ALEJANDRO BULLÓN

TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

A CALL TO SERVE

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Our evangelistic and missionary work for others is to increase as we come closer to Christ’s soon second coming. Comprehensive evangelism outreach can take many forms, but usually culminates with some type of small group or public meeting in which the Bible becomes the central focus so that people’s hearts can be touched with eternal truth. The Holy Spirit can work in marvelous ways when the Word of God is presented in a clear, concise, and winsome manner. The timeliness and power of God’s salvation story is profound—it is heaven-blessed. The unfolding of biblical truth is to occupy more and more of our time, and we must do that in any manner possible. Where public meetings can be held, by all means hold them. Where small groups are better positioned to touch a life, hold them. Let us lift up Christ, His righteousness, and His sanctuary service. Let us be faithful to God, His Word, and the Spirit of Prophecy. Let us be involved in Total Member Involvement.

The secret of Total Member Involvement includes door-to-door visitation, Bible studies in homes, intense prayer initiatives, comprehensive health ministry outreach, distribution of Adventist literature, youth involvement, Community Services, ADRA activities, media outreach, social media contacts, choirs singing for the Lord, personal evangelism, public evangelism, and many more forms of evangelistic outreach. These activities involve everyone who is willing, since the Lord has asked all to participate in the proclamation of the gospel and the three
angels’ messages, as we see in Matthew 28:19, 20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (NKJV).

What a privilege for each of us to do something for Jesus. You do not have to be a pastor to speak to others either personally or publicly about God’s great plan of redemption. All church members are asked to proclaim God’s final message to the world that Jesus is coming soon—you can do that personally and publicly! Total Member Involvement includes men, women, youth, and children in proclaiming God’s truth. Laypersons are to unite with pastors and church leaders, as we are told by Ellen G. White in Testimonies for the Church: “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers” (vol. 9, p. 117). This is what Total Member Involvement is all about: everyone doing something for Jesus, including speaking for Him whether you are a layperson, a pastor, a man, a woman, a young person, or a child. May God bless, in every form possible, the evangelistic outreach to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is coming soon.

Ted N. C. Wilson, President
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
I INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide an introduction to this book on Total Member Involvement. I believe it provides the principles and practical applications of reaching out to people and helping them become disciples of Jesus. I also believe that you hold in your hands a book that will inspire you to share your best friend, Jesus, with others in a simple, non-threatening way.

The proclamation of the gospel to the whole world was Jesus' first priority from the beginning of His ministry to the end. From His baptism to His ascension to heaven, Jesus' chief preoccupation was twofold: first, to seek and to save the lost, and second, to teach others how to seek and save the lost. His main goal was to evangelize and to teach people how to evangelize (Luke 19:10). That is what this book is all about.

In 2015 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists launched a new visionary initiative called Total Member Involvement. Total Member Involvement is about every church member doing something for Jesus. Every member, every pastor, every teacher, every church administrator. Every member involved in the mission of the church. This book is one of the many resources being produced by the General Conference to encourage the involvement of every church member.

The Great Commission that Jesus gave His disciples was simple, clear, and powerful. The command was: “Make disciples.” This is a call to every member of the church to do something, to get involved in His mission to save the world.
At the very beginning of His ministry Jesus told His disciples: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19, KJV). At the very end of His earthly ministry He said: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:18, 19).

Jesus told them to go and make disciples. That was their mission, to make disciples. And what was to happen with the disciples they made? Those disciples were to make other disciples, and those other disciples were to make other disciples, and so on, until the gospel reached every nation on earth.

What Jesus was doing was creating a self-perpetuating organism that would continue to reproduce itself. The intent of Jesus was that one disciple would make another disciple. He was establishing the principle of multiplication, in which one disciple could give birth and develop other disciples who in turn would do the same thing. It has been proven, as is shown in this book, that there is no better way to make this happen than by helping people become involved in the mission of the church and through small group settings.

Pastor Alejandro Bullón has been instrumental in bringing thousands of people to the Lord by using some of the simple yet powerful biblical principles for soul winning that he shares in this book. It is my prayer that this valuable resource will find not just a place in your bookshelf, but a special place in your heart as you seek to follow the Master’s command to make disciples by getting personally involved in His mission.

