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Toward a Philosophy of Christian Adult Education

BY CHARLES LEE

I could have taken one of two directions in writing this article. One would have been to pursue a typical tedious research route and try to sew together various views on theology, definition, theory, methodology, curriculum, psychology, and so forth into a coherent, useful whole that is representative of what is happening generically in the pre-twenty-first-century church. The other would have been to describe what is working at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, where I have been minister of adult education for nineteen years. I chose the latter, not because it was the simpler of the two, but because I have seen it work, and I believe it can be applied in churches that are serious about nourishing their adults. The application of these ideas is not fully implemented at every point at Southeast, but we are working on it.

Focus on Adults

The foundation of a philosophy of Christian adult education for any church is to view the adults as the primary focus of the educational program.

Jesus established a church, defined in its simplest sense as a “called out” group of people who have a common relationship with each other. Hebrews 10:24–25 underscores the fact that association is essential to relationship by encouraging Christians to avoid the mistake of losing touch with one another. The clear message is that we must gather together or we will lose relationship. Sociology acknowledges this principle:

[O]ur humanness must be sustained through social interaction, and fairly constantly so. When an association continues long enough for two people to become linked together by a relatively stable set of expectations, it is called a relationship.¹

Relationship is more than people being with people. The term carries with it an intrinsic characteristic, namely, the bonding of human beings. This bonding is twofold:

People are bound within relationships by two types of bonds: expressive ties and instrumental ties.

Expressive ties are social links formed when we emotionally invest ourselves in and commit ourselves to other people. Through association with people who are meaningful to us, we achieve a sense of security, love, acceptance, companionship, and personal worth. **Instrumental ties** are social links formed when we cooperate with other people to achieve some goal.²

Relationship cannot sustain itself without substance. Proximity and activity alone do not create or enhance relationship. That is why the church is composed of “disciples” (Matt 28:18–20; John 13:35)—people involved in the process of growing, maturing, learning. It could be said that learning is that which nourishes the body, and relationship is the dynamic by which the body functions. If the church is to reflect how it is essentially defined, it

must be composed of disciples in relationship. The New Testament refers to this entire phenomenon as “fellowship”:

Life in Christ is concerned with relationships. It springs from an intimate relationship with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3). It is brought about by reconciliation to God in Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19) and to others who have been so reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:17,18; cp. Ephesians 2:9). Being mutually members of the family of God, we are also brothers and sisters of one another. Brotherhood is not dependent upon conformity to doctrinal systems but upon a common parentage. Christian fellowship is a manifestation of brotherhood in Christ.³

Defining the church as disciples-in-relationship gives rise to an important assumption, namely, that *adults are at the center of the definition*. Children and youth can be disciples, but, with only a few precocious exceptions, their ability to practice relationship autonomously both in the expressive and instrumental realms is limited (1 Cor 13:11). That is why we provide not only teaching but also adult supervision for children and youth. A major mistake of many churches is to emphasize programming for children and youth while overlooking the development of a quality adult education program. To argue that we must have such an emphasis because the children are “the church of tomorrow” only underscores the point that the church is, by definition, primarily adult.

Definition of Christian Adult Education

Adulthood has been defined in a number of ways. In a culture virtually devoid of any clear-cut rite of passage, we have developed a somewhat arbitrary system of ascribing adulthood, granting certain privileges and responsibilities at a given age. Some, like Lucien Coleman, have defined adulthood as a series of stages in which certain primary concerns and needs become significant. Others see adulthood as simply the ability to adapt: “[Adulthood] is the capacity of the evolving self to make successive and successful connections to an unpredictable and changing world.”⁴

We are now living in an era in which the criminal behavior of those who would have been defined as “children” less than a decade ago is being treated as adult behavior. For a variety of reasons, we have had to return to

the question of what is and what is not “adult.” My definition of “adult” is not very profound, but it does cover most of what the word implies: An adult is someone who lives by the assumption that the rules apply to him or her. Children and youth, by nature, have a difficult time living by such an assumption (Prov 22:15). The individual who has arrived at the conclusion that he or she has the personal, autonomous responsibility to be the kind of person described in Psalm 1 is, in my opinion, an adult. (Will this not open up the possibility that some young men and women could attend adult educational programming? Absolutely. We have a number of such situations at Southeast, even though we offer an outstanding youth program.) Any philosophy of adult Christian education needs to start with the presupposition that the people it serves live by the assumption that the rules apply to them.

