

 YOUNG ADULT

SABBATH SCHOOL AND SMALL GROUPS

A Re-imagined
Framework for
Facilitators
Who Shape
Sacred Spaces

**YOUNG ADULT
SABBATH
SCHOOL
(AND SMALL GROUPS)**

A Re-imagined Framework for Facilitators
Who Shape Sacred Spaces



Young Adult Sabbath School and Small Groups

Created by the North American Division Young Adult Sabbath School Taskforce

Cover and interior design and layout: Claudia C. Pech Moguel

Additional copies of this resource are available from:

AdventSource

5120 Prescott Avenue

Lincoln, Nebraska 68506

AdventSource.org

402.486.8800

Copyright © 2026 by the North American Division Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Printed in the United States of America | March 2026

ISBN# 979-8-88628-983-1

CONTENTS

- v INTRODUCTION | From Classroom to Sacred Space: Why Young Adult Sabbath School Must Change
- 1 CHAPTER 1 | CONVERSATION
Create Safe Spaces for People to Communicate
- 4 CHAPTER 2 | CONNECTION
Create Safe Spaces to Connect Emotionally, Spiritually, Intellectually, Socially
- 8 CHAPTER 3 | COMMUNITY
Create Safe Spaces Where People Do Life Together Outside of Sabbath School
- 11 CHAPTER 4 | CHALLENGE
Create Safe Spaces for Open Dialogue and Exploration
- 14 CHAPTER 5 | CONSISTENCY
Create Safe Spaces That Are Not Rushed but Real, Genuine, Authentic
- 18 APPENDIX
Building a Leadership Team
Suggested Meeting Flow
Practical Wisdom for Re-Imagined Young Adult Groups
Research & Framework References

| INTRODUCTION |

From Classroom to Sacred Space: Why Young Adult Sabbath School Must Change

On any given Sabbath morning, young adults walk into our churches carrying far more than a lesson quarterly. They carry stories—some hopeful, some unfinished, some bruised by disappointment. They carry questions about faith, identity, justice, Scripture, relationships, vocations, and the list goes on, unique to each young adult. Many carry deep affection for Jesus alongside a complicated relationship with the church. Others arrive cautiously, wondering whether this space will be safe enough to be honest—or whether silence would be wiser.

Scripture reminds us that God consistently meets people where they are. When Elijah fled in exhaustion and fear, God did not confront him with correction but with presence—“a gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:12). Young adults today are often listening for that same whisper. Sabbath School, when rightly shaped, can become one of the most consistent places where they encounter it.

For decades, Sabbath School has been one of the most faithful development engines in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It has shaped biblical literacy, nurtured intergenerational connection, and anchored weekly spiritual rhythms. Yet for many young adults today, the inherited form of Sabbath School no longer fits the lived reality of emerging adulthood. The issue is not truth. It is trust. The issue is not content. It is context.

Young adults are not asking for less Scripture; they are asking for space to wrestle with it. They are not rejecting faith; they are trying to make it their own. And they are not disengaging because they do not care—but because too often they do not feel safe enough to speak.

This book is written for local church Young Adult Sabbath School facilitators who sense that something sacred is at stake. You know that simply “getting through the lesson” is no longer enough. You feel the tension between honoring Adventist theological convictions and creating space for honest exploration. You recognize that the posture of the leader often matters more than the precision of the content. And you believe—perhaps quietly, perhaps fiercely—that Sabbath School can become one of the most powerful faith-transformational spaces in a young adult’s spiritual journey.

RE-IMAGINING, NOT REPLACING, SABBATH SCHOOL

To re-imagine Sabbath School is not to abandon its purpose, but to recover its soul. Re-imagining does not mean discarding Scripture, structure, or Adventist identity. It means re-centering Sabbath School around people rather than performance, transformation rather than information, and presence rather than pressure.

Jesus Himself modeled this re-imagining. He taught in synagogues, but He formed His young adult disciples on roads, at tables, and in honest conversation. He allowed questions, welcomed interruption, and resisted rigid expectations of religious performance. When young adults encounter Sabbath School shaped by the posture of Jesus, they begin to experience Adventism not as an institution to survive, but as a community to belong to.

In many traditional Sabbath School models, success is measured by how much material is covered. In a re-imagined model, success is measured by whether people feel seen, heard, and invited into deeper faith. In older paradigms, the teacher is the expert. In re-imagined Sabbath School, the facilitator is a steward of sacred space—one who guides conversation, protects trust, and invites the Spirit to do transformational work that cannot be rushed.

We all live in a world of constant noise, conflicting opinions, and unrelenting urgency. Ironically, what we often lack is a peaceful, consistent safe space where faith can be explored without fear. Sabbath School, when thoughtfully facilitated, can become that space.

| CHAPTER 1 | CONVERSATION

Create Safe Spaces for People to Communicate

Conversation is the foundation of all meaningful discipleship with young adults. Before beliefs can be clarified, before habits can be formed, before community can deepen, young adults must be able to speak—honestly and without fear. Scripture consistently affirms that faith grows through dialogue, testimony, lament, and shared reflection, not silent compliance.

