



Almir Marroni



Opportunities in Literature Evangelism

How to Afford an Adventist Education:

The year was almost over, and many students at Brazilian Adventist College¹ planned to join the literature-evangelism program in the summer. For weeks the conversations among my roommates focused on the dilemma of staying to work at the school or facing the risk of going out to sell books without any assurance of the outcome.

I felt strongly compelled to go. I had read about the church's publishing work and was impressed by the Holy Spirit to enroll in that army of workers. Interestingly, I was not recruited, as no leader extended an invitation to me. I had to take the initiative to seek a space in one of the teams being formed. The student literature-evangelist (LE) teams were organized by the union and conference publishing directors with the assistance of students, who, based on successful previous experience in canvassing, were assigned as team leaders. Why teams? Teams made it easier for supervision, training, assistance, and motivation. Also, young adults love to work in teams.

From among the several teams, I picked the leader whom I trusted the most. I spoke to him but was frustrated with the excuse that his team had run out of available spots. He recommended that I talk to other leaders, which I did without success. Everyone gave the same

answer: "The team is already complete." Soon I realized there was a hidden truth behind the standard answer.

You see, I was considered a privileged student. I was raised in a middle-class family and did not have to worry about working to pay for my studies. I realized no one believed that a student would "expend blood and sweat in canvassing" if he or she didn't need to raise money for college tuition. So, I had to change my approach to get a chance.

I returned to the first leader—the one I trusted the most—and found him outside the classroom building. I approached him and said: "My parents already know that this year I will not travel on vacation with them and will not even spend Christmas with my family. So, when are we leaving for the canvassing territory?"

A bit confused, he replied, "December 2nd." Hearing what I wanted, I excused myself and entered the building.

Literature evangelism would be a great challenge. I was shy and fearful, and it was difficult for me to approach strangers. Before the real work began, I would have to practice the sales presentation with my teammates. I felt nervous and began perspiring and trembling. Everyone laughed when the book slipped out from my hands onto the floor. Failing in front of all of

my peers was embarrassing. The next morning, I went out into the field carrying with me the disbelief of my leaders and canvassing colleagues who thought: “That little daddy’s boy won’t achieve anything.”

But to everyone’s surprise, I took the opportunity seriously. After an entire morning without success, God gave me my first sale: a complete set of books to a young mother of two little boys. Before purchasing the set, she asked: “Are you sure these books will help me to raise my boys as God’s children?”

“Absolutely,” I said.

From that first set of books, I felt God had called me for that work, and I did it with all my strength and with complete dependence on Him.

Door-to-door work became a second school where I learned many lessons. I prayed as never before. I felt small, but God was with me. Every day I had opportunities to share the good news about Jesus, pray with clients, and develop the art of persuasion. Although I experienced pain and challenges, by the grace of God, the results were amazing. After two months, I returned home with a check for the equivalent of almost two years of tuition as a boarding student.

I continued canvassing during the summer and winter vacations until I finished my studies. This activity was a life-changing, practical school. Although I had no idea about the significance of what was happening in my life, God was preparing me to serve in the publishing ministry. The thought that I belonged to an army of thousands of young people motivated me with a sense of significance and purpose. At that time, I found out that throughout history, the canvassing work has played a vital role in grounding and strengthening the faith of young Christian people who mightily contributed to the gospel mission.

The Canvassing Work and Christian Education

Over the centuries, the canvassing work and Christian education have been partners in training and developing youth to serve God. Long before the Adventist movement began, students from Christian schools were already involved in sharing their faith by selling literature.