I have always appreciated Ernest Ligon’s simple two-word definition of education: guided change. His assumption is that since change is inevitable, education provides a systematic way of changing. “Guided” implies system, and “change” implies the natural processes of maturation. Christian education could be defined as “biblical guided change.” This adds the element of content to the definition. Adult Christian education would then be “biblical guided change that develops disciples into mature men and women who wish to live by the rules.” This definition includes content, system, maturation, and objective.

Objectives of an Effective Christian Adult Education Program

Having offered an argument for primacy of adult education and a definition of Christian adult education, I would propose that the following six objectives characterize an effective Christian adult education program:

1. Deliberate retention of new adult members
2. Systematic Bible study with a view toward pragmatic mastery of scripture
3. Provision for the practical needs of adults
4. Development of relationships among adult members
5. Development of a commitment to ministry
6. Development of a commitment to evangelism

I want to cover first what is involved in each of these objectives. Then I will offer what I believe are the best ways to accomplish them.

Deliberate Retention of New Adult Members

It has been said that the first place new members look for is the back door. That is not true, of course, but it suggests that the retention of new members is a universal problem. Thom Rainer, dean of the Billy Graham school of Evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has developed an assessment of what kinds of programs work best in retaining members. Interestingly enough, he has discovered that the most effective program for retention in the churches he has surveyed is the Sunday school. In view of the current trend to drop the adult Sunday school, this finding suggests a serious reconsideration of such thinking.

Retention must be deliberate; that is, it must be a determined, planned, well-organized effort into which new members are placed no more than two weeks after they join the church. It must be developed on the philosophy that expectation leads to retention. New members need to hear leaders say, "We expect you to participate in certain programs if you want to grow as a Christian and be an active, informed member of the congregation." In most cases, it can be said that new members want to be told what they are supposed to do. If that is what they want, then let's tell them what to do! If we wait three months to try to involve them, they will not listen. If we are well prepared with a program for them from the very beginning, we can expect them to follow through. Expectation leads to retention.

Systematic Bible Study with A View toward Pragmatic Mastery of Scripture

As a warning to our time, we have been inundated of late with reports from pollsters regarding the biblical "dumbing down" of American adults:

Although 93% of American homes contain at least one Bible and 33% of American adults say they read the Good Book at least once a week, recent surveys reveal the Word may not be sticking. According to a Gallup poll:

54% of American adults can't name the authors of the four gospels

63% do not know what a gospel is

58% cannot name five of the Ten Commandments

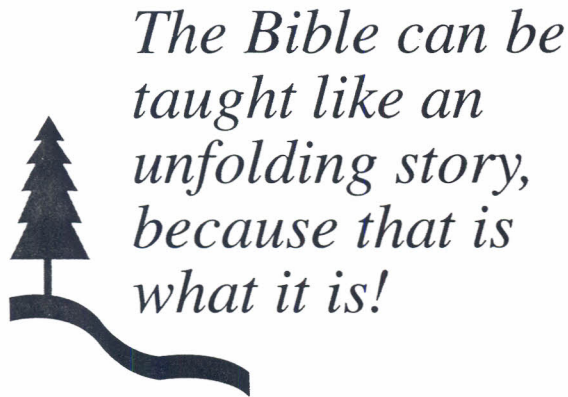
10% think Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.⁵

We could soon be faced with a crisis in American Christianity unless we resolve now to take serious action regarding biblical illiteracy among adults in our churches:

The churches of America face no greater challenge as we approach the next century than overcoming biblical illiteracy. The prospects for doing so are formidable because the stark fact is, many Americans don't know what they believe or why. Our faith is often not rooted in Scripture. We revere the Bible, but we don't read it. Some observers maintain that the Bible has not in any profound way penetrated the culture.⁶

I am amazed that in the face of these growing statistics we are hearing so much about building relationships in adult programming. Is the answer to biblical illiteracy the development of relationships? As important as relationship is to God's family, without strong biblical substance it is in danger of becoming raw interpersonal existentialism. I believe we should be equally dedicated to the development of teaching Bible content to adults. Perhaps those who are pushing relationship see it as a means to improve biblical literacy. I personally hope so. Whatever the motives may be, the objective should be a commitment to cognition *and* caring, literacy *and* loving, not just one or the other.

Primary to a philosophy of adult Christian education is the provision of systematic Bible study with a view to pragmatic mastery. This objective is not impossible if we resist the temptation to make "scholars" of adult students. That was a mistake of earlier educators who were excessively caught up in the Socratic notion that "to know is to do." It was assumed that disciples would become effective Christians if they just knew what was in the Bible. That, of course, is true, but it is equally untrue. We have learned, rather painfully, that knowledge of scripture alone does not necessarily translate into "living a Christian life." Although the trend toward application in our day is healthy in this regard, it must never replace the pursuit of a substantive knowledge of the Bible. If we allow the affective to swallow up the cognitive, we will end up with a generation of adults who insist that people should love God but are incapable of telling them why. By accepting the fact that most adult students are not inclined toward scholarship but do wish to have a reasonable and useful degree of Bible knowledge, the following objectives should be



The Bible can be taught like an unfolding story, because that is what it is!

part of a systematic endeavor to help adults become biblically literate.

Summarize the Bible, including the intertestamental period. Most adults would be delighted to be able to “tell the Bible story” in broad terms to someone else. We can attain this objective if we will teach the Bible chronologically, not canonically or topically. Frankly, a curriculum that is linear will remove much of the drudgery of Bible study because it will, by nature, be story. Such an approach can be fun; it can be fulfilling. The Bible can be taught like an unfolding story, because that is what it is! Walk Through the Bible Ministries has successfully pioneered this idea. Creative teachers will look for ways to help adults enjoy learning how to tell the story and to keep them from becoming overwhelmed with the details or lost in a topical forest.

Effectively use basic Bible references. Einstein said that he never memorized something if he knew where to look it up. Adults flounder in their search for biblical help because we do not teach them how to use the excellent references available to them. Handbooks, concordances, and study Bibles abound with references of which most adults are not even aware. Teaching adults how to use these references is valid Bible study for Sunday school classes or electives.

Employ an inductive study of scripture. A resurgence of interest in inductive study through the influence of precepts has awakened us to the fact that this is not just a tool of the preacher or professor. Much confusion on a variety of subjects is swept away when students learn how to employ the inductive method.

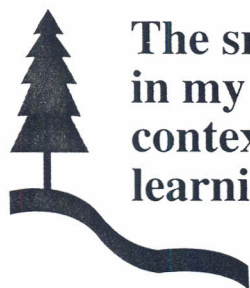
Derive principles from scripture and make life applications. This final objective is the most difficult of all, but

it is worth attempting. There are life principles in scripture that can be sifted out and laid over the contemporary experiences of adults. Learning to spot these principles is valuable. The most effective pulpit ministers of our day use this approach in their expository preaching. A good teacher will not only employ it in preparing a lesson, he or she will stop and show the students how it is done while teaching them. Here is where interactive methodology can enjoy its most beneficial application, as adults work together to identify principles rather than just share existential applications.