The epistle of James counsels believers to be “quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (James 1:19). This is not merely relational wisdom; it is a spiritual posture. Listening creates space for God’s work to unfold in human hearts. When Sabbath School environments prioritize listening, they align with God’s own way of drawing people into truth.

Yet in many church spaces, conversation has been quietly replaced by monologue. Questions are asked rhetorically. Answers are supplied quickly. Silence is treated as failure. Disagreement is smoothed over or shut down. In such environments, young adults learn an unspoken lesson: it is safer to be quiet than to be real.

Re-imagined Sabbath School begins by restoring conversation as an act of spiritual hospitality.

CONVERSATION AS SPIRITUAL HOSPITALITY

Hospitality in Scripture is not about impressing guests; it is about making room. Abraham welcomed strangers before he knew their significance. Jesus ate with those considered religious outsiders. Likewise, conversational hospitality creates room for unfinished faith.

Luke 24 offers a powerful model. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus walked with two disillusioned disciples. He did not correct them immediately. He asked questions. He listened.

RESEARCH GROUNDING

Creating Safe Spaces Where Faith Can Be Spoken Aloud—Steven Argue emphasizes empathetic listening, psychological safety, and dialogue as prerequisites for young adult faith engagement; see *Young Adult Ministry Now*, pp. 41–49, 57–61. These practices align with Growing Young’s emphasis on warm community and iCOR’s focus on fostering relationships.

Only after they had spoken their confusion and grief did He begin to open the Scriptures. Transformation followed conversation.

Young adults long for this same experience. When facilitators create space where people can speak before being instructed, Sabbath School becomes a place as when Christ walked alongside seekers listening to their perspectives as they searched for answers to their questions.

DIALOGUE BEFORE DOCTRINE

Young adults are often deeply interested in theology—but they are wary of theology used as a weapon. They want to know not only what the church believes, but how those beliefs intersect with their lived experience, suffering, injustice, and hope.

This is why dialogue must precede doctrinal precision. Dialogue does not mean relativism. It means allowing people to articulate where they are before making suggestions of where they should be. It recognizes that faith development is a relational process, not an event.

Ellen White observed that “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good... then He bade them, ‘Follow Me’” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143). Conversation precedes commitment.

THE FACILITATOR AS GUIDE, NOT EXPERT

In re-imagined Sabbath School, the facilitator’s role shifts from expert to guide. Guides do not pretend to know every answer. They know the terrain, but they also walk alongside others as fellow travelers.

This posture reflects Adventist discipleship at its best. Early Adventist pioneers studied Scripture together, debating, praying, and revising their understanding. Truth emerged in community.

Guides ask questions like:

- What stands out to you in this passage?

CASE STUDY: CAMPUS SABBATH SCHOOL AND HONEST QUESTIONS

A campus-adjacent young adult Sabbath School shifted its format from lecture-based teaching to facilitated conversation. Early sessions felt awkward. Silence lingered. Questions emerged that leaders were unprepared to answer immediately. Instead of retreating to monologue, facilitators acknowledged uncertainty and committed to exploring Scripture together. Over time, attendance stabilized, and students began inviting peers. One participant shared, “This is the first place I felt like my questions didn’t make me a problem.”

The lesson was clear: safety precedes growth.

- How does this challenge or comfort you?
- Where do you feel resistance or confusion?

Such questions do not weaken faith. They strengthen ownership. As a facilitator make sure you are listening 80% of the time while speaking 20% or less of your group time.

CREATING SAFETY WITHOUT LOSING SUBSTANCE

Some facilitators fear that open conversation will dilute Adventist identity or lead to doctrinal drift. In reality, the opposite is often true. When young adults are given space to wrestle, they are more likely to internalize belief rather than merely perform it.

Safety does not mean the absence of conviction. It means the presence of grace. It means disagreement can occur without shaming, and questions can surface without penalty.

Practically, facilitators can cultivate safety by:

- Responding to questions with curiosity rather than defensiveness
- Thanking people for honesty, even when it is uncomfortable
- Modeling how to hold conviction with humility
- Naming when a question does not have a simple answer

WHEN SILENCE SPEAKS

Silence is not always disengagement. Sometimes it is reflection. Sometimes it is caution. Sometimes it is the residue of past harm.

Re-imagined Sabbath School treats silence gently. Facilitators learn to pause without panic, to allow space for thought, and to resist filling every moment with words. Over time, consistent safety invites quieter voices to emerge.

CONVERSATION AS THE FIRST ACT OF FAITH

Every time a young adult risks speaking honestly about their beliefs, their doubts, or their longings, they are taking an act of faith. The facilitator's response determines whether that risk will be rewarded or punished.

