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CQ is written by Seventh-day Adventist young adults and their friends around the world.

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Evangelism and *Witnessing*

10  **Lesson One** *Defining Evangelism and Witnessing*
Andy Blosser, Jennifer Calhoun, Jasmine Doram, Emily Knott, Ashley Meyer, Johanna Nielsen

19  **Lesson Two** *Every Member Ministry*
Jenny Cruz, Antonio DeJesus, Cindy DeJesus, Hannah Goldstein, Guillermo Ronquillo, Christina Zaiback

28  **Lesson Three** *Spiritual Gifts for Evangelism and Witnessing*
Edward Allen, Chris Blake, Rich Carlson, Addison Hudgins, Serena Stevens, Joyelle Worley

37  **Lesson Four** *Evangelism and Witnessing as a Lifestyle*
Jared Bosire, Gary Case, Dallas Estey, Tanya L. Henry, Lawrence Kiage, Francis G. Wokabi

46  **Lesson Five** *Sequential Evangelism and Witnessing*
Anna Bartlett, Judy Bartlett, Emily Bartlett, Amanda Ernst, Karen Pires, Kevin Pires

55  **Lesson Six** *Personal Evangelism and Witnessing*
Nina Atcheson, Jean-Pierre Martinez, Kim Peckham, Lori Peckham, Allison Saucedo, J. Philip Williams
Lesson Seven Corporate Evangelism and Witnessing
Deena Bartel-Wagner, Ashley Wagner, Steven J. Dovich, Jason Hammel, Jose-Ann Martin, Gary Wagner

Lesson Eight Equipping for Evangelism and Witnessing
Faith Johnson Crumbly, Celina Dawson, Melody Matudan-Page, Glenn G. Poole II, Jarrod Purkeypile, Sheryll Rao

Lesson Nine Releasing Into Ministry
Joseph Baker, Debbie Eisele, Alan Steven Hecht, Kathy Coleman Hecht, Dunbar Henri, Lisa Eisele Poole

Lesson Ten A Love Response
Ruth Abel, Ryan Abel, Janice Antoinette Becca, Oluwakemi Ola, Paul A. Samuel, Hannah Goldstein

Lesson Eleven Let the Church Know
Andres Maldonado, Rodlie Ortiz, Emily Perez, Jose Javier Perez, Roger Prather, Cenia Rivas

Lesson Twelve Evaluating Witnessing and Evangelism
Dave Edgren, Georgina Hobson, Aleksandra Marek, Adele Nash, Talitha Simmons, Scott Wegener

Lesson Thirteen A Perpetual Ministry
Radisa Antic, E'schelle Celestte Hernandez, Debbie McReynolds, Tom Meijer, Felix Opoku-Gyamfi, Katie Ramharacksingh
SABBATH SCHOOL

http://www.sabbathschoolu.org
There are times when life is more than the update on Facebook, the tweets, the IMs, and texts. Sometimes, the important times, it’s about looking beyond the abridged, the instants, the clichés. It’s about discovering what God is really trying to say to you.
SABBATH SCHOOL
TEACHER PREPARATION
IN MINUTES . . .

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teacher’s guide

JUST CLICK AND SERVE!
FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. CQ’s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the Adult Bible Study Guide find that because CQ deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

About four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to CQ each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflect the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

POINTERs FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit’s guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passages on which each week’s lesson is based appear in bold type in the “Logos” portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.

3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the “Logos” pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.

4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
   Introduction is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week’s theme.
   Logos is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
   Testimony presents Ellen White’s perspective on the lesson theme.
   Evidence approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
   How-to discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
   Opinion is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
   Exploration provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week’s lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference–approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.
Evan Louis was born in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., and found himself naturally drawn to art and photography from a young age. By the time he was in his teens, he had turned his passion for the visual arts into a successful freelance business in graphic design and photography. His work in downtown Detroit was varied as his clientele expanded from the local to the international arena. It included photography at Hollywood film locations and extended to musicians and models, for which he produced album covers and did photo shoots. In his late teens, Evan came to know Christ as His personal Savior and rejoiced to learn the precious truths of God’s remnant church. This completely changed the focus of Evan’s life. He has dedicated his talents to the Lord, and in answer to prayer, has seen God provide him with a livelihood in which nearly all of his work comes from the church organization or other Seventh-day Adventist ministries. In his spare time, he enjoys playing the guitar and composing music.
The Artist’s Thoughts
on the Lessons’ Illustrations

Lesson 1: The spiritual elements at the core of evangelism and witnessing run much deeper than communication skills or personality. They stem straight from the Word of God and are only effective through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 2: We are called, young and old, to pick up Christ’s cross and follow Him. Age is never a hindrance.

Lesson 3: Walking with Christ and developing our spiritual gifts is possible only when our minds are stayed on His purpose for our lives. We must focus on the cross, and our lives will overflow with service and gratitude to Him.

Lesson 4: When Christ transforms us, our everyday activities will be filled with the life and light of His Word.

Lesson 5: With the help of the Holy Spirit, our efforts to witness for God and to share what He’s done for us will not return void.

Lesson 6: Our ability to share the gospel can only stem from a personal experience with God. This requires dedicated, focused, individual time with God.

Lesson 7: When our hearts are connected with God, our faith will reach the world. When walking humbly with the Lord, the blessings we receive will extend to our associates in the work place and all other everyday situations.

Lesson 8: We have at our fingertips the tools and resources needed in order to equip us for the fiercest trials and the most heated battles. All we need to do is use them.

Lesson 9: God will train us so that we may be released into the world to witness for Him. Led by His Holy Spirit and transformed into His image, we will complete His work on earth.

Lesson 10: When we recognize what God has done for us, we cannot help but pour our lives out in loving service for Him. Our hearts will be struck with a deep sense of His love for us and we will purposefully look for ways to be of service.

Lesson 11: God imparts His love to us through the time we spend with Him. He designs that this benefit might be shared with His body, the church.

Lesson 12: With the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of experienced spiritual leaders, it is our duty to examine the fruit of our walk with God.

Lesson 13: The truths in God’s Word will bear fruit in this life and for eternity.
Defining Evangelism and Witnessing

"‘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’" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NKJV).
Even before I walk into my cabin with the last of my now clean-teethed junior campers, I hear their voices piecing together the week’s memory verse with my co-counselor: “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet. 3:15, NASB). In the moments before gathering them to morning worship, the same words roll off my own tongue.

As my campers and co-counselor file down to the chapel, I make my way up the hill to the horse barn. The verse runs about in my head, slows to a walk, and finally sinks down to where the probing questions lurk. Am I worthy to be a mentor to youth, a witness of His love and hope? Am I ready to answer humbly and with wonder any person who asks why I have this hope? How can I, just one small person, even point one individual to the fulfillment of his or her yearnings for Christ?

The truth is that it is not impossible, even though the task is too vast for our imaginations. Christ tells us to “‘lift up [our] eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest’” (John 4:35, NASB). Daily we are surrounded with people to reach, while the enemy of souls works to counteract our every step. We might look up with discouragement, our hearts confused, as we see that even family members are ignorant of God’s immense love.

But Peter doesn’t tell us to go change the world in an instant. He tells us first to set apart Christ in our hearts, to seek Him, to let Him begin the work. We are to be ready, willing, malleable in His hands. We are to share our hope, our passion, our joy in the Lord. We are to share the reason for our hope, and the good news of Christ’s sacrifice and the Father’s love. We are to share our testimony with any person who asks, to any who watches, to any who wonders.

Right now it is the children laughing up the roadway for their horseback riding lessons. It is the co-worker walking by your cubicle. It is the friend needing support. Christ has put His fire and His hope within us. And He has taken the first step. Will you follow?

Emily Knott, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, U.S.A.
People Are God’s Tools (1 Cor. 4:1, 2; 2 Cor. 4:7)

God can communicate in a variety of ways. In some instances He speaks directly and audibly to large numbers of people (Exod. 20:1). Or He may speak to individuals alone, as in the case of Enoch (Gen. 5:22), the patriarchs (Gen. 12:1; 26:2; 28:10–13), and Moses (Exod. 3:4). Yet most often, it seems, God communicates through people. You might not think of people as the finest medium for delivering divine messages, given our weak memories and proneness to garbling concepts. Yet the apostle Paul suggests that God speaks through humans precisely because we are lowly and fallible—“earthen vessels,” as he says—our weakness highlighting God’s strength (2 Cor. 4:7).

How It All Started (Gen. 12:1–4)

This cosmic game of “telephone” stretches back to the time of Abraham. In Genesis 12 God summons Abraham (then Abram) out of his comfortable life in central Mesopotamia to follow Him on a wild journey with no specified destination. Why? God explains: “I will make you a great nation; . . . and you shall be a blessing. . . . And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (verses 2, 3, NKJV). Abraham’s descendants were given a unique task—blessing all the families of the earth. They (who became, of course, the Jewish people, among others) were the means through whom the world would become aware of divine grace. God would speak to them, and they would speak to the world.

The Church Takes the Torch (Acts 1:1–8)

The command to reach the world is reiterated in Matthew 28:19, 20. The calling originally given to Abraham and his descendants was expanded to include the Gentiles. Now, in the twenty-first century, we are to continue what Abraham started—being a blessing to the world by spreading God’s message. The book of Acts is an account of how the early church went about this task, starting in Jerusalem (Acts 2) and ending up as far as Rome (Acts 28).

This book is filled with fine sermons and heroic apostolic feats of healing and casting out demons, but underneath all the grandeur one senses a more mundane yet powerful work going on. It’s simply the story of people chatting with people as they travel the road (8:26–39), gathering in houses (10:24–48), meeting on riverbanks (16:13), and philosophizing in the judicial and legislative halls of government (17:16–34). The followers of the Way (as...
Christians were called) simply could not contain themselves (4:20). They had to talk. They would witness at the most awkward and unusual times, such as immediately after an earthquake that shook open prison doors (16:25–32) and even (amusingly) in a Roman court session (25; 26).

The key word is passion. Because of what they had seen and the power of the Holy Spirit pulsing through them, the early Christians were driven to spread their message in an almost reckless fashion. Although they certainly possessed free will, the image one sees from reading the book of Acts is that of God seizing people and employing them as tools for His mission. Witnessing was not so much a project or a program as it was a lifestyle, a never-ending proclamation of the goodness of God.

**What It Is Like to Get Involved (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 4:1, 2; 6:20)**

The Bible has a number of motifs that express this lifestyle of being a divine messenger. One of Paul’s most common motifs is that of slavery. Repeatedly, he describes himself as a bondservant, or slave, of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1). This image suggests total submission, complete immersion in the work of God. A slave loses his or her identity in the will of the master to the point where the master becomes the means by which the slave is defined. Slaves have no purpose other than to serve their master. While this metaphor for the Christian life is imperfect, since slaves rarely submit freely whereas Christians do so with joy, it nevertheless helps to convey the all-encompassing nature of Christ’s call to witness. In a very real sense, one cannot be a “part-time” evangelist. Christ demands all our time and energy.

**Slaves . . . Yet of a Royal Sort (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20)**

As Christ’s witnesses, we are His lowly slaves. Yet we’re also His royal representatives on a kingly mission. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul refers to himself and his co-workers as “ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us” (NKJV). This image of Greco-Roman diplomacy places Paul—and by extension all of us—in a position of great responsibility.

The role of an ambassador is to be a voice for the king or governor being represented. The ambassador speaks all of what and only what the ruler would speak. There can be no fudging or equivocating. Just as slaves lose their identity by being owned by their masters, so ambassadors lose their identity by taking the place of their masters. When Christians assume this position, their only aim is to glorify Christ by conveying His message accurately and completely.

**REACT**

1. How do you feel about being a mouthpiece for God? Honored or overwhelmed? Why?
2. Are you so committed to evangelism that you could be called a slave to the cause?
3. When you witness to non-Christians, do you talk about God or for God?

Andy Blosser, Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A.
“The mind must be active to invent the best ways and means of reaching the people next to us. . . . We often let opportunities within our reach slip away, in order to do a work at a distance from us which is less hopeful, and thus our time and means may be lost in both places.”

“There are many souls yearning unutterably for light, for assurance and strength beyond what they have been able to grasp. They need to be sought out and labored for patiently, perseveringly. Beseech the Lord in fervent prayer for help. . . . Let His melting love, His rich grace, flow forth from human lips. You need not present doctrinal points unless questioned. But take the Word, and with tender, yearning love for souls, show them the precious righteousness of Christ, to whom you and they must come to be saved.”

“Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. . . . But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He . . . took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail.”

“Let us take heed to our words. Let us talk faith, and we shall have faith. Never give place to a thought of discouragement in the work of God.”

“The good seed sown may lie some time in a cold, worldly, selfish heart, without evidencing that it has taken root. . . . We know not in our lifework which shall prosper, this or that. . . . We are to do our work, leaving the result with God.”

**REACT**

1. What do you think should be or can be done about the “gospel-hardened” areas?
2. Who do you know that, though he or she may know of God, does not know His love? What small steps can you take to show His love to this person?

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1. Review and Herald, December 8, 1885.
2. Evangelism, p. 442.
5. Ibid., p. 64.

Johanna Nielsen, Tacoma, Washington, U.S.A.
There was nothing special about Peter and John. They were ordinary fishermen, untrained in the lawyer’s art of argument, unaccustomed to public speaking. Neither had they proven themselves to have much courage. When Jesus was arrested, they ran away, and Peter denied even knowing Him. Yet after Jesus returned to heaven, we find these ordinary men standing on the steps of the temple, proclaiming the message of Christ.

God loves us and has a plan to rescue us.

What had happened to these fishermen to make them devote their lives to the preaching of the gospel? The answer they gave to those who questioned them was simple: “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20, NIV). Peter and John possessed knowledge so wonderful that they could not help talking about it. The word evangelism comes from the Latin evangelium, meaning “good news,” and the news Peter and John had to tell was good indeed! God loves us and has a plan to rescue us.

Evangelism rests upon testimony.* The disciples were eager to share what they had seen and heard. The credibility of our message comes from our own personal experience with what we are sharing. The disciples could share the good news of Christ because they had experienced His love for them. Their joy was so great at the revelation of God’s love that they could not keep it to themselves. It was their privilege to bring that same joy to others by telling them about what God had done and would do for them.

Today, evangelism still rests upon testimony. There are still those who have not accepted Christ’s salvation, and it is our privilege to tell them of the Father’s love and the redemption He brings us. “As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ ” (Rom. 10:15, NIV).

REACT

1. How else could you spread the good news of the gospel? Think about outreach programs you could get involved in or acts of service you could do in your community.

2. The heart of evangelism is the speaker’s personal testimony. Think about how you felt when you first learned about Jesus and what He has done in your life since then. Ask God for a chance to share this with someone.

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Ashley Meyer, Altamont, New York, U.S.A.
“Go forth,” “evangelize,” and “witness.” When these words are mentioned, images such as standing on a soapbox and preaching tend to spring forth. Preaching is an important form of evangelism. However, it is not the only way to witness. Just like with a “real” job, there are many areas a person can choose. Through schooling and practical experience, we begin to realize what interests us and in what type of environment we can work. In the same way, we can discover what evangelistic areas match our strengths.

Evangelism is learning how to act in a way that enables you to reach out.

One can witness through singing or leading a Sabbath School group. I am no public speaker; however, I do love to sing. I know that through singing, God uses my talents to show others His goodness. One can also witness through service. Being a part of the community blesses you and those around you as you exhibit God’s love to them through your actions. No matter what you’re doing to witness, keep praying for God to lead you to the path He wants you to follow.

One important thing to discover about evangelism is learning how to act in a way that enables you to reach out, even if it means leaving your comfort zone. We must spread God’s love through the talents He has given us. Evangelism may at first seem tough, but it is very important to persevere, even when it seems difficult. Here are some steps to help you learn how to effectively evangelize:

- **Step One.** Discover the gifts God has given you.
- **Step Two.** Use those gifts to witness for Him.
- **Step Three.** Stay focused on God rather than yourself, for you are nothing without Him.
- **Step Four.** Stay connected to God and pray that He will use you every day.

Remember that even though things might become difficult and you will make mistakes, it is God and His message that are most important. Through Christ, we can reach out to the world and be sure that many will be prepared for the Savior’s soon return.

**REACT**

1. What are the gifts God has given you to witness for Him?
2. Think of a situation in which you believe God effectively used you in being His witness. What can you learn from that situation?

*Jasmine Doram, Roseville, California, U.S.A.*
The book of Acts is a patchwork of stories about evangelism’s pioneers—the first men and women to step out and fill that “heavenly job description” given by Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20). One ingredient holds these stories together. It is a thread that, if removed, would cause the entire “blanket” to unravel. As recipients of Christ’s commission, we must identify this ingredient so we can fulfill our call to be His witnesses.

“God’s Holy Spirit will finish God’s work.”

Jesus told His disciples about this not-so-invisible thread just before He returned to heaven: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV; emphasis added). There they are: two words identifying the power source for everything we do in Christ’s name—Holy Spirit. It is impossible to consider the topics of witnessing and evangelism without first acknowledging where our power comes from. The Holy Spirit is such a vital part of witnessing that Jesus told His disciples to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit before beginning their evangelistic efforts (Acts 1:4). Jesus Himself did not begin His official earthly ministry until after the Holy Spirit descended on Him (Matt. 3:16, 17). We too must receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that Christ can use us to be powerful witnesses for Him.

Dennis Smith points out that for years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been pouring countless amounts of time and money into “plans, programs, and methods to bring Christ to the world.” He writes, “God’s Holy Spirit will finish God’s work—God’s Spirit, speaking and ministering through Spirit-filled men and women.”*

As we study evangelism and witnessing throughout this quarter, let us remember that it is the Holy Spirit who wins souls for Christ. We are merely the vessels who will proclaim the good news of salvation to lost souls. This is our mission, our “job description.” We need only to reach out and claim it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**REACT**

1. Have you been involved in evangelistic “plans, programs, and methods” that were missing the Holy Spirit? How did it make you feel?

2. Why is the Holy Spirit such a crucial part of evangelism and witnessing?

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Jennifer Calhoun, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE

While witnessing for Jesus can be an intentional act, the most effective witnessing comes as a consequence of a relationship with God rather than a previously decided intention to speak for Him. Many Christians, perhaps you included, have felt nervous or afraid when thinking about being a witness. The thought of projecting oneself to others, especially to strangers, may bring up great anxiety, which can lead to avoidance. In truth, the only fear we should entertain is the fear of becoming indifferent to our loving God and His Son. If we go to God at the beginning of every day and engage in our relationship with Him, and if we live in habitual consciousness of His presence and His love, we will see in the events of each day how God is blessing, leading, and saving us. Then because of how we live with God, every day becomes a testimony we can share in our natural interactions with anyone we meet. A few people are born to evangelize in public, but at the end of this life we will see that we have all been evangelists, perhaps without even noticing or ever saying a word.

CONSIDER

- Drawing a map of your influence. Sort names into groups, perhaps in widening circles, using different colors for friends, family members, co-workers, classmates, acquaintances, friends of friends, etc. Besides your memory, refer to social network friend lists (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to find and map the extent of your influence.
- Asking four or five trusted friends to characterize you in terms of spiritual gifts. Perhaps make a fill-in-the-blank list as a prompt for them. Tell them you would like to know what strengths they see in you that you might not be able to see for yourself, so that you can present the best witness possible for Jesus.
- Writing a brief story of what Jesus has done for you. Keep it to two pages, and write down the essence of your personal experience with Him. Store it in a place where you can review and revise it often.
- Creating an iTunes playlist of songs that express who Jesus is and what He has done for the sinful people of earth. Search out the lyrics and choose songs that specifically inspire people with the gospel message of salvation through Christ. Choose a title for the playlist that reflects this good news.

CONNECT

Matthew 5:14–16.  
Counsels for the Church, chap. 7.

Tim Lale, Boise, Idaho, U.S.A.
“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV).
Introducing
Witnessing
Through a Flat Tire

I was driving home from work one day, and as I turned left, I hit a large concrete median, even though I thought I was clear of it. Praying, “Oh no, God! Why me?” I began to drive rather slowly, hoping that my tire was all right. Then a man signaled me to pull over and told me that my tire was indeed flat. Because I was in an area I wasn’t familiar with, I didn’t know where I could find a gas station that could help me. Neither did I have a cell phone. So I just prayed to God and continued to drive carefully. Suddenly, I spotted a gas station only 15 feet away! Praise the Lord!

Suddenly, I spotted a gas station only 15 feet away! Praise the Lord!

The young woman who was working at the counter was friendly, and while I waited for the repairs to be made, we started to carry on a conversation. One question led to another, and soon she learned I was a Christian. Then I was able to share my testimony with her. She said she was seeking for God but didn’t know where to find Him, so I invited her to attend some Bible studies with me. Not only does she come every week to study, but she also has started to attend church every Sabbath. The beautiful thing is that she has now found hope in being transformed through Christ. It’s through our testimonies that we are able to share with people around us that we once were broken but were healed by Jesus Christ.

The world needs to know of Jesus now more than ever. There is a lot of despair in so many lives, and many of these people are going to all the wrong places to find peace. We need to steer them toward the Prince of Peace who can give them ultimate peace.

This week we will explore the concept of “every member ministry” and how we can reach out to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people as God has commanded us to do, using the gifts with which He has blessed us.

Cindy DeJesus, Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A.
At the heart of Christianity and the message we are to share is the belief that God poured out His unlimited love for all humanity through Jesus’ death. However, this message is so pervasive in Scripture that we sometimes take for granted the etymology behind recurring phrases referring to Jesus’ death. Yet these phrases tell us the story of how the first Christians took it upon themselves to disseminate the “good news.”

**Sin holds us in bondage. But Jesus’ death paid to set us free.**

When we read of Jesus’ death, we find that Jesus was referred to as God’s “servant” (Acts 3:13, NKJV). This word resonates with the Hebrew prophecy of the sin-bearing servant (Isa. 53:11). Furthermore, John the apostle, by speaking of Jesus as the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29), brings to mind the sacrificial lambs of the sanctuary service that symbolized the Savior’s atonement for sins. Indeed, Jesus was truly the suffering Servant, pierced for our offenses.

However, as Christianity spread beyond Israel and Palestine, the Gentiles did not understand these distinct Hebrew symbols regarding Christ’s work on the cross. Nevertheless, because Jesus “opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27, NKJV) and because He “died for all” (2 Cor. 5:15), it was imperative that the Gentiles understand what God had done for them through Jesus.

Thus, the inspired authors of Scripture began to use words referring to Jesus’ death that a Gentile audience would understand. The word *ransom* (Mark 10:45) is an example. Within the Ancient Greco-Roman world, the word *ransom* referred to the price paid for the release of a slave from bondage.* Sin holds us in bondage. But Jesus’ death paid to set us free. In our everyday attempts to share God’s Word, we must remember that Jesus died for all of humanity and that there will never be an obstacle too great for the Holy Spirit to help us in our role.

