INTRODUCTION

Prayer is an important spiritual virtue which can foster the believer’s spiritual growth to maturity and likeness of Jesus Christ. It elevates the soul and brightens the spiritual life of a believer. It also creates an assurance of an intimate relationship between God and the believer. When it is insufficient the consequences are detrimental to spiritual life. Therefore, for a church to flourish and be able to accomplish Jesus Christ’s commission to the world, its members will need to pray incessantly. In the Bible, prayer is worship that includes all the attitudes of the human spirit in its approach to God. The believer worships God during adoration, praise, confession and even supplication in prayer. This communion with God upholds the fact that it is divine initiative. A Christian acknowledges God and depends on Him because of the conviction that He exists. Prayer therefore emphasizes the character of God as One who is all in all and places people as recipients of His grace who live in a saving relationship with Him. When the disciples realized the importance of prayer while being with Jesus Christ, they pleaded with Him saying, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). (White, E. G. 2002) records that “God is willing and ready to hear and to respond to our heartfelt prayers under all circumstances is profoundly reassuring.” Men and women who have a relationship with God can boldly approach His throne of grace and present their requests (Heb 4:16). If such a relationship with God suffers injury and is not well rooted then the faith commitment of the believer(s) is threatened.

There has been a decrease of members attending church prayer meetings in the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Nakuru South and an increase in the number of members joining Pentecostal Christian in worship, including prayer meetings and casting of spells. This approach to spirituality contravenes the Adventist way of prayer and destabilizes the spiritual steadfastness of those members who go to such meetings. As a result, some become irregular in church attendance, while others even leave the Seventh-day Adventist faith to join other churches. Those who have this dual allegiance copy and or emulate the Pentecostal system of prayer and programs. They attempt to bring various contradictory prayer practices into the Seventh-day Adventist church. Hence this necessitates studying this challenge and addressing it properly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring is generally geared towards helping another person or group of people to achieve certain goals. It is taking time to identify the needs and aspirations of an individual or group and as a mentor help them to achieve their goals. As (Kay 2009) says, “Mentoring is an approach to people development that is independent of and takes place outside any line management relationship. It is about one person helping another to achieve something that is important to them.” The two, the mentor and the mentee or a group of mentees, are involved in a relationship for purposes of spiritual growth. It is about giving and receiving that which is needed to support and help the concerned develop a relationship with Jesus Christ and be able to guide others.
To develop this relationship involves just more than the mentor and mentee. (Horsfall, T. 2008) defines spiritual mentoring as “a triadic relationship between mentor, mentoree and the Holy Spirit, where the mentoree can discover through the already present action of God, intimacy with God, ultimate identity as a child of God and a unique voice for kingdom responsibility.” Therefore, learning to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is crucial in such undertaking, and it is important because the Holy Ghost reveals to humanity who God is and exposes His plans to all who love Him.

On a horizontal level establishing a relationship with another person is always a two-way process, it is a partnership. Expectations must therefore be defined as to what mentoring relationship would entail. These expectations may be a desire to know God better, to know how to pray and hear God’s voice, to find answers to problematic spiritual problems and even how to lead others to Christ. It is important to agree with the mentorship process and it may take several months to establish an ideal time for a healthy mentoring relationship. The mentors should be exemplary to their mentees in all areas of Christian life. Mentoring depends upon friendship and the creation of a conducive environment where it is easy to be open and vulnerable. It is an enabling relationship in which the mentee is empowered to enjoy the graces of God and for service. Hence, mentoring plays a crucial part in growing the spirituality of an individual in a mentoring relation with a mature spiritual person. A spiritual person ought to carefully guide the mentee to love and share spiritual things to others.

According to Webster’s dictionary, a mentor is defined as “someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person.” A mentor therefore guides and has something to do with the growing up and development of the mentee. (Murray, M., & Owen, M. A. 1991) state that “Mentoring is a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies.” Mentoring is done to help the church members develop a mutual relationship with Jesus Christ that will result in renouncing dual allegiance. It is developing a relationship that not only attracts others, but guides others to have that fulfilling relationship with Jesus Christ. On the other hand, discipleship is a total commitment of a lifetime commitment to following Jesus. Simply put it means learning from and following Jesus. Simply put it means learning from and following Him. (Hull, B. 2006) describes discipleship differently.