When conversation is honored, connection follows. When connection deepens, community forms. And when community is strong, faith can be challenged and refined in love.

This is why Conversation is the first C. Not because it is the most impressive—but because without it, none of the other Cs can survive.

| CHAPTER 2 |

CONNECTION

Create Safe Spaces to Connect Emotionally, Spiritually, Intellectually, Socially

If conversation is the spark, connection is the bond that forms when people realize they matter to one another. Young adults may attend a Sabbath School once out of curiosity, obligation, or habit. They return—and eventually attach—when they experience genuine relational connection. Scripture affirms that belonging is not peripheral to faith; it is foundational. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together... but encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

In re-imagined Young Adult Sabbath School, connection is not accidental. It is cultivated intentionally by facilitators who understand that faith grows best in relational soil.

WHY CONNECTION MATTERS MORE THAN ATTENDANCE

Many churches quietly measure success by how many people show up. Young adults, however, measure value by how deeply they are known. Attendance without attachment leads to transience; connection leads to commitment.

The book of Acts describes early believers as “devoted... to the fellowship” (Acts 2:42). Fellowship here is not casual socializing; it is shared life rooted in Christ. Adventist history reflects this same pattern—small groups, Sabbath meals, camp meetings, and home worships have long sustained faith through relationship.

Young adults are navigating one of the most relationally unstable seasons of life. Jobs change, cities change, relationships shift, and digital interaction often substitutes for embodied presence. In this context, Sabbath School has the potential to become a rare

RESEARCH GROUNDING

In from “Attendance to Attachment” Argue identifies relational warmth, belonging, and attachment, not attendance, as decisive factors in sustained young adult engagement; see *Young Adult Ministry Now*, pp. 67–75. This chapter reflects Growing Young’s “Warm Community,” iCOR’s relational refuge model, and the Naural Church Development’s emphasis on loving relationships.

place of relational continuity—a weekly reminder that someone notices when they are present and cares when they are absent.

Connection answers a fundamental question young adults are always asking: *“If I disappear, will anyone notice?”*

CONNECTION IS MORE THAN FRIENDLINESS

Friendliness is superficial warmth. Connection is relational investment.

A friendly space says, “You are welcome here.” A connected space says, “You belong here.”

Jesus modeled this difference. He welcomed crowds, but He connected deeply with individuals—learning names, hearing their stories, and understanding their fears. He noticed Zacchaeus in a tree, Mary at His feet, and Thomas in his doubt. Connection always preceded transformation.

Facilitators cultivate connection not by being charismatic, but by being attentive. They learn names. They remember stories. They follow up. They notice patterns—who speaks often, who stays quiet, who arrives late, who stops coming.

These small acts communicate dignity. Over time, dignity fosters trust, and trust opens the door to deeper faith exploration.

SABBATH AS RELATIONAL RESISTANCE

For Adventists, Sabbath is a weekly act of resistance—resistance to productivity, to isolation, and exhaustion. Sabbath invites presence. It slows us down enough to notice one another.

When Sabbath School mirrors hurry or efficiency, it contradicts Sabbath’s theology. When it embodies relational attentiveness, it becomes a lived sermon.

Re-imagined Sabbath School treats time as a gift, not an enemy. Facilitators resist rushing conversation, cutting prayer short, or prioritizing content over connection. In doing so, they model Sabbath rest as relational trust.



CASE STUDY: HEALING AFTER CHURCH HURT

A young adult Sabbath School included several participants who had stepped away from church due to past conflict. The facilitator committed to consistency and relational follow-up without pressure. After several months, one participant shared, “I’m not here because I agree with everything yet. I’m here because I know people care if I’m missing.” That sense of attachment became the foundation for renewed spiritual openness.

Connection healed what argument never could.



In young adult Sabbath School, the facilitators often become the relational anchors—the consistent presence that signals stability even as participants come and go. This does not mean the facilitators carry the entire relational load, but it does mean their posture sets the tone.

Facilitators who foster connection:

- Arrive early and linger after
- Ask questions beyond the lesson
- Normalize vulnerability by modeling it
- Check in during the week when appropriate

“*Connection deepens when facilitators are willing to be human, not just prepared.*”

CONNECTING BEYOND THE HOUR

Young adults do not experience life in weekly segments. Their faith, work, relationships, and rest are deeply intertwined. Sabbath School connection strengthens when it is reinforced outside the hour itself.

This does not require constant programming. Simple practices are often most effective:

- A shared group message for prayer requests
- Occasional shared meals or meet-ups at coffee shops
- Remembering birthdays or major life events
- A brief message after an absence: “You were missed.”

Such gestures transform Sabbath School from an event into a relational rhythm.