**REACT**

1. What are some of the barriers you encounter as you witness to people in your culture?
2. What words or objects in your culture would help people to understand what Christ has done for them?

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*Easton’s Bible Dictionary. s.v. “Ransom.”

Guillermo Ronquillo, Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A.
人民在等待！（约翰4:35）

约翰将人比作庄稼。他在这一节中最生动地说：
“你们不是说‘田里还有四个月的庄稼吗’吗？我告诉你们，睁开你们的眼，看看田地！它们已经熟透，该收割了”（约翰4:35，NIV）。我常常听到人们哀叹人类是一个失去的事业，作为超越回归上帝的点。然而在这一节中，耶稣告诉我们相反。无论我们是否睁开眼睛，有许多人渴望和饥饿得到话语，他们愿意学习它。然而，由于某种原因，我们大多看到忽视上帝的人，对耶稣的教导怀有轻视。而且最糟糕的是，我们怪罪他们社会的恶行。

使徒（哥林多后书5:15–20）

哥林多后书5:15–20描述了转变的状态；在基督中，我们是新的，已经把自己置于死地。它也使用了有趣的术语“使徒”。在第20节中，他说“因此，我们是基督的使徒，就像上帝通过我们发出呼吁”（NASB）。《大不列颠百科全书》将“大使”一词定义为“授权的代表或使者”。基督授权我们成为他的使者。这难道不使我们更加意识到别人如何看待我们的言论和行为吗？称自己为“基督徒”等同于成为大使。

这一点不能过分强调。如果我们称自己为基督徒，如果我们称自己为基督，我们就会为他人的得救工作。这不意味着我们都必须成为牧师或宗派员工。这意味着无论在学校、在工作，甚至在公共汽车上，我们都可以通过言论、行为，甚至举止成为基督的使徒。

生命或没有生命（约翰5:12）

不幸的是，我们在一个时代，当被告知一种生活方式和另一种生活方式一样好（只要你不伤害别人），以及一套信仰和另一套信仰一样好。我们不要评判。《约翰4:35–41；哥林多后书5:15–20；以弗所书4:11, 12；帖撒罗尼迦前书1:5–8》

《收割者和丰收》

2 + 2 = ？

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people’s hearts or motives, as Christians we are to have a specific, black-and-white view of the world. Think about the words of John: “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:12, NASB). John’s words are so profound. They don’t leave us a middle ground or a gray zone. It is Jesus and life, or no Jesus and death.

If you had friends and those friends were doing something you knew would hurt, or even kill them, what would you do? Be silent? Not judge them? Let them do whatever they wanted without at least attempting to show them the danger of their actions? What kind of friend would you be if you remained silent?

**Bigots or Life Savers (Acts 4:9–12)**

In a sense, that is our situation as Christians. By merely taking the name “Christian,” we assume certain basic beliefs, and among them is the belief that salvation is found only in Jesus. However narrow or bigoted that might sound to many ears, that is the truth. We have to believe it, because it is in the Bible: “If we this day are judged for a good deed done to the helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:9–12, NKJV).

Look at it this way. How many right answers are there to the equation $2 + 2 = ?$ Just one. How many wrong answers are there? Literally, an infinite number. This is something that all who profess the name of Jesus, who are called to be ambassadors for Him, should seriously think about.

**REACT**

1. How much responsibility should you feel to witness to those who don’t know the Lord?
2. The Bible says, “‘From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked’ ” (Luke 12:48, NIV). Think about how much we have been given in Jesus. What should that tell us about how much is expected from us?
3. While we should do what we can to reach others, why is it important to remember that ultimately it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring people to repentance and conversion?

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Hannah Goldstein, Sykesville, Maryland, U.S.A.
God has given all unique and different talents not to be used for just your personal gain but also to be utilized for His honor and glory.

“There are many kinds of work to be done by laborers with varied gifts. Some are to labor in one way, some in another. The Lord desires that the cities shall be worked by the united efforts of laborers of different capabilities. All are to look to Jesus for direction, not depending on man for wisdom, lest they be led astray. As laborers together with God they should seek to be in harmony with one another. There should be frequent councils and earnest, wholehearted co-operation. Yet all are to look to Jesus for wisdom, not depending upon men alone for direction.”

As we work in the Father’s vineyard, we must remember that the talents and gifts can only take us so far. Furthermore, if we do not always remember that our talents and gifts come from God, we run the risk of doing more harm than good.

“The Lord desires his people to arise and do their appointed work. The responsibility of warning the world rests not upon the ministry alone. The lay members of the church are to share in the work of soul-saving. By means of missionary visits and by a wise distribution of our literature, many who have never been warned, may be reached. Let companies be organized to search for souls. Let the church-members visit their neighbors and open to them the Scriptures. Some may be set to work in the hedges, and thus, by wise planning, the truth may be preached in all districts. With perseverance in this work, increasing aptitude for it will come, and many will see fruit of their labors in the salvation of souls. These converted ones will, in turn, teach others. Thus the seed will be sown in many places, and the truth be proclaimed to all.”

**REACT**

1. We know from Scripture that our talents/gifts are to be used to spread the gospel. What can you do to make sure you are doing what needs to be done in these last days?

2. Do you have any talents/gifts that you’re not using at the moment? If so, why not place them in God’s hands now and prepare to go where He calls you?

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The human body is fascinating partly because all of its many systems working together. When one system becomes dysfunctional, other systems can be affected, and we feel quite out of sync. In the same way, the body of Christ—the church—cannot function without the help of all its members. How does God’s body maintain proper function?

**God has promised to be with us every step of the way.**

*Each member is to use the talents he or she has received from God.* As members of the body of Christ, we are to work together to show those in darkness the light—Jesus Christ. God has given each of His children talents that are meant to edify the lives of church members and the lives of people who have yet to join the fold. Some have been granted the gift of preaching, singing, praying, and healing, but these are all gifts God asks us to use in His name so that He might be glorified. How are we to use these gifts so that the church can properly present God’s true image to the world?

*We are to act by faith.* God has promised to be with us every step of the way. But in order for Him to be with us, we must have faith. The Samaritan woman believed, and through her testimony and faith, many others believed. The Samaritans had no doubts because they had seen Christ’s power and His love for humanity (John 4:39–42). We must let God into our hearts so we can witness for ourselves the miracles He can perform in our own lives. Then we can share our experience with others just as the Samaritan woman did.

*We are to be examples of His love.* In order for us to share God’s Word, we must first be an example to the world. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are to live our lives according to God’s principles of love as found in the Ten Commandments (Matt. 22:34–40). People who have not given their lives to God are watching those who say they have. That is why God must reside in our hearts. There He can blossom in our daily lives so that others can see Him in us, thereby making us examples of His love.

**REACT**

1. In what ways can you develop the talents God has given you?
2. We live in a society that has slowly forgotten God’s true nature. How can you teach your friends about God and His love?

Jenny Cruz, Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A.
Have you ever felt pressured to be part of an outreach program? Perhaps it was pressure from others, or perhaps you put pressure on yourself. Did it cause you to question why you weren’t as excited about outreach as others?

It’s not we who create the desire to reach out to others; it is God.

A few years ago I decided to try something that was out of my comfort zone—community outreach. We planned to drive to a neighborhood, break up into pairs, and go to each house to ask if there was anything we could do to help—no strings attached. Even though I thought the idea was great, I felt that I wasn’t as interested or excited as some of the others. I wondered if I would have been more enthusiastic about doing outreach had I tried a different type of outreach.

It wasn’t long after this experience that I realized I shouldn’t do outreach because I think that’s what a Christian should do; I should do outreach because of a genuine desire to demonstrate Christ’s love to others. But how and when will that desire develop within us? The latter half of 2 Corinthians 5:20 has the answer to that question: “We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (NIV). This sounds simple, doesn’t it? When we’re reconciled to God, we’re making a purposeful commitment to have a personal relationship with Him, and He will initiate subtle changes within us that will transform us into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). I believe this new creation includes new interests, desires, view points, and, most importantly, a new heart. Therefore, it’s not we who create the desire to reach out to others; it is God. But here’s the catch. He won’t forcefully transform us into a new creation. He will only begin the work when we allow Him to.

So don’t fret if your desire to be part of outreach and evangelism doesn’t seem as strong as others. Rather, ask the Lord to place that desire within you. In God’s own mysterious way, and in His own time, He can and will place within each of our hearts the desire to go out and reap the harvest of souls that Christ has sown for us.

REACT
1. What hinders you from wanting to do outreach and evangelize?
2. Come up with ways you can do outreach in your daily life.
3. Ask the Lord to place a desire within your heart to be used by Him.

Christina Zaiback, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE

Sin holds us in bondage, but Jesus paid to set us free. In turn, we are to help free others. This means we are ambassadors for Christ, looking to Him for direction. We are to use the talents and spiritual gifts He has given us. Each of us has a unique task. If all of us became involved, more people would be reached, who, in turn, will reach even more people. You must have faith in order to work with Christ. Let Him place in you the desire to witness to others about His love. Let Him guide you to where you should go, what you should do, and what you should say.

CONSIDER

• Compiling demographic data about the area around your church and your church members’ homes. Notice where the data intersects to help your congregation prepare outreach material.
• Telling a friend about your relationship with Christ, expressing what it means to you to be a Christian.
• Joining a discipleship group in your church. If you feel that you know all the group members, bring a friend with you who wants to learn more. Or study how to give Bible studies so you can share Christ more effectively with your friends.
• Fixing food from a different culture and have a meal to which you invite non-Christian friends or neighbors. Invite someone from that culture to talk about the needs in their country, and have those you’ve invited sponsor the meal to assist ADRA projects in that country.
• Praying for a week about what God wants you to do to serve Him in outreach. Keep a record of how God answers your prayers. Then follow what the Holy Spirit calls you to do.
• Rehearsing music with your pastor/worship leaders and other young adults in your church to be used for some of your church’s outreach programs. Dedicate your music to Jesus through prayer.

CONNECT

Matt. 18:19, 20; John 14:12–14; Rom. 6:16–18, 22, 23.

Evangelism.


Karin Wieczorek, Melbourne, Australia
Spiritual Gifts for Evangelism and Witnessing

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11, 12, NKJV).

lesson three
APRIL 14–20
“Can I help you?” The petite blond woman opened the door a crack. The way she studied us made me wonder if she was planning to whip out a magnifying glass. “Are you the exterminators?”

Knocking on doors made me extremely nervous.

“Well, we’re from the church down the street and we—”
“No,” the woman cut in, “I have a hired man coming. You’re not him.”
“We have—”
“Sorry, I don’t have time.” The woman shut the door abruptly.

*Sigh.* This was harder than I had expected. I glanced at Alicia, who rolled her eyes. Our youth group had sent teams to pass out flyers concerning the upcoming evangelistic series at our church, and so far, Alicia and I had successfully handed out zero. The youth leader had made it sound so simple. She even suggested we pray with the people with whom we came in contact. But no one kept his or her door open long enough to reach that step!

At the end of that day, Alicia and I had “won” no souls. And worse yet for my pride, many pairs from our youth group had passed out all their flyers and even came back for second and third supplies. Don’t misunderstand me; I was glad they were spreading the word. But what was wrong with me? Knocking on doors made me extremely nervous. I felt like I had giraffe legs that quaked under my weight when I tried to stand. Words failed me. *Why* should these people come to our meetings? My mouth went dry when I tried to explain. The terror of strangers scrutinizing me was enough to make me crawl into my turtle shell.

As I glanced at the flyer, ideas for a different design popped into my mind like cartoon thought bubbles. A punchier headline came to me like manna from heaven. I could re-create the flyers and make them easier to relate to—more powerful. That was doing my part, right?

Though evangelism is a spiritual gift, we shouldn’t leave evangelizing to those who preach or teach. Each individual was created with his or her own set of talents to be used by God. Winning souls for Christ is not limited to preaching an evangelistic series and knocking on doors. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit uses any person with any set of skills to fulfill the work Christ calls us to. Ask God to start using you today by exterminating your doubts and magnifying your talents for Him.

Addison Hudgins, Jessup, Maryland, U.S.A.
The Gift of the Spirit (John 14:16, 17)

Everyone loves receiving a gift. Usually a gift is a surprise; and because it is a gift, you do not have to pay for it. A gift affirms and strengthens the relationship with the giver. It usually brings joy to the receiver.

Jesus promised to ask the Father to give the Holy Spirit to His disciples. He calls the Holy Spirit “another Comforter.” While the word comforter may contain the idea of consoling a person over a loss, it has a much deeper meaning. The root of the English word for comfort is the same as the root for fortitude or fortress. In Greek, the word contains the ideas of one who “strengthens,” “empowers,” and “defends.”

A Christian without the gift(s) of the Spirit is like a zebra without stripes.

Jesus says that the Father will send another Comforter. Jesus was the original Comforter, defending, strengthening, and empowering His disciples. As He prepared to leave them, He asked His Father to send someone just like Himself to continue doing for them what He had done. The Comforter or Counselor is called “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17). He will teach Jesus’ disciples all things (John 14:26), bring conviction (John 16:7–11), and glorify Jesus (John 16:14). When the gift of the Spirit appears in a believer’s life, the event will be marked by a profound understanding of Jesus, His mission, and His teachings. The truths He taught (and continues to teach) will encourage, empower, and protect those who receive the gift and those who share it.

To Everyone (Acts 2:38, 39)

Pentecost was the first general outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Men and women received the Spirit as evidence that Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33). It was not just those in the upper room who were to receive the Spirit. According to Peter, the Spirit is for “you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39, NIV; emphasis added).

Could it be that a Christian without the gift(s) of the Spirit is like a zebra without stripes? In other words, just as a stripeless zebra would be difficult to distinguish from a common horse, a Christian without any of the gifts of the Spirit is a little different from someone who isn’t a Christian.
The distinctiveness of Spirit-gifted Christians was evident in the Pentecostal community, which was marked by God’s miraculous presence, incredible generosity, complete unity, and exponential numerical growth (Acts 2:41–47).

**No Gift Comes Alone (1 Corinthians 12)**

There are four New Testament discussions of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12; Rom. 12:2–8; Eph. 4:7–13; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11). All of these passages emphasize that each one of us has a gift. Paul talks about these gifts as charismata. This word comes from the Greek word for “grace” but has the added meaning of being a gift. It could easily be translated as “grace gifts.” Paul suggests that just as salvation is a gift of God’s grace (Eph. 2:8, 9), so ministry within and without the Christian community is a gift of God’s grace. Instead of cooking up a plan for nurture or outreach and then asking God to bless it, this view of ministry says that God is the Initiator, and each of us is the responder. After all, God is already at work around us, and He invites us to join Him in His work. Just as our part in salvation is simply to respond to God’s gift, so our part in ministry is simply to respond to God’s invitation to join Him in His work.

If every believer has the gift of the Spirit and gifts from the Spirit, how are these gifted believers to relate to each other? The example of the post-Pentecostal church gives a hint. Harmony is the ideal. The reality, though, is often quite different. At Corinth, it was the issue of spiritual gifts that brought discord. In response, Paul suggests that the church is like a human body. Every part of the body needs every other part of the body. Every part has its role to play, and every body has both unity and diversity. It is the Spirit that provides the unity because it is the Spirit “distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Cor. 12:11, NKJV).

**No Excuses (Rom. 12:6–8)**

Discovering your spiritual gift was a popular activity some years ago, but it often brought frustration. There did not seem to be a match between the lists in Paul’s writings and what people saw in their own lives. Often a discussion of spiritual gifts left the impression that if you were not gifted in a particular area, you did not need to get involved. Instead of inspiring people to ministry, an emphasis on spiritual gifts often gave people an excuse for not being involved.

Each list of gifts is different; and there may well be gifts of the Spirit not listed. So instead of trying to “discover” your gift, it would be better to have faith that God has given you a gift and then get involved in ministry. Instead of inspiring people to ministry, an emphasis on spiritual gifts often gave people an excuse for not being involved.

Edward Allen, Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A.
“The present is our day of trust. To every person is committed some peculiar gift or talent which is to be used to advance the Redeemer’s kingdom. . . . God’s providence proportions His trusts according to the varied capabilities of the people.”

“All these gifts are to be converted to God.”

“One worker may be a ready speaker; another a ready writer; another may have the gift of sincere, earnest, fervent prayer; another the gift of singing; another may have special power to explain the Word of God with clearness. And each gift is to become a power for God, because He works with the laborer. To one God gives the word of wisdom, to another knowledge, to another faith; but all are to work under the same Head. The diversity of gifts leads to a diversity of operations.”

“The knowledge of God’s grace, the truths of His Word, and temporal gifts as well—time and means, talents and influence—are all a trust from God to be employed to His glory and the salvation of men. Nothing can be more offensive to God, who is constantly bestowing His gifts upon man, than to see him selfishly grasping these gifts and making no returns to the Giver.”

“All these gifts are to be converted to God. The Lord stands in need of them, He calls for them. All are to act a part in preparing their own souls and the souls of others to rededicate their talents to God. Every soul, every gift, is to be laid under contribution to God. All are to cooperate with God in the work of saving souls.”

“Different gifts are imparted to different ones, that the workers may feel their need of one another. God bestows these gifts, and they are employed in His service, not to glorify the possessor, not to uplift man, but to uplift the world’s Redeemer. They are to be used for the good of all mankind.”

“How will you bless someone with your spiritual gifts today?

1. Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 618.
2. Evangelism, p. 99.
4. That I May Know Him, p. 327.

Joyelle Worley, Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A.
In many legal systems, witnesses are limited to those who have firsthand knowledge of the issue under investigation. I wonder if the church could learn something from the courts that might help us to be more efficient and effective in our calling?

The continuation of “witnessing” includes discipleship and caring for each other.

Tracking the process of becoming a “witness” in the New Testament seems to reveal clear evidence of a process. Jesus, as He was ending His earthly ministry, reminded His disciples that it was imperative for Him to leave so that the Holy Spirit could come, guide them into all truth, and glorify Him (John 16:13, 14). We have been called to be witnesses (Acts 1:8), but only after the Holy Spirit has come upon us! Pentecost proved this process true. They were “filled,” they “witnessed,” and God’s work “prospered.” So apparently “witnessing” is related to experiencing the Holy Spirit.

The result of the Holy Spirit at the Pentecost experience was a discipleship community—the early church (Acts 2:40–47). The excitement of Pentecost translated to the discipline of process. It included being teachable, fellowshipping, praying, being unified, and even communal living for the sake of anyone who had a need (verse 45). And it worked, because their numbers grew (verse 47)! The Pentecost experience gives evidence of preaching. The early church experience gives evidence that the continuation of “witnessing” includes discipleship and caring for each other.

As the church grew, the branch in Antioch sent out Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2–5). This suggests that the third stage of witnessing includes going out to others after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of the fellowship of believers.

Peter reinforces the concept of individuality in witnessing as does Paul (1 Corinthians 12; 1 Pet. 4:10). They admonish us to use whatever gift we receive to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace and love in its various forms.

Many court systems use witnesses to achieve their goal of knowing the truth. God’s system of witnessing is about using a multitude of witnesses from a variety of perspectives: experiencing and growing in the Holy Spirit, understanding the unique role of each of His witnesses, accumulating enough evidence to establish the validity of Jesus’ love, forgiveness, grace, and goodness. The Holy Spirit will take care of convicting and converting. His witnesses provide the evidence upon which “pre-believers” can base their faith.
Likely you’ve been in a clothing store, browsing, not looking for anything in particular—wishing that a certain salesperson would just leave you alone. Why? Too pushy. She or he is obviously on commission.

**Let our motto be “Dialogue With the World.”**

Now you know how people feel when Christians mistake Jesus’ great commission for a bottom line to “win” (Matt. 28:18–20). Whenever people think they’re part of an agenda, they feel manipulated. Wary. Angry. Here’s how to avoid witnessing weirdness:

*Don’t try to convert anybody.* Spiritual conversion is the Holy Spirit’s job, not yours. Your job is simply to love genuinely. You do this by sharing real freedom, integrity, and hope with people—even if they don’t eventually get wet.

*Listen. Don’t talk so much.* “Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19, NIV). Instead of “Tell the World,” let our motto be “Dialogue With the World.” No one likes a one-sided conversation.

*Don’t think of people as “decisions.”* People are children of God. Whenever we aim for decisions, we get into trouble. Ask yourself, “Am I willing to be this person’s lifetime friend?” No drop and run. But rather invest.

*Don’t miss the joy.* If you aim at sharing joy, the weirdness evaporates. Without Jesus, no one will be saved. Without joy, no one will be attracted to Jesus. So enjoy each encounter.

In conclusion, while you are most definitely needed in the sharing church, you are definitely not required to share Jesus in any formulaic fashion. Be yourself. A spiritual gift is any talent dedicated to God. You may possess the spiritual gift of automobile mechanics or graphic design. What are your dedicated talents?

Of course, some basic requirements do exist. “What does the Lord require of you? / To act justly and to love mercy / and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8, NIV).

There is no better witness than that.

**REACT**

Why do we get manipulative and weird when we’re sharing Jesus—who is the antithesis of manipulation and weirdness?
I was afraid to go to my friend’s wedding. I knew her church family was conservative, and I feared what they would think and say of me.

I had my ears pierced, and I wore lots of other jewelry. I loved God, but I didn’t know whether that would be enough for them. I imagined a trip filled with clipped arguments and defensive tactics.

But I was wrong. The church members accepted me without a glance at my earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. They didn’t try to smother me with their beliefs. They loved me.

After Paul lists the spiritual gifts and discusses their functions in 1 Corinthians 12:1–30, he tells us that next he will show us “the most excellent way” (verse 31, NIV). That way is love. See 1 Corinthians 13, especially verse 13. The spiritual gifts are necessary, but without love, they are nothing. Paul compares the spiritual gifts without love to a “resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (verse 1, NIV). Love is not just another spiritual gift—it is the foundation for all the gifts. In fact, love is the foundation for our Christian experience.

A lot of witnessing focuses on “saving” people, helping them to “mend their ways,” and teaching them doctrine. It seems to me that if we placed more emphasis on love rather than on changing someone’s actions, we’d reach a lot more people. After all, God is the one who’s supposed to make us better. Trying to reach His ideal by ourselves isn’t going to do much.

People don’t respond well to judgmental attitudes. If your gift is evangelism, it is important to ask God for love. These days, Christians have a bad reputation for hatred and judgment, which stands in stark contrast to God’s emphasis on love and mercy. We have to try even harder, then, to break down the barriers created by hypocrisy in order to reach people with love.

If we do focus on doctrine, the most important idea to get across is how God’s love is shown in each doctrine. God has always loved us. He saved us even when we were “in sin.” And He still loves us even when we sin and desire to return to Him.