He states, “Discipleship isn’t a program or an event; it is a way of life. It’s not for a limited time, but for our whole life. Discipleship isn’t for beginners alone; it is for believers for every day of their life. Discipleship isn’t just one of the things the church does; it is what the church does. It is not just part of the advancement of God’s kingdom; the existence of serious disciples is the most important evidence of God’s work on earth. Without enough of these workers, the task languishes and the work remains incomplete (Matt 9:35-38).”

In discipling for mentorship, one needs to be guided by vision and accountability. Those who are being nurtured and developed will do well to patiently learn from their mentors. The approach of one person at a time, as mentors personalize the process and help the mentees, will help them be accountable. (Pue, C. 2005) recognizes that the heart of Jesus’ leadership was putting His Spirit in His disciples by mentoring and teaching them, and then setting them free to pursue a vision, for God. The mentees will rely on dedicated peers to build character and be kept on course through the mentoring process. At the same time, self-awareness should be mentioned here as it is the vitally important aspect of developing mentors and mentees. This self-awareness can identify abilities, gifts, and skills that are needed to be developed and also the dark side of life which needs to be addressed.

Mentoring can be done with many goals in mind. However, the goal herein is to walk with the mentee(s) for the purposes of having life transformational encounters with Jesus Christ, thereby becoming like Jesus Christ. That is to say living a life that is transformed in mind, behaviour, influence, habits and interactions. In Romans 12:2 Paul declares that believers are transformed by the renewal of their minds. Having transformed minds will help a believer to live a life of Jesus Christ that will be an influence not only in church but also in the community. This will result in taking up the character traits of Jesus Christ and thus becoming a channel through which God will bless the church and those that connect with such a believer. (Hull, B. 2006) points out, “let your life preserve what will decay. Allow the light from your life to penetrate the darkness, to be that shining city on a hill...spiritual greatness means living and teaching about God’s kingdom.” To put it in another way, the mentors assist the mentees to realize that renewed lives and transformed mind are hands and feet that God uses to transform the world. Hence, such individuals mentor new converts in prayer with a sole purpose of uplifting their spirituality.

The sole aim of transformation is to have Christ formed in a believer’s life in order to ultimately restore the lost image and likeness of Jesus Christ. In Galatians 4:19 Paul stresses the idea of Christ being formed in the believers. The indwelling Christ transforms the inner
being and creates it after His own likeness, thereby making the transformed believers’ become disciples who can mentor others for spiritual growth. In accordance with this, (Samaan, P. G. 1995) observes that “A truly saved person loves Christ and longs to abide with Him and be like Him. Devotion to emulate the pattern of Christ results from devotion to the person of Christ. The bedrock of Christianity is personal, passionate devotion to the Lord Jesus.” As a result, a transformed individual cannot remain silent, but becomes the one who is eager to direct and guide others to spiritual maturity.

Oneness with Jesus Christ is the only way transformation can occur. It is the only secret of becoming like Him. The union between a believer and Christ will result in breaking down the devil’s strongholds thus making a person a channel to bless others and establish a relationship with Jesus Christ. (Samaan, P. G. 1995) also notes that “It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken.” Members who have vowed to follow Christ Jesus find solace in abiding in Him who is the source of every aspect that brings about maturity in spiritual relationship with God.

Every member needs another for training and mentoring through the God -given talents and gifts. (Engstrom, T. W., & Rohrer, N. B. 1989) have rightly observed that, “every Christian mentor needs a Barnabas to receive encouragement, a Timothy to guide as a protégé, and an Epaphroditus to enjoy on a peer level.” Spiritual mentoring can be likened to a journey. It is a process and never a point. Spiritual mentoring takes the position that there is always something more to learn, always something new to discover and some new growth and development to take place. Spiritual mentoring indeed provides a safe climate where members can explore how God that is at work to make transformation a reality in their lives.

Discipleship means following Jesus, with no rival, no distraction, and no competition for the allegiance of His disciples (Longenecker, R. N. (Ed.). 1996). It is wholly surrendering to the direction and instructions of Christ. It is learning from Jesus and becoming His follower. There are three dimensions towards biblical discipleship: the rational, relational, and spiritual. The rational dimension is majorly concerned with knowledge. The relational dimension as (Bauer, B. L. 2018) observes, “Stresses the need for a continuing transformation and growth even for those who have already become disciples.” This gives an opportunity to the disciple to grow since Matthew 28:19 “teaching” implies an on-going process, and it also suggests that the goal is continuing learning which is not for imparting knowledge only but also to make total commitment to Jesus Christ.

