An Investigation of the Effectiveness of Training in the Utilization of Spiritual Gifts in the Personal Ministries of Ontario Seventh-Day Adventists

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Abstract
Problem. The New Testament indicates that spiritual gifts occupy a crucial function in the life and growth of the church. No known empirical study has measured the effectiveness of nurture and training for gift implementation. This study was designed to investigate behavioral change in awareness and use of spiritual gifts by Seventh-day Adventist members.

Methodology. The New spiritual Gifts Inventory (NSGI) was used to identify awareness of giftedness in five clusters—Teaching, Shepherding-Evangelizing, Supporting, Counseling, and Leadership. An Activity Inventory was developed for the study with 20 activity questions corresponding to the NSGI. The following statistical designs were used to analyze the data: Paired samples t-test to discover changes in subjects; one-way analysis of covariance to analyze the difference between the experimental and control groups in giftedness and activities; two-way analysis of covariance to investigate the presence of interactions between the treatment and personal values affecting spiritual gifts and activity factors. Seventy-two subjects participated in the study. The experimental group of 40 subjects was randomly selected from one West Indian
(Black) congregation and one Caucasian (non-Black) congregation. The control group comprised of 32 subjects, was randomly chosen from one West Indian congregation and one Caucasian congregation.

Results. Qualitatively, subjects sensed their need to use their gifts in the church as a function of their ministry. Quantitatively, treatment produced significant increases in gift awareness in the experimental group in the factors Counseling ($p = .01$) and Leadership ($p = .00$). Five experimental sub-groups whose pre-test were not primary, improved significantly in Shepherding-Evangelizing, Supporting, and Leadership awareness, and in Teaching and Shepherding-Evangelizing activities. No significant interactions were evident between the treatment and personal factors affecting gifts and activities except that Blacks increased more in counseling activities than Non-Blacks ($p = .05$) after the treatment. The Hawthorne effect was sufficient to produce significant increases in the control subjects’ activities.

Conclusions. Nurture and training increased awareness of spiritual gifts in Seventh-day Adventists in Ontario. A study of spiritual gifts with suggested activities can sensitize believers to significant involvement in personal ministries. It also seems evident that gifts are generally distributed without bias, but Blacks improve in more counseling and caring activities than non-Blacks.

Subject Area
Gifts, Spiritual--Seventh-day Adventists, Lay ministry--Seventh-day Adventists.

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