CONNECTING WHOLISTICALLY

Because we are multifaceted complex people it is important for facilitators to see everyone as a whole person. Understanding and being sensitive to all aspects of our being is essential to our relationships. Healthy wholistic connections operate on multiple levels:

- **Emotional**—feeling safe to share honestly
- **Spiritual**—sensing God’s presence together
- **Intellectual**—being respected as a thinking person
- **Social**—enjoying being together

When one dimension is neglected, connection weakens. Balanced facilitation tends to all four.

CONNECTION REQUIRES BOUNDARIES

Re-imagined connection is not limitless intimacy. Facilitators must practice appropriate boundaries to avoid burnout, dependency upon or from others, or blurred roles. Healthy connection empowers community rather than centralizing it around one leader.

This includes:

- Encouraging peer-to-peer relationships
- Sharing leadership and facilitation
- Knowing when to refer to pastoral or clinical concerns

Strong boundaries do not weaken connection; they sustain it.

CONNECTION TAKES TIME

Not all young adults attach quickly. Some carry church hurt. Others are naturally cautious. Facilitators must resist the urge to rush relational connection or interpret slowness as failure.

Isaiah reminds us that God's work often unfolds patiently: "A bruised reed He will not break" (Isaiah 42:3). Consistent presence allows connection to grow at a human pace.

CONNECTION AS A MINISTRY OUTCOME

When Sabbath School fosters real connection, remarkable things happen quietly:

- Participants begin praying for one another
- Faith conversations continue outside the group
- Young adults invite their friends to join them
- Absences are noticed and followed up, not out of responsibility but out of personal interest

Connection transforms Sabbath School from a place people attend into a safe space they are attached to. And attachment is the bridge between curiosity and commitment.

| CHAPTER 3 |

COMMUNITY

Create Safe Spaces Where People Do Life Together Outside of Sabbath School

Community is where faith moves from theory to practice. Scripture never imagines discipleship as a solo endeavor. From Israel gathered at Sinai to the early church breaking bread together, God forms His people in community. For Seventh-day Adventists, this communal identity has always been central—seen in Sabbath gatherings, camp meetings, and shared mission, pointing towards Jesus’ second coming and life together forever. Yet for many young adults, Sabbath School has not consistently functioned as a space where community is truly formed.

Re-imagined Young Adult Sabbath School recovers a deeply Adventist conviction: belief is sustained through belonging.

COMMUNITY AS A BIBLICAL PATTERN

Acts 2:42-47 offers a snapshot of the early church’s life together. They devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Notably, learning and living were inseparable. Faith was not confined to structured instruction; it overflowed into shared meals, generosity, and daily life.

This pattern resonates strongly with Adventist practice at its best. Historically, Adventist faith spread not only through preaching but through close-knit communities that studied Scripture together, shared resources, and lived counterculturally. Young Adult Sabbath School can become a modern experience of this same movement.

RESEARCH GROUNDING

When Sabbath School Becomes “Us”—Argue documents that young adults remain engaged where community extends beyond programs into shared life and mission; see *Young Adult Ministry Now*, pp. 73-82. This chapter integrates iCOR’s intergenerational community vision, Growing Young’s focus on belonging, and NCD’s relational health markers.

FROM PROGRAM TO PEOPLE

When Sabbath School is treated primarily as a program, community is assumed to form elsewhere—or not at all. Young adults experience this gap quickly. They may appreciate content yet feel relationally invisible.

Community begins to form when facilitators quietly but intentionally shift priorities:

- From efficiency to presence
- From content mastery to shared meaning
- From audience to interactive participants

This shift does not diminish Adventist teaching; it embodies it.

LANGUAGE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Words shape belonging. While “Sabbath School” is cherished language for many Adventists, it can unintentionally signal insider status to those new to the faith. Some congregations have found it helpful to use complementary language such as “Bible Conversation” or “Young Adult Bible Study” while still honoring Sabbath School’s purpose.

COMMUNITY BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Authentic community rarely stays contained within an hour. When Sabbath School functions as a relational seedbed, connections naturally extend into meals, service, and shared experiences.

Facilitators need not manufacture this. Instead, they can legitimize community by naming it as spiritually valuable. Inviting participants to linger, eat together, or serve alongside one another communicates that faith belongs in everyday life.



CASE STUDY: IMMIGRANT-RICH ADVENTIST CHURCH

A diverse congregation serving first-generation Adventists noticed that young adults unfamiliar with denominational language felt hesitant to attend Sabbath School. By reframing the space as “Young Adult Bible Conversation,” participation increased without altering theological depth. Community grew as language lowered barriers.

CASE STUDY: SMALL-TOWN ADVENTIST CHURCH

A young adult Sabbath School began hosting monthly Sabbath lunches in rotating homes. Attendance at the class itself did not immediately increase, but relational depth did. Over time, spiritual conversations deepened, and several young adults who rarely spoke in class became active contributors.



INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY

Adventism has long valued intergenerational life, yet young adults are often siloed. While peer community is important, occasional intergenerational presence strengthens identity and continuity.

When older members participate as listeners and mentors rather than directors, young adults experience affirmation rather than oversight.

COMMUNITY ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Young adult communities reflect wide diversity—ethnic, theological, political, and experiential. Scripture calls believers to unity rooted in Christ, not uniformity of perspective (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Facilitators model this unity by holding space for difference without erasing conviction. Respectful disagreement, when grounded in relationship, becomes formative rather than divisive.

COMMUNITY TAKES TIME

Community develops slowly, especially among those carrying wounds. Facilitators must resist equating emotional intensity with authenticity. Quiet consistency allows trust to grow organically.

Paul's metaphor of the church as a body reminds us that each part belongs, even when it seems weak or hidden (1 Corinthians 12). Community matures as members learn patience with one another.

THE FRUIT OF COMMUNITY

When Sabbath School becomes “us,” subtle but powerful shifts occur:

- Newcomers are noticed
- Prayer becomes personal
- Faith stories are shared
- Belonging precedes belief
- Likelihood for spiritual burnout in facilitators drops

CASE STUDY:

INTERGENERATIONAL SABBATH COLLABORATION

A church invited two retired elders to attend young adult Sabbath School once a month—not to teach, but to listen and pray. Their presence communicated trust. Relationships formed that extended beyond Sabbath mornings, enriching both generations.

“Community does not replace doctrine—it gives doctrine a home.”

| CHAPTER 4 | CHALLENGE

Create safe spaces for open
dialogue and exploration

Adventism is a movement born of conviction. Our pioneers wrestled deeply with Scripture, challenged inherited assumptions, and followed truth wherever it led. This legacy matters profoundly for young adults today. What many resist is not doctrinal clarity, but a culture where belief is measured by acceptance to previous generations' definitions rather than the encouragement to study and articulate faith from one's own discovery.

Re-imagined Young Adult Sabbath School does not avoid challenge—it redeems it. It reframes challenge as an invitation into mature, resilient faith development rather than a test of loyalty.

BIBLICAL FAITH GROWS THROUGH WRESTLING

Scripture consistently portrays faith as something refined through struggle. Job questioned God without forfeiting relationship. The psalmists lamented openly while remaining anchored in hope. Thomas doubted publicly and was met not with rebuke, but with presence (John 20:27). Even the Bereans were commended for examining Scripture critically (Acts 17:11).

These stories reveal a pattern: God does not fear questions. He meets them.

Young adults instinctively recognize this. When Sabbath School environments suppress questioning, they unintentionally teach that faith is fragile. When they welcome it, they communicate confidence in both Scripture and the Spirit.

RESEARCH GROUNDING

In “Inviting Faith to Grow, Not Perform” Argue reframes questioning and “faithing” as normative developmental processes rather than threats to belief; see *Young Adult Ministry Now*, pp. 33–37, 83–89. This approach corresponds with Growing Young’s call to take Jesus’ message seriously, iCOR’s emphasis on safe exploration, and NCD’s passionate spirituality.

FROM CONFRONTATION TO INVITATION

Religious challenge is often experienced as confrontation—arguments to win, boundaries to enforce, positions to defend. While clarity matters, confrontation without relationship rarely produces faith development.

Invitational challenges ask different questions:

- What is God inviting us to see more clearly?
- How does this belief shape the way we live?
- What might faithfulness look like right now?

Jesus modeled this approach repeatedly. He asked probing questions, told unsettling parables, and invited people to take the next faith-filled step rather than demanding instant conformity.

“Challenge handled with humility builds trust.”

DISTINGUISHING DECONSTRUCTION FROM DISENGAGEMENT

Not all questioning signals rejection. Many young adults are disentangling cultural assumptions from core belief—a process often labeled as faith deconstruction. When this work occurs within community, it frequently leads to reconstruction.

Disengagement tends to happen when questions are met with silence, shame, or dismissal.

Facilitators can support healthy wrestling by:

- Keeping people anchored in Scripture
- Encouraging patience rather than premature resolution
- Affirming that faith development is a life-long journey

ANCHORING CHALLENGE IN BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Adventist theology offers young adults a compelling, holistic vision of faith—Sabbath rest in a restless world,

CASE STUDY: HOLDING DOCTRINE WITH HUMILITY

During a Sabbath School series on prophecy, young adults expressed discomfort with sensational interpretations they had encountered online. Instead of shutting down concern, the facilitator affirmed Adventist commitment to biblical prophecy while inviting careful study of Daniel and Revelation in their historical context. The group explored both conviction and humility. Several participants later shared that this approach restored confidence in Adventist teaching without fear-based pressure.

hope in the face of uncertainty, embodied care for body and mind, and a prophetic call to justice and mission.