The other dimension found in the Great Commission is that of mission. This is concerned with the believers being involved in proclaiming the love and salvation of Jesus Christ to the entire world. The command “make disciples” calls for believers to multiply themselves by teaching others for this is the primary call for the believers who have become disciples. Relationships are important in discipleship making. It cannot be overstressed that every believer is both a disciple and discipler in the context of his or her Christian relationships. Each has a privilege and God-given responsibility to be a learner and a teacher of what it means to a Christian. (Anderson, N. T. 2000) writes, “Discipleship is an intensely personal ministry between two or more persons who help each other experience a growing relationship with God. Discipleship is a process of building the life of Christ in one another.” Hence, the knowledge of knowing Christ stimulates in a believer a zeal to share with others, and it compels another disciple to be won for God.

**RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

**Prayer as a Mentoring Tool**

The study sought to describe prayer as a mentoring tool. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed on the items of the statements relating to prayer as a mentoring tool. Higher mean scores indicated strong agreement on an item, whereas lower mean scores indicated strong disagreement with the statements. As indicated in Table1, the item with the highest mean score was “Prayer is the backbone of a believer in the Christian life” (M = 4.74, SD = 0.509) while the item with the lowest mean score was “Prayer in church today does not embrace personal communication between God and a believer” (M = 3.15, SD = 1.351).

The overall mean score on prayer as a mentoring tool was 4.093. These results indicated that the respondents strongly agreed with the statements regarding prayer as a mentoring tool in their lives. These results were interpreted to mean that the church members consider prayer as a mentoring tool to a large extent.

**Table 1: Prayer as a Mentoring Tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer as a mentoring tool</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer is the backbone of a believer in the Christian life</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer reveals a relationship that exists between God and the believer</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A believer needs to continually learn the power of prayer</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mode of prayer of an Adventist has changed</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prayer is a fundamental aspect of a believer’s spiritual growth. Living a prayerful life is a sign that one has an existing relationship with God and vice versa. As God responds to the prayers, believers in turn are motivated. Church members were motivated and gave out testimonies whenever they came for worship. Hence members of the Nakuru South Seventh-day Adventist church needed to return to the biblical way of prayer. The seminars and Bible studies presented to the members of the church together with the planned sermons yielded motivating results that seemingly changed church attendance, the way and manner believers were praying and a worship experience of the believers. After six months of the seminars, Bible studies and sermons on prayer, the researcher, while interacting with the believers, through interviews the following sentiments were echoed.

“The seminar has helped me to start a prayer program in my family and since then, our family-life has changed. For the past four months we have been consistent in church attendance as we pray together as a family. There is indeed power in prayer when offered in sincere heart and thanksgiving.”

This life changing experience for those believers who committed to the life of prayer after the researcher organized seminars for church members. To these believers, there was a realization that prayer was a means to glorify God. Honest prayers from faithful believers can restore believers to regular church attendance which has influenced their spiritual health through prayers. Further, spiritual healing is a result of prayers from sincere hearts of faithful believers. Primarily, God can do much more to those believers who decide to live passionate and prayerful life. Confirming these, some members had these to say, “Seminar and Bible study series together with prayer moments have built me once again spiritually and restored me to regular church attendance. I used to attend church once in a month but I have seen a lot of improvement and need for me to pray and attend church regularly. A six-month prayerful exercise has built up my spiritual muscles; the Lord has helped me to surrender every aspect of my life and given me a spiritual breakthrough upon my life in Jesus’ name."

Some challenges I had thought to be witchcraft-sponsored arrows in my family are breaking loose in my life and family at large.”