Provision for the Practical Needs of Adults

Adults change and respond to change in an ever-adapting process. Christian adults are citizens, participants in this inescapable process. They are greeted daily with challenges to their values and presuppositions. It takes time for morality to undergo new applications, but mores tend to change rapidly. What society viewed as “good” ten years ago it may no longer acknowledge. The Christian adult must function as citizen, worker, family member, provider, protector, socializer, employer, leader, and more—and do it all in the context of Christian values. A philosophy of Christian adult education acknowledges the need to provide a variety of educational opportunities to address these challenges. This cannot be done in a Sunday school class alone. Many needs can be addressed only by providing specific studies, focused groups, and special programs that offer a detailed response to challenges that Christian adults face in the marketplace.

A practical ministry must acknowledge the painful times of Christian adults and offer substantive help, not just hand-holding. I believe that every sin specified in scripture is an opportunity for ministry. It is in the realm of our sinfulness that we encounter most of the painful circumstances of life. Not all, but most. A philosophy of adult Christian education must include ministering educationally to those whose lives have been victimized by the sinfulness of others or (and this is the most difficult) who have been swept into pain by their own sinfulness. Christian adults can be educated about their particular plights, including both strategies for developing endurance and processes that can work toward the resolution of critical situations. The provision of counseling is vital, and the practice of prayer and patience are indispensable, but adults can be helped to help themselves if they are given the opportunity to learn more about the painful challenges they



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are facing. A well-rounded educational program that seeks to provide educational help for adults in the practical realm should be developed from two sources: (1) the specific needs of adults in the congregation and (2) a careful assessment of the cultural pressures that are present in the community served by the local church. Done well, such a research effort will provide ample information on what kinds of workshops, seminars, and closure classes should be developed.

Development of Relationships among Adult Members

Adults need relationships. John 13:35 is often mistaken for the way in which we win the world to Christ. That is why we put "Welcome" signs in front of the church building and call it evangelism. But our love for one another only identifies us. It is our commitment to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:15–17) that draws others to Christ. Then, once we are in Christ, John 13:35 becomes the rule by which we act toward fellow Christians. We must provide the opportunity for adults to develop intimate friendships if they are going to be mature disciples. By far the best method to bring this about in our time is the small group.

The development of small groups in American churches is a remarkably successful phenomenon. We have seen people grow in their commitments to Christ and to each other, creating a context for vulnerability and accountability that is unlike that of any other methodology. At Southeast, we call our small groups Home Bible Fellowship Groups. We have defined them as follows:

A Home Bible Fellowship Group is designed to be a place where you can grow in Christlikeness, walk compassionately alongside others through life's

problems and pains, celebrate the goodness God has graciously granted you and others, discover the stories of others and have your story heard as well, express and receive love and serve and be served.⁷

We have also seen an enhancement of the learning process through small groups. Roberta Hestenes strongly encourages the use of groups as means to rediscover the Bible:

The Bible tells us the story of God's mighty words and actions. . . . To seek to know this story better and discover our own place in it, we study the Bible, and because this story is the tale of a people, a community of faith, we find it helpful to read it with others—to study the Bible in groups.⁸

The greatest contribution of the small group, however, has been the development of relationships among adults. The small group is not, in my opinion, the best context for cognitive learning. It is, essentially, a method among many methods characterized by strong application of *andragogy*, driven by an affective dynamic, and guided by a facilitator. I believe that a facilitator context is always potentially dangerous if the participants do not have a reasonable degree of objective knowledge about the Bible. Truly successful *andragogy* depends on prior pedagogical methodologies. Too many current advocates of small groups appear to overlook this. Malcolm Knowles, in his studies of adult learning processes, does not intend that adults be placed in a context of freewheeling existentialism before they are given some substantive instruction. Commenting on his pedagogical/andragogical models, Knowles says:

These two models do not represent bad/good or child/adult dichotomies, but rather a continuum of assumptions to be checked out in terms of rightness for particular learners in particular situations. If a pedagogical assumption seems realistic for a particular situation, then pedagogical strategies are appropriate. For example, if a learner enters a totally strange content area, he or she will be dependent on a teacher until enough content has been acquired to enable self-directed inquiry to begin.⁹

An effective philosophy of Christian adult education includes the development of relationships among the adult

members of the congregation. This will be best accomplished by creating small groups in addition to other programs.

