The Bible’s Formula for Effective Outreach

“And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come’” (Mark 4:26-29).

According to the Bible, there are only three steps involving outreach: sowing, growing, and reaping.

**Sowing**—connecting with people, making friends, “bridging” them to God—is the responsibility of the church, of each Christian, just like sowing is the responsibility of the farmer. What it takes to do that is not ability or money or even time. What it takes to do it is faithfulness, a steady willingness to be used of the Lord for the sake of others.

**Growing**—developing spiritually—is God’s responsibility, not ours. We cannot make people grow. Trying to do so would be like a farmer pulling on a plant to try to speed up its growth. He’d end up killing the plant! What does it take for people to grow spiritually? Nothing less than a sustained miracle, it takes power, God’s power.

**Reaping**—leading people to make decisions for Christ and His church—is a responsibility the church shares with God. It is all about the right timing. The more Christ’s followers understand how God works, the better able they are to perceive the “golden moment”—in the words of Ellen White—when people should be invited to surrender all to the Lord. Accepting Bible teachings and joining God’s remnant church calls for special timing in each individual.

But the key to a large harvest is faithful sowing. Will you allow the Holy Spirit to use you to “sow” the field, to make friends for Christ?

**A Personal Testimony by Dr. Clouzet**

When I was a pastor, I had several Bible studies with different people each week. But a few years after we moved to teach at Southern Adventist University, I found myself without any ongoing Bible studies. Although I was making a tangible difference to the collegiates I taught, I realized I was making no saving difference to any of my neighbors or inquirers who did not know our wonderful message.

So, one Sabbath morning, I knelt before God with a great longing in my heart. I pleaded with Him to give me another opportunity to witness to someone not of my faith. “Lord,” I cried, “please forgive me for allowing my busyness to be my excuse not to lead people to You any longer.” I asked Him to put me in contact with someone who might be interested in studying the Bible, such as I had in the past.

The Lord did not delay an answer. As our family went to church that morning, Lisa and I sat in the back of a Sabbath School class I had not previously attended. Before it started, the associate pastor approached me to ask if I could teach the lesson, since the teacher would not be there that morning. Although I did not have a quarterly, providentially, I had studied that very lesson on the sanctuary a few weeks before, for a television program where I was a participant. As I
stood up to teach, a finely dressed lady, not an Adventist, came in the sanctuary and sat next to my wife. She was riveted to everything she heard that morning.

At the end, we met, and she shared her eagerness to learn such wonderful things from the Bible. Then she asked, "Do you ever have time to meet with people to study the Bible?" How about that for answered prayer! This was the first time she’d attended an Adventist church, and that morning she had an overwhelming impression that she needed to attend one!

Isn’t God wonderful? He heard my heart-felt prayer and answered it so clearly! We began Bible studies, and a few months later she and her husband were baptized. She immediately got involved in ministry and became a blessing to many in the name of Jesus.

Could God answer your prayer as well? Would you ask Him, earnestly and sincerely ask Him, to put you in the path of someone looking for Jesus and His truth? Maybe you too can be a powerful instrument of grace over the next few months.

**Missional Groups Can Make a Life-Saving Difference**

In *Ministry of Healing*, page 143, we read about Christ’s own formula for outreach success:

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”

Here is how this works in small groups:

**Step One:** A team of two or three can start getting acquainted with neighbors just by going for a Sabbath afternoon walk every week and praying for God’s blessings on the homes they walk by, and stopping by just to say hello to those in their front yards (that’s mingling with people as you desire their good). As you develop friends you can build relationships by inviting them to your house for a watermelon feed, afternoon hike or even a campout.

**Step Two:** As your team grows (you now have a small group) and gets acquainted with the different needs of your friends you will have a chance to meet those needs through DVD’s, bridge-building seminars, and other ministries (you are now showing sympathy for them and ministering to their needs).

**Step Three:** Some will now share an interest in reading a book you may offer or taking Bible studies because you have become friends (they now have confidence in you).

**Step Four:** You and your group will be pleasantly surprised that some will be ready for you to invite and take them to church, or an evangelistic series in your area (take them to Jesus). You have just followed the simple plan that Jesus used in reaching out to others.

*Dr. Don James, Associate Director, Consultant for Discipleship and Small Group Ministries*

**Servant Evangelism: A New Way to Reach Out**

What if you got a team of church friends, and on the first Sunday of every week were to go to the neighborhood and make a real difference?

For example, you could host a car wash (warmer weather permitting) but not for fund
raising purposes but genuinely for free. You’d simply wash cars as they come in, whistling as you go. When you are done and the driver hands you a $5 bill, you put your hand up and say, “Thank you very much for your thoughtfulness, but today we just want to show God’s love in a practical way.” And just smile.

The best thing would be to print a special business card. On it, you can quote "Showing God’s love in a practical way.” Then (or on the other side), you can name your church, the address, phone number, and website. That’s it.

If you do this regularly (monthly, every two weeks, or weekly), it will take but a few times and people will finally get that you’re doing ministry for the community with no strings attached—servant evangelism. Eventually, a number of these folk will be interested to know what church you are from and why people from that church are so very nice.

Other things you could do? Give away water bottles near a high school on warm days, or put quarters on washing machines for older people or single moms, or provide umbrella escort services, or drive or shop for older people in the neighborhood. The key is ministering with a smile, and doing so in the same spot consistently.

Try it for three months. You’ll start to make a real difference. For more ideas, check out the book Conspiracy of Kindness: A Unique Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus by Steve Sjorgen.

Dr. Eduard Schmidt, Associate Director, Personal Ministries

What is Bridge-Building, and Why Does it Matter?

The best way for a church to make friends for heaven is to follow a bridge-building plan of community-oriented offerings every year. Bridge-building, you say? That’s a common term used when churches offer various ministries to the community with the purpose of making friends with them. Here are a few examples:

♦ Stop-Smoking Clinics
♦ Weekly Homeless Feeding
♦ Vegetarian Cooking Schools
♦ Weekly Community Services
♦ Health-Assessment Fairs
♦ Parenting or Finance Seminars

You get the idea. When a church schedules these months in advance, they can issue a schedule and publish it in local newsletters or post them around town. If done well, little by little, people in the community get used to the various services provided by the local church, and the door of friendship opportunities begins to swing wide open. It is through these services, plus individual Bible studies and personal evangelism, that “sowing” is effectively done that will yield a “reaping” when evangelistic meetings are offered.

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