Challenge becomes meaningful when belief is connected to practice:

- How does Sabbath “rest” counteract burnout culture?
- How does Adventist hope speak to climate anxiety?
- How does our health message include mental well-being?

WHEN DISAGREEMENT ARISES

Disagreement is inevitable in thoughtful community. Facilitators model Christlike leadership by slowing conversation, reflecting what is heard, and naming shared commitments.

THE FRUIT OF FAITHFUL CHALLENGE

When Sabbath School invites faith to grow rather than perform:

- Scripture engagement deepens
- Beliefs become owned rather than inherited
- Commitment becomes resilient



CASE STUDY: NAVIGATING POLARIZATION

In a young adult Sabbath School discussing social justice, political tension surfaced. The facilitator paused the discussion, invited prayer, and reframed the conversation around Micah 6:8. While perspectives differed, trust remained intact. Several participants later noted it was the first church space where disagreement did not lead to division.



“Challenge, rightly practiced, does not push people out. It calls them forward.”

| CHAPTER 5 |

CONSISTENCY

Create Safe Spaces That Are Not Rushed but Real, Genuine, Authentic

Among the five C's, Consistency is the least flashy—and the most powerful. Young adults are not primarily formed by exceptional moments, but by faithful presence over time. In a world marked by instability and broken promises, consistency communicates something profoundly theological: God can be trusted.

Consistency is the quiet theology of trust. While creativity attracts attention, faithful consistency forms disciples. Scripture declares that God's mercies are "new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). Sabbath itself stands as a weekly testimony to divine reliability.

Young adults often carry stories of instability—relationships that fractured, leaders who disappeared, churches that changed direction abruptly. Consistent presence speaks louder than polished programming.

Re-imagined Young Adult Sabbath School becomes a place of healing and transformation when facilitators embody reliability—not perfection, but personal presence.

RESEARCH GROUNDING

Why Showing Up Matters More Than Getting It Right—Argue highlights consistency, trust, and long-term presence as essential for young adults—especially those navigating church hurt; see *Young Adult Ministry Now*, pp. 49-50, 74-75, 88-89. This chapter aligns with iCOR's stable refuge model, Growing Young's emphasis on relational trust, and NCD's sustainable leadership.

CONSISTENCY AS SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Scripture reveals a God who shows up again and again. From the weekly rhythm of Sabbath to the long arc of covenant faithfulness, consistency is woven into Adventist theology. Sabbath itself is a weekly reminder that God is dependable and that rest is not earned by performance.

When young adults encounter Sabbath School leaders who are consistently present, emotionally available, and spiritually grounded, they experience a lived theology of grace.

Consistency answers a quiet but urgent question: “Will this space still exist when I’m struggling?”

WHY RELIABILITY MATTERS TO YOUNG ADULTS

Many young adults have experienced inconsistency in church life—leaders who burn out, programs that disappear, spaces that change direction abruptly. For those carrying church hurt, inconsistency reinforces mistrust.

Reliable Sabbath School environments:

- Meet at the same time and place
- Maintain a recognizable rhythm
- Preserve a familiar relational tone
- Resist constant reinvention

CONSISTENCY AS COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself as steadfast. “I am God, and there is no other... I will carry you” (Isaiah 46:4). When facilitators show up week after week with integrity and care, they reflect this covenant faithfulness.

Consistency answers a core question: “*Will this community still be here when life becomes difficult?*”

AVOIDING THE TRAP OF NOVELTY

Church culture often rewards innovation and visibility. While creativity has value, constant change can undermine trust. Young adults rarely need more content—they need continuity.

Facilitators practicing consistency:

- Resist over-programming
- Keep rhythms simple and repeatable
- Allow depth to accumulate slowly.

“Predictability does not stifle creativity; it creates safety.”

CASE STUDY: HEALING THROUGH FAITHFUL PRESENCE

A small young adult Sabbath School never exceeded twelve participants. The facilitator showed up every week for two years—even when only two people attended. Eventually, several young adults who had stopped attending church returned quietly. When asked why, one said, “I knew this space would still be here when I was ready.” Consistency created room for healing.

CONSISTENT SABBATH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

- Meet predictably
- Maintain familiar relational tone
- Protect unhurried space

“Faith grows best in environments that are not rushed.”

CONSISTENCY WITHOUT BURNOUT

Consistency does not mean doing everything alone. Sustainable leadership requires shared ownership, healthy boundaries, and realistic expectations. Practices that protect facilitators include:

- Rotating facilitation roles (when possible)
- Taking planned breaks
- Naming limits openly
- Inviting pastoral support when needed

FAITHFUL PRESENCE MUST BE SUSTAINABLE

Adventist leaders model Sabbath rest not only in teaching but in practice. For consistency to happen it does take a team of facilitators who understand their responsibilities and do all they can to share the load. Therefore, developing a consistent team of leaders is crucial. It is a high calling and a treasured opportunity to be present for those who come each Sabbath looking for their spiritual safe space to experience God. Healthy consistency includes:

“Healthy consistency is communal, not heroic.”