Development of a Commitment to Ministry

Charismatic Christians have long contended that every generation of believers, not just those who were part of the first-century church, should expect to receive special gifts from the Holy Spirit. Have we not in our disagreement with their position actually “thrown out the baby with the bath water”? The Holy Spirit does endow Christians with gifts of service and ministry to the Body. Passages like 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4 do affirm that there are “gifts of the Spirit” that are intended to create a body of believers who help one another become mature in Christ.

At Southeast, we have developed a “Spiritual Gifts Assessment” that has helped us create an effective volunteer force. Volunteers enter their areas of ministry, not by responding to appeals for help, but by analyzing closely what their spiritual gifts are. Each member’s “style” of personality and proclivity toward a certain area of ministry (“passion”) are added to the assessment, and a decision is made as to where he or she can best serve. Any successful philosophy of Christian adult education should include both careful assessment of the gifts, personalities, and passions of adult members with respect to its ministry(ies), and training for those ministries. An untrained volunteer almost inevitably becomes a wasted resource. For example, when we find someone at Southeast who is gifted in teaching and has a passion for working with adults, we take seriously our responsibility to see that he or she is prepared for the job.

We require that our adult Sunday school (Adult Bible Fellowship) teachers be certified. They must either finish a one-year course of study that equips them for the job of teaching an ABF full-time or take a one-hundred-question “CLEP” test that determines whether they are exempt from the classroom work. All candidates, including those who CLEP out, must work with a mentor for an indefinite period of time, becoming eligible for certification when the mentor so determines. Each mentor is a certified ABF teacher and can prescribe any kind of program he or she deems necessary to help the candidate become proficient at teaching adults. After certification, candidates must be approved by the Southeast elders. Approval is based on spiritual maturity, exemplary lifestyle, and other factors

that the elders determine to be important in those who will teach and lead adult members. Other data are a part of each ABF teacher’s profile, including personality assessments, teaching styles, and basic training courses in doctrine and theology. We also require that ABF teachers sign a “Teacher’s Statement of Faith.” Two of the biggest problems in Christian education are teachers who quit and teachers who won’t quit. Certification is, in my experience, an extremely effective way to deal with both of those problems. Any effective philosophy of Christian adult education includes provision for assessing the gifts of adult members and a training program within the ministries that they select.

Development of a Commitment to Evangelism

Evangelism should not be something that Christians do; it should be a state of mind. Matthew 28:18–20 opens literally with the words “As you are going.” A useful definition of a Christian is “Someone who makes it easier for others to believe in God and can tell them why.” Adults can be encouraged to live ethical lives that are gracious and sensitive to others, but they will never be completely empowered to evangelize until they can adequately answer questions about their faith (1 Pet 3:15–16). I believe that contemporary Christian adults need three things to become effective personal evangelists: (1) a church program that they can be proud of—biblically sound, dynamic, responsive to the realities adults are facing, and willing to make methodological changes; (2) a significantly adequate pragmatic knowledge of the Bible; and (3) basic people skills.

Most Americans assume that Christianity at some points means a gathering of believers, or a church. Consequently, there is inevitably a point in personal evangelism when a nonbeliever is invited “to church.” Frankly, many adult Christians today are not good personal evangelists because they are frustrated by the inadequacies of the church they attend. The solution is the task of the leadership and needs to be addressed by them. For the adults themselves, training in the skills of working with people will always be valuable. It is one of those educational programs that never become obsolete. The business world still takes Dale Carnegie’s book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* seriously. Most contemporary literature on success is simply a rewriting of the axioms of effective “people skills” established long ago. Teaching adults to work with people can be accomplished if we are willing



The hardest, yet most important, work is to equip adults with an adequate knowledge of scripture

to use these resources and not simply dismiss them as “worldly.”