In Waldensian communities in Europe, the youth were trained through a combination of classroom activities and the experience of sharing their faith in the cities. “They had education centers where young people would transcribe portions of the Bible, which soon they would go out in the cities to disseminate. It was a re-

quirement that those who wanted to become ministers had to spend three years canvassing in foreign territories.”² Later, during the Reformation years, student colporteurs were trained to spread Luther’s books while earning funds to pay for their tuition fees.³

At the beginning of the 20th century, Adventist schools in North America established a plan to encourage students to sell literature during the summer months. A sale of a certain amount would allow students to attend school during the year. In 1906, Union College, in Nebraska, established the first scholarship plan for student canvassers.⁴

Ellen G. White was still living when students, referred to as “colporteurs,” first began the work of door-



to-door ministry. She offered counsel, encouragement, and a list of benefits the youth would obtain by enrolling in this program. She saw the canvassing work as a learning experience, full of opportunities to share God’s love through personal testimony (see *Colporteur Ministry*, chapter 5).⁵

Student canvassers meet dozens of people daily, many of whom face trials and spiritual challenges. They need prayers, kindness, and hope. Through the influence of Christian students, many people request Bible studies and eventually attend church and request baptism. Thus, canvassing is a blessing both for students and those with whom they come into contact.

Student Canvassing Today

Reports from world divisions show that more than 20,000 young people get involved in Adventist literature evangelism every year.⁶ The student canvassing

Literature Evangelist Opportunities for Students

One way students can earn money to pay for school fees and tuition is to sell books. The General Conference Publishing Department and conference publishing departments provide resources and opportunities for students to sell and distribute Adventist literature during school vacations or for a designated period. Participants in this program have opportunities to grow and enhance their social and leadership skills.

General Conference Publishing Department <https://www.adventistpublishing.org/students/>

Think Big Literature Evangelist Training Program (serve as a literature evangelist for one year) <https://www.adventistpublishing.org/students/think-big/>

Summer Programs (work as a literature evangelist during a vacation) <https://www.adventistpublishing.org/students/summer-program/>

program is active on all continents with excellent results, but involves much more than sales figures. It is exciting to know that every year, this army of students meets more than five million people face to face. Can you imagine the impact of these young Christian people on hurting, discouraged people seeking meaning in their lives or those who are seeking a personal relationship with God? Thousands of prayers are offered, and millions of truth-filled books are distributed. Only in eternity will the results of this ministry be revealed.

Both during and since the pandemic, canvassing has continued to thrive.⁷ Many students accepted the challenge of selling books when people especially needed a message of hope. In most countries, it was possible to resume door-to-door work after following health protocols.

As a publishing leader, I have met thousands of young people aiming for a better future and a chance to enroll at an Adventist college or university. Most of them struggle with a lack of financial resources to pursue a Christian education. I have had the privilege of recruiting, training, and ministering to committed youth who, despite a variety of challenges, accept God's call to service. Many say that canvassing was one of the most rewarding and rich experiences they have ever had. They developed social skills, learned discipline, and above all, they experienced God's

power as He performed miracles in providing for their needs every day.

Many Seventh-day Adventist youth have a vision for service. They dream of preparing themselves not only for a professional career but also to exercise their profession within a missionary framework. Recognizing the role of canvassing on students' development and spiritual growth, teachers and educational administrators should encourage them to dedicate at least one summer to literature evangelism. Such an experience will strengthen their relationship with God, nurture their commitment to service, and teach them many other unforgettable, valuable lessons.

Literature evangelism allows teenagers and young adults to serve and feel useful. It helps create a sense of purpose in life. We praise God for the youth worldwide who have engaged in literature evangelism and pray that many others will accept the call to join this powerful army and take advantage of the opportunities to support themselves as they pursue Adventist education. ✍

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Brazilian Adventist College in São Paulo is now Brazil Adventist University. See <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=8GGU>.
2. Nicolás Chaij, *El Colportor De Éxito* (Florida Oeste, Buenos Aires: Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana, 1985), 23.
3. *Ibid.*, 26.
4. Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1979), 350.
5. Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1953).
6. Information supported by quarterly reports submitted by the world divisions to the General Conference Publishing Department.
7. *Ibid.*