**REACT**

1. What about my life is getting in the way of reaching out to people?
2. Why is love so important in my walk with God? In my relationships?
CONCLUDE
Perhaps there is no greater gift than the gift of love. A love that requires no conditions in order to be sustained. A love that does not admonish but encourages. A love that is exemplified on the cross. From this ultimate demonstration of love all things emanate. The Bible takes us through all the gifts that were given to humans. We base our church life, our vision, and our mission on our ability to use these gifts for God’s glory. We emphasize evangelism and the plethora of ways in which a soul may be reached. We produce and distribute innumerable pieces of literature in order to manifest God’s gifts. However, in the end, we cannot give what we do not have. If we understand the evangelism for what it is—a calling that offers no worldly glory or fame—and we still commit to it, we are confronted with the inability to turn back. Not because there is no choice and therefore it is not possible, but because Jesus’ love is the grandest gift of all.

CONSIDER
• Organizing a food drive to replenish your community’s food bank. With your offerings include one box of Christian literature for all age levels.
• Writing a letter to your local newspaper, bringing attention to the plight of the homeless or poor in your community. Base your letter on valid statistics.
• Encouraging your family or friends to participate in the washing of feet with you at your residence. Discuss how such a service can turn our thoughts toward serving others.
• Teaching your Sabbath School class. How is doing so a gift of life?
• Keeping a daily log of things for which you are thankful. Incorporate your gratitude into your prayers. How does gratitude enrich our lives?
• Creating a Bible study PowerPoint with your own pictures and sharing it with friends.
• Posting your friends’ talents on Facebook each day of the week and start a conversation about God’s purpose for each person’s gifts.
• Approaching your pastor and church board with ideas to reach others. Ask them if you can share these ideas with the church as a whole.

CONNECT
Rom. 12:2–8; 1 Corinthians 12; Eph. 4:7–13; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11.
The Desire of Ages, chap. 47; Christ’s Object Lessons, chap. 25.

Fabian Carballo, Grand Terrace, California, U.S.A.
Evangelism and Witnessing as a Lifestyle

“At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did” (Acts 9:36, NKJV).
I am quite shy. When in a room full of people, particularly ones I don’t know well, I prefer to just sit, watch, and listen to what is happening. While I will carry on a conversation with someone who approaches me, I am not likely to start up a conversation with anyone else. For someone like me, it can be a challenge to verbally share my faith one on one with people I don’t know. In fact, the thought of going up to someone I don’t know and sharing God with them scares me to death!

But God doesn’t ask me for excuses. He has called each and every one of us to share the good news about Him with the world, whether we are shy or not. The world consists of our friends and family, our co-workers and neighbors, or anyone else God puts in our path. And while He may not have given everyone the gift of being able to go right up to someone and start talking to them about God, there is one thing all of us can do—witness with our lives.

I work in the physics department of a state university. While there are a few Christians who work in the department, it is quite a secular environment. Most of my colleagues are agnostics or atheists. They know I am a Christian, and they observe what I do and hear what I say. They notice that I don’t eat the same things they eat, drink the same things they drink, or use the same type of language they speak. I realize that my biggest witness to them is my lifestyle and how I treat others. Once in a while, someone will ask me why I do or don’t do certain things, and that opens the door for me to share with them what I believe and why.

Yes, our lifestyle is a powerful witness and can lead to opportunities to share our faith with people who might not otherwise respond positively to more direct evangelism. As you study this week’s lesson, think about who might be watching and how you might gain an opportunity to talk to someone about Jesus because of how you live.

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**Let Your Light Shine**

Matt. 5:16

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Yes, our lifestyle is a powerful witness and can lead to opportunities to share our faith with people who might not otherwise respond positively to more direct evangelism. As you study this week’s lesson, think about who might be watching and how you might gain an opportunity to talk to someone about Jesus because of how you live.
Evangelism refers to preaching the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus and winning people to Him. Witnessing involves providing a firsthand account of what Christ has done in our lives. It is letting other people know what we have seen, heard, and experienced in our union with the Savior. One’s lifestyle involves everything a person says or does. It includes the public and private aspects of life that sum up a person’s being. One’s lifestyle—a person’s habits, general behaviors, and treatment of others, is based on that person’s values. Evangelism and witnessing become major parts of my lifestyle when my values are based on Christ’s teachings. Consequently, whatever I say or do not say, whatever I do or do not do, will clearly reveal God’s love for me, my love for Him, and my love for my fellow humans.

Authentication rules out hypocrisy and insincerity.

Evangelism and witnessing as a lifestyle is characterized by complete surrender to Christ, consistency, and authenticity. Nothing can be ignored. A simple careless word, a seemingly harmless omission, a minute of unbelief may lead a soul to doom. Consistency underlines the importance of continuity, endurance, and predictability. A Christian’s love for the sinner and efforts to lead the sinner to God need to be unconditional and endless. Authenticity rules out hypocrisy and insincerity. Evangelism and witnessing must involve a truthful outflow of God’s saving grace and love from the transformed life of the Christian.

In 2 Corinthians 5:15–20, our new birth in Christ is depicted as the foundation of evangelism and lifestyle witnessing. Having experienced the transforming power of Jesus Christ and becoming God’s friends, Christians are given the privilege of helping to reconcile other human beings to God, thus helping them to be friends with Him. This type of witnessing is letting Christ work through every detail of their life, consequently inviting other people to also become a friend of God.

**REACT**

1. To what extent is one’s lifestyle a means of winning souls?
2. What aspects of your lifestyle might turn people away from God? What can you do about that aspect?
“In the Way” or In “The Way”? (Mark 5:1–19)

The people who met Jesus when He landed on the eastern shore of Galilee were from strikingly different lifestyles. The uncontrollable demoniac was terrorizing the countryside, a constant threat to himself and to others. The men tending the livestock were calmly making a positive impact by earning a living. Yet all were possessed, one overtly, the others covertly. While even the devils in the demoniac recognized who Jesus was, the men tending the livestock and the villagers who came to see Him ignored the testimony before them and asked the Savior to leave. His presence meant nothing more to them than a loss of profits.

As Jesus departed, two types of witnesses remained to influence the people of Decapolis. Both spoke of the impact Jesus had on their lives. Both contributed to the eternal outcome of others. Only the one who totally surrendered to Jesus could help others experience the awesome, saving love of God.

Get In, Get Out, Get All About (Matt. 9:36–38)

Only one was sent to prepare the way for the Savior (Matthew 3). Within a couple of years, twelve others were ordained to help share His message. A little more than a year later, just prior to the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the need was so great that an additional seventy were commissioned as missionaries to witness to the areas He would soon visit (see Luke 10:1–16).

As our Lord’s second coming comes ever closer, our world continues to grow, Satan’s deceptions become harder to recognize and more difficult to resist, and people become more desperate for a better tomorrow. God needs more witnesses now than ever before, believers whose lives are consistent, positive influences. We need to get in sync with God, get out of our cocoons, and get about the work of sharing our life-changing Savior with those whose paths intersect with ours.

It’s Not “All You” (John 17:11–19)

Jesus knew the difficulties that would face His disciples as they remained behind to witness for Him. Just as He had constantly relied on His Father’s strength, He knew the disciples would need the same sustaining power to remain faithful.

Jesus asks each of us to work for Him in some way.
and the more Satan will strive to control us. No matter how hard we try, we just don’t have the power within ourselves to win that battle. Only by relinquishing our own feeble power to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our lives can we remain in the world without being overwhelmed by it.

**Adaptation ≠ Compromise (1 Cor. 9:20–23)**

People who serve as missionaries to other countries adapt their way of life so others will be more likely to listen to the gospel. They learn a new language, change their social interactions, modify their attire, and accept different living conditions. But the Gospel Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20) is not just for missionaries to foreign lands.

What about your nation, your neighborhood? All around us are people just as “foreign” to us as those in faraway places. Using “all possible means” (1 Cor. 9:22, NIV), we need to meet them where they are, then show them where Christ is.

Few young adults will be reached by holding Revelation seminars in affluent neighborhoods. The homebound or bedridden are not likely to attend “church in the park.” We can’t share Jesus’ love with the homeless via the Hope Channel. Hanging out and visiting after serving a meal at the local soup kitchen probably won’t put you in contact with those who rarely venture outside the comfort and security of their upper-middle-class world. And ministering to those who are currently ignoring the truth they once fully embraced is especially challenging.

As we explore how to witness to anyone and everyone, anywhere and everywhere, we must always protect the integrity of the gospel. Any compromise of God’s truth changes our witness—from for Him to against Him.

**It’s Obvious to Everyone (2 Cor. 3:2, 3)**

You don’t need to announce to the world that you’re a Christian. Those around you can tell who you are by the way you act as much as by what you say. “The world has need of more legible Christians. The language of a Christlike life is intended for all mankind. Only thus can men comprehend what Christianity means, understand its great truths, and learn to love and obey God’s law. . . .

“Each believer and each church should be a letter from Christ to the world. The author of the letter is Christ. The material on which the writing is done is the heart of each believer, and that which is written is the law of God, and a transcript of His character.”*

**REACT**

1. If “actions speak louder than words,” can a faithful witness remain forever silent? Explain your answer.
2. Is it possible to “take a break” from witnessing without totally isolating oneself?
3. Which is more damaging to the cause of Christ: negative words or negative actions? Why?

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*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, pp. 843, 844.

Dallas Estey, Firestone, Colorado, U.S.A.
Before the Internet, e-mail, mobile phones, and Facebook, people communicated by hand-writing letters and sending them to the intended recipients through the post office. It took roughly a week to receive such a letter or sometimes even longer. Lost letters were common. But technology has completely changed the way we communicate. One thing, however, still persists—we write and read letters in whichever form they come.

“Personal influence is a power.”

Like letters opened for the scrutiny of their intended readers, the lives of professing Christians are subject to scrutiny by the world. Our lives must be like salt that preserves. “Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate, infuse it, that it may be preserved. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved as masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. It is to work with the influence of Christ, to lift where Christ lifts, to impart correct principles, and to stay the progress of the world’s corruption. It is to diffuse that grace which Christ alone can impart. It is to uplift, to sweeten the lives and characters of others by the power of a pure example united with earnest faith and love.”

The presence of God in a person instills the godly character that changes the world (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 4:13). “The great lesson to be given to the youth is that, as worshipers of God, they are to cherish Bible principles, and hold the world as subordinate. God would have all instructed as to how they can work the works of Christ, and enter in through the gates into the heavenly city. We are not to let the world convert us; we are to strive most earnestly to convert the world. Christ has made it our privilege and duty to stand up for him under all circumstances.”

**REACT**

1. What made Christ’s presence so powerful, thus touching and transforming so many lives?
   2. How can we influence others in ways that will draw them to Christ?

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*Jared Bosire, Mombasa, Kenya*
When the Swiss lawyer Albin Schram died in 2005, he left behind a collection of letters written by some of the greatest minds of modern civilization. One of these letters was from Albert Einstein to his childhood friend, Paul Habicht, who was in poor health. The letter is dated July 5, 1935. It begins with these words: “I heard recently that the Devil—the only one who is never without work these days—has had his claws firmly in you.”

These solemn words apply to all the human race. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, everyone from henceforth was sold into sin. But there is good news in the greatest letter ever, the Bible. He is trying to reach the world with this good news through letters that can be read by all. Whereas human languages have limitations, God’s language of love can be understood by all. It is God’s desire that His people be living letters, communicating His love. Why are such letters such effective witnesses? The answer is that the change in you that occurs when you accept Christ is “written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God . . . on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:3, NIV). The bigger question is, How do you become an effective letter for witnessing?

You must stay connected to the Word (John 15:4, 5). Without being grafted to Christ, there can be no growth and, therefore, no witnessing.

Your lifestyle must reflect Christ (Phil. 2:5). You can only reflect Christ if you adopt His mindset. The people who are “reading you” will be attracted to Him if they see Him in your life.

You must stay relevant (1 Cor. 9:19, 20). The apostle Paul became like a Jew when among the Jews and like a Gentile when among Gentiles just so he could win many to Christ. However, we must not confuse staying relevant with compromise.

**REACT**

1. Why did God choose to use humans instead of angels for evangelism and witnessing?

2. How can you show relevance in your Christian walk without compromising your faith?

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I’m going to be late, the man thought as he hurried down the dirt road, his robes flaring out behind him. What with the unexpected cattle crossing and the bumbling, blind beggar accosting him for money, his trip had been unusually slow going. Oh, and that widow selling her worthless wares in front of his home had held him up too. Didn’t she realize this was the Sabbath? She needs to get a real job, he thought irritably. With all these inconveniences, it was really hard to maintain his spiritual mood. And he had to preach this morning! To help brighten his mood, he started to pray loudly. Of course, he hoped this would enlighten anyone who might happen to hear him as he walked by.

He crossed the road to avoid any possible further contact with the wretch.

Halfway to the synagogue, he saw something in the road ahead. What is that? he thought. It was a man, bruised and beaten, moaning softly. This was a section of road where thieves frequently hid, ambushing travelers, stealing their possessions, and often leaving them for dead.

The priest looked about carefully, clutching his robes tightly around him. This man must have been careless in some way—flashing his goods, not keeping a good eye on his surroundings. How else would he have ended up in a situation like this? So he crossed the road to avoid any possible further contact with the wretch. He arrived at church just in time for the opening hymn.

The music swelled to a crescendo as he stepped to the pulpit. “Happy Sabbath!” He spoke in a great voice filled with authority and ease. “Welcome to the house of the Lord. I apologize for my lateness. I ran into a little trouble on the road this morning. But it was nothing, really. Let us begin our discussion on the importance of witnessing.”

REACT
1. Can you remember a time when your witness was less than optimal?
2. How could you have done things differently?
3. If you’re not witnessing for God, for whom are you witnessing?
CONCLUDE

Our daily lives provide opportunities for the Holy Spirit to reach out to others through us. A life transformed by surrender to Christ has many qualities that naturally attract people's attention. When we allow God to change and rebuild us, we experience the Good News for ourselves. Then we have something worth sharing. He helps us communicate the gospel in the ways that can be best understood by the people around us.

CONSIDER

- Writing the following quotation on note cards and place them where you'll see them throughout the week: “The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian” (Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, p. 470).
- Reading the lyrics to “A Diligent and Grateful Heart” (The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 639, or “Say So” by Israel Houghton, http://www.chordie.com/chord.pere/www.guitaretab.com/i/israel-houghton/97078.html). Think about the words in the context of this week's lesson. How does the fact that you are redeemed change your life and the way you relate to others?
- Eating a baked potato or other favorite vegetable without salt. What difference does it make? How is that similar to the difference that Jesus intended for Christians to make in the world (Matt. 5:13)?
- Sitting for a few minutes in a darkened room, then lighting a candle. How does lighting the candle change things? Does it make a difference how large, small, ornate, or expensive the candle is? If your life is like a candle in a dark world, how might you be able to lead others to Christ?
- Reading 2 Corinthians 3:3 and writing out what you think God might want to say to the people around you through your life and influence.
- Asking several people, “How can you tell if one of your friends is in love?” Think about how their answers relate to this week's lesson.
- Drawing a picture to illustrate what “lifestyle evangelism” means to you.

CONNECT


The Ministry of Healing, pp. 469, 470.

Joe Aldrich, Lifestyle Evangelism: Learning to Open Your Life to Those Around You (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah, 2006).
Sequential Evangelism and
Witnessing

“I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it” (1 Cor. 3:2, NKJV).
Today’s Scripture doesn’t end on a happy note. Well, you might be thinking, maybe John 6:54–66 is telling us what not to do when it comes to witnessing. But these verses are talking about the evangelism and witnessing of Jesus. So was His witnessing flawed? If so, the rest of us are in serious trouble. What did Jesus say that caused so many to leave Him?

First, Jesus said that whoever eats His flesh will live forever. Obviously Jesus was not supporting cannibalism. According to Andrew Fountain, blood is a metaphor for violent death. He explains that, in Psalm 27:2, “David is talking about the wicked who are coming against him. ‘When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell’. . . . They want to kill David because they want to obtain some kind of benefit from his death. This example from the Old Testament gives us an insight into what Jesus means by eating his flesh—it means to benefit from His death on the cross. . . .

“When [Jesus] refers to eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He is talking about enjoying the benefits which come from His death.”*

At this point the people still view Jesus as their earthly king, so He is talking about them benefiting from His death. His death, however, is not part of their plan, so they begin to complain. He asks if His true mission offends them (John 6:61). Then He says that some still do not believe Him (verse 64) and follows this with “‘no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father’” (John 6:56, NKJV). That did it. Not only was Jesus refusing to be their earthly messiah, He was telling them that they didn’t believe. Thus many people stopped following Him.

Jesus told His followers then the most controversial thing facing our culture today—the truth. Our mission is to live that truth, to enjoy the benefits of His death, to live out the gospel in our daily lives, and to share it with others when the opportunity arises. Jesus spent His life witnessing and evangelizing. He spent His life living the truth and sharing it with others, and that is what He has called us to do today.


Anna Bartlett, Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A.
Sequential evangelism begins with yourself. If you don’t have Jesus, you certainly cannot share Him. First you must devour His flesh and drink His blood. This saying turned many of Jesus’ disciples away because it is a hard saying (verses 60, 66). Why? It requires dedication to become like Jesus. Jesus Himself spent hours in prayer and study of the Old Testament. We, too, must spend time in prayer and Bible study. Jesus’ flesh and blood are His words. By spending time with Him in prayer and study, we become like Him in character and action. We must share things “that we do know and testify that we have seen” (John 3:11). The priests in Jesus’ time could not help the people because they did not know God. They had plenty of traditions, programs, and activities to do, but these did not meet the people’s needs. It avails others nothing if we don’t know God ourselves, if the Holy Spirit is not in our hearts.

How do you share spiritual food and drink when a “baby” Christian just spits it back out?

Prepare the Way (Luke 8:4–15; 1 Cor. 3:1–3; 1 Pet. 2:1, 2)

How does knowing Jesus make a difference in our lives? The parable of the sower describes different types of ground. What type of ground are you? If you are still selfish with your money (the deceitfulness of riches) or distracted with too many responsibilities (the cares of this life) you have some weeding to do. If you don’t understand the why or how of your beliefs, then you have some studying to do. How can you tell others about Jesus if you don’t understand Him enough to love and follow Him? We must become selfless like Jesus is. To witness, we must put away jealousy, arguing, and hurt feelings. When we do, our eyes can be opened to spiritual things. Get rid of all these things (1 Pet. 2:1, 2) and develop an unquenchable desire for holiness (Matt. 5:6). Long for sincere milk (truth) so that you will grow. Then by growing, God will give you things to share and a desire to share. Constantly work the soil in your heart. Pull weeds. Throw out the stones. Then when Jesus’ words are planted in your heart through daily study, they will produce fruit.
Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (Isaiah 58; Matt. 25:35–40)

What is this fruit we all desire to produce? Some of us confuse it with the number of people we have led to baptism. However, the fruit we are responsible for is the character traits we form in our own lives. Jesus commends the “sheep” for feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty and shelter to the poor, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting those in prison. In Isaiah 58, fruit is defined as freeing people who have been put in prison unfairly, being fair, taking care of your family, not using flattery, speaking kindly, not pointing your finger at others, and taking care of the needs of those who really need it.

Create a Thirst (1 Cor. 3:1–3; 1 Pet. 2:1, 2)

How do you share spiritual food and drink when a “baby” Christian just spits it back out? It is by loving your neighbor as yourself. The fruit of your own relationship with Jesus begins the next phase of evangelism—witnessing. Others will see the beauty of Jesus’ love in your life and desire it for themselves. People do not want just doctrines. They want to know what difference doctrines will make in their lives, and they want to know Jesus. People want to see the difference that doctrines and the gospel can make in your life, in your family’s life, and in your church’s life. That difference is a witness worth talking about.

Teach Them How as They Are Ready (1 Cor. 3:1–3; 1 Pet. 2:1, 2)

When you become a sower, you can share your genuine experiences. You can encourage and show others how to work the soil of their hearts because you have been there and succeeded. You know the trials and temptations, and your experience is priceless wisdom you can share. You know that they have to weed out pride, envy, and selfishness before they are ready for the heavier responsibilities in church. Most of all, you have that attractive, deep, abiding love of Jesus in your heart that will give you patience when dealing with their trials and difficulties. Start out with Jesus’ love and how to trust Him in daily life. Teach them how to study for themselves. Spend time in prayer with them and for them. Lead them into service for others so that they, too, can experience the joy of unselfishness; and when they are ready, share the deeper, more challenging truths.

REACT

1. Where am I personally in the sequence of evangelism?
2. What do I need to do to personally prepare?
3. Whom around me do I already influence?
The Prince of heaven, the Commander of the heavenly hosts, stepped down from His high position, laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might become the divine Teacher of all classes of men, and live before human beings a life free from all selfishness and sin, setting them an example of what, through His grace, they may become.”

The simplest and most effective methods of evangelism involve what we say and how we live.

“Before ascending to heaven, Christ gave His disciples their commission. He told them that they were to be the executors of the will in which He bequeathed to the world the treasures of eternal life. You have been witnesses of My life of sacrifice in behalf of the world, He said to them. . . . You have seen that all who come to Me confessing their sins, I freely receive. . . . To you, My disciples, I commit this message of mercy.”

Just like the disciples of the New Testament, we are also called to make Jesus’ commission a way of life. Jesus gave us a message to share with the world, and by how we live our lives, we can share that message and help a world that desperately needs God’s mercy. Every moment we live and interact with others should be evangelism.

“The disciples were to carry their work forward in Christ’s name. Their every word and act was to fasten attention on His name. . . . “The less ostentation and show, the greater would be their influence for good. The disciples were to speak with the same simplicity with which Christ had spoken. They were to impress upon their hearers the lessons He had taught them.”

Jesus showed us through His own example that the simplest and most effective methods of evangelism involve what we say and how we live.

**REACT**

What are some ways that a new convert, ministered to through the example of a Christ-like person, might continue to grow in Christ?

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1. *This Day With God*, p. 373.
3. Ibid., pp. 28, 29.

*Amanda Ernst, Charlotte, North Carolina, U.S.A.*
As he revisited church sites, Paul found that many of the members had not grown in their spiritual journey. They had not applied themselves to the study of God’s Word for deeper understanding. Therefore, the Corinthians were immature and unable to appreciate and understand the deeper matters of their spiritual life. First Corinthians 3:1–3 “directly [ties] spiritual diet to growth in understanding, behavior, and attitude.”

“**A poor spiritual diet results in a spiritually weak and diseased person.**”

In verse 2 we see that these new believers were being fed “with milk, and not with meat.” Their immaturity “produced strife and factions in the congregation, proving that the people were far more carnal than converted.”

In light of sequential evangelism, there were those that heard the truth presented, embraced it, but had no one to continue teaching them after Paul left. From this experience we can see how important it is to not only meet the needs of the moment, but to continue instruction in truth and grace.