- Shared leadership
- Planned rest
- Honest boundaries

WHEN CONSISTENCY BECOMES WITNESS

Over time, faithful presence produces quiet fruit:

- Trust deepens
- Vulnerability increases
- Faith stabilizes

Consistency can transform Young Adult Sabbath School into a safe spiritual home each Sabbath.

For consistency to happen it does take a team of facilitators who understand their responsibilities and do all they can to share the load. Therefore, developing a consistent team of leaders is crucial. It is a high calling and a treasured opportunity to be present for those who come each Sabbath looking for their spiritual safe space to experience God.

CONCLUSION: FROM SABBATH SCHOOL TO SPIRITUAL HOME

Young Adult Sabbath School, when re-imagined through the lens of the 5 C's, becomes far more than a weekly discussion. It becomes a formative environment where faith is spoken aloud, relationships deepen, community emerges, beliefs mature, and trust is restored.

This work belongs to facilitators who understand that leadership is not about control, but care. Not about answers, but accompaniment. Not about speed, but faithfulness.

When Sabbath School reflects Conversation, Connection, Community, Challenge, and Consistency, it aligns with Adventism's deepest convictions: truth lived in relationship, hope anchored in Scripture, and faith embodied over time.

The future of the church is not waiting elsewhere. It is present, sitting in your circle—listening, wondering, hoping, believing, leading.

“You are not merely leading a group. You are stewarding sacred space.”

| APPENDIX |

BUILDING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

START WITH ONE COMMITTED POINT LEADER

- Choose someone who loves Jesus, cares deeply for young adults, and can give consistent time and attention.
- This person does not need to do everything, but they should help gather, guide, and support the team.

BUILD A SMALL CORE TEAM

- Invite 3–4 stable, relationally warm people who can journey with the ministry over time.
- Look for people who are consistent, spiritually grounded, and able to relate well to young adults.
- Include young adults themselves whenever possible.

PRAY BEFORE PLANNING

- Meet regularly for prayer before building programs.
- Ask God to reveal the needs, stories, and spiritual questions of the young adults in your church and community.

CLARIFY THE PURPOSE OF SABBATH SCHOOL

- Define the group as a sacred space for conversation, connection, community, challenge, and consistency.
- Keep the focus on Scripture, honest dialogue, belonging, and spiritual growth—not just covering lesson content.

ASSIGN SIMPLE LEADERSHIP ROLES

- Facilitator: Guides Bible conversation and protects a safe discussion environment.
- Hospitality Leader: Welcomes newcomers, learns names, notices absences, and follows up.
- Prayer/Care Leader: Collects prayer requests and helps provide spiritual support.
- Community Builder: Plans meals, meetups, service opportunities, or group communication.
- Apprentice Leader: A young adult being mentored toward future leadership.

USE A SHARED-LEADERSHIP MODEL

- Do not let one person carry the whole Sabbath School.
- Rotate facilitation, prayer, welcome, and follow-up responsibilities.
- Move people gradually from participating, to assisting, to co-leading, to leading.

TRAIN FACILITATORS TO GUIDE, NOT LECTURE

- Teach facilitators to ask open questions, listen carefully, welcome silence, and respond to hard questions with humility.
- Encourage dialogue before correction and curiosity before debate.

CREATE A RHYTHM FOR TEAM MEETINGS

- Meet monthly to pray, review the group's health, plan upcoming Sabbaths, and identify people who need care.
- Ask: Who is connecting? Who is missing? Who is ready to lead? What needs to change?

PROTECT LEADERS FROM BURNOUT

- Keep expectations realistic.
- Share responsibilities.
- Plan breaks.
- Avoid giving young adults too many roles too quickly.

DEVELOP FUTURE LEADERS

- Give young adults real responsibility with support.
- Invite them to lead one question, one prayer, one activity, or one Sabbath at a time.
- Build a leadership pipeline where today's participants become tomorrow's facilitators.

MEASURE HEALTH BY FORMATION, NOT JUST ATTENDANCE

- Look for signs of trust, honest conversation, spiritual growth, friendships beyond the regular meeting time, and young adults inviting others.
- A healthy leadership team helps Sabbath School become a spiritual home, not just a weekly class.

SUGGESTED MEETING FLOW

WELCOME AND CONNECTION – 10 MINUTES

Begin with warmth, not announcements. Learn names. Notice newcomers. Invite a simple opening question such as:

- “What stood out to you this week?”
- “Where did you notice God this week?”
- “What is one word that describes how you are arriving today?”
- The goal is to help people arrive emotionally, spiritually, and relationally.

