for getting your local church involved in evangelism. Each chapter concludes with thought-provoking discussion questions. Sample church assessments and community surveys will be a helpful resource for any church wanting to intentionally prepare for effective outreach activities.

Crucial to the success of evangelistic activity is the formation of evangelistic small groups. The author outlines the key components of a healthy evangelistic small group: devotion, nurture, community, and mission. The 22 suggestions for those leading a small group Bible study would be helpful for even the most experienced small group leader (76, 77). Braham not only outlines the steps for conducting a traditional evangelistic series but also discusses a variety of other creative forms of evangelism: family, women, men, youth, children, and comprehensive health. The common goal is impact for the kingdom of heaven.

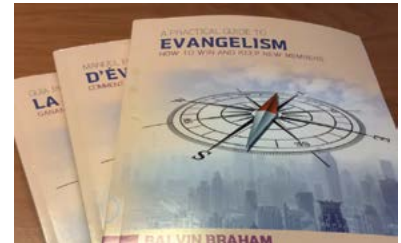
The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always emphasized the importance of Christian education, but have we recognized the mission opportunities on our primary, secondary, and tertiary campuses? According to the author, the goal of evangelism, in connection with Adventist educational institutions, is “to foster social and spiritual growth among teachers and professors,

Adventist students, and non-Adventist students” (179). Professors, teachers, and Adventist students play a significant role in on-campus evangelism through collaboration, modeling, and mentoring. Non-Adventist relatives and friends of students are also impacted when evangelism occurs on educational campuses. Unfortunately, the author does not explore strategies for evangelistic outreach to the thousands of secular and private campuses, many of which include Adventist students who might serve as a core group for evangelistic outreach.

The author devotes an entire chapter to discuss the importance of discipleship and nurture. Five core values of a disciple of Jesus are identified: devotion, evangelism, fellowship, outreach, and stewardship. A spirit of “sacrifice is a key component in order for these core values to become a reality in the life of the disciple” (187).

New believers also need to be nurtured. As the church experiences growth through a variety of evangelistic activities, the welcoming church family must be intentional about nurture and conservation. This involves careful training and accountability. What are the pressing needs of the new members who have been dislocated from previous support systems? The author suggests four immediate needs: affirmation, love, assurance, and support. I am certain the reader could augment the list of ways to show love to new members, but the 26 suggestions offered by the author are a great place to start (199).

The author also shares a sample program to nurture new members that has proven to be remarkably effective.* The seven practical strategies outlined




in this program can be implemented with minimal cost, and the results will be long lasting.

The reader might be surprised to see a closing chapter addressed to the new believer. Evangelism is presented as a way of life, not just an event, and evangelism is for every believer, not just a select few. Each disciplined and nurtured new member becomes an integral part of the church’s comprehensive evangelistic team with the assurance “you will find immeasurable joy in living and sharing your faith” (215).

This helpful resource on the “how to” of evangelism also includes valuable appendices on topics including planting new churches, reaching non-Christians, and connecting with former members (217–37).

At a recent training event conducted by the author, a church leader exclaimed, “Every church member needs to read this book!” Even though the book is user friendly for individual church members, a great start would be for each pastor and lay leader to read this valuable resource prayerfully and carefully. This might change your evangelistic ministry for good.

—Reviewed by Derek J. Morris, editor, Ministry, International Journal for Pastors. 

* In a case study using this sample nurturing program, 90 percent of approximately 240 new members were still active in church after two years.