Sermons planned in a way to sensitize believers on living a life of prayer are vital and commendable in the Seventh-day Adventist church across the globe. Changed life and spiritual growth will be exhibited among Adventist believers within and without the Seventh-day Adventist church Nakuru south. If understood and embraced well, seminars and Bible studies on prayer helped believers of the Nakuru South Seventh-day Adventist church to learn how essential prayer was and its application. Biblical figures like Elijah prayed and great things happened because of his faithfulness and commitment. Together with other biblical examples, prayer can not only bring heaven down but also uplift the believers spiritually to the understanding of God and how God answers prayers for His own glory. According to the Bible, believers should continually learn that God works in action to our prayers mightily so that His name remains and is not dishonoured. The members of the Nakuru South church had acknowledged the working of God in prayers of the faithful believers. During the assessment of the six-month training and Bible studies on prayer some members also acknowledged that, “Prayers have been my personal tool that has fostered my spiritual growth over the last six months. I can say it’s beyond the obvious, because am not who I used to be six months down. These days I pray for everything and situation of my family and it’s been a success especially attending church both morning and afternoon for bible study. I speak destruction to the roots and fruits of rejection in my family line, destruction to the roots and fruits of stagnancy in my life, destruction to the roots of marital destruction and declare the favour of God over my life and take authority over the forces delaying answers to my prayers in Jesus’ name. Attending seminar and bible study for me has not been a waste of time but a glorious moment that has restored my vertical relationship with God.” These declarative statements are life transforming and confirmatory of the effectiveness of planned seminar, bible study and sermons on prayers conducted in the Nakuru South Seventh-day Adventist church.”

Believers of the Nakuru South Seventh-day Adventist church, who were initially facing hard situations, have learned to experience a
breakthrough in their lives and church attendance on a regular basis. Most of them used to attend church irregularly and they were very demotivated in their spiritual lives. After the researcher’s intervention, they have learned that closeness to God through prayer is a major factor that not only leads to spiritual growth but also opens heaven for blessings to rain in their live. The believers of the Nakuru South Seventh-day Adventist have come to learn that a breakthrough is not something Christians sit around and wait for but it is about God waiting for believers to respond in obedience to what He has already commanded and promised. The study indicated that believers’ prayers are answered when one earnestly prays and trusts God’s outcome. Accepting that to trust God is the beginning of Him acting supernaturally and bringing to happen what seems impossible in the eyes of people. God waits for believers to take the first step in faithful prayer and believe in His goodness and promise that He will act accordingly.

- **Importance of Prayer among Believers**

  Prayer is connecting our hearts with God. It’s not measured by the number of words used during prayer but the sincerity of our hearts to God “pouring our hearts before God our father” (psalms 62:8). The closeness believers have with God can be used to measure how much they talk to Him when they are in church or out there. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” “Drawing near” isn’t referring to distance because God is in the believers. It’s talking about drawing nearer in their hearts.

  Consequently, one time in the OT, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, was threatening to conquer Jerusalem. At the time King Hezekiah was aware that he might be defeated, but he also knew that asking God through prayer might change things including stopping the king of Assyria from invading the Israelite land. Out of Hezekiah’s prayer God changed the game, the bible says “Because you have prayed to me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you” (2 Kings 19:20 NASB). This was a great lesson to the believers of the Nakuru South church. They learned that, prayer offered to God through King Hezekiah changed the fate of Jerusalem. Prayer brought something to pass on earth that would not have happened if the king never prayed.

  Certainly prayer has always made a difference in biblical times and its impact is still relevant today. A life of prayer to any believer is really vital to any growing Christian. While talking about the importance of prayer to the members of the Nakuru South church the researcher underscored the difference between members who live a prayerful life and those who do not. Prayer shows God how desperately believers need something. In the same way James states that “The effectual fervent (desperate) prayer of a righteous person avails much” (James 5:16). The desperate prayer of believers touches God’s heart and catches His ear.

  As Jesus passed through Jericho, two blind men sitting by the road side cried out, “Lord, has mercy on us!” (Matt. 20:30). In this anecdote, though a huge crowd surrounded Him, Jesus stopped when He heard their cries for help. Jesus attended to the request and healed the sick. On a different occasion, a woman who had a hemorrhage for 12 years touched the hem garment of Jesus and was instantly healed. While a large crowd was touching Him, Jesus felt power leave Him and she was healed (Mark 5:24-34).

  To put it another way prayer is quite important as it helps members of Gods kingdom to ease anxiety which may be a burden to the heart. The bible says “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6-7). Without doubt, God did not design his people to carry burdens in their souls, so when they pray correctly, they easily transfer their worries and problems to God “their father”. It is therefore probably true to say that, if a believer is still burdened even after prayer then he/she never let going of his/her problems during prayer. There is a release of concerns into the Lords hands and let Him carry the load for his people.