PRAYER AND GROUP POSTURE – 5 MINUTES

Pray in a way that invites honesty and openness. Remind the group of simple shared agreements:

- Confidentiality matters.
- Curiosity comes before correction.
- Speak from personal experience.
- Make room for different voices.
- Grace is part of growth.

SCRIPTURE AND CONVERSATION – 25–30 MINUTES

Read the key passage aloud. Keep the focus on discovery rather than lecture. The facilitator serves as a guide, not the expert with every answer.

Use open questions:

- “What stands out to you in this passage?”
- “What feels challenging, hopeful, or uncomfortable?”
- “What does this show us about God?”
- “How does this connect with real life right now?”
- “What might obedience or faithfulness look like this week?”
- Allow silence. Do not rush to fill every pause. Silence may be reflection, caution, or the beginning of trust.

RESPONSE AND APPLICATION – 10 MINUTES

Move from discussion to lived faith. Invite the group to name one practical response.

Possible options:

- A personal next step
- A prayer request
- A Scripture to carry into the week
- A relationship to repair
- A service opportunity
- A question to keep exploring
- Faith grows when young adults are invited to connect belief with practice.

COMMUNITY AND FOLLOW-UP – 5 MINUTES

Close with prayer, but do not let the community end when the hour ends. Encourage people to linger, eat together, join a group chat, attend a shared meal, or participate in a service opportunity.

PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR RE-IMAGINED YOUNG ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL

CORE POSTURE

- Be present more than impressive
- Listen before leading
- Protect safety relentlessly
- Trust the Spirit's pace
- Encourage curiosity over control
- Exemplify grace over fear

FACILITATOR PRACTICES

- Begin with prayer that invites honesty
- Ask open questions before teaching
- Normalize doubt as part of growth

SCRIPTURE ANCHORS

- James 1:19 – Listening
- Acts 2:42 – Community
- Micah 6:8 – Faithful living
- Hebrews 10:23-25 – Hope and encouragement

DO'S AND DON'TS

Do:

- Learn names and stories
- Normalize questions
- Follow up after absences
- Model humility

Don't:

- Rush to correct
- Dominate conversation
- Shame doubt
- Measure success by numbers alone

SAMPLE OPENING QUESTIONS

- What stood out to you this week?
- Where did you notice God – or resistance?
- What felt challenging or hopeful?

GROUP AGREEMENTS TO CONSIDER

- Confidentiality matters
- Curiosity over debate
- Speak from personal experience
- Grace for growth

RED FLAGS THAT TRUST IS ERODING

- Silence without engagement
- Sarcasm or defensiveness
- Repeated non-attendance
- Fear of disagreement

SIGNS OF HEALTH

- People return
- Conversations continue beyond Sabbath
- Faith grows steadily

WHAT SUCCESS REALLY LOOKS LIKE

- People return interested in their ongoing spiritual development
- Friendships and activities begin happening throughout the week
- Participants invite others who are new to join
- Spiritual growth is steady and participants become facilitators
- Leadership opportunities expand beyond Sabbath School

RESEARCH & FRAMEWORK REFERENCES

- Argue, Steven. *Young Adult Ministry Now: A Growing Young Guide*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2023.
Referenced concepts include empathetic listening and psychological safety (pp. 41–49), faithing and questioning (pp. 33–37), warm community and belonging (pp. 67–75), relational courage and empowerment (pp. 82–89), and consistency and trust (pp. 49–50, 74–75).
- Powell, Kara, Brad Griffin, and Jake Mulder. *Growing Young*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016.
Key themes: warm community, keychain leadership, taking Jesus' message seriously.

- Intergenerational Church of Refuge (iCOR). © 2018 Youth Ministries Department, General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist © Church. Printable website version of a brochure <https://www.gcyouthministries.org/wp-content/uploads/Info-Brochure-eng-NEW.pdf>
Key themes: fostering relationships, cultivating empowerment, providing intergenerational refuge.
- Schwarz, Christian A. *Natural Church Development*. Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2000.
Key themes: loving relationships, empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, sustainable structures.

Sabbath School is not just a program—it is a sacred space.

Across North America, young adults are not leaving the church because they reject faith. Many are leaving because they no longer experience Sabbath School as a place where relationships can grow and belief can mature.

Written specifically for local church Young Adult Sabbath School facilitators, *Young Adult Sabbath School and Small Groups* moves beyond theory to provide a practical framework for cultivating spaces where young adults can truly belong.

Built around the five essential movements—Conversation, Connection, Community, Challenge, and Consistency—this resource equips facilitators to build trust, guide meaningful dialogue, nurture authentic community, invite faith-stretching growth, and model the steady presence that forms disciples over time.

Whether you are launching a new young adult Sabbath School or seeking to renew an existing one, this book will help you move from simply covering the lesson to cultivating sacred space—where faith is owned, community is lived, and the next generation discovers that the church is not just something they attend, but a place they can call home.

AdventSource



North American Division
of Seventh-day Adventists

