

JULY-SEPTEMBER

Q
2000

SUMMONS TO THE WITNESS STAND



A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults



Henry Kopitzke: Professor of Business

"Give and you shall receive may not be the going phrase during tax season—unless you take my accounting class."

Though the assignment was optional, everyone in Henry Kopitzke's class accepted the challenge. At a local retirement home, the accounting students helped some of the residents prepare their tax returns free of charge. And in the end, once the intimidating forms had been conquered, Kopitzke knew his students had received the greatest return. At PUC, we call that service learning—the concept that Christian education can benefit everybody. It's a radical notion, and at PUC, there's no time like now.



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Summons to the Witness Stand



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Welcome to *CQ's* World



The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writers who have participated in *CQ's* writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School Bible study guide, more than 300 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 65,000. It is published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Indonesian, and Finnish.

Get Interactive

Ever think about writing for *CQ*?

Why not! Each year 300 young adults from around the world participate in the *CQ* writing program. It gives Seventh-day Adventist young people aged 18 to 35 a unique opportunity to grow spiritually, to share the benefits of their Bible study, to exchange ideas, and to contribute to the mission of the church.

You are the most important ingredient in our *CQ* formula because you can be the answer to our greatest need—the need for caring, committed, contributing authors. If you think you'd like to participate in the writing of a lesson, write us today:

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This Quarter's Illustrator



Randy Jamison was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, and attended high school in Nampa, Idaho, and art courses at Boise State University. After dropping out of school, he experienced conversion to Christianity on Easter Eve 1996. Later that year he was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist after the Net '96 program.

He works now for Digital Effects, a multimedia company in Boise, where he produces 3-D animations, illustrations, and design for the Web and CD-ROM. He married Sharia Lauterbach in 1998. Sharia and Randy, who plays guitar and drums, both perform in "Praise Band," a contemporary Christian music group that includes students and staff members from Gem State Adventist Academy.

Getting the Most Out of CQ

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.

More than three hundred Adventist young adults contribute to CQ each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject. Circulation of CQ is about 65,000.

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 are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are 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 passage.
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.*

Lesson 1
June 24–July 1

A Christian fundamental



“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).

Tables Turned

INTRODUCTION

Acts 9

One summer I took courses at a university campus in Los Angeles. From early morning to late afternoon I was in class, so that by the end of the day I dreaded walking back up the hills to my dorm.

One tired afternoon, as I passed by the soccer fields, I noticed two students (a girl and guy) walking directly toward me. They looked as if they were going to run into me so I veered toward the right. They, too, followed my direction. Soon they were standing next to me. "Hi," the girl said. The guy next to her said nothing. "We're Christians," she continued, "and wanted to know if you would like to know more about Jesus."

"God wants to show you His love, and you have to come to this."

I smiled inwardly and thought, *So this must be what it's like to be accosted by one of those Christians.* I nodded my head and she proceeded, "Our club is having this Bible study and you're invited. All kinds of people will be there. Do you belong to any church?"

"I belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church," I said.

"Is that Christian?" she asked. "Well, God is a good God and He really loves you and you have to come to our Bible study and learn about God," she said in one breath. With her eyes, she dared me to object.

"I have a lot of studying to do," I said.

"Well, let me get your name and phone number and I'll call you. You should come. God wants to show you His love, and you have to come to this. It will be like the greatest—what is your name again?" She persisted for a few more minutes.

Finally I said, "Look, I am really busy but I will try to come if I can."

As I walked off, I remembered my friend telling me how Christianity had turned her off. She was frequently accosted by over-zealous Christians spreading the gospel. "Why should I associate with people who think that just because they have all the answers about God they can harass me? They're 'Jesus freaks.'"

What have your witnessing experiences been like? Pleasant? Unnerving? Pushy? What is a witness and what is the goal of witnessing? How do we interpret and act upon the following statement: "Our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly Father. We are to take our Bibles and go forth to warn the world. We are to be God's helping hands in saving souls—channels through which His love is day by day to flow to the perishing."*

* *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 150.

LOGOS

Daniel 1; Matthew 5-7; 28:18-20; Acts 5:17-42; 8:26-31; 9:1-22; 18:4; 22:15, 16, 20; 2 Cor. 5:14; 2 Pet. 3:9.

What images does the word *witness* conjure in your mind? You might envision passing out tracts on a Saturday afternoon or telling someone why you are not going to some event on Friday night. How about an abiding sense of serenity in spite of adversities? Regardless of what specific act comes to mind, your definition of witnessing probably involves some kind of outward display, conscious or subconscious, that compels others to take a second look at Christ. A problem arises, however, when Christians approach witnessing as a one-step process involving only the actual witnessing act. To be a true witness, though, a number of steps must precede one's actual witnessing event. These include a personal encounter with the love of Christ and a conversion experience.

Step 1: A Personal Encounter With the Love of Christ

In discussing Christ's second coming, 2 Peter 3 prepares its readers for scoffers who doubt Christ's return. Peter explains Christ's delay, however, by explaining that He has not returned because "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (verse 9, NIV). Because Christ loves us so much, He delays His coming to give those who haven't accepted Him time to repent. It is so easy to overlook the significance of Jesus' delay. This can be avoided, however, by putting ourselves in Jesus' place. The people whom He created accused Him of blasphemy when He discussed His Father and the laws He instituted. They killed Him by the most demeaning means available.

Wouldn't you have given up on humanity by then? Jesus is so patient, though, and He loves us so earnestly, that He delays the world's destruction to give us a chance to change our minds and come to Him. What love! After a personal encounter with Christ's unfathomable love, one can never be the same.

Step 2: A Conversion Experience

After choosing to accept Christ's love and sacrifice, one undergoes conversion, a change from one belief, religion, or doctrine to another. Some people, like Paul, may have dramatic conversion experiences accompanied by bright lights, voices from outer space, and blindness (Acts 9:1-22)! Others' experiences are marked by intense emotion. Still others cannot gauge their conversion by events or emotions, but note that as a result of conversion, they see the emptiness of sins which were formerly so appealing. Conversion experiences are as diverse as the people who experience them, but the singular identifying characteristic of conversion is a marked change from the old life under sin to the new life under Christ. When one undergoes conversion, a Christ-centered focus is adopted,

and desires, goals, motivations, and actions duly align with the focus.

Step 3: Compelled to Tell

In the first step of witnessing, one personally experiences Christ's love, a love so strong that it endured humiliation, ridicule, pain, and death in an effort to save sinners. If the individual decides to accept Christ's love and sacrifice, he or she undergoes conversion. Then, and only then, in the natural, step-wise progression of the witnessing process, are Christians compelled to tell about the love they have personally experienced and that has redirected the focus. The initial steps facilitate this third step of witnessing, the outward demonstration of the inward phenomenon.

Granted, it is possible to tell others about Christ without personally encountering His love or undergoing conversion.

Jesus is so worthy of our praise that even the stones could proclaim His goodness (Luke 19:40). Telling someone about Christ necessitates knowledge of the gospel. Witnessing, however, takes knowledge one enormous step

**Christians do not just
know *about* Christ;
they know Christ
personally.**

further. A witness is someone who gives a firsthand account of something. For the Christian, the firsthand account is that personal experience with Christ. Christians do not just know *about* Christ; they know Christ *personally*.

Like conversion experiences and personal relationships with Christ, expression of the third step in witnessing varies. We all have "diversities of gifts" (1 Cor. 12:4, KJV) for conveying Christ's love, and another Christian's preferential style of witnessing might not work for you. Nevertheless, the single most effective testimony, one that any Christian can render, is living a life that truly exhibits the love of Christ. You might feel that you don't know enough to give someone Bible studies. But you can be genuinely kind to the person whom everyone else shuns. You don't have enough money to sponsor someone who wants to go on a mission trip? You can send them a card and let them know that you will be praying for them. Witnessing is more than a singular action that can be checked off the Christian's "to-do" list. It is an attitude, a lifestyle initiated and sustained by Christ's love. It is Jesus' way to win the world through us—one person at a time.

REACT

1. What steps can one take to ensure that Christ's love is the motivation for witnessing?
2. Why is witnessing so often viewed as a one-step process?
3. Why do you think people who are most enthusiastic about witnessing often happen to be those who were recently converted themselves?

Monday
June 26

Love Witnessed on the Cross

TESTIMONY

Phil. 2:8

**After we allow God's
seeds to be distributed
through us, His Spirit
takes over.**

heart-wrenching parable of the wheat and the tares alludes to the importance of witnessing when dividing the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30). He uses us to sow His seeds of love and correction in the hearts of others on earth. However, our work stops here; we

do not do the work of Christ through the Holy Ghost.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to *all men*.' This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for *all*.' Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:3-6."¹

After we allow God's seeds to be distributed through us, His Spirit takes over. The Holy Spirit begins the process of sanctification; however, some choose to harden their hearts to their Creator. "The Spirit of God is freely bestowed to enable every man to lay hold upon the means of salvation. Thus Christ, 'the true Light,' 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' John 1:9. Men fail of salvation through their own willful refusal of the gift of life."²

Jesus' life was a witness, and He served as a ransom for our sinful condition. His purpose was not only to fulfill the law, but to provide salvation. His love and His law are inseparable because love fulfills the law (Rom. 13:8). His love made Him "obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8, NIV). We are to tell of this love and give it to others. Witnessing, therefore, is a grand commission from the Lord. With Him as our blueprint of witnessing, the Holy Spirit is allowed to save souls.

"Can we whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?"

1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 261, 262.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

God's Last Command

EVIDENCE

Matt. 28:18-20

To witness is "to declare, on the strength of personal observation, that something is true; to affirm the truth of a religious faith." Every day, as Christians, we have opportunities to spread our religious faith to those around us. But, do we take advantage of these opportunities? Unfortunately, we often do not. When we ignore the spiritual needs of people around us, we are not being the Christians God intended us to be. God has given us a purpose on this earth that goes beyond the scope of our own individual lives. He gave us the command to "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).

As Christians, we must not be so apathetic or insecure that we keep the knowledge of God's love away from those who have not yet been introduced to it. The tendency to feel inadequate of delivering this tremendous message to others is natural when we try to act on our own. It is not by our power, however, but by the power of God, that we witness.

Like Paul, one of Christ's greatest followers, we must trust in God and let His love take over in our lives, lead our thoughts and actions, and be our sole guidance and inspiration. Once God is truly the ruler in our lives, we will see that God's love compels us to spread the gospel to those who do not yet know Jesus so that the love that was meant for all will reach all. We will not shy away from this task but rather gain strength and courage in His word. "He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor. 5:15, NIV). Jesus' last command was for us not to keep to ourselves the knowledge of God's love. Through the Holy Spirit, we are given the ability to share the gospel, to give others the means by which they, too, may know the truth.

Jesus' last command was for us not to keep to ourselves the knowledge of God's love.

REACT

1. Many of us feel guilt that we don't witness enough. What holds us back from more active witnessing? Explore the reasons. Are they rational or irrational?
2. In Acts 5:20, the angel who releases the apostles from prison specifically tells them to witness in the temple courts. What would be an equivalent venue for witnessing in these modern times? Explain your answer.

Witnessing Principles

HOW-TO

2 Cor. 5:14

When we awake each morning to face the world, we must remember two things: First, we are Christians; second, as Christians we are witnesses. Being a Christian is not a passive activity. God's Word provides us with example and instruction on how to be active Christians; Acts and the apostles' letters in the New Testament are our guides to being witnessing Christians.

Three principles will direct us in how to be successful witnesses:

1. Before taking action, we must understand that we witness through the power of God rather than through any righteousness of our own (Matt