- **Seminars on the Patterns of Prayer**

  The researcher organized for seminars on prayer under various topics. Since there was need for prayer for spiritual growth, the researcher faced the confusion that was among the believers about prayer and church attendance. Some believers of the Nakuru South church seem to have perceived prayer from Moses Tabernacle perspective which led some to legalism. This made the researcher to organize seminars that unfolded a big picture of prayer throughout Scripture. He clarified that God lives in His Heavenly Temple and that the Temple is literally the centre of all creation. He further taught that the eternal reality of God’s Temple in heaven. In this seminar the researcher pointed out that, prayer and regular church attendance is a form of worship in the bible and that it’s important for believers of the Nakuru South church to know that prayer is a motivation factor to regular church attendance.
This form of worship ushers believers to what may be called God’s ordained pattern of worship. What believers do while praying is actually a real worship in an invisible tabernacle (our bodies). It was further emphasized that prayer is part of the tabernacle pattern of worship in addition to singing, praising, church attendance and waiting on God to answer the prayers. The researcher organized seminars and conducted them under the following sub-sets.

- **Jesus Teaching on Prayer**

  In Matthew 6, Jesus taught his disciples how to pray which was a pattern to help them especially for the new converts into the church. In this topic the researcher emphasized that just like preparing a particular meal for the first time, the cook will follow the recipe very closely, but as the cook gains confidence and experience making substitutions and personalizing the recipe and therefore preparing the dish will not need the cook to look at the recipe. This is the way believers of the Nakuru South church were taught in this seminar to learn how to follow Jesus’ model of prayer and church attendance. Moreover the believers were learned how to address God as “our father” as well as the thanking God before addressing our greatest needs to Him.

  Besides, it was also emphasized that God is most interested in responding to His children’s needs and that this shows that they are indeed His possession. During this seminar, the believers of the Nakuru South church Seventh-day Adventist church were taught in this seminar to learn how to follow Jesus’ model of prayer and church attendance. Moreover the believers were learned how to address God as “our father” as well as the thanking God before addressing our greatest needs to Him.

  How God Responds to Our Prayers

  The personal prayer requires a response that is supremely personal. The researcher introduced this topic to the members of the south church that, prayer has no a magical formula to be repeated, but the personal communication, awed and adoring, of the redeemed creature who stands in the presence of the Saviour. It’s in prayer that the believers address their creator and that means that, believers need to depend on God to both spiritual and material satisfaction. God created man in his image but man is not divine. In the midst of the created cosmos, man is called to prayer, not only to praise God for his marvellous works, but also to further his will and design in creation. Consider the amazing boldness of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. They may call God their Father and ask that he hallow His name; they may seek the accomplishment of his will on earth as in heaven. God stands in no need of counsellors; he requires no support or encouragement to unfold the mystery of His will.

  Man is God’s image on earth, when man prays there is a man-God involvement that may bring a response with no parallel in the life of a believer. Man’s personal relationship with God is necessarily important. Prayer, church attendance and worship are overwhelmed by the presence of God’s being and glory. When the seraphim cry “Holy, holy, holy” in God’s temple, every utterance springs from a fresh perception of the glory of the Lord sweeping over them like the waves of the sea. To illustrate this bibles says “To the boundless wisdom and power of God there is added the depth of his mercy and the height of his love” (Ps. 103:11; Eph. 3:18-19). David tasted it; he added to his psalm of deliverance from Saul the opening exclamation, ‘I love you, O LORD, my strength’ (Ps. 18:1; cf. 2 Sam. 22:2). David’s experience has been deepened for us by the coming of the Lord, but his cry is still the cry of believers. The researcher emphasized that, the more
aware the members become of the “WHO” God is, the more they are drawn to seek His face in prayer and the more they seek His face in prayer, the more aware they become of the inexhaustible riches of His grace (2 Cor. 3:18). The project narrative indicated that prayer was used to mentor others they interceded on behalf of others who were not present. Furthermore many appreciated the fact that prayer drew believers together and is a good tool to mentor others. Members also accepted that reading the Bible daily helped them to pray daily and attend services. Members participation and commitment in prayer, revealed the need and significance of assisting one another heavenward. Finally on prayer as a mentoring tool, the members indicated strongly that when prayer is used as a mentoring tool the spirituality of the believers grows, it was observed that poor and unorganized Bible readership led to slow spiritual growth.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: The result indicated that there was a general agreement of prayer as a mentoring tool with an overall mean score of 4.093.

Recommendation: After completing this study, researcher recommends that the clergy and church leadership needs to encourage, train, educate and instruct believers daily and regularly on prayer even in their homes. Furthermore the church should form small prayer groups for purposes of praying together hence this will nurture and mentor members more than in a large group.

REFERENCES