“The Bible provides ample evidence that a poor spiritual diet results in a spiritually weak and diseased person, just as a poor physical diet works to erode and eventually destroy a person’s physical vitality. Similarly, we can see that a person can be in good spiritual health but lose it through laziness or another form of neglect. Just as a mature adult needs good, solid nourishment to maintain his vitality and remain free of disease, the spiritual parallel follows. For one to grow to spiritual maturity and vitality, a mature Christian needs solid, spiritual nourishment, assimilated and actively applied, to continue growing and prevent regressing, as opposed to the Hebrews[’] sluggish spiritual deterioration.”

While small steps are appropriate for babies, we must grow and learn to take larger, more purposeful steps. As Christians, we must study God’s Word for ourselves and get to the heavier thoughts He has for us.

**REACT**

1. How are milk- and meat-fed Christians different? How are they alike?
2. Devise a plan, identify the sequence, and prepare a timeline for three target groups surrounding the area of your church.

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
God, the Master Gardener, has given us, His gardeners-in-training, seeds of truth in a package labeled “The Bible.” In the Bible we find instructions on how to prepare the soil, plant the seeds, and care for the plants that sprout. He also has given us biographies (the Gospels) of His Son so we might better understand how to become good gardeners.

As a Master Gardener, God knows that it’s a good thing to be able to talk to other gardeners and share tips about how to make your garden grow. So He has organized us into a garden club that He calls the church. One of the goals of this garden club is to plant the seeds from the Bible around the world. In the biographies of our Teacher’s Son we find simple, practical steps on how we can best accomplish our goal.

Prepare the soil. When you want to share something with someone, you don’t usually give it to a random person on the street. Instead you give it to someone you know and care about. Not only is that person more likely to accept your gift, but he or she will also be more likely to use it. Likewise, when we share what God has done for us personally, it’s easier and more effective if we share it with people with whom we are friends (Mark 5:18, 19).

Sow the seed. It’s not uncommon to invite your friends over for a party or a friendly get-together. So why not invite them over to have a Bible study? Talk and have a good time while sharing some of the things that God has done in your life (Matt. 9:10).

Plant the sprout. After you’ve talked with your friends about God for a while, invite them to church. This way they’ll see what God’s garden club is really all about, and they might just decide that they want to become a gardener too (John 1:40–42).

Don’t get discouraged if the seeds you plant don’t sprout immediately. Seeds need time and the right environment to sprout. Your job is to plant the seed. It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to make it grow.

**REACT**

1. What can you do in your neighborhood and community to help plant the seed of God’s Word?
2. How many of your friends need to know Jesus as Savior?
3. What is God doing through you to help complete the great commission?

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Emily Bartlett, Robersonville, North Carolina, U.S.A.
Newborns must be fed age-appropriate foods. As they grow, their body calls for different foods. There is an order that will help them grow into full adulthood. In the Christian life we find that there are steps to becoming mature Christians. When a church is considering a witnessing program, sequential evangelism will help them put these steps in order.

After baptism, give the new members something . . . to do.

Begin with a spiritual gifts seminar. Help your church members to understand what spiritual gifts God has given them and how they can share those gifts with others.

Start a Bible School. Begin sharing with others by answering their Bible questions.

Organize outreach programs. Meet weekly and spend time in new visitation, giving Bible studies, and prayer.

“Basically, prayer evangelism is talking to God about people before you talk to people about God. This allows the Holy Spirit to be in charge of the results.

“Based on Luke 10, there are four simple steps of prayer evangelism that must be followed in sequential order to change the spiritual climate of a city, state, or nation: bless them; fellowship with them; minister to felt needs; proclaim.”

Another sequence to follow is Organize community programs. Show your community that you care by giving a cooking class or another type of health class. Invite your friends to these classes. This will give you a group of people upon which to draw for your evangelistic series. Help with the duties of the meetings, and when appropriate, invite your guests to help also. This will help them to feel needed.

After baptism, give new members something useful to do that suits their abilities. Help your “new babes” to grow in God’s Word and in their Christian lives.

**REACT**

1. What are your spiritual gifts?
2. In what ways would you feel comfortable helping with an evangelistic meeting?

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Karen Pires, Lexington, South Carolina, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE

Feeding a baby takes more than milk and healthy food. It also needs a healthy relationship with someone who has time, patience, and an ability to tolerate goop, messes, and sticky fingers. Mealtimes help to grow an important bond between the parent and the child. The parent needs to be sensitive to the needs of the child, and to wait for the perfect moment to introduce the next mouthful of mashed carrot. The parent needs to be caring, unselfish, supportive, and reliable. And one day they’ll celebrate together when the child proudly learns how to fix his or her own peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich.

CONSIDER

- Creating a sculpture, collage, or sketch that illustrates the relationship between a mother and her hungry baby, or a person hungering and thirsting for God.
- Designing a survey of your church members’ favorite spiritual “foods.” What are the experiences that nurture their faith and help them to grow more like Jesus?
- Writing a thank-you letter to three different people who “fed” your faith at three significant points in your spiritual development.
- Creating a sequential recording or playlist of hymns and praise/worship songs that illustrates the development of a person’s growth in Christ.
- Working with others to create a mime or an American Sign Language “paragraph” that illustrates the journey from being a spiritual milk-fed baby to serving a banquet of blessings to others.
- Assembling a spiritual “food” basket for a young adult Christian you know. Include items that will nurture this person’s growth in Christ, such as books, promise cards, CDs, etc.
- Creating an edible map of your spiritual journey, marking the significant experiences and finding different foods to illustrate your development (milk, pomegranates, nuts, etc.)

CONNECT

Ruthie Jacobsen, Bridges 101 (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 2008).

Philip Samaan, Christ’s Way to Spiritual Growth (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 1995).
Personal Evangelism and Witnessing

“You are My witnesses,’ says the Lord, ‘and My servant whom I have chosen’” (Isa. 43:10, NKJV).
Have you ever held your breath until you almost fainted? It is interesting to observe how your body fights your attempt to do so. At some point, there will be a release, and you will take in a fresh breath of oxygen. In spiritual terms, we are filled by God’s Holy Spirit. True Spirit-filled Christ followers breathe in His commands, love, faith, and hope; and they cannot help but share their newfound life with others.

Jesus calls believers by name and knows exactly how they will serve in His kingdom. It is a beautiful kind of exchange. He calls us to pledge our allegiance to Him; then He anoints us to be present in His love and fills us with His Spirit. The Holy Spirit, in turn, equips believers with the tools needed to share God’s love. The equipping process is one of the most miraculous processes in the Christian experience. Oh that we all would spend more time in God’s Word and in prayer so that He could reveal to us His gifts and refine these gifts in our lives.

You and I can be everyday witnesses for Christ. When we have a connection with Him, we cannot help but be transformed in thought and action (Rom. 12:2). His love begins to flow from us to others. We are called to begin this work with those closest to us—spouses, children, family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. The measure of evangelistic success is lives restored and newfound hope and power in Jesus.

C. S. Lewis said, “The salvation of a single soul is more important than the production or preservation of all the epics and tragedies in the world.”* We cannot begin to imagine the weight of responsibility we share with Christ in saving souls. Scripture states that “it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things” (1 Pet. 1:12, NIV; italics added). Let us not allow the knowledge of God’s grace to be squandered because of our fear, guilt, or laziness. This week I invite you to consider how you might become a fully-fledged Holy Spirit–filled witness.

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Jean-Pierre Martinez, Sydney, Australia
John the Baptist had a band of disciples who followed him and absorbed his teachings. They were probably young men, maybe even teenagers.¹ They called him “rabbi” as a sign of respect and affection. There were different levels of discipleship.² Some disciples were more like sports fans who show up at every home game. They came out to hear their teacher speak when he was in the area and donated food and money to the cause. Women were accepted as this type of disciple. Other disciples were more like professional apprentices who studied with the teacher, hoping that they would be a teacher themselves. A serious disciple would choose a rabbi and ask, “May I follow you?”³ This request is never recorded in the case of the twelve disciples. Instead, Jesus chose them. On one occasion when a man approached Jesus and asked to follow Him, Jesus discouraged him by saying, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58, NIV).

Some disciples were more like sports fans who show up at every home game.

The disciples mentioned in John 1 appear to be serious seekers, as evidenced by Andrew’s triumphant announcement to his brother. Messiah meant “anointed one.” In the Old Testament times it could apply to any king or priest, but by this time the Jews used it to refer to a future king.⁴ Chafing as they were under Roman rule, they began to think that this king would be a military leader who would kick out the Romans and their greasy-palmed minions in order to usher in a golden age for Israel.

When Philip announced to Nathanael, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law” (John 1:45, NIV), he was probably referring to Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses says: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to him” (NIV).

These disciples were looking forward to the prophetic promise of a soon-coming Savior. They were quick to move into the orbit of those who shared their hope. If today we eagerly look forward to Jesus’ return, we will find people who are receptive to our message and ready to join us in anticipating the Second Advent.

Word of Mouth (John 1:35–50)

William Bernbach, the advertiser who introduced America to the Volkswagen Beetle, created award-winning ads that appeared in magazines and on television. However, in his opinion, “Word of mouth is the best medium of all.”

Word of mouth has been central to witnessing since the first followers were attracted to Christ. One day, John the Baptist pointed to a man in the crowd and said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” Immediately, two of John’s disciples began to follow Jesus. It might seem rude to have ditched their teacher. Nevertheless, in a way, they honored him by taking his prophetic statement seriously. They wanted to know more.

Hang Time (John 1:38, 39)

As hopeful disciples, John and Andrew might have been expected to ask, “May we follow You?” However, neither of them said anything. It was Jesus who broke the silence by asking, “What do you want?” John and Andrew replied with their own question: “Where are you staying?” They wanted to talk with Him at length. They wanted to hang out.

“Come and see,” said Jesus.

It is difficult to witness to someone without inviting them into your home—or without spending time in their home. Many new believers find that it was a relationship with a Christian that helped them form a saving relationship with Jesus.

Sometimes we might wish we could herd people into church like cattle into a corral without touching them personally. We might say, “Here’s a sheet of proof texts. We’ll see you next Sabbath.” However, we usually have to invest ourselves in those we want to reach. It would be ridiculous to send the message, “God loves you, but frankly, I would rather not see you except on Sabbath mornings.”

As people learn to trust us, they will believe what we have to say about our Christianity. It might take a long time for that to happen. Bible scholars believe that Andrew and John “hung out” with Jesus for as long as a year and a half before they responded to His call to join the twelve disciples whom we talk about today.*

Winning Ways (1 Pet. 3:1–15)

Peter tells women who are married to unbelievers that their “purity and
reverence” (1 Peter 3:2, NIV) will win their husbands without words. This does not necessarily mean that our Adventist lifestyle will cause people to come running. Nobody says, “Hey, you don’t eat pork? Let me join your religion.” Peter is talking to those who have close relationships with unbelievers. These are family members who know us better than anyone else. They will be able to see if we really have the Spirit of Jesus inside us and if it is something they want for themselves.

**Skipping the Argument (John 1:35–50; 1 Pet. 3:15)**

Philip had some big news for Nathanael. “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law,” he said. Nathanael was not so sure. He had doubts about anybody hailing from Nazareth. Instead of arguing, Philip said simply, “Come and see.”

Philip’s approach to witnessing didn’t involve arguing. He just made an introduction; then Jesus proved Himself to Nathanael in such a powerful way that the man went from being a cynic to becoming a believer in a matter of seconds.

If we argue with others about our faith, we come across as a lawyer—and not a lawyer who is on their side. There are many good arguments for Christianity. However, do we really think we can force people into the baptismal tank by the sheer force of logic? Peter says to give a reason for our hope, but to do it with gentleness. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit can do much more than we ever can. Our job is not to sell Jesus, but to make enough of an introduction so Jesus can sell Himself. Sometimes that is as simple as offering to pray with a friend about a problem they are facing.

**In the Long Run (John 4:38)**

Andrew and John were seeking the Messiah and immediately followed Him. We may meet people who are already seeking a deeper spiritual experience. Other teachers or perhaps life circumstances may have prepped them to walk right into our church and plop down on a pew. In the context of “fishers of men,” these are the fish that jump out of the water and into the boat. As Jesus said, “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for” (NIV).

But we can expect that witnessing will usually be a long process that requires much patience and time—often more patience and time than we’re willing to sacrifice without God putting a love for people in our hearts. Love is what forges connections between us and the people who need Jesus, just as it is love that binds us to the heart of God.

**REACT**

1. What part does your Adventist lifestyle play in witnessing?
2. How important is a personal invitation in bringing people to Jesus?

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*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 910.

Lori Peckham, Sharpsburg, Maryland, U.S.A.
There are many who will spend and be spent to win souls to Christ. In obedience to the great commission, they will go forth to work for the Master. Under the ministration of angels, ordinary men will be moved by the Spirit of God to warn people in the highways and byways. Humble men, who do not trust in their gifts, but who work in simplicity, trusting always in God, will share in the joy of the Saviour as their persevering prayers bring souls to the cross.”

“I have been deeply impressed by scenes that have recently passed before me in the night season. There seemed to be a great movement—a work of revival—going forward in many places. Our people were moving into line, responding to God’s call. My brethren, the Lord is speaking to us. Shall we not heed His voice? Shall we not trim our lamps, and act like men who look for their Lord to come? The time is one that calls for light-bearing, for action.”

“All who engage in ministry are God’s helping hand. There is no line of work in which it is possible for the youth to receive greater benefit. They are coworkers with the angels; rather, they are human agencies through whom the angels accomplish their mission. Angels speak through their voices, and work by their hands. And the human workers, cooperating with heavenly agencies, have the benefit of their education and experience.”

“Never has there been a time when man has been so responsible to God as he is at the present hour. . . . Satan, in cooperation with his angels and with evil men, will put forth every effort to gain the victory, and will appear to succeed. But from this conflict, truth and righteousness will come forth triumphant in victory. Those who have believed a lie will be defeated; for the days of apostasy will be ended.”

“REACT
How often do you feel a sense of urgency to share God’s message with those close to you and those in your community?”

2. Ibid., p. 43.
3. Ibid., p. 44.
4. Ibid., p. 50.

Nina Atcheson, Margate, Queensland, Australia
Last weekend I flipped the lights on in my room, but some of them didn’t work. I checked the fuse box twice, but everything seemed fine. The problem was not resolved until I hired an electrician. Apparently, a particular outlet had become corroded over time, and the current one couldn’t make the proper connection.

We can tell how His still, small voice has encouraged and comforted us.

Successful Christian witnessing requires at least two things: (1) something to witness or tell about, and (2) the ability to connect with the person(s) witnessed to. John defines witnessing as declaring that “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1, NKJV). While we may not have physically heard, seen, or touched Jesus, telling others about our “by faith” experience with Him can have a positive effect.

We can tell how His still, small voice has encouraged and comforted us. We can tell how we have “seen” Him work miracles in our lives. We can acknowledge that we have “touched” Him by going to Him in prayer and have found that He also can be touched “with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15). Obviously, if we have not had these experiences with Jesus, we do not have anything to witness about!

Having an experience with Jesus is the foundation to successful personal evangelism. Just as critical, however, is making the connection with someone who needs the witness. Electrical current will power a light bulb if it makes the connection. No connection, no light.

The Holy Spirit removes anything that may hinder the witness from getting through. The Holy Spirit gives the right words to say. He creates the best opportunity and a favorable mindset. A good witness also applies the words to the hearer’s heart. To be a dynamic force for good, it is imperative that the Christian witness submit to the Holy Spirit. Daily prayer, Bible study, and submission create an amazing bond between the human and the Divine! Out of this union flow rivers of living water (John 7:38), bringing life and light to all who come into connection with the witness.

REACT

Should we try to witness to others, or is witnessing something that happens spontaneously? Explain your answer.
When I was 16, I went on a mission trip to India. This experience was life changing. For four weeks I worked at an orphanage/boarding school in Tamil Nadu. One of my tasks was to help the students develop their English skills. Each day, I would teach basic English-speaking skills to the younger students and converse in English with the older students.

Another of my tasks—and by far my favorite one—was sharing Jesus’ love with the girls who lived in the dormitories. Many of them were orphaned, so they could not fathom the unconditional love of a father. During our evening Bible studies, I tried to introduce them to Jesus, who could change their lives, take away their pain, and provide a love that many of them had never known from earthly interactions.

Many people feel that evangelism involves traveling far from home to find people who have never known Jesus. Yes, Jesus has asked each and every one of us to tell the world about Him. However, there are many people—probably some people within your circle of friends—who do not know Him.

Knowing Jesus is different from knowing about Him. Knowing Him is different from merely showing up at church each Sabbath, reading your Bible, or eating healthful foods. Knowing Him stems from a deep, burning desire to become one with Him—to take on His suffering, His mission, and blessedly, His grace. Even within our church, there are people who do not know Him because they are hung up on all of the “stuff” that can get in the way of having a true relationship with Him.

You may not be called to travel to far-off countries to witness to those who do not know Jesus, but you are always called to witness to your family, friends, and co-workers. This type of mission work may be harder. It may challenge you to go outside your comfort zone. However, at the end of the day, what can be more fulfilling, more beautiful than to hear them say, “We have found the Messiah”?

**REACT**
1. How can you reach out to people you come in contact with daily?
2. Why might it be harder to witness to people you know than to strangers?
CONCLUDE

Jesus calls each believer to be an every-day witness for Him. By submitting to the task, the Holy Spirit equips us with the tools needed to share God’s love. Evidence of successful witnessing is not often readily available. People want to first see if the truth we share is something they want for themselves. Having a personal experience with Jesus is therefore fundamental to successful personal evangelism. We are called to let Christ shine through our lives to our family, friends, classmates, and co-workers.

CONSIDER

• Sitting in a busy park and trying to figure out what kind of work the passers-by do and if you would trust them to do that work for you. All humans constantly send messages to people around them. What nonverbal messages are you sending to those you are witnessing to? How does your answer help you to be a better witness?
• Examining the fruit and vegetable shelves in a market. Starting with the seed, how long does it take before any piece of produce reaches the shelf as food? For example, it takes several weeks for peppers to germinate, but runner beans take about ten days; and an apple seed will take years before it produces fruit. Relate this to different people who hear the message of Christ. What time span do you allow each of them from “seed” to baptismal pool?
• Reading the words to the hymn “Working, O Christ, With Thee” (The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 582). How many of the following elements of witnessing can you find within this hymn: preparation, submission, Spirit-filled person, sharing Christ near and far, God’s support, difficulty, success? Sing the hymn to close your study.
• Studying Psalm 23 and listing ways in which this psalm’s message is relevant to you personally. Then, in a comfortable setting, share the essence of your findings with a non-Christian friend.
• Preparing a meal for five people whose dietary needs you don’t know. What would you do to ensure that everyone has a satisfactory meal? How are the preparation and delivery of the meal similar to effective witnessing?

CONNECT

Messages to Young People, pp. 197, 198.
Morris Venden, How to Make Christianity Real, pp. 71–86.

Albert A. C. Waite, Berkshire, United Kingdom
Corporate Evangelism and Witnessing

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2, NKJV).
Have you ever been involved in a discussion that started with the best of intentions? It might have gone something like this:

Friend 1: “We’re a new generation, and we know better than older people how to reach our age. They just have meeting after meeting and never really make any progress spreading the gospel. Have you seen how few baptisms there have been in the church for the past ten years? Most of my friends in my church dropped out years ago, and nobody even seemed to notice.”

You: “Yeah. It’s like the old people are either tired, or they have too much to occupy themselves with to do the Lord’s work. They go bowling, or watch TV, or just get together for prayer meeting. I hear the same few people come week after week. They read books that tell them what they ought to do. They get all excited and say, ‘Someone really ought to do that.’ Then they go home and never do anything. There’s always some excuse. They have to take care of kids, fix something in the house, or get some work ready for the next day. If you ask me, they’re just not very committed to what they claim is important.”

Friend 2: “Listen, we’re adults. We don’t need them telling us what to do. Let’s meet and get a plan together. We can do this.”

Friend 1: “Where?”
You: “How about the Student Union?”
Friend 2: “OK, at the pizza place there so we can multi-task.”
Friend 1: “When?”
You: “How about Tuesday?”
Friend 2: “No, we’ve got a chemistry test on Tuesday. How about Wednesday?”
Friend 1: “That won’t work. The Union’s really packed on Wednesdays. We won’t be able to hear each other. What about Thursday?”
You: “Some of us have a class at noon. How about 3:00?”
Friend 2: “The weather’s too good to be inside then. What about 5:00?”
You: “I have to meet some other friends. Is 9:00 OK?”

Friend 1: “OK. That’ll work for most of us. Whatever we do has to be finished in time for me to get back to my room to see ‘The Daily Show.’ ”

So, how will the gospel be taken to all the world by this generation, if doing so has to be fit in between what we have to do and what we want to do?
Evangelism has many names. Among them are soul-winning, outreach, sharing the gospel, and using our gifts. Whatever one calls it, evangelism is the job of the entire church. Everyone plays a role in what needs to be done. Young adults are no exception. In fact, it is this very demographic that has been uniquely singled out as the primary labor force that, when it is surrendered to God, will be used to finish the work of preparing the world for Jesus’ return. Which generation of young adults will it be? There is no good reason why it shouldn’t be this one.

**Find another person. Then go tell someone about Jesus.**

**Before Sin (Gen. 1:27, 28)**
Frankly, soul winning has always been the job of all God’s people, even from day six of creation. When God told man and woman to be fruitful and multiply, the intent was that the world would become populated with people created in God’s image—people who loved Him and who would spend eternity with Him in mutual adoration. All people were given this command as it came through our first parents. All were fitted with the gifts (the equipment), the power, and the authority to carry out the command, and all were blessed with the bidding to accomplish it.

The Bible speaks of no one complaining about the command. Even now, nearly all teens and young adults look forward to participating in the activities of pre-sin evangelism. It must be noted, however, that it was always to be conducted within the bounds of marriage. The family was the original church and governing body. Within the family, God still looks with favor upon this kind of evangelism. Read Proverbs 22:6. The New Testament put the same command into terms for a world in sin.

**After Sin (Matt. 28:18–20)**
Jesus gave the command which had the same purpose, but using a different process. “Go and make disciples of all nations” (NIV) still has the intent of filling the world with people in God’s image—people who love Him and who will spend eternity with Him in mutual admiration. Similarly, all God’s people are given this command, and all are fitted with the spiritual gifts, the power, and the authority to carry it out. Successful results can be equally as gratifying. Still, a local congregation that has more than 5 percent of its members actually active in regular outreach is a rarity in some parts of the world.
Finishing the Work (Eph. 4:11–16; Phil. 1:5–18)

Evangelism is not just for the benefit of the one being reached out to. Christ wants to finish the good work He started in us. God’s intention is not that young adults must be mature enough to do what needs to be done before they can begin. Ephesians 4:12, 13 challenges this generation to use their spiritual gifts and thereby be made mature by having done so. In this way, they will be protected from those who would deceive them by cunning and craftiness (verse 14). We do the work, which, in turn, enables us to become mature in Christ. Others do too. Having been taught, they will then be doing the same thing (Col. 1:28, 29).