Ramon J. Canals, D.Min., Director
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The disciples were all about caring for their Master. They wanted Him to eat in order to be ready for the harsh journey ahead. But Jesus responded to their concern in an unusual manner. “‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest’” (John 4:34, 35).

There are two concepts arising from Jesus’ answer. First, it points to the importance of carrying out the Father’s work (the harvest), but only in fulfillment of His will. Second, it says that the fields are already ripe for the harvest. There’s no time to waste. The world is ripe for the taking. People are suffering and seeking desperately for solutions to their problems in myriads of deceitful ways, only to end up frustrated and hopeless. Sin has done enough damage. It’s time for Jesus to return!

But the work of proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus must be finished. Total Member Involvement is God’s way of preparing His people and the world for the second coming of Jesus.
In seeing the pain of a world in pieces, we can no longer stand idly by and do nothing. The fields are ripe for the harvest, but there can’t be a harvest where no seeds were sown or cultivated. Evangelistic events are wonderful harvest projects, but how will we harvest if we never sowed? However, the planting is to be done according to the will of the Father; no other way will suffice. That is the subject of this book.

One of life’s most unpleasant experiences is realizing you’ve been wrong when you were convinced you were right. To believe you have arrived in Moscow when you’ve actually arrived in Lima. And despite all the explanations and warnings, to resist evaluating the road traveled. There is no one blinder than someone who refuses to see. The worst kind of deaf is someone who refuses to hear.

Paradoxical as it may seem, we risk falling into the same pattern when trying to accomplish the mission. It is easy to conclude that we are on the right track because every year thousands of new believers are baptized and statistics show growth. But if we study the purpose Jesus had in mind when He entrusted us with the mission, perhaps we’ll discover the sad reality that we are doing what we think is humanly better, but not what the Master taught.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warned, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evil-doers!’” (Matthew 7:21-23).
This is the sad description of the condition of sincere people who did what they considered correct, and yet will be lost on the final day. For one simple reason: They did not do the will of the Father.

**IT’S NOT ENOUGH TO RUN**

It is not enough to run. You need to know why you run. It is not enough to work. You have to know why you do what you do. In the Bible we find the story of someone who just ran, without knowing why.

Absalom had died, and someone had to take the news to the king. Two warriors received the mission and ran to the palace. One of them was Ahimaaz. He ran, sweated, strained, and reached his destination. But he did not know why he had run. He thought the mission was simply running. And he ran. But it did not fulfill the mission (2 Samuel 18:19-33). By now we should ask the following questions: What is the mission Jesus gave us? Are we doing the Father’s will? What is His will when we refer to the mission?

**IT’S NOT ENOUGH TO PREACH THE GOSPEL**

We need to understand that God did not give us the mission because He needs our help. He is God. He knows no limits. If He wanted, the world would be reached with the gospel in a second. He could part the sea of difficulties so that every nation, tribe, tongue, and people would know the gospel message in an instant, just as He opened the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross.

On one occasion He told Zerubbabel: “I do not act through an army, ‘nor by power, but by my Spirit’” (Zechariah 4:6).
You deceive yourself if you believe that God needs humans to preach the gospel. The Spirit of Prophecy is adamant in affirming that “God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy—the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice—we must participate in His labors for their redemption.”

If it were only to preach the gospel, God could do it without our help. But He gave us the mission because we the believers need to share the gospel in order to grow in the Christian life.

“The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has enjoined upon us.”

WITH THE ANGELS

On the other hand, the gospel could be done through the ministry of angels. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews asks this about angels: “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). Angels are always ready to serve, and could preach the gospel with dizzying speed.

If it were about seeking the easiest and fastest way to evangelize the world, God would call on the angels. Ellen White declares: “God could have proclaimed His truth through sinless angels, but this is not His plan.”

This concept is repeated several times.

“The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God’s way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.”
Notice the part “but this is not God’s way of working.” God has a definite plan for the preaching of the gospel, and in that plan the angels are in a supporting role. The church must fulfill the mission involving each believer because human beings need to be involved. It is a matter of spiritual survival.