The hardest, yet most important, work is to equip adults with an adequate knowledge of scripture. Socrates was partially right when he contended that “to know is to do,” because we arrive at faith by hearing the word of Christ (Rom 10:17). The saying “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” is correct. But the operative word is “until.” That conjunction makes the knowledge just as valuable as the caring. People do care how much Christians know, or they would not ask questions. An ability to answer those questions is crucial to the effectiveness of evangelism in the Christian adult’s daily life. That is precisely why 1 Pet 3:15–16 links “caring” with “answering.”

The Need-Meeting Dynamics of Adult Groups

By definition, the church is a group, and people develop their identity in groups. One of the observations of sociology with which we can agree is that a human being without another human being loses definition. When people say that they can be Christian without being part of a church, they are defining themselves downward. Unless forced upon the individual Christian, fellowship with other Christians is indispensable to one’s complete identity in Christ. We cannot show our love for one another if we are not in proximity. The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ have for years contended that what defines individuals as Christians also defines them as part of Christ’s church. We do not baptize people into a congregation; we baptize them into Christ, which makes them a part of the universal body of Christ. Being part of a local congregation is a choice made by the individuals.

Early church-growth teachers described the church as discrete, interconnected groups, each with a functional

identity. At Southeast, we have looked more closely at this group idea and found that the distinctions are more than just functional. It is a fact that the dynamics (factors or forces that create a “comfort zone” in which certain kinds of activities are permitted or excluded) of a given group are altered by the number of people in the group. If two people are talking and a third person walks up, the dynamics are changed. In large assemblies there are certain factors or forces present that are not found in medium-sized groups or small groups, and vice versa. These observations have become a vital part of how we structure specific components of our adult education program. We have also determined that there are certain needs brought by adults to the larger context of edification. When these needs are met within the “comfort zone” of the group, adults learn better and respond more favorably to the encouragement to grow in Christ. The needs and groups have been defined as follows.

Needs

Universal identity: a sense of belonging to a universal body of believers, to those who have the same struggles and a need to worship God with one another

Anonymity: the freedom to be “unidentified” while in a group, whether to worship personally or just be a listener/watcher in a learning context

Close relationships: friendships in which the deepest needs and truths of one’s life can be shared

Casual relationships: friendships on a less intimate level

Dialogue: the occasion to raise questions, discuss meanings behind what is said or taught, and search for information and clarification

Objective learning: substantive Bible information; the “knowing” part of learning—that which is cognitive

Subjective learning: personal interpretation and “relating” of Bible content; the “feeling” part of learning—that which is affective

Vulnerability: an openness regarding one’s life, in both the spiritual successes and failures; a willingness to share one’s very personal life situations so that prayer and encouragement might be prompted in others

Accountability: a willingness to be challenged to responsible growth in one’s Christian faith and life and to be mutually answerable for the sake of overcoming weaknesses

Groups

Church: larger assemblies in which the objectives are to participate in worship and praise and, often, to hear a sermon or witness a special artistic presentation (drama, concert, etc.)

Class: medium-sized groups (sixteen or more) that assemble to learn objective biblical information, experience both casual and intimate fellowship, and engage in ministry together

Circle: groups of three to fifteen that meet to share their deepest needs, develop intimate spiritual relationships, encourage one another, and identify how scripture relates specifically to their lives.

How the Natural Dynamics of the Different Groups Meet Adult Needs

Intensity Levels of Dynamics

1 = Very High 2 = Moderately High 3 = Moderately Low 4 = Very Low

<i>Need</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Circle</i>
Universal Identity	1	2	4
Anonymity	1	2	4
Close Relationships	4	2	1
Casual Relationships	1	1	3
Dialogue	4	2	1
Objective Learning	2	1	3
Subjective Learning	4	2	1
Vulnerability	4	3	1

It was noted earlier that meeting the needs of adults depends on choosing the right kind of context. The following is a list of the six objectives of an effective Christian education program discussed above, showing what we believe to be currently the best kind of group for reaching that objective. Selection has been made on the basis of the dynamics that are natural to each group as noted in the diagram above, ideally providing the most effective way to reach the objective itself. For a variety of reasons, other adult programs may conclude differently. The "Best Context" listing is given in the order of which group more adequately initiates the program and which is better for retention of the objectives. Obviously, one-on-one has its own special dynamics in which there is a mentor/protégé relationship that cannot be duplicated in the three kinds of groups.