Now is the time to act in order to prevent this generation from also leaving its mandate unfinished. No forward stride for the kingdom was ever made without a sacrifice. There have been many of every age who have committed themselves to the task of evangelism. They were led by God and imbued with the Holy Spirit, but it was not time. Those of previous generations who were faithful to their calling as young adults will be rewarded for their faithfulness. Those who were not faithful will reap the consequences. Apathy and busyness are no respecters of generations. Many have waited until they were finished with their education or until they were settled into a good job before they occupied themselves with the “Lord’s work.” However, they were surprised to find that “real” life made it even more difficult to fit evangelism into their schedules.

Sin’s power becomes stronger with each age. It seems an increasing percentage of the population falls into the snares of the devil. The times cry out for this generation to put an end to the suffering of all people. The work becomes greater while the army seems to become smaller. It is a Gideon force that is needed—the type of force that can be successful working by twos or by threes (Eccles. 4:9–12). God and you are a majority. Find another person. Then go tell someone about Jesus.

REACT

1. If you were raised in the church, what do you remember being the most bored with? What have you done to change that activity so that it will foster eager learning for those who are now of that age?

2. Without false modesty, what part of outreach can you do better than others you have seen doing it? When will you start?

3. Which one or two other young adults will you invite to join you in some form of New Testament evangelism?
“Throughout the ages, God has been particular as to the design and the accomplishment of His work. In this age, He has given His people much light and instruction in regard to how His work is to be carried forward—in an elevated, refined, conscientious manner; and He is pleased with those who in their service carry out His design.”

“The people see you exalting Jesus.”

“Those who labor for Christ should be men and women of great discretion, so that those who do not understand their doctrines may be led to respect them, and regard them as persons void of fanaticism, void of rashness and impetuosity. Their discourses and conduct and conversation should be of a nature that will lead men to the conclusion that these ministers are men of thought, of solidity of character, men who fear and love their heavenly Father. They should win the confidence of the people, so that those who listen to the preaching may know that the ministers have not come with some cunningly devised fable, but that their words are words of worth, a testimony that demands thought and attention. Let the people see you exalting Jesus, and hiding self.”

“Every conference . . . is responsible for earnest, solemn work in preparing a people for the coming of Christ. Those churches in the conference that are willing to work, and are in need of help in order to know how to do effective work, should have the needed assistance. Let every conference worker become wide-awake to make his conference an intensely active agency for the upbuilding of the work of God. Let every church member become a working member, to build up spiritual interests.”

The mode and manner may have changed, but the mission for the church is the same as always. Individual evangelism still has its place in the big picture, but corporate evangelism cannot be left behind. Conference workers, church members, and the full church body have their own responsibilities in completing God’s work.

**REACT**

1. How do we define “an elevated, refined, conscientious manner”? Do we live up to that definition in our evangelism efforts?

2. Is it possible to hide self completely while exalting God? Or does our pride in what we do get in the way?

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2. Ibid., Apr. 26, 1892.

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*Ashley Wagner, McDonald, Tennessee, U.S.A.*
A theme in Paul’s writings is the need for unity among believers. Unity makes the whole stronger. In Ephesians, Paul provides three metaphors to represent God’s devotion and purpose for His unified church: a building (2:21), the body (4:16), and a wife (5:22, 23). The foundation of our faith and our church must always be Christ, the head of the body and the “chief corner stone” (1 Pet. 2:6). Early Christians understood this concept. They were one unified body of believers, breaking bread together (Acts 2:46), and preaching Christ wherever they went (Acts 5:42). They even endured persecution together. Mission was their mind-set and purpose, “not just another program of an institutionalized church.”

This is the danger we face.

The use of the body as a metaphor for the church shows each part accomplishing a function for one common purpose. Paul expands this concept, stating that even the parts that appear to be the weakest are “indispensable” (1 Cor. 12:22, NIV). Because the human body is a sum of its parts, when one part is weakened, the rest of the body feels it. Likewise, “if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26, NIV).

The human body is also extremely efficient. If one part is not used, it loses its function. When a muscle is not used, it shrinks, loses strength, and no longer supports that part of the body. Then the body must compensate for the loss. This is the danger we face. We have perhaps been exercising certain parts of the church body for so long that our remaining parts no longer function. By relying solely on certain members of the body to accomplish the church’s mission, we risk losing the vital functions that lay members, young and old, can offer. For “where churches are helped most, there they are weak, lifeless, and helpless. . . . Nothing is so weakening as the habit of depending upon others for those things which we ought to supply for ourselves.” So use it or lose it!

REACT

Have you ever felt like you are, or aren’t, part of the body of Christ? If so, how?

1. Russell Burrill, Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church (Hart Research Center), p. 34.
Read Proverbs 29:18. The church needs to have a vision and a plan to carry out that vision. It’s impossible for a group of people to act as one body without a vision and a plan. Successful evangelism also requires a vision and a plan. Here’s how to go about creating both:

**Define the plan.** Even before Adam and Eve sinned, God created the plan of salvation. Some of the tactics of this plan involved Christ living a perfect life, dying on the cross, rising from the grave, and returning to heaven, where He intercedes for us. A good plan also involves metrics. In the case of salvation, metrics involves the number of people who will be saved (said number to be determined). When planning for evangelism we should seek to follow this model for planning.

**Know your role.** On a sports team, each member fills a specific role defined by the coach in order to produce an outcome that accomplishes the team’s mission (to win). In U.S. football, a quarterback’s role is to throw the ball according to the plays defined by the coach. When each player carries out his role, the team is positioned to score touchdowns and win the game.

**Understand the vision.** A successful football team requires talented players, but behind any great player is the leadership that manages the talent. Successful leaders motivate the players by clearly communicating their vision and plans, and then empowering them to do their individual jobs.

**Be part of the team.** Touchdowns are the goal of the whole team, and all players must work toward this goal. Teamwork is the result of several players working together and guided by a coach to attain the team’s mission. Paul writes about the importance of “oneness” and how each person within the body of Christ (the church) has special duties that are meant for one purpose—to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry. Without this oneness of heart, the work cannot be done.

If we unite our talents with the vision of God-inspired leadership, we have a winning formula. However, without a clear vision and plan from leadership and qualified individuals to carry it out, any organization will fail. So make sure you have done your part by praying, studying, and developing your talents so that you may be ready and equipped for ministry wherever you may go.

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*Jason Hammel, Rochester, New York, U.S.A.*
In John 10:1–18, Jesus reminds us that the hired hand leaves his post when danger threatens. He does not own the sheep, so he feels no obligation to save them. If this observation on ownership culture seems out of place, consider a few thoughts on investing (Matt. 25:14–30), loss mitigation and recovery (Luke 15:4–10), and seizing a market opportunity (Matt. 13:44–46). Then conclude with Jesus admonishing His parents that He “must be about [His] Father’s business” (Luke 2:49).

There is a time-honored tradition of sons and daughters joining the family business. In contrast to the hired hands, heirs to the business realize that their diligence today will increase the value of their inheritance. With that motivation, each generation of owners looks for opportunities to expand the business into new markets, add new products to the catalog, or invest in new technologies to increase profitability.

Too often we treat the Great Commission as a job offer and traditions of the church as the job description. Sticking to the way we have always done it is operating as the hired hand—finding somewhere else when challenges arise. If we truly want to see God’s kingdom increase, then we must start thinking like owners rather than like servants. We must consider how we can invest all the talents the Master left in our care. Beyond our individual abilities and gifts, we need every member of the church body and all the resources that amplify effectiveness in a commercial enterprise. Are the newest online services still an untapped marketplace for Christianity? Are church members still sitting idle while the field awaits the harvest?

Paul reminds us that “we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16, 17, NRSV). With Christ as our example, it is time to put some skin in the game. It is time to take responsibility for the success of the family business. Our Father will be so proud of us.

**REACT**

1. What methods/tools from your secular discipline can be used to move the work of evangelism forward?
2. How would your life focus change if you became a full partner with the Holy Spirit to advance the kingdom?
CONCLUDE

Don’t you just love Philip? The Spirit said, “Rise and go!” and he up and went. The Spirit said, “Check out that powerful-looking man in the expensive chariot.” And Philip ran over to meet him. When he heard the Ethiopian reading a messianic prophecy out loud, Philip knew he had a message for this man.

His official job was to be a deacon, because the apostles were too busy to wait on tables. Today we call him Philip the Evangelist, but don’t let that fool you. He was just a regular guy looking for Spirit-led opportunities.

Today the Spirit’s telling you, “Rise and go!”

CONSIDER

• Reading all the texts about Philip the Evangelist and consider what traits he had that made him a good evangelist. Which ones do you have or need to cultivate? (Acts 6:1–6; 8:4–8; 21:8, 9.)
• Researching your community to find organizations that promote your favorite recreational activity. Get involved in community activities and make friends around your shared interests.
• Looking up the Pathfinder Web site to find out if they have an honor for a hobby that you have. Offer to teach your hobby to your local Pathfinder club.
• Thinking of ways to make your Facebook or Twitter page more evangelistic.
• Creating a list of music for your iPod that would help you share the gospel with your friends.
• Thinking of things you can do in your neighborhood that could be evangelistic without opening your mouth.
• Starting a blog about your life with Christ. Be honest. Share your struggles as well as your victories. Invite your friends to read your blog.

CONNECT

The Acts of the Apostles, chap. 11;
The Ministry of Healing, pp. 95–107; 161–216.

Jennifer Morgan, St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada
Equipping for Evangelism and Witnessing

“He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’ ”

(Matt. 4:19, NKJV).
Some cab drivers in India are notorious for two things: (1) Overcharging you by either tampering with the meter or by outrightly demanding that you pay extra. (2) Displaying all kinds of religious paraphernalia in and around their vehicle—pamphlets, brochures, stickers, idols. You name it, they’ve got it.

Now here’s a question: How would you react if a cab driver, who just demanded that you pay extra, also handed you a pamphlet about the Second Coming? Which of his two actions would you remember?

“The word evangelist comes from the Greek euaggelistes, which literally means “messenger of good news.” “Evangelism is the declaring of a message. It is not necessarily formal preaching but a sharing of Christ with other people.” As Christians, it is our duty to witness and proclaim the truth. We are called to be messengers of God. But how effective would our witnessing be if our actions completely contradict our message?

So how do we go about witnessing? We are all sinners. Why would anyone believe us? Andre Bustanoby once wrote, “We the church are confronted with the task of evangelism. And what is our task? To make converts? No! It is to tell men the good news—good news that carries with it its own convicting and saving power. We need not plead; we need not argue. Tell them. Just tell them that Jesus Christ died for sinners. That’s evangelism!”

The Bible is full of evangelism examples, from Andrew’s short and crisp declaration, “ ‘We have found the Messiah!’ ” (John 1:41, NIV) to the dramatic story of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26–39). So how do we get from wallflower to witness? Jesus had the answer in Matthew 4:19, where He said, “ ‘Follow me . . . and I will make you fishers of men’ ” (NIV). And that’s it. When we follow Jesus, we develop a strong personal relationship with Him. Then our thoughts and actions begin to mirror His thoughts and actions. And when our lives serve as examples of the transforming power of God’s love and grace, we become evangelists, the declarers of truth.

This week’s lesson aims to equip us for evangelism. So come on! It’s time to go a-fishing.

2. Ibid.
When reviewing the launching of Christ's public evangelism in Matthew 10 and 11, four themes become apparent. First, Jesus invited the unlikely. We all would expect someone such as John the Beloved to be on the team, but “Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him” (10:4, NASB)? One would think that Jesus, being God’s Son, would pick perfect people for evangelism. And who can say that He didn’t? But if we ever feel as though we are the odd pick, have no doubt that Christ’s invitation holds.

Second, Christ gave authority and power to His disciples to cast out demons and heal the sick. If you were part of His team, then He gave you authority. It’s easy to think that you’re not good enough or that you don’t have the correct skill set to witness. But Christ gives you what you need (Matt. 10:1). Our job is to respond with a “Count me in.”

Third, the disciples were to live simple, innocent lives, heal the sick, raise the dead, and proclaim the good news that “the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 10:7, NIV). These types of miracles may seem rare to us these days, even though they do happen in parts of the world; but symbolically, proclaiming the Good News does raise the spiritually dead and heal the brokenhearted. Another part of our job is to do the proclaiming and let Him do His work of redeeming.

Fourth, Christ’s evangelism program involved group activity. It’s true that He witnessed by Himself (John 4:4–26). However, as Matthew 10 and 11 show us, evangelism is also a team activity. Think of the benefits a team provides: built-in encouragement, safety in numbers, accountability, increased enjoyment (ever tried to play soccer by yourself against another team?) and longevity.

Perhaps the act of witnessing and evangelism leads us to Him in a way we couldn’t achieve by other means. Let there be no doubt that His evangelistic dream team includes you and me, and each member of our church body.

**REACT**

1. How can public evangelism be effective in our contemporary society?
2. What fears do you face when deciding to join an evangelism team? What are some of Christ’s promises you can claim when facing these fears?

Celina Dawson, Walla Walla, Washington, U.S.A.
Following in Close Relation (Matt. 4:19)  
Jesus is inviting these few men to take action: Come! And then He describes what that action entails. The Greek word translated “follow” is opiso which means “following in close relation after someone.” From this point on, the lives of these men would be lived in the context of their proximity to Jesus Christ. He wasn’t talking to them about creating a movement, executing an agenda, or establishing an organization. He was talking about them being in connection with Himself.

Knowing Jesus Christ personally means we learn to find our identity in Him alone.

The central action to this passage is not “fish for men.” We so often make the mistake of confusing religious activity with Jesus Himself. We confuse truth with Him who is the Truth, the Life, and the Way (John 14:6). The central verb clause is “come after me.” So what does this mean for us? It means that we make Jesus the only leader of our lives. We watch for and receive His direction. If we do that, and only if we do that, He will take upon Himself the responsibility of making us fishers of men.

Notice that it doesn’t say the disciples immediately left their nets and became fishers of men. It says, “At once they left their nets and followed him” (Matt. 4:20, NIV; emphasis added). The equipping process is the activity of following Jesus. If we are not following Jesus, we are not equipped to fish for men. And if we don’t continue to follow Jesus, we cannot maintain effectiveness in partnering with Him. We can’t possibly memorize enough rules and principles to be effective in life or in witnessing. There are simply too many variables that could be thrown at us. We have to be following Him constantly so that He can bring His wisdom to shine through us at every moment.

Receiving Something to Give (Matt. 10:1–14)  
Jesus told His disciples, “‘Freely you have received, freely give’” (Matt. 10:8, NIV). So the question to us in the context of being equipped is, “Have we truly received from Christ?” Have our own hearts experienced the founding principles of His kingdom: (1) love, (2) freedom, and (3) responsibility? Have we tasted of His healing, His redemption, His transforming power? Are we abiding so closely to the Vine that we know what it’s like to have His life running through our veins? If we have received
these things, then we can give them to others. We can share them in a personal testimony filled with power.

As part of their training, Jesus told the disciples that they should not acquire any extra provisions for their preaching forays. He had good reason for doing so. People are tempted to hedge the provisions of God for their own sense of security. So He was asking them and us, “Will you learn to trust Me? Will you let Me provide for your needs? Will you let Me be your security?” Such faith can grow only where there is an intimate relationship. To obey Jesus on this command demands that we trust Him. And to trust Him we must know from experience that He loves us.

This personal experience of Jesus’ power in our own lives gives us the fortitude to shake the dust off our feet (verse 14) when someone dislikes the message we share. Knowing Jesus Christ personally means we learn to find our identity in Him alone, not from the acceptance or rejection of other people. When Jesus is our security, other people’s rejection won’t harm us.

**Reality Check, Part 1 (Matt. 11:1–11)**

We will face discouraging circumstances in our partnership with God. Things will happen that we will not expect. Even God will apparently act or not act in ways that we wish were different. Like John the Baptist in prison, we will be tempted to doubt. We may wonder whether our relationship with Him is real. At those times we need to open our eyes to what Jesus is doing in others. Then we can see Him give sight to the blind, strength to the lame, cleansing to the unclean, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead. When we see Jesus bringing good news to the afflicted, binding up the brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners—in essence, building transforming relationships with people around us—we are reminded that He has done and will continue to do the same for us.

**Reality Check, Part 2 (1 Pet. 5:8)**

The apostle Peter gives us an equipping tip—a warning about what awaits us in the service of God. It’s a little reminder of what we are facing and, most important, clarification on whom we need to stay close to. There is and will always be opposition to our equipping and witnessing in Christ. Our enemy is the one who holds the world under his power (1 John 5:19). He is the one who gathers the kings of the whole world to do battle with God (Rev. 16:14). The reality of our enemy should sober us up into staying close to Jesus—very close. Jesus is the One who has told us: “Take courage; I have overcome the world’ ” (John 16:33, NASB).

**REACT**

1. What is it like to attempt to share the gospel without having experienced it personally?
2. How are you going to stay very, very close to Jesus this week?
“It is a wonderful privilege to be able to understand the will of God as revealed in the sure word of prophecy. This places on us a heavy responsibility. God expects us to impart to others the knowledge that He has given us. It is His purpose that divine and human instrumentalities shall unite in the proclamation of the warning message.”

“God’s people are to be distinguished as a people who serve Him fully, wholeheartedly, taking no honor to themselves, and remembering that by a most solemn covenant they have bound themselves to serve the Lord and Him only.”

“God’s people are to be distinguished as a people who serve Him fully.”

“How few are willing to sacrifice to bring souls to the knowledge of Christ! There is much talking, much professed love for perishing souls; but talk is cheap stuff. It is earnest Christian zeal that is wanted—a zeal that will be manifested by doing something. All must now work for themselves, and when they have Jesus in their hearts they will confess Him to others. No more could a soul who possesses Christ be hindered from confessing Him than could the waters of Niagara be stopped from flowing over the falls.”

“A superficial faith results in a superficial experience. . . . The Lord desires that every soul who claims to believe the truth shall have an intelligent knowledge of what is truth.”

“God has appointed means, if we will use them diligently and prayerfully, that no vessel shall be shipwrecked, but outride the tempest and storm, and anchor in the haven of bliss at last.”

**REACT**

1. God empowers those whom He calls to service. How have you experienced this in your life?

2. How have you heard the lion’s roar thus far in this quarter’s study? For example, what have you identified as essential additions or deletions from your life to strengthen yourself to be a fisher of men?

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2. Ibid., p. 17.

Faith Johnson Crumbly, Hagerstown, Maryland, U.S.A.
Pretend you joined the SWAT team with no training and you’re going into a drug bust with criminals behind the other side of the door. Your leader yells, “Lock and load!” Your teammates quickly prepare their weapons, but you’re clueless as to what to do. Before you have time to ask, your team bursts out of the van and rushes to the door. In a panic you decide that you’ll just have to hide behind your colleagues and trust them to get the job done. Just before the battering ram plunges through the door, you’re signaled to be the first one to enter the building. Suddenly, you’re on the front lines against unknown dangers and you’re carrying a weapon you don’t know how to use.

Of course, the SWAT team would never go into a raid so unprepared, but this is often how we feel when it’s time to pass out flyers, work with the homeless, or witness to a friend. We want to hide behind the knowledge and spiritual gifts of our friends, hoping that the work will get done without us having to fire a single shot. These hopes are usually based on our lack of preparation and training. How can we change that?

Get to know Jesus. This step is so important we should never stop doing it. It’s the very first step in evangelism, because evangelism is all about Him. Our daily relationship with Jesus is what motivates our evangelism. The term “lock and load” means to pause and prepare your weapon for battle. When Jesus was in our position, He made time every day to connect with His Father. How often do you lock and load?

Truly understand the message we want to spread. The three angels’ messages are simple, yet they can be confusing. It’s easy to think that they are just about destruction, but they really tell us that God wants to save everyone. Peter tells us that God is patient with us, “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9, NIV). Let your friends know you want to be with them forever. Your message is actually great news!

Train, prepare, and start practicing. Put some real time and thought into your evangelism. Train yourself to be the best you can be. Get your church friends involved and ask for advice. Finally, just begin. Every experience is practice, and the Holy Spirit will be with you every step of the way.

Jarrod Purkeypile, Linwood, Kansas, U.S.A.
The origin of the saying “Share the gospel and when necessary, use words” is controversial, but there was an elder in my church who used to say it a lot. This statement always urges me to examine how we usually think we are to share the gospel. We usually talk, preach, and sermonize to evangelize people. Doing so, however, is one-sided and dangerous to one’s spiritual life. Stories abound on how individuals have brought many people to the truth, but who have lost their own souls in the end.

The Bible is not silent concerning how Jesus, our true Pattern, shared the gospel and ministered to others. He trained 12 individuals (and 70 more), who turned the world upside down by not only their words, but also by how they lived.

Do we really know by experience “that the Lord is good”?

Take note how Jesus phrased this call to be His disciples when He said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19, NKJV). This tells us that first we are to study Jesus’ life and seek to make His character our own. We are to have the same motivation and the same love for souls as He does. We are to have our own personal testimonies on how the gospel affects us, for we can only really share what we have. So do we really know by experience “that the Lord is good”? (Ps. 34:8, NKJV).

Jesus said to follow Him. This means that we should study His methodology on how to reach out and minister to people. From one-on-one interviews, to talking to hundreds, then to thousands of people, Jesus left us an example. Nevertheless, how often do we find ourselves running after the methodologies of men, drinking from the “broken cisterns” (Jer. 2:13) of the world?

Yes, in sharing the gospel, we have to use words. But more important, it is our lives and characters that are “known and read of all men” (2 Cor. 3:2). When we maintain a living connection with our Savior, His promise to make us fishers of men will be fulfilled in us.

**REACT**

1. How does being personally revived and reformed in Christ help a person to be an effective soul winner?
2. What can we do to help people become interested in soul-winning activities?

Melody Matudan-Page, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE

Evangelism is sharing the good news. For most of us who are disciples of Jesus, that does not mean standing in the pulpit and preaching to the millions of lost people. It means learning what God wants each of us to do with the gifts and opportunities He presents to us, and then getting up and doing it. When we set our priorities according to God’s ways, we have both time and inclination to work for Him. If we lack the training and mentoring we need, we look for them and prepare ourselves to be productive for the eternal Kingdom. There are hundreds of ways for us to share the message of salvation, whether with one person or with a few or a large number. Every disciple of Jesus has the task of sharing. With the daily presence of the Holy Spirit, every disciple will feel inclined to find his or her evangelistic work and do it.