“God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work.”

Any method that leaves the believer as an observer, seeing how others fulfill the mission, deviates from God’s plan.

**WITH ANIMALS OR WITH STONES**

But not only could the angels preach the gospel. On a certain occasion God had a message for Balaam. There was no pastor, evangelist, or Bible instructor nearby. Only a donkey. And the Bible says, “The Lord opened the donkey’s mouth” (Numbers 22:28). Can God use the animals to preach the gospel in our days? He could if He wanted. But not only the animals: even inanimate objects can preach. When Jesus was on earth, He said: “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40).

But the divine plan for evangelism is different. We cannot forget the divine plan and create our own designs, believing that in this way we are helping God. If we do, we risk reaching the final day and discovering that although we did many good things with the best of intentions, we did not do the Father’s will.

**AN ILLUSTRATION**

Imagine that I am the owner of a bicycle factory and want to test the endurance of my latest production. I gather a group of
employees and entrust them with the mission of taking my bike from Los Angeles to Miami, by land, to test its performance. I tell them to write down all the details: the resistance of the brake pedal, tire life, etc. I then tell them that I’ll wait for them in Miami and leave.

As soon as I leave, employees gather and begin to organize committees to study the quickest, cheapest, and easiest way to get the bike to Miami. They spend hours and hours analyzing what would be the best method to accomplish the mission. They write proposals and produce books on the subject.

Finally, they conclude that it is best to take the bike by plane. It is the fastest way, and they find a good deal on airfare.

When we meet in Miami, there they are, all happy. They think they did an excellent job, and expect me to recognize them as loyal employees. But when I ask for a report on the long-term performance of the bicycle, they look at each other and perceive sadly that they did not fulfill the mission. They feel frustrated. They spent many hours studying and analyzing. They worked hard to get the resources. They did what they thought best. Unfortunately, they did not fulfill the mission. Not because they didn’t want to, but because they didn’t understand it.

**THE DIVINE PLAN**

What then is the divine plan in relation to the mission? Let’s go back and read the inspired statement: “God could have proclaimed His truth through sinless angels, but this is not His plan.”

It is evident that God has a plan for fulfilling His mission. He would be unfair if He gave us the mission but did not teach us
how to fulfill it. This is not about inventing a method to do what He has already taught us. He taught us that “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

To be a witness is an attribute of human beings. Animals or things can’t testify. A witness is someone who tells what he or she has seen or experienced. John says: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us” (1 John 1:1, 2).

So when Jesus gave His disciples the mission moments before ascending to heaven, He was reminding them of something He had already taught them before His crucifixion: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

The key phrase is “as a testimony.” It is a matter for every believer. A personal testimony. Not a corporate one. And Jesus reminded them of this after His resurrection, before ascending to His Father.

The Spirit of Prophecy explains: “Christ was standing only a few steps from the heavenly throne when He gave His commission to His disciples. Including as missionaries all who should believe on His name, He said, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ God’s power was to go with them.”
Note the expression “including as missionaries all who should believe on His name.” The mission, in the mind of Christ, was not only to preach the gospel, but to “include as missionaries all who should believe on His name.”

**RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BELIEVER**

Let’s turn to a previous quote: “The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God’s way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.”

One of the first concepts that God taught us regarding the fulfillment of the mission is that the plan is for human beings to work for the benefit of their fellow humans. There is no true fulfillment of the mission without human participation. This participation can be collective, but it’s much more individual.

“During His ministry, Jesus had kept constantly before the disciples the fact that they were to be one with Him in His work for the recovery of the world from the slavery of sin. When He sent forth the Twelve and afterward the Seventy, to proclaim the kingdom of God, He was teaching them their duty to impart to others what He had made known to them. In all His work He was training them for individual labor, to be extended as their numbers increased, and eventually to reach to the uttermost parts of the earth. The last lesson He gave His followers was that they held in trust for the world the glad tidings of salvation.”

There are three thoughts that stand out in this statement. The first is that “in all His work He was training them for individual labor.” The second is that this work was “to be extended as their numbers increased”; and the third is that this work would
“eventually . . . reach to the uttermost parts of the earth.” Let’s consider these three points.

**AN INDIVIDUAL WORK**

From the biblical point of view, the mission that God entrusted to His church is not just a corporate mission, but includes the participation of each and every one of the believers. Jesus never imagined His church fulfilling the mission with the participation of only a few members. Any evangelistic plan that leaves the believer just watching “is not His plan.” “This is not God’s way of working.” The Master taught it clearly: “It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch” (Mark 13:34).

The concept is simple. The Lord leaves “each with their assigned task.” This work cannot be done by proxy or representation. There is not the slightest chance that I can pay someone to do the work that was entrusted to me.

“To every one work has been allotted, and no one else can be a substitute for another. Each one has a mission of wonderful importance, which he cannot neglect or ignore, as the fulfillment of it involves the weal of some soul, and the neglect of it the woe of one for whom Christ died.”

This is a beautiful concept. We write many books and countless sermons about it. But when we spring into action, we forget the teachings of the Master. We prefer to look around for the easiest, most economical and productive methods. And we’re never satisfied with anything. We run around in search of the “latest method,” and we ignore the divine counsel: “To
everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot and place, saying, ‘Here am I; send me.’ Isaiah 6:8, KJV. Upon the minister of the word, the missionary nurse, the Christian physician, the individual Christian, whether he be merchant or farmer, professional man or mechanic—the responsibility rests upon all. It is our work to reveal to men the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which we engage should be a means to this end.”[11]

Look at the expressions “everyone,” “each one,” “upon all.” This concept is not presented once, or just a few times. The Spirit of Prophecy repeats the same concept over and over. The mission is not only corporate but individual.

“God expects personal service from everyone to whom He has entrusted a knowledge of the truth for this time. Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can be home missionaries in their families and neighborhoods.”[12]

No one can be omitted, or believe that because they collaborate financially, someone else can fulfill the mission that was assigned to them.

“A distinct work is assigned to every Christian.”[13]

**Church Growth Would Be Faster**

The result of fulfilling the mission with the individual participation of every believer, as Jesus taught, would be that the work would be “extended as their numbers increased.” The key words here are “extended” and “increased.” Both denote expansion, multiplication, and numbers. The inspired writer was not afraid to mention numbers as a growth rate. She said: “If every
Seventh-day Adventist had done the work laid upon him, the number of believers would now be much larger than it is.”

But she notes that the numbers are the result of following divine counsel, and involving each member in accomplishing the mission. “If every Seventh-day Adventist had done the work laid upon him,” she says.

Numbers cannot be the motivating factor in accomplishing the mission, but simply the result of something wonderful that happens in the life of every believer. Numbers are not alien to biblical teachings. The Bible is full of numbers. From the Old Testament, when Israel left Egypt, “the Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children” (Exodus 12:37).

Going through the experience of Pentecost: “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41). Even in heaven we see numbers: “Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (Revelation 14:1). “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands” (Revelation 7:9).

Yes, numbers are needed. Not as a source of inspiration and motivation, but as measurements that allow evaluation. They may not be the best indicators, but no one has yet discovered
better indicators. If you tell me you’re losing weight, the logical question is How many pounds? If you claim that you are growing, you have to answer how many inches.

The Spirit of Prophecy says: “The Thessalonian believers were true missionaries. . . . Hearts were won by the truths presented, and souls were added to the number of believers.”15 How do we know that the Thessalonians were true missionaries? Because new people were added to the number of believers. Declaring that they were true missionaries without an increase in numbers would be inconsistent with the evidence.

At the beginning of our history the servant of God said: “Seventh-day Adventists are making progress, doubling their numbers, establishing missions, and unfurling the banner of truth in the dark places of the earth; and yet the work moves far more slowly than God would have it.”16

How did they know that Adventists were making progress? By the fact that they had doubled their numbers. But numbers should never be used as a source of inspiration or pressure. They are not to be used in comparisons to “prove” who is better. If we follow the way Jesus worked, what matters are not the numbers, but the fact that we are preparing a people to be ready to meet Jesus.

**THE MISSION WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED**

This would be the second result of following the divine method of evangelism, in which the participation of every believer is indispensable. “Eventually [it would] reach to the uttermost parts of the earth.”17 Ellen White was clear on this concept. She affirmed this at the end of the nineteenth century and then
repeated the concept: “Were every one of you a living missionary, the message for this time would speedily be proclaimed in all countries, to every people and nation and tongue.”

Notice that the secret to the completion of the work is “were every one.” In other words: each believer needs to be “a living missionary.”

The other day someone asked me what plans the church has to complete the mission, because according to him we are “wandering in the wilderness like Israel.”

This person believes that we should take advantage of social networks and technology. And I think this is true. We must seize all means available, but we can never forget the individual action of each believer, seeking out people and leading them to Jesus. Personal witnessing has a capacity for a rate of speed much more extraordinary than we imagine.

“He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost.”

This concept of the chain is extraordinary. In the mind of Christ each one should seek out one, and then those two should do the same. This means that the increase would not be by addition, but by multiplication or geometric progression.

If we take just 2 million of the 20 million Seventh-day Adventist believers in the world and challenge every one of them to bring a person to Christ, and every new believer did the same, in just 12 years we would reach the 7 billion people who now populate the planet. We err when we underestimate the possibility, the potential, and effectiveness
of personal testimony. It is no less explosive than cell multiplication or atomic fission energy.

“Churches are to be organized and plans laid for work to be done by the members of the newly organized churches. This gospel missionary work is to keep reaching out and annexing new territory, enlarging the cultivated portions of the vineyard. The circle is to extend until it belts the world.”

Note that if every church member were involved in the mission and if every church had plans in place to involve every believer, the circle would widen clear around the world.

**CORPORATE WORK INSTEAD OF INDIVIDUAL EFFORT**

I think church leaders live constantly concerned about fulfilling the mission. In ministerial meetings you often hear, “Such and such conference baptized this many” or “This union added this many new members this year.” And the encouraged members exclaim, “Amen!”

One leader told me: “I think we’re doing well, because when the quinquennium began, we were baptizing 900 souls per year, and this last year we reached 5,000.” Then he asked: “Doesn’t this mean we’re fulfilling the mission?”

From the human perspective, maybe so. Surely his conference will look good in the statistical report.

What had that particular conference done to grow so fast?

“We invested in evangelism” was the reply.

And certainly a leader who has the vision to invest in evangelism has the right understanding as to why the church even exists. Except that the investment that conference had made had
been to hire 300 Bible instructors. Each had baptized an average of 12, and the results were impressive.

But here’s the question: Is this the best way of fulfilling the mission that Jesus gave us?

Perhaps Ellen White answers this question best:

“Everywhere there is a tendency to substitute the work of organizations for individual effort. Human wisdom tends to consolidation, to centralization, to the building up of great churches and institutions. Multitudes leave to institutions and organizations the work of benevolence; they excuse themselves from contact with the world, and their hearts grow cold. They become self-absorbed and unimpressible. Love for God and man dies out of the soul. Christ commits to His followers an individual work—a work that cannot be done by proxy. Ministry to the sick and the poor, the giving of the gospel to the lost, is not to be left to committees or organized charities. Individual responsibility, individual effort, personal sacrifice, is the requirement of the gospel.”

According to this statement, a group of Bible instructors cannot replace the individual work of every believer. Everyone can do something, which is the basis of Total Member Involvement.

In the same conference, I met at least three people who gave plenty of financial resources to pay the Bible instructors, but were not personally involved in the mission to seek souls for Christ. What they are doing is certainly extraordinary. These are people who love God and His church, because where your treasure is, there is your heart also. But in the mind of God, it is the “individual responsibility” that is “the requirement of the gospel.”
This raises the logical question: Why should the mission be individual? This is the question that we will answer in the next chapter.

**Total Member Involvement** is about personal commitment. It is about finding a need in the community and supplying that need. Here are some practical ways to become personally involved:

1. Cook a meal for a neighbor/coworker who has been sick.
2. Give food to a homeless person.
3. Donate clothing in the condition that you would want donated to you.

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4 ibid., p. 109.
9 ibid., p. 32.