1. *Deliberate retention of new adult members.* Best context: initially small groups; both non-closure medium-sized groups and small groups for retention. Curriculum: overview of salvation by grace through faith; qualities of Christian life; program of church (classes, groups, events); design for attendance and participation.
2. *Systematic Bible study with a view toward pragmatic mastery of scripture.* Best context: non-closure medium-sized groups; closure medium-sized groups. Curriculum: chronological; inductive, when appropriate; expository (principles and relevant applications); methodologically varied. See Brett DeYoung, "Getting the Most Out of a Published Curriculum," in *Tips for Teachers: Adults* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1995), 44–45.
3. *Provision for the practical needs of adults (electives).* Best context: closure medium-sized groups; small groups for retention. Curriculum: researched and developed by instructor and reviewed by a staff member; studies offered at various levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced); Bible (in-depth, focused Bible study, theology, doctrine, etc.); issues that are always vital (cultural, political, worldview, cults and sectarianism, marriage and family life, work ethics).
4. *Development of relationships among adult members.* Best context: small groups, one-on-one, non-closure medium-sized groups. Curriculum: seven to ten questions based on the sermon of the previous weekend; *Serendipity Bible*, *Fisherman Bible Study Guides*, *Discover Life* (Church Development Resources) and *Christian Character Bible Studies* (InterVarsity).
5. *Development of a commitment to ministry.* Best context: initially closure medium-sized groups; small groups for retention. Curriculum: spiritual gifts assessment (developed by Lees Hughes, Involvement Minister, Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky); personality inventories (Littauer, Meyers-Briggs, DISC); personal inclination or "passion" for area of ministry. Note: Areas of ministry and participation can become small groups: ushers, greeters, communion preparers,

office workers, maintenance workers, sports teams, etc.

6. *Development of a commitment to evangelism.* Best context: small groups, one-on-one mentoring; non-closure medium-sized groups for retention. Curriculum: Book of Acts; missions (exciting stories of the gospel message today); short term mission trips, including reports from participants; "how to" evangelism studies; utilization of "people skills" literature (Carnegie and others).

After forty years in the ministry, I have learned that no one ever "arrives" in his or her particular field. The church is an organism, alive and growing. What once was effective may later become ineffective. Christian adult education is only one part of the body of Christ that needs constant oversight, research, and renewal. Obviously, a philosophy of Christian adult education that works in one church may not be entirely viable elsewhere, though it can inspire ideas and procedures that will be useful. The concepts presented in this article have been offered with this objective in mind.

CHARLES LEE is adult education minister at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

Notes

¹ James C. Vander Zandan, *Sociology: The Core* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 101.

² Ibid.

³ Clint Gill, "The Fellowship of Saints," *Christian Standard*, 28 June 1998, 8.

⁴ Cheryl Mercer, *Grown-Ups: A Generation in Search of Adulthood* (New York: Putnam, 1987), 40.

⁵ *New York Times Magazine*, 7 December 1997.

⁶ Princeton Religion Research Center, *Emerging Trends* 18, no. 2 (1997).

⁷ Murphy Belding, *Small Groups Manual* (Louisville, Ky.: Southeast Christian Church, 1998).

⁸ Roberta Hestenes, *Using the Bible in Groups* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), quoted in *Emerging Trends* 18, no. 2 (1997).

⁹ Malcolm Knowles, "Contributions of Malcolm Knowles," in *The Christian Educator's Handbook*, ed. Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Wilhoit (Glen Ellyn, Ill.: Victor, 1997), 97.