CONSIDER

• Making a 40-day prayer commitment for a particular time of day. Pray for the Spirit of God to tell you what kind of sharing to do. Pray for a short time, and listen for a while. Write down everything that comes from these prayers.
• Creating an infographic with a design program like Photoshop that outlines the message of salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Study the steps in the Bible and incorporate texts that indicate the path to salvation.
• Organizing a prayer walk for the neighborhood around your church. Set a date and time (after church is good), ask for volunteers, divide them into groups, and instruct them to walk the blocks nearby, praying at intervals for the people who live there. Consider knocking on doors one by one and asking people if you can pray for something specific.
• Asking your pastor to set up and conduct training for such activities as giving Bible studies and presenting seminars. Take the initiative and help him or her in practical ways to make this happen.
• Reviewing DVDs from Christian sources and creating a Friday-night series for the young adults you know. Choose a theme, such as Christian sports movies, discipleship videos, Christian nature DVDs, or topical study DVDs. Find a venue where young adults would like to hang out.

CONNECT


Tim Lale, Boise, Idaho, U.S.A.
“How shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,

who bring glad tidings of good things!’ ” (Rom. 10:15, NKJV).
Have you ever heard the phrase, “He (or she) is as dumb as a rock”? Do we as Christians sometimes want to be more like rocks than like living, organic matter? Would we rather sit in our pews for, say, four or five thousand years as sermons and familiar tunes from the hymnal wash over us? The problem is that such a state of being isn’t physical life, and it certainly isn’t a vital Christian life.

Fortunately, when instinct kicks in, most of us have a strong desire to be alive. It’s called self-preservation. And being alive is to ever be in the process of changing. Chances are if you think you are forestalling change, you’re in fact dying or decaying. Ask any health professional what happens when you stop exercising but keep on eating. One changes, but it is change in the wrong direction.

The same is true of the life of the church and the spiritual life of the individual Christian. If the church or the individual Christian really has God’s message for the world, remaining silent about it is not an option. We will spread the message, and people will hear it, see it manifested in the collective life of the church, be attracted to both the message and the church that spreads it, and will want to be part of it themselves. In short, the church will grow. If the church forgets this principle and merely tries to hold on to what it thinks it has, it will eventually discover that it no longer possesses it. So to live as a real Christian is to do ministry.

Ministry can be defined in this instance as the intentional and purposeful use of the gifts of individual Christians to spread the gospel. Ministry brings positive change and growth to us as individual Christians, as well as to those to whom we minister. That is why when God, through His Spirit, calls us into the church, He also sends us out—releases us—into ministry to meet the physical and spiritual needs of those around us, to be the feet that bring glad tidings of good things.

This week we will explore ways in which we as a church can help one another as we make use of our God-given talents for ministry.

Alan Steven Hecht, Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A.
Who Should Go? (Matt. 7:17, 18; John 4:36)

Not everyone who professes a zeal for ministry and saving souls has pure motives (Matt. 7:15). As a congregation considers who among them is qualified to be released into ministry, it is crucial that the church recognizes its limitations. No human is able to read the motives of another person’s heart. How wonderful, then, that God accounted for this limitation by supplying guidance in Matthew 7:15–20.

No one person should carry the burdens of ministry alone.

“It does not matter how many we enlist for the cause, but how many we conquer for Christ. That is why all along our emphasis must be upon quality of life. If we get the right quality of leadership, the rest will follow.”1 One of the most precious fruit of a good Christian is humility. John 4:35–38 describes two people sowing and reaping, laboring for souls in such a way that everyone rejoices in the final outcome regardless of what role they personally played in the salvation of that soul. It is crucial to remember that good fruit will be far more productive in spreading the gospel than bad fruit wrapped in fanfare. “The best work is always done with a few. Better to give a year or so to one or two men who learn what it means to conquer for Christ than to spend a lifetime with a congregation just keeping the program going.”2

How Should They Go? (Exod. 18:13–26)

No one person should carry the burdens of ministry alone. The story of Jethro and Moses provides an example of how Christ’s disciples can organize themselves for efficiency in sharing the work of ministry. Moses models the fruit of humility by not only listening to and accepting his father-in-law’s counsel, but by giving up some of his personal control in the sharing of leadership with others.

“One must decide where he wants his ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of his life in a few chosen men who will carry on his work after he has gone.”3 There is room in God’s service for more than just key leadership to receive the benefits of making a difference in other people’s lives. Furthermore, Jethro’s counsel contains within it the chance of burnout (verse 18) should leaders refuse to relinquish some of their power, and/or should God’s people expect certain leaders to do all the work. It is important to observe that Jethro does not recommend a “get help from anyone you can” method. Rather, he suggests that certain fruit be observed in the lives of individuals prior to placing them in leadership (verse 21).
Even in Conflict? (Acts 6:1–8)

That there is work enough to go around should not be disputed. Jesus plainly stated in Matthew 9:37, 38 that the fields are ripe for harvest. True to human nature, however, the catalyst for sending out more laborers is frequent when some sort of difficulty arises. Acts 6:1–8 tells the story of a problem within the early church over the apparent inequality of daily distribution. Rather than become distracted from their calling and embroiled in a debate over whether the accusations were legitimate or not, the disciples quickly recognized the need for more laborers. Perhaps the complaint had surfaced before in smaller settings in which the disciples had attempted to some degree to meet the problem. Perhaps the Twelve had all been involved with it to some degree at one time or another. The fact that they chose seven men to help oversee this project seems to indicate that the daily distribution program was a much more time-consuming project than just one or two disciples could manage.

In humility, the twelve disciples delegated some of their leadership power to others and opened the door for spiritual gifts to grow, which resulted in a more rapid spread of the gospel. Again the choice of who should fill these new positions was not left to a “get-whomever-you-can-find” type of selection process. Acts 6:3 defines the general parameters the congregation was to use in looking for their new gospel servants, and Acts 6:7, 8 describes the outcome.

Similarly, it was within the context of conflict that Barnabas chose to take John Mark on a mission to Cyprus (Acts 15:36–40). This controversy demonstrates the importance of staying focused on the Gospel Commission while turning difficulties into opportunities.

“We must always remember, too, that the goal is world conquest. We dare not let a lesser concern capture our strategy of the moment. All too many times one has been brought to the place of service only to be discharged with no further training or inspiration. . . . Before long a promising leader is spoiled for want of supervision.” 4 Thankfully, in the case of John Mark, the spiritual gifts in him were recognized by Barnabas and developed at a time when almost certainly Satan was working to prevent John Mark from ever becoming useful in the ministry.

**REACT**

1. What are some good fruit you like to see in spiritual leadership? Why?
2. What are some of the risks/benefits of sharing burdens in ministry?
3. What role does conflict often play in preventing the Gospel Commission from being accomplished?

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2. Ibid., p. 117.
3. Ibid., p. 37.
4. Ibid., p. 100.
The first step toward evangelizing the world is allowing God to prepare us for doing so.

“The good tree will produce good fruit. If the fruit is unpalatable and worthless, the tree is evil. So the fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character. Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith that acts by love and purifies the soul. And though the eternal reward is not bestowed because of our merit, yet it will be in proportion to the work that has been done through the grace of Christ.

“Let everyone do his best to improve his talents.”

“Thus Christ set forth the principles of His kingdom, and showed them to be the great rule of life. To impress the lesson He adds an illustration. It is not enough, He says, for you to hear My words. By obedience you must make them the foundation of your character.”¹

The second step is being willing to be used of God in whatever capacity He chooses to engage us. This sometimes includes taking us out of our comfort zone to develop strengths in us that we might not otherwise discover. It also requires us to recognize that those around us have been called and are in development as well.

“‘One soweth, and another reapeth’ [John 4:37]. The Saviour spoke these words in anticipation of the ordination and sending forth of His disciples. Throughout Judea, Christ had been sowing the seeds of truth. Clearly and distinctly He had outlined the plan of salvation; for the truth never languished on His lips. . . .

“God has need of wise men and women who will labor earnestly to accomplish the work committed to them. He will use them as His instruments in the conversion of souls. Some will sow, and some will reap the harvest of the seed sown. Let everyone do his best to improve his talents, that God may use him either as a sower or as a reaper.”²

**REACT**

1. How can different generations in the local church combine/interact to spread the gospel?
2. What happens to fruit that just sits on the shelf? Are “good works” of more benefit at home, in the local church, or out in the field? Explain.

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Kathy Coleman Hecht, Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A.
Early in the Christian church, the words *disciple* and *apostle* acquired ha-
os, the latter more than the former. A disciple is not the same thing as an
apostle, but it is necessary to be a disciple to be an apostle. The word dis-
cipulus, from which we get *disciple*, is Latin, and a literal translation of the
Koine Greek *mathetes*. Both words mean “learner” or “student.” We derive
the word *mathematics* from the same Greek root. Originally mathematics ge-
erically referred to a field of study, as does the word *discipline* today. Even
the common use of the word *discipline* to mean “punishment” expresses the
sometimes vain hope that the subject will learn from an experience.

The disciple was expected to show the world the . . . usefulness
of the master’s teachings.

In the ancient world a disciple was someone who followed the personal
discipline of a teacher or master. The disciple was given opportunities to
put his master’s teachings into practice, or to teach those parts of them in
which he (almost always *he* in that age) was knowledgeable or proficient.
But he was not sent forth on his own, and he exercised whatever authority
he had under strict supervision. Sometimes, as in Mark 9:16–29, the master
had to clean up after an inexperienced or incompetent disciple.

But the goal of discipleship was not merely to bask in the wisdom and
knowledge of the teacher. At some point, the disciple had to go into the
world and apply the knowledge and techniques he had acquired, without
the master hovering in the background ready to reassemble the pieces if
the process went awry. The disciple was expected to show the world the
merit and usefulness of the master’s teachings. In a sense, he was to be
the master to the people he encountered, to accurately teach what he had
been taught and make it his own. And there we come to the word *apostle*,
from the Koine Greek *apostolos*. An *apostolos* was (is) one who is sent forth
as a representative.

The church, as the body of Christ, bears the responsibility of gathering
disciples to learn the ways of the Master, and of guiding them through the
disciplines of the Christian life so that they too can be sent forth, literally to
become apostles.

**REACT**

How does God overcome the inadequacy sometimes seen even in the
efforts of mature Christians as they represent Him?

*Joseph Baker, Terre Haute, Indiana, U.S.A.*
Running shoes come in styles for every taste and function. Don’t see what you want? Customize! Pick a color, choose a sport, and choose a product type, so you can run in your own “armor” and have those beautiful feet Paul talks about (Rom. 10:15).

\[\text{Be passionate about God and the people He created.}\]

Church leaders usually do a good job of getting out the Good News. They do their part, and you need to do yours. God designed you to reach out in witness to your family, friends, fellow students, and beyond! He customized you for a specific task that, combined with others in your church, produces harmony, health, and growth. Plus, you’ll be running for your eternal life and for the eternal lives of others.

Learning from Moses, Matthew, John, and Paul in the Scripture passages above, we know that leaders get burned out if they don’t get others involved in the race. This is where you come in. You’ll need to run for your life! So let’s go back to the idea of customizing your running shoes:

- **Pick a color.** Start with your own ID. Discover your personality! Take a temperament inventory. Study your spiritual gifts. Learn how God designed you. Be passionate about God and the people He created.

- **Choose a sport.** What type of witnessing appeals to you? What ways of interacting with others has brought you joy? One on one? Leading a campaign? Joining forces with other community outreach programs? Raising funds to assist people who are hungry, homeless, or jobless? The ideas are limitless and fueled by your own ingenuity!

- **Choose a product type.** Know your situation, goals, and options. Gear up. Get the best fit. Get the training you need that will teach you the most about the people out there. Ask your leaders about workshops and seminars. Go online. Find out how to run toward your goal unimpeded.

Got beautiful feet? Run for your life—and theirs . . . On your mark, get set, go!

**REACT**

1. How can you show your leaders that you love God, that you are capable, responsible, trustworthy, and generous with your time, treasure, and talents?

2. What types of “stretching exercises” could you do to prepare for action and to be active at the same time?

Debbie Eisele, Washington, District of Columbia, U.S.A.
Sharing the gospel implies that one wants to share and has something to share. There is a blessing in sharing that comes from nothing else. The ability to see the “light” go on, the proverbial “I’ve got it” gives such joy that it is incomparable to any other feeling—even love.

Jesus shared the truth with perpetual love.

When you have a desire to share, you do all that you can. The question is, How does one get sent? The answer? We are all sent! We have no excuse. However, so many Christians don’t feel “called” to preach. But really, everyone is called to preach. We are sent forth to proclaim (preach) the goodness of God to those with whom we come in contact. How? We proclaim by our actions. But how do we network with those we know and those with whom we come in contact? What do we proclaim? Peace. Peace is an active word. It doesn’t mean complacency. Rather, it implies that we “do” peace. By proclaiming (verb) we bring (verb) peace. We have to be out among those with whom we want to share (verb) the gospel.

Sharing isn’t always a crusade—but is always evangelistic. Evangelism is more than a seminar. Evangelism is sharing the gospel of peace. Christianity is active. Where was Jesus often found? He spent much of His time among the people. He did not spend most of His time exhorting or in traditional preaching. He spent most of His time proclaiming, by being in the midst of the people, by sharing a friendly touch, fulfilling needs (physical and spiritual), eating with people in their houses—places where everyone was comfortable and thus more open to the gospel. He never placed Himself above them physically, socially, or mentally. Although He was head and shoulders above everyone, He was humble. He shared the truth with perpetual love. He shared the purity of the gospel with no desire to climb the political ladder.

When we proclaim in this manner, we are sharing the gospel of peace and we bring good tidings. Wherever we go, we will leave joy and beauty. We will leave Christ who is the gospel of peace. We actively, consciously, proclaim in the manner Christ has sent us to proclaim.

**REACT**

1. What is the most important method of evangelism?
2. What would be the most effective way to reach you personally?
CONCLUDE

If the church or the individual Christian really has God’s message for the world, remaining silent about it is not an option. No one person should carry the burdens of ministry alone. Moses models his openness and humble nature by not only listening to and accepting his father-in-law’s counsel, but by giving up some of his personal control in the sharing of leadership with others. The church, as the body of Christ, bears the responsibility of gathering disciples to learn Jesus’ teachings, and to guide them through the practices of the Christian life so they too can become apostles. We can get the training we need that will teach us the most. This sometimes includes getting out of our comfort zone to develop strengths in us that we might not otherwise know we had. Sharing isn’t always about evangelistic meetings—but sharing is always evangelistic. Use what you learn and what God calls you to do. Then go out!

CONSIDER

- Inviting non-Christian friends for a nature walk. Look for a chance to explain why you believe in a literal six-day creation.
- Giving Bible studies to someone who is interested in learning more about the Christian faith, or start a course with some other members, such as a Revelation seminar or a cooking class.
- Starting a small group with people you know who do not know Jesus. Tell them that you want to discuss spiritual subjects and to have a good time getting to know each other better.
- Making a plan with graphs for how your young adult class could be divided into small groups to which you can invite your friends. Include a calendar for when you would all get together for worship.
- Preparing a drama that illustrates the experience of discovering Jesus as your Savior. Perform it at an outreach event.
- Writing some study and discussion questions for a small group based on some chapters in one of the New Testament Gospels. Offer these questions to someone who runs a small group, or use them in your own small group.

CONNECT

Messages to Young People.

Karin Wieczorek, Melbourne, Australia.
A Love Response

“If you love Me, keep My commandments”

(John 14:15, NKJV).
As a Christian, you know something incredible. You know that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. You know that the Creator of our universe loves you. You know that He sent His only Son to die and to redeem you from the sin that separates you from His holiness. You have accepted Christ as your Redeemer and have made Him Lord of your life. But is it enough to just know and have accepted?

At the end of His life on earth, Jesus gave one last command to His followers. “‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations’” (Matt. 28:19, ESV). He sent them out to baptize and teach others about Himself and about how to follow Him. This was not a suggestion. His last words were not “Now you all be good, be happy, and make sure to be nice to each other.” He commanded them to go forth and tell others about Him. It is not enough to just know Him.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Paul asks, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?” (Rom. 10:14, ESV). Do you remember the first time you heard about the good news of Christ? It may have been a friend or a coworker who brought you to the Lord. Perhaps it was a radio sermon or a book that made you stop and think. Or, you may have grown up in a family where your parents told you about God’s love from an early age. However the gospel came to you, in almost every situation, another person was on the other end, prayerfully sharing the love of Christ.

How can we keep the greatest news of our lives to ourselves? It is not our news to keep. It is a message of love that Jesus died to bring. It is our job to “go forth” and spread the Good News. We can start today, right now. Begin at home, at work, and at school. The most effective evangelism happens between two people who know each other. Your friends and family need to be told! Don’t just assume they already know. The best part about this job is that Jesus is going to go with us. He promises, “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20, ESV).

Ruth Abel, Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A.
John tackles two of the most misunderstood topics in life—love and God. All of us have struggled with either one or both of these topics, and John wastes no time in connecting the two. Following the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), and the death of James (his brother), and Peter and Paul, John writes as one who has learned to love regardless of his circumstances. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the believers were scattered among the provinces of Rome. John writes to them to help them fight the urge to hurt and hate their oppressors.

**Fear and love are mutually exclusive.**

While 1 Corinthians 13 is usually referred to as “the love chapter,” 1 John 4 could also be referred to as such. However, verse 18 introduces a noun that is incongruent with love. That noun is *fear*. This noun appears only three times in the book of 1 John, and all of these occurrences are in this verse. Fear and love are mutually exclusive. One could infer this from just the numerical count of occurrences of these two words in 1 John; but verse 18 expands on their incompatibility.

Perfect love casts out, expels, banishes, evicts, removes, dismisses fear because perfect love and fear cannot coexist. That is why a Christian who fears judgment has not yet been perfected in Christ’s love and needs to grow in his or her understanding of Christ’s sacrificial love and the Trinity’s gift of that love to us.

When it comes to evangelism, each of us must strive to speak the truth in love. Otherwise, the truth will fall on deaf ears. Our goal is not to scare people into the kingdom of God by preaching punishment and eternal damnation. Our goal is to remove the scales from the eyes of those who have yet to be perfected in His love. Verse 19 reminds us that we love God because He first loved us. This truth should instill in us an urgency to reach a dying world and to be patient as we live out our lives and reveal to others the love of the Master.

**REACT**

1. What attracts people more—your display of love or your knowledge of doctrinal truth? Give a reason for your answer.
2. How would you explain the plan of salvation without scaring people with the reality of sin and God’s judgment against it?

God created this world with a perfect plan in place. Daily He would walk in the garden with Adam and Eve and commune with them face to face. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, and were therefore sinless. There was no unholiness that separated them from their Creator until sin made its ugly mark on the face of God’s new world. Since then, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray” (Isa 53:6, NIV). We are separated from God by our sin.

Jesus came to this world with a single mission—to save us and to redeem us from our sins. He came to lead us back to God’s plan. He describes His mission in the following way:

“‘The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost’” (Luke 19:10, NIV). Despite our purposeful rejection of God’s loving plan, He loves us so much that He came to take upon Himself all of our sins. He also accepted our punishment as His. He bought us back! Although Jesus’ sacrifice is a gift to everyone, those who want it must accept it. When an individual does so, Jesus expects that person to do two things: (1) follow Him, and (2) stop engaging in sinful behavior. He has made it clear in the Word what our lives should look like. In fact, just like Jesus, we each have our own mission to carry out. Through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, we are able to follow Him in all that we do.

A Command and the Tool to Evangelize (Matt. 28:18–20; John 16:5–11; Acts 1:8)

When Jesus returned to heaven, He left those watching Him with these commands:

“‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you’” (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV). Obeying these commands is part of being a Christian. In the days before Jesus was crucified, He spent time with His disciples, explaining to them about His return to heaven. They were distressed because He would no longer be with them. He comforted them by telling them that His leaving would actu-
ally be beneficial to their evangelistic work. He said, “‘I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you’” (John 16:7, NIV). Then, just before He returned to heaven, He promised them again that the Holy Spirit would come to them so that they would be able witness to others about Jesus (Acts 1:8).

The work of evangelism may be difficult, but Jesus has given us the tool to get the job done. That tool is the Holy Spirit.

**Our Mission (Acts 2:38)**

We know Jesus today because of the work His disciples undertook to evangelize the world. The same message that passed to others from their time down to ours is the message we are to share. Peter stated that message simply when he wrote, “‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38, NIV). Everything we need to accomplish is found in the Spirit. Peter later wrote that “his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet. 1:3, NIV).

Sometimes it is easy to think that only pastors or evangelists are to reach the world for Christ, or that we have to take special classes before we are able to tell others about God. However, Jesus gives us the ability to do so through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Our friends, family, neighbors, classmates, and coworkers are those with whom we are to share God’s love. We are to continue the work the disciples began more than two thousand years ago. And the disciples we lead to Christ are to continue the cycle by telling more people about Jesus. Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost. Our mission is to seek the lost and tell them about who can save them.

**REACT**

Review Matthew 28:19, 20. Then answer the following questions: (1) What is involved in “going”? (2) What does baptism symbolize, and why is it important for people to be baptized when they accept Christ? (3) What is the significance of being baptized in the name of all three members of the Trinity? (4) In what various ways can we teach people to obey? (5) Why is it important to remember that Jesus will be with us always while we fulfill His command?

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Ryan Abel, Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A.
A man digging a well was suddenly buried alive. Instantly the alarm was sent out, and mechanics, farmers, merchants, lawyers, hurried breathlessly to the rescue. Ropes, ladders, spades, and shovels were brought by eager, willing hands. A pipe was let down and contact was made with the man. “It is fearful in here,” he cried. Encouraged, his rescuers persevered. Ellen White used this illustration to help us understand what it meant to have a “burden for souls.” What brought these people to this man’s rescue—mechanics, farmers, merchants, and lawyers—people with no obvious expertise in well digging? Human suffering evokes strong emotions and also unbelievable acts of bravery and generosity. The greatest human crisis, however, is unperceived by most people—a life separated from the Source of life itself.¹

“It is fearful in here,” he cried.

“Was this too great zeal and interest, too great enthusiasm, to save one man? It surely was not; but what is the loss of temporal life in comparison with the loss of a soul? If the threatened loss of a life will arouse in human hearts a feeling so intense, should not the loss of a soul arouse even deeper solicitude in men who claim to realize the danger of those apart from Christ? Shall not the servants of God show as great zeal in laboring for the salvation of souls as was shown for the life of that one man buried in a well?”²

The sight of people without hope and needing the assurance of God’s love is mandate enough for us to share the good news with them. However, the motivation for doing so comes from realizing something greater. “In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which ‘seeketh not her own’ has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.”³ It was love that caused Jesus to exchange heaven for Calvary in order to save us. For us to share that salvation with others, it will take just that—self-sacrificing love.

REACT

How can someone be involved in witnessing yet still not love those to whom they are witnessing? What motivates such a person? What are some dangers of witnessing from a motivation other than love?

2. Ibid., p. 32.
3. The Desire of Ages, p. 20.
Imagine dating someone who constantly has to be reminded he or she is in a relationship. Perhaps your significant other forgets to introduce you to some acquaintances you bump into at the restaurant. Or even worse, conversation is routinely cut short when someone interrupts your daily phone call. Sooner or later, there will be no relationship to talk about. This week we’ve been focusing on the causal effect love has on witnessing and evangelism. Our relationship with Christ naturally compels us to witness. Our motivation centers on our love for God and lost humanity. So let’s explore some pointers for maintaining this mission of love.

**Unbelievers long for more than a lecture series.**

*Keep connected.* It’s impossible to overstate the obvious need for prayer and personal Bible study. Once we appreciate who God is and what He does, we’ll desire to know Him better and to reach to lost souls.

*Understand the message.* Seventh-day Adventists have a unique message to share. It’s a tune no other denomination is humming. Review Revelation 14:6–12, and try to understand the significance of the three angels’ messages.

*Keep it natural.* When you have a job you’re passionate about, it’s not difficult to talk about it. The same is true with witnessing. When you’re truly in love with Christ, your work is simply to believe in Him (John 6:28, 29). Understanding why you are called to witness takes the pressure off how to witness. Whether you travel to remote regions of the world, leave tracts in public restrooms, or witness through acts of service, your life will synchronize with evangelism. Unbelievers long for more than a lecture series; they’re looking for a people whose actions speak louder than words.

*Eliminate fear.* Perfect love eliminates fear (1 John 4:18, 19). We often start out with great intentions, or sometimes our witnessing efforts are stunted by fear, guilt, and shame. If you find yourself frustrated and stressed about your outreach, ask why you are doing what you’re doing. If evangelism equals anxious nerves, you need to reevaluate the source of your motivation.

**REACT**

1. Why is it so important for our motivation for evangelism to be driven by love?

2. How can leaders better prevent evangelistic programming details and logistics from consuming the purpose of the Great Commission?
Evangelism. It’s one of the most important parts of Christianity. Yet it’s also one of the most overlooked. So often we attend various Bible studies, prophecy seminars, and other types of meetings that promote our own religious education. Doing so is important to one’s personal growth in Christ, but what else are we forgetting to do? “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation’ ” (Mark 16:15, ESV). It’s just that simple.

Yet so many times we get caught up in educating ourselves that we forget about the most important thing we can do—sharing what we’ve learned with others who lack the knowledge God has for them.

I recently taught a Sabbath School class, and the topic was evangelism. I talked about how God gave Jonah a specific message to share. Yet he was reluctant to share it. I asked class members what would keep them from sharing the message of salvation with others. One person answered, “I’m scared that I’ll come across as ‘holier than thou,’ and I’m never quite sure how to talk to someone without seeming judgmental.” Others said that they refrained from witnessing because they know certain people will just reject what they say.

I think the main question we must ask ourselves is similar to the one I asked in Sabbath School. Why are we hesitant to evangelize? We first must get to the root of our problem. Then we can figure out how to let God work with us despite our fear or lack of incentive. Also, we often think that people won’t listen, don’t care, and might scorn what we have to say. We need to replace such thoughts with the truth that it is through God’s power that salvation is given, and therefore we are not to be ashamed (Rom. 1:16). Through ourselves alone we can do nothing. God is the One who opens the hearts and minds of others.

**REACT**

1. What should be the most important part of our lives?
2. How can we make evangelism something we do daily?

Hannah Goldstein, Sykesville, Maryland, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE

An inevitable reaction to the love that God bestows upon us is to share Him. Sharing His love, sharing the Word, sharing the sacrifice, is a response to God’s love, not a requirement. In reality, God has no requirements other than that we love him with all our minds, all our hearts, and all our souls. However, we respond to the life-changing experience of salvation by being instruments of the Lord to reach others, anywhere and everywhere in the world where there is suffering. Because we are not ashamed of the gospel, we consider evangelism to be a large part of our church’s growth, both literally and spiritually. Today we have many ways and innumerable resources we may use to reach others for the kingdom.

CONSIDER

- Producing a short YouTube video inviting people to your youth group or church meetings.
- Designing a screen-printed shirt or hat for your church’s next evangelistic meetings. Make several and pass them out to the ushers, helpers, or anyone else involved.
- Raising money for a local mission trip with your youth group. Find out what needs to be done in your part of the world and organize a mission trip to meet that need. Raise money through yard sales, bake sales, car washes, etc.
- Making a list of at least ten different ways in which evangelism can be done. Along with a friend, choose one or two of the ways and do them.
- Visiting the General Conference Adventist Mission Web site at www.adventistmission.org to learn about how the Seventh-day Adventist Church is making disciples throughout the world.
- Looking in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal for songs about discipleship. Offer to lead out in a song service after the mission story is told in Sabbath School. Have the congregation select at least two of the songs.

CONNECT

Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 1 John 4:18, 19. The Desire of Ages, chap. 86; Medical Ministry, pp. 303, 304, beginning with a “Mission in Every City”; Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 115; Evangelism, chaps. 1–5.
“Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught”

(Mark 6:30, NKJV).
“If a tree falls in the forest but no one hears it, does it make a sound?”

The room was instantly filled with puzzled faces. With this question, our psychology professor introduced the topic for that day’s class: perception. The response to this question gave rise to an extensive discussion. Some argued that the tree would make a sound. Others insisted that it wouldn’t. The answer depended upon the definition of sound.

If the events in the Bible had never been reported, what would we know about them today?

According to www.dictionary.com, sound is defined as “the sensation produced by stimulation of the organs of hearing by vibrations transmitted through the air or other medium.”* So although the tree fell, the vibrations it produced couldn’t stimulate anyone’s ears because no one was there. Therefore, technically speaking there was no sound because the event was not perceived by anyone. And as a result, there cannot be a record of the incident. It is as if the phenomenon never occurred.

The events we read about in Holy Scripture were not all recorded as soon as they took place. However, we can learn about them now because people who witnessed them firsthand declared to others what they had seen. These statements served as evidence to future generations who then created written records of these events. These records are what we now know as our Bible. If the events in the Bible had never been reported, what would we know about them today?

In Numbers 13:17–33, we read the story of 12 men who were sent by Moses to bring a specific report of the land of Canaan. These men were thrilled to report that Canaan did indeed flow with milk and honey. However, their good report was followed by discouraging descriptions about the people who populated the land. The negative words they spoke shattered the hope of those who waited so long to enter into the Promised Land. So extreme was their disappointment that they considered returning to Egypt instead of moving forward, trusting solely in God’s promise.

The Bible says that we are saved through faith, and that faith comes from hearing the word of God (Eph. 2:8; Rom.10:17). This week’s lesson explores how hearing about the outcomes of our church’s evangelistic efforts energizes, directs, and informs the church’s activities and enhances its effectiveness.

*Cenia Rivas, Glen Cove, New York, U.S.A.

Reporting sometimes gets a bad rap. Sometimes people associate reporting with bragging and being prideful, so they’re reluctant to share. I’ve also noticed that some people think that paying too much attention to numbers or results is somehow unspiritual, so they’ll say, “Let’s just leave the results to God.” But the Scriptures point out several reasons why reporting can have a transformational effect on churches and communities.

**Reports Help the Church to Prepare Spiritually for an Event** *(Num. 13:1, 17–33)*

It’s been said that the first thing any leader must do is to establish reality. What are things actually like? What are the true conditions on the ground? So Moses challenged the spies to go into the land God had promised to give them and to come back with a report of what they saw.

He wanted to know how many people were in the land, whether they were strong or weak, and what resources the land contained. When the spies returned with their report, many people were initially discouraged because the challenges seemed so great. Moses, however, used that information to help him and the people understand what they would be facing. Someone preparing for the 400-meter run in the Olympics is going to prepare much differently from someone preparing for a jog around their neighborhood. So the challenge determines the preparation.


Peter had just healed a lame man by the entrance to the temple. As a result, many of the witnesses began praising God, and a crowd of onlookers began to gather (Acts 3:11). Seeing their amazed looks, Peter used this event as an opportunity to witness to the people and to reveal to them the source of his healing power. Then he and John were arrested and threatened by the religious leaders. Upon leaving jail, they reported back to their companions and leaders the threats that had been made against them. This is where it gets interesting. As a result of the threats, the believers started to pray and ask God for further boldness. What
was the end result? The place where they were literally shook with the power of the Holy Spirit and they began speaking with boldness (verse 30). Seeing the Holy Spirit at work further unified the believers, and they began to hold all things in common (verse 32). Thus we learn that hearing a report about a difficult reality can help a church prepare spiritually. In this example, the church boldly prayed for a miracle. The result? An outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

**Reports Provide Opportunities for Learning (Acts 11:1–30)**

In Acts 11:3, some of the leaders complained to Peter because he had eaten with uncircumcised men. This confrontation became a teachable moment when Peter told them about the vision God had given him. Before that time, Jews believed it was improper to associate with any Gentiles. After Peter’s vision, the burgeoning Christian community clearly understood that the gospel is to go out to all people, not just the Jews. This became an occasion for praise.

**Reports Share Methods and Strategies to Help the Church to Grow (Acts 17:16–34; 1 Cor. 9:19–23)**

Why is it that when people are successful, they sometimes keep their strategies and methods to themselves? In gospel work, however, we must strive to share with each other the strategies and methods that are working well. In this case, the apostle Paul shares the nugget of his evangelistic strategy—he seeks to find common ground with those he’s trying to reach. This, of course, was a radically new concept. In Acts 17, we see Paul looking for common ground with the people in Athens. After finding that common ground, he uses it as a bridge for them to connect with the gospel in ways they would understand. Paul shared the methods he was using and thus has been a powerful blessing to the church ever since.

**REACT**

1. What do you think are the greatest benefits of reporting back to a church?
2. Why are people sometimes shy about reporting what’s happening?
3. When have you personally heard reports that have helped a church prepare spiritually for an event, lead to the presence of the Holy Spirit, provide opportunities for learning, and share methods to help the church to grow?
“Several years had passed since the brethren in Jerusalem, with representatives from other leading churches, gave careful consideration to the perplexing questions that had arisen over methods followed by those who were laboring for the Gentiles. As a result of this council, the brethren had united in making definite recommendations to the churches concerning certain rites and customs, including circumcision. . . .

“Among those present at this meeting, were some who had severely criticized the methods of labor followed by the apostles upon whom rested the chief burden of carrying the gospel to the Gentile world. But during the council their views of God’s purpose had broadened, and they had united with their brethren in making wise decisions which made possible the unification of the entire body of believers.”¹

“After the presentation of the gifts, Paul ‘declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.’ This recital of facts brought to the hearts of all, even of those who had been doubting, the conviction that the blessing of heaven had accompanied his labors. ‘When they heard it, they glorified the Lord.’ They felt that the methods of labor pursued by the apostle bore the signet of Heaven. . . .

“This was the golden opportunity for all the leading brethren to confess frankly that God had wrought through Paul.”²

Ellen White also emphasizes the importance of reporting effective fund-raising and philanthropy efforts in support of the church’s work to fulfill the divine commission. She wrote, “Let those who labor in the interests of the cause of God lay the necessities of the work in [name of city omitted by compiler] before the wealthy men of the world. Do this judiciously. Tell them what you are trying to do. Solicit donations from them. It is God’s means which they have, means which should be used in enlightening the world.”³

**REACT**

1. What can your church do with the information reported back from missionary and evangelistic work?

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Andres Maldonado, West Hempstead, New York, U.S.A.
Paul was truly the evangelist to the Gentiles. Because of his ministry, the churches of Rome, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and elsewhere were on the same page theologically, organizationally, and evangelistically. This alone could be a lesson in church accountability—that Paul held congregations accountable while giving an account of his own actions. However, Paul’s example doesn’t stop there.

**Paul’s response is a lesson in mutual accountability.**

In Acts 21, Paul comes before James and the elders. James, Jesus’ brother, and the Jerusalem elders were leaders of the Christian movement. When Paul went before them, he “reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry” (verse 19, NIV). After listening to Paul, they praised God and acknowledged that Paul’s work was truly Christ-centered. However, they went on to say that Paul’s ministry had also caused controversy among Jewish converts. People were accusing him of encouraging Jews to abandon the law of Moses and to not circumcise their male children. The council was concerned that some of the angry Jews would learn that Paul was in Jerusalem and demand a hearing before them. To avoid a confrontation that could harm the Christian movement, the council encouraged Paul to make peace with those who misunderstood his message, showing them that he also lived “in obedience to the law” (verse 24, NIV). Paul did exactly that.

Paul’s response is a lesson in mutual accountability. He recognized the importance of accountability in a successful evangelistic movement. He was accountable to the congregations he led; and he also held those congregations accountable. So he submitted himself to the Jerusalem council, giving an account of his ministry.

Sometimes it seems natural to act defensively when we are called to account for our actions, but if we are to spread the gospel in anticipation of Christ’s return, we must be accountable to each other, to the church, and ultimately to Jesus. Only then can our evangelism be orderly and efficient like Paul’s.

**REACT**

Paul was a leader, but he was accountable to other leaders and to his church’s members. Why is this an effective way to conduct business?
Entrepreneurs never invest in a new business venture until they conduct or commission a market analysis. Who is going to be the target audience of the new product? What are their needs and preferences? What other competitors are already in that market, and how will the new product be different from and better than the existing products?

While your church plants and waters the seed, God is the one who makes it grow.

When Moses sent the spies to get the lay of the land in Canaan, it was no different. He knew the Israelites needed to have certain information in order to best plan their strategy. Therefore, he sent them to conduct their own market analysis. Even though the majority of the Israelites made the wrong decision regarding whether to invade Canaan, we still can understand the importance of accurate reports to the decision-making process.

**Identify what you need to know.** What are the needs of the citizens around you? How can you best serve their physical needs and thus gain an opportunity to minister to their deepest spiritual and existential requirements?

**Gather intelligence.** Send your “spies” to scout things out. Give them specific instructions about what data are needed. To get this data, have them talk to community leaders and research local newspapers.

**Formulate your strategy.** As a church, utilize the intelligence you have gathered to formulate your soul-winning plan.

**Turn that plan into action.** This will include delegating tasks to church members based upon their God-given abilities, much like Moses delegated tasks to trustworthy, capable elders (Exod. 18:18–26).

Remember that while your church plants and waters the seed, God is the one who makes it grow (1 Cor. 3:7). He allows us to work in concert with Him, but we must always acknowledge our total dependence upon Him.

**REACT**

1. The spies’ report about the Promised Land caused many Israelites to lose faith and to feel that they were powerless to accomplish the work set before them. How can we avoid making that same mistake as we preach the gospel?

2. If God’s power is what will ultimately complete the work of evangelism, why does He want us to be involved?
As students there was one day that united us all—report card day. Some of us were excited to see how our hard work had paid off. Some of us felt worried or anxious. And still others of us ran home as fast as we could, hoping to grab the reports from the mail before our parents did. We often wondered, “Why can’t the school just tell us directly?” But family is our built-in support group. And our parents, as the head of our family, are meant to encourage us. They are to look at situations objectively and help us devise a plan for our success.

God intends for the church to help us know His will.

Regarding Bible times, Paul Achtemeier says that the “traditional view of family was transformed [in the New Testament] by seeing the Christian community as a new family.”1 This principle is true of our spiritual family. “Those who are made holy are of the same family” (Heb. 2:11, NIV). God intends for the church to help us know His will. When any one member hears His voice, He expects that member to share with others what he or she heard, not only to better preach the word to nonbelievers but also for the betterment of the other believers.

Henry Blackaby and Claude King emphasize the importance of learning for the church family: “Because each believer is added by God to the body of Christ, he or she is interdependent on other believers... You should depend on God to speak through the church to help you know what assignment you are to carry out in the ministry of the kingdom.”2

God wanted us to have an account of the early church so that we could see what worked and to learn from the experience of people such as Paul. Imagine if Luke had decided it was a waste of time to report such events. We wouldn’t have the benefit of their knowledge—knowledge that is key to understanding God’s plan to win souls. Not only can we learn from our own experience, we can learn from the experience of others. In this way, we learn exponentially more than by individual trial and error. As a group, we can encourage each other, enlighten each other, and keep each other focused on winning as many souls for Christ as possible.

REACT

How can we encourage our spiritual brothers and sisters to share their experiences with us?

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Emily Perez, Chattanooga, Tennessee, U.S.A.
CONCLUDE
Sharing information about what’s working in terms of evangelism and outreach helps to focus a church. It provides direction and incentive, and it helps individuals feel that they are part of something greater. Reporting gives us reasons to praise God, and invites the continued presence of the Holy Spirit. It builds respect within the Christian community through mutual accountability. In this manner, we can widen our horizons by learning from others who only may be across town or as far away as the other side of the world.

CONSIDER
- Reading an issue of the magazine(s) published by your Union and/or Division (many are available online). How does what you read illustrate the key principles from this lesson? Share with a friend something interesting you found.
- Using Facebook to locate a friend-of-a-friend on the other side of the world. Start a conversation with this person about how God’s work is being accomplished in their community.
- Listening to the song “Look What God Is Doing” (Scott Wesley Brown). What words would you use to express something you’ve learned this week?
- Creating a skit that illustrates what might happen in medicine, science, or technology if people failed to (1) set goals and measure their achievement, and (2) communicate their accomplishments and findings with fellow professionals.
- Strolling through a mall or downtown area and identifying communication media that convey progress reports, goals, or evaluations. Ask yourself what your church can learn from each one.
- Researching how each of the four temperaments (choleric, melancholy, sanguine, phlegmatic) is likely to react to goal setting or evaluation. What factors besides your temperament or personality may influence how you feel about being asked to report on something?

CONNECT
Evaluating Witnessing and Evangelism

“Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to an obedient ear” (Prov. 25:12, NKJV).
Standing on the ledge of a rail, she looked life deep in the eyes. If she let go, she would no longer have to feel the rejection and pain that characterized so many of her days. She was about to jump when she felt strong hands pull her back to safety.

That night two young men were returning from a church meeting. As they made their way across a bridge, they noticed a pair of shoes on the footpath. With a sinking feeling they rushed toward them, getting there just in time. That night both men had a chance to live out their Christian mission. They not only saved the girl’s life, but they were able to plant a seed in her heart—a seed of Christ’s love and His desire to give life abundantly. As the men left, they didn’t know what would happen to the girl, but they prayed for God’s leading in her life.

Some years later while attending a church meeting, a woman came up to one of the men. After initial greetings, she recalled the story of that night. She shared how after the men had left, she started searching for the Jesus they had told her about, and how God put people in her life who led her to the church that preaches the gospel of love.

This story illustrates a number of lessons about witnessing and evangelism. It shows that each one of us needs to be ready to share the gospel. When Jesus returns He won’t ask, “What did your church do for Me?” Rather, He will ask, “What did you do for Me?” (Matt. 25:31–46). God can use a variety of circumstances and people to reach those who have not heard the gospel, so we should be careful when we judge whether a particular method of evangelism or witnessing is effective.

Often people say that traditional methods of witnessing and evangelism are no longer working. But how do we know? How can we really measure the success of witnessing and evangelism? Is it by the amount of money we spend on these activities? Is it by the number of people who attend? Is it by the number of people who ask for further study? Or is it by the number of baptisms?

This week’s lesson will explore what God has to say about measuring the success of witnessing and evangelism. As you study, open your heart to His leading so He can show you how you can become His instrument for witnessing.

Aleksandra Marek, Sydney, Australia
What better illustration of evangelism-in-action than the early church. This quarter’s lesson has frequently reflected on the Book of Acts because it describes the exponential growth of the church at that time. Believers were added to their number daily, sometimes in the thousands (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4), and despite uncertainty and persecution, the church operated as an extended family. Members shared possessions, fellowshipped, and passionately shared their faith (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–34).

What ingredient made their ministry so powerful? Luke reveals that it was the Holy Spirit. Active in the hearts and minds of the people, He guided the spreading of the Word throughout the region. He was integral in the administration of the church as it grew in complexity and size (Acts 6:1–7; 15:8). He also guided the apostles as they preached and performed miracles (Acts 2:4, 17–21).

Today, the Seventh-day Adventist Church participates in many types of evangelism. Through its global institutions and local church events, there is evidence the Holy Spirit is active in bringing people to Christ. But to be truly accountable and engaged in our ministries, we cannot just examine corporate evangelism methods. We must begin with our individual commitments. Have we invited the Holy Spirit to be the essential ingredient in our ministry, just as He was for the early believers?

Paul says: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Cor. 13:5, NIV). This call to action is renewed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church initiative “Tell the World.” This initiative challenges every Adventist Christian to Reach Up and build our individual relationship with Christ so we can authentically Reach Out and Reach Across to others with a message of hope and healing.”* Together as a people empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can be confident in our desire to live and share the gospel.

**REACT**

Do you believe there is a reflection of the characteristics of the early church visible in our Seventh-day Adventist churches today? If not, why?

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Georgina Hobson, Sunshine Coast, Australia
In a recent small-group discussion, I heard a church member say, “I wish our conference office would just tell the truth. I don’t like it when our leaders evangelize the facts.”

I almost corrected her, saying, “You mean, ‘exaggerate’ the facts, right?” Then I realized her mistaken word choice actually said far more than she had intended. As a people who focus on winning souls and adding baptisms, have we become so adept at inflating the results that we’re redefining evangelism? Do we want the next generation of young Adventists to use the word evangelize interchangeably with the word exaggerate?

A Worthy Report (Rev. 14:6, 7)

Revelation 14:6, 7 challenges God’s people to call the world to worship the glorious Creator God and to proclaim Him as the soon-coming Judge. In this passage, God is a God of evaluation. He will judge what has taken place on earth—both the good and the bad. It stands to reason that we should do likewise as we share our faith individually and corporately. Without examining the results of our effort, we cannot recognize our successes or refine our strategies. A worthy report can only be given if the work is reviewed.

Faith at Heart (2 Cor. 13:5, 6)

We do not need to worry about the holiness or sinfulness of others because God alone is the Judge. We have been called to fix our eyes on Jesus, who is both author and finisher of our faith. Second Corinthians 13:5, 6 says: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test” (NIV)? We can examine our faith by asking ourselves, “Is Jesus among us?” You’ve probably heard the question “What would Jesus do?” This is an action-based question, but actions can be forced and do not always reveal the true person. The question posed to the church in Corinth is a heart-based question: “Does Jesus live here?”

Live to Love Him (Deut. 10:12, 13)

Many of us carry a burdensome list of all the things we believe we are supposed to do to be a “real Christian.” Deuteronomy 10:12, 13 tells us, however, that we are to focus on God and love Him. Out of that love for
Him will flow service, obedience, and a life pleasing to Him. Then at the end of each day, rather than checking our lists, we can evaluate our witness by saying, “Do I love Him more?”

**Strength in Numbers (Heb. 10:24, 25)**

In a lecture, I once heard church leadership expert John Maxwell say that you know you’re a leader by looking behind you. If there’s nobody there, then you’re just taking a walk. Hebrews 10:24, 25 show us one of the many benefits of being part of a church. When we have people behind us, we can motivate them to do acts of love and good works. When we have a leader in front of us, we have someone to motivate the best in us. When we are alone, we lack the empowerment and encouragement that come from working with likeminded people. We need each other.

**Evangelize the Truth (Matt. 23:15)**

While awaiting my two-minute reporting time slot at a camp meeting, I listened with dismay as a public evangelist used his time to explain why he would need at least ten minutes. “I’m an evangelist,” he said. “I can’t say anything in just two minutes.” He then proceeded to speak for 15 minutes, so valuing himself and his words that he stole the time allotted to others.

I was frustrated and dismayed by the repeated comment made by each following presenter: “I’m not an evangelist, but . . .” Then they gave their “two-minute” report. When it was finally my turn, although I was fired up, I decided to use my two minutes as requested—to report, not to comment. But, as I approached the microphone, the host said, “Dave, don’t tell us you’re not an evangelist!”

I paused, reconsidered, and then, sweeping my hand from left to right across the audience, said, “You are all evangelists. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, He has commissioned you to go and make disciples.” Heads nodded, and a chorus of “Amens” filled the tent.

The end-time work has been given to every one of us. And when the work is finished, let’s be honest. At the end of the day, we do have something to report—the truth! Telling the truth doesn’t take long. The truth doesn’t need flowery adjectives or inflated numbers, and it doesn’t need to be hidden behind that “one good story” that came out of the recent evangelistic endeavor. If there was just one saved, celebrate that one, fully.

As witnesses for Christ, we have a responsibility to evangelize, not to exaggerate. Let’s be an example to those who will follow us. And when they take the mantle on their shoulders, may they say, “Let us evangelize the truth” and mean it in all honesty.

**REACT**

1. What areas of your life would benefit from more evaluation?
2. We have all been guilty of inflating, exaggerating, or blurring the truth. What can we do to ensure we are more honest in the future?

Dave Edgren, Melbourne, Australia
“The Lord calls upon those connected with our sanitariums, publishing houses, and schools to teach the youth to do evangelistic work. Our time and energy must not be so largely employed in establishing sanitariums, food stores, and restaurants that other lines of work will be neglected. Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.”

“The Savior is waiting for each one of us to lay our “bundle of self” at His feet."

“God calls for consecrated workers who will be true to Him—humble men who see the need of evangelistic work and do not draw back but do each day’s work faithfully, relying upon God for help and strength in every emergency. The message is to be taken up by those who love and fear God. Lay not your burden upon any conference. Go forth, and, as evangelists, in a humble way present a ‘Thus saith the Scriptures.’”

“As a people we greatly need to humble our hearts before God, pleading His forgiveness for our neglect to fulfill the gospel commission. We have made large centers in a few places, leaving unworked many important cities. Let us now take up the work appointed us, and proclaim the message that is to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger. If every Seventh-day Adventist had done the work laid upon him, the number of believers would now be much larger than it is.”

The Savior is waiting for each one of us to lay our “bundle of self” at His feet. As a church, we need to keep our focus on the special work God has given us to do—carrying the three angels’ messages to every part of this world. We must not let ourselves get so distracted by being part of the church that we forget why we are part of it.

**REACT**

1. Have you ever found yourself focused so much on church activities that you neglected the work Jesus wants you to do?

2. Are you ever so obsessed with what’s happening in your life, your job, your relationships, and even your church, that you forget about sharing the love of Jesus with those who really need it?

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Following are some ideas that may help you decide whether an evangelistic event was successful, needs tweaking, or should never be repeated. (Note: I use “seekers” as meaning the guest that is not a church member, “advertisement” as how you attract the seeker, and “event” as what you did when they engaged with you.)

**Baptisms are usually deemed the biggest sign of evangelistic success.**

*Baptisms.* This is usually deemed the biggest sign of evangelistic success. However, the road to baptism can be long. It may happen years later and not even in your local church. Asking newly baptized members about their journey to baptism will tell you what events had an impact. Let the leaders of each of those events know that they played a part in the person’s journey.

*Church attendance.* If you can’t tell if someone was a participant in an event, asking any visitor how they learned about your church is an interesting discovery.

*Participants’ thoughts.* At the end of an event, survey seekers about how they learned of it, what they thought of it, what they learned, and whether they’re interested in future events.

*Participation numbers.* Keep track of the numbers of seekers you first have participating. This shows the effectiveness of your advertising. If the event happens more than once, see how many people drop away (or build) after each occurrence, and you’ll have an indication of how well the event is connecting with seekers.

*Demographics.* Gather the age, gender, nationality, and social group of each seeker so you can see who is interested in what type of events and what demographics you’re not reaching.

*Internal morale.* Survey the members who ran the event. Ask how they thought it went, what they thought did and didn’t work, and if they have the energy and willingness to do it again.

Once you have the data, you can answer questions like these: (1) Was the advertising effective? (2) Did the event hold the audience? (3) Was there a reasonable response to the invitation to the next event or special offers? (4) How was church morale and involvement? (5) What demographics were missing? (6) What shall we do better next time?
An atheist friend once told me about a church sign that read, “Eternity: It’ll be hell without Jesus.” This message didn’t tempt him to stock up on marshmallows to toast over eternally burning flames. Nor was he tempted to find out more about what that church said about Jesus.

**Evangelism can be even more effective on a personal level.**

Thankfully, most churches have moved beyond scaring people into believing in God just so they won’t spend eternity somewhere too hot to bear. But does this mean there isn’t anything else about evangelism that needs changing? Often people perceive evangelism as giving a seminar or using prescribed outreach program. But I think this perception is limiting. This isn’t to say mass evangelism doesn’t get results, because it clearly works in many parts of the world. But will it work everywhere and for all people?

It’s good to have more people attend church after an outreach program. But there are occasions when a lot of time and money are invested for relatively small results. Of course we can’t see the potential connections being built in the hearts of people who may not start coming to church when the programs end, but what about people who don’t come or are put off if they do? And what if the evangelistic content isn’t meeting people’s spiritual needs? “Public evangelism divorced from people’s needs widens the gulf between people and God.”1

In Revelation 14:6, 7, the first angel proclaims the eternal gospel to everyone in the world. It’d be nice if things could be left for angels to do, but this vision is really about our responsibility to share God’s Word with others. This includes inviting people to come to church with us. One survey discovered that out of 15,000 people, 70 to 90 percent went to church and developed a relationship with Christ because someone invited them to come.2 Thus, evangelism can be even more effective on a personal level.

**REACT**

1. What sort of outreach do you think would be most effective for people in your area?
2. What message do you think people would most benefit from, and why?

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Adele Nash, Cooranbong, Australia
CONCLUDE

It’s only human to measure our evangelistic success by the head count of our flocks. But Jesus taught us that what really matters is the way we let His generous love flow into our hearts and out again, as we’re moved with His compassion for people in need. Maybe the true measure of evangelism is not how many people we baptize, but how many people are so moved by their experience of God’s love that they naturally reach out to love others. And they do it with such authenticity that they aren’t even aware of the difference their kindness is making.

CONSIDER

- Creating a PowerPoint presentation, a display of objects, or a piece of artwork that illustrates themes from the parable of the sheep and the goats.
- Surveying your local church members about the different ways in which they’ve relieved the suffering of others in the past year and the joy they experienced in doing so.
- Writing a short story about the difference someone’s simple act of kindness made in your life.
- Finding an anonymous way of sharing God’s love by relieving the suffering of someone who needs clothes, food, comfort, friends, rest, encouragement, help, or protection.
- Planning at least one act of kindness for a stranger each day for a week and writing about it in your diary.
- Composing a song that encourages people to share God’s love by caring for others.
- Growing flowers that can be given away as a ministry to cheer up lonely, housebound, and bereaved people.

CONNECT

Isaiah 58; James 2:14–17.
The Desire of Ages, chap. 70; Welfare Ministry, chap. 3.
“‘What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches’” (Luke 13:18, 19, NKJV).
In the parable of the mustard seed, the birds nesting in the tree depict an important message. The birds are there because they feel safe, protected, and supported. Is that not how we want all those within our church, members and visitors alike, to feel: emotionally safe, physically protected, and spiritually supported?

We must remember that ours is a living ministry.

Using our talents to welcome the birds and extend the branches of God’s kingdom-tree is a mission each of us is to accept. It is important to consider the variety of gifts within the church that are to be used to extend this invitation. Both young and old members of the church can bring a freshness and enthusiasm to its mission. Those of us in the collegiate age group have mental preparedness, professional contacts, energy, and creativity in great supply. Neither do our gifts expire. Even when those older than we retire, they still have a contribution to make toward the growth and support of our church tree.

The advantage of our message over messages in the commercial market is that it not only has initial appeal, but it is forever captivating. We have a perpetual ministry that needs to be advanced throughout the generations. As changes occur within our church—changes in leadership, choruses replacing hymns, scheduling tea and social time between Sabbath morning services—we need to ensure that our “present truth” stays present. We must remember that ours is a living ministry. God’s invitation to become part of His family is extended to everyone, regardless of age, race, or gender.

Jesus does not use the growth of the mustard seed to “emphasize the notion of astonishing extravagance” but to remind us that we hold in our hands a message that transcends our human errors and abilities. After hearing how God throws our sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19), replaces our ‘ain’t it awful’ song with a new song (Ps. 40:3), and exchanges our self-centered hearts for tender hearts that seek Him (Ezek. 36:26)—others will surely want to nest in His tree—the kingdom of God.

Although the first humans sinned, thereby bringing sin to all future generations, God has made us an integral part of the process of restoring people to Him. He began the reclamation process by first promising a Savior (Gen. 3:15), and then He chose Israel to lead other nations back to that Savior.

Our call to be evangelists did not come to us merely by chance.

From Creation to today, God seems to be working from two basic principles. The first is His initiative to breathe life into our lifelessness. The second principle is that He empowers us to tell others of our resurrection experience. In the New Testament, God fulfilled the first step of His grand rescue plan by sacrificing His only Son to atone for our sin. This clearly reveals God’s ultimate plan to eternally secure His kingdom, not just to the ends of the earth, but to the deepest parts of our very beings. These guiding principles also reveal the indispensable and privileged roles that every believer has a part of the salvation wheel. We all can become agents through whom God dispenses the good news (John 15:16; Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 5:20). Jesus continually pours joy, peace, and love into our hearts and enables us to understand His mysteries. This presupposes that each Christian must grow his or her own ministry. For us to reach this “high calling,” there is the need to keep in mind the following points.

You Are Meant for Expansion (Matt. 4:18, 19; 21:18–20; 1 Pet. 2:9)

In Matthew 4 we read of Jesus’ call to Simon and Andrew to become both His followers and ambassadors. Peter later shares why God favored sinful people to be His special envoys: “That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you” (1 Pet. 2:9, NASB). From these texts we learn that God saves us and sustains us so that we can be His ambassadors of hope.

The consequence of neglecting this calling is dramatized in the story of Matthew 21. Traveling to Jerusalem, Jesus became hungry. When He spotted a fig tree, He drew close in hope of finding fruit on it. His disappointment in discovering the tree to be fruitless, in spite of all outward signs of its ability to bear fruit, caused Him to curse it. The tree, while
professing to bear fruit, was unproductive. How terrible for us if, when Christ returns, He finds us to be as that tree—not ever having shared with others our story of His amazing grace.

**Drink From the Fountain Instead of From the Well (John 4:1–42)**

John 4 shares the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman. She asks Him, “‘Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well?’” (John 4:12, NIV). In His response, Jesus makes known that all who drink from the well of Jacob will thirst again, but those who drink the water He gives will be forever satisfied. Although the woman and Jesus were both talking about water, they were coming from different reference points. While the woman was referring to a man-made well (Greek: *phrear*), Jesus was talking about a natural fountain (Greek: *phγχ*) that flowed from the Creator’s hand.

Today, many people believe in man-made fables instead of in the Word of God. However, laborers of the Lord can do no less than draw their water from Jesus and His Word. Thus Paul admonished young Timothy to “guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith” (1 Tim. 6:20, 21, NKJV). Instead, he urged Timothy to “study [the Scriptures] in order to receive God’s approval not needing to be ashamed” (2 Tim. 2:15).

**The Caller Has Not Hung Up (Matt. 28:18–20)**

Our call to be evangelists did not come to us merely by chance but through God and His infinite wisdom. Because this calling covers one’s life span, Jesus assures us that He is with us always, “even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). It is essential for each of us to remember that the One who has appointed us will also support us.

Our schoolmate, our sister, our neighbor depend on our witness regarding our Savior’s faithfulness and our inheritance as His children. Now, wouldn’t we be selfish to stop the salvation wheel once it gets to us?

**REACT**

1. In your opinion, why does God depend on us rather than on angels to share the gospel?
2. How would you rate the importance of your role in the salvation cycle? (a) High (b) Average (c) Low. Explain your answer.
3. Is anyone ever justified to “retire” from being the bearer of the mysteries of God—His amazing grace? Explain your answer.

Felix Opoku-Gyamfi, Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England
“Never underrate the importance of little things. . . . It is by them that the soul is trained that it may grow in the likeness of Christ, or bear the likeness of evil. God help us to cultivate habits of thought, word, look, and action that will testify to all about us that we have been with Jesus and learned of him!”

“Does your character testify for Christ?”

“The most intellectual, those who are looked upon and praised as the world’s great and gifted men and women, are often refreshed by the most humble, simple words spoken by one who loves God, who can speak of that love as naturally as worldlings can speak of those things which their minds contemplate and feed upon. Words, even if well prepared and studied, have little influence; but the true honest work of a son or a daughter of God in words, or in a service of little things, done in natural simplicity, will unbolt the door, which has long been locked, to many souls.”

“You who profess to be proclaiming the last solemn message of mercy to the world, what is your experience in the knowledge of the truth, and what has been its effect upon your own hearts? Does your character testify for Christ? Can you speak of the refining, ennobling, sanctifying influence of the truth as it is in Jesus? What have you seen, what have you known, of the power of Christ? This is the kind of witness for which the Lord calls, and for which the churches are suffering.”

“Men of spiritual stamina are wanted, men who are able to find work close at hand, because they are looking for it. The church needs new men to give energy to the ranks, men [and women] for the times, able to cope with its errors, men who will inspire with fresh zeal the flagging efforts of the few laborers, men whose hearts are warm with Christian love, and whose hands are eager to go about their Master’s work.”

**REACT**

1. What do you know of the power of Christ? How can that “knowledge” help you in witnessing?
2. Is education really of any importance in the proclaiming of God’s Word? Are not sincerity and good will enough? Why or why not?

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1. The Youth’s Instructor, March 9, 1893.
2. The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, May 9, 1899.
In the New Testament, the meaning of the Greek verb for evangelizing is quite broad in that it relates to something that all Christians regularly do because they have an ongoing, life-changing experience with Jesus. The story of the Samaritan woman in John 4:1–42 helps us to understand this definition. Jesus meets this woman at Jacob’s well. Knowing that a Samaritan, and especially a Samaritan woman, would be wary of speaking to Him, Jesus starts the conversation by asking her for a drink. Not long after, it is actually Jesus who offers her a drink, not from a man-made well, but rather from something He calls “living water” (verse 10). Then follows a conversation between Jesus and the woman that leads to Jesus revealing to her His true identity.

The water this woman has now found and especially the Person who provides it are so refreshing that she forgets her errand, leaves her water jar behind, and runs back to her hometown to share the good news. She simply cannot contain her enthusiasm at having found this new, life-giving source. John records that “many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done’ ” (John 4:39, NRSV). We also have evidence from later in the gospels and the book of Acts that this same, previously promiscuous woman had quite some influence in the early stages of spreading the good news outside of Palestine. She was an evangelist in every sense of the word.

Similarly if we have a meeting with Jesus Christ and drink from the water He offers, we also will hasten to spread the good news of what He has done for us. We, too, will become living and perpetual testimonies of the goodness of God in this world.

**REACT**

1. What do you think your life would look like if you started seeing yourself as an “evangelist”?
2. What does Christ’s “living water” taste like to you? When did you last tell another about the “living water”?

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There persists a misconception that evangelism is generally restricted to door-to-door literature distribution, giving Bible studies, and leading out in prophecy seminars. These approaches are important; however, they are not the whole of evangelism.

I used to think that unless I became a missionary nurse, I wasn’t being a good Christian. But I’ve since learned that there are as many different ways to evangelize as there are people. This has huge implications for evangelism. Imagine if everyone could find his or her spiritual gift and was taught how to maximize that gift for God.

The best way of sharing Jesus is by example.

The point of evangelism is to share Jesus using every avenue available to us. The challenge comes in figuring out what our particular gift is. A good way to start is to ask close friends or mentors what they perceive your gifts, talents, and positive personality traits to be. This will give you a good idea of the general areas in which you are gifted. From there, you can begin to utilize those abilities for expanding God’s kingdom on earth and for eternity. If you have an interest in photography or film, then you might ask yourself how you can put that interest to godly good. There are no limits to what you can do. It doesn’t even matter if it’s something that hasn’t been done before.

Remember that Jesus didn’t limit His ministry to activities in the synagogue. His interest was meeting the needs of all types of people He spent quality time with in all segments of society. And whenever He saw a need, He tried His utmost to meet it. But at the same time, He wanted to fulfill more than people’s surface needs. He sought to fix what was broken deep inside them. And His success in evangelism came in direct proportion to His genuine love for others.

Somehow, between the busy nothings that make up our lives, we can show Jesus to everyone we meet and can find our unique way of doing it.

The best way of sharing Jesus is by example. As Donald Miller wrote, “Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself. It’s as if they are showing you the way.”*

When was the last time someone watched you loving Jesus?

*Donald Miller, Blue Like Jazz (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2003), p. ix.
When you have a personal relationship with Jesus, your whole life is a perpetual ministry to others. In her book, *It's All About Love—Reflections for Women*, Ruth Coulter writes: “It’s all about love! For, God first loved us and poured His amazing, unending, extravagant love into our lives. We cannot keep it to ourselves. It must overflow to those around us—in our home first and foremost—then ripple out to affect all.”*

*A kind word, a listening ear, a warm smile can open many a heart’s door.*

In this age, success in evangelism is often outward focused—beyond the church and family. It is so easy to get caught up in how many new members are being welcomed into the family of God while those already within the family are quietly slipping away unnoticed. Coulter asserts that the overflowing of God’s love to those around us should begin with those closest to us.

A second challenge to sharing God with others is thinking that one size fits all. Individualized approaches often are neglected in the face of mass evangelism where success is measured by targets set and figures achieved. There are, however, several different groups to whom we are called to minister. There are those who are total strangers to things of God just as the two demon-possessed men of the Gadarene region were (Matt. 8:28−33). Then there are people who have issues with God because of hurts they have experienced—such as Mary, the sister of Lazarus (John 12:1−8); the Samaritan woman (John 4:7−30); and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1−10). We should also remember church members who remain unseen or who are disconnected from the church family, people such as the prodigal son and his brother (Luke 15:11−32). These distinctive situations call for differing approaches when speaking about spiritual matters.

How we react and interact with others will have dramatic effects in ways we cannot know. A kind word, a listening ear, a warm smile can open many a heart’s door. Consider how Jesus interacted with others while He was on earth. He accepted them rather than ignored them. He was forgiving rather than condemnatory. He met individual needs instead of demanding that His own needs be met. We should strive to become like that beacon of joy and love we personally know as Jesus.


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CONCLUDE
You are an integral part of the process of restoring people to God. You, along with all the rest of us, can become agents through whom He dispenses the Good News. When you have a personal relationship with Jesus, your whole life is a perpetual ministry to others. You just have to find your spiritual gift, maximize that gift, and ask God to live out His life in you.

CONSIDER
• Asking three children to count in unison: a three-year-old counting from one to ten, a five-year-old counting in tens from 10 to 100, and a ten-year-old counting in twenties from 20 to 200. They start and finish counting together. Each feels accomplished when they hear you say, “Well done.” But 10, 100, and 200 are different values. How does this experiment illustrate that each of us can share Christ within our personal ability range and still feel as though we’ve accomplished something?
• Doing something secretly for your roommate, best friend, family member, or neighbor that needs to be done but that they just never have the time to do. Don’t do it just once. Do it as you see the need for it. Think about how such an activity is actually witnessing.
• Seeing how many of the principles in Matthew 5:1–12 you could incorporate in your daily life over the next year. Start with the one you find easiest to live out. Claim God’s support each step of the way.
• Getting two sponges of the same size, three drinking glasses, and access to a kitchen sink. Ensure that the sink has no water in it. Place one sponge in the sink. Then put an empty glass on it. Pour water rapidly into the glass. Stop as soon as water leaks from the sponge. Carefully lift the glass, remove the sponge, and squeeze out the water into an empty glass. Repeat with the other sponge. This time, fill the glass slowly until water leaks from the sponge. Remove the sponge and squeeze the water into the last empty glass. Which sponge held more water? This illustrates that you cannot keep Christ’s goodness to yourself; it will overflow to those around you. What else does the experiment tell you about the effectiveness of witnessing?

CONNECT
Colossians 4:2–6; 1 Peter 2:9.
Christ’s Object Lessons, “Asking to Give,” pp. 139–149.

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If you have not received a copy of CQ for Third Quarter 2012, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: The Gospel Comes to Thessalonica


Memory Text: “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of me, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13, NIV).

Key Thought: Our assurance of God’s promises must be based on our confidence in His Holy Scriptures.

The young pastor sat outside with a young lady who had just been baptized. Much to his surprise, she said, “I need to be baptized again.” When the pastor asked why, she responded, “There are things that I didn’t tell the senior pastor about my past.” Thus began a long conversation about forgiveness in Christ, which she hungrily consumed. When the pastor finished praying with her, a huge downpour suddenly drenched them both. Eyes shining, the young woman said, “I’m being baptized again!” A gracious God often provides living tokens, such as this unexpected rain, to assure believers that they are right with Him. But our confidence in God will be even more solidly grounded when it is based on the clear teaching of His Word. In this lesson we’ll see that the fulfillment of prophecy that provided solid assurance to the new believers in Thessalonica.

Lesson 2: Preserving Relationships


Memory Text: “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19, 20, NKJV).

Key Thought: True evangelism leads to relationships that can stand the test of time and last for eternity.
Paul held a three-week series of evangelistic meetings in Thessalonica. It was a very exciting series, but it incited opposition from local religious leaders and from a gang of thugs. Paul was finally expelled by the city council, which also sought to prevent his return. This lesson covers the aftermath of Paul’s attempt to evangelize Thessalonica. It would have been easy after such an experience for Paul to focus on the opposition and other obstacles along the way. Instead, Paul’s mind was focused primarily on the relationships that he had developed with members of the new Christian community in Thessalonica. Paul was heartbroken that he wasn’t able to spend more time with the believers. He knew that the short time he had been with them would leave them vulnerable to discouragement and negative influences. Not being able to be there in person, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write letters to them instead. Those letters make up the books in the New Testament known as “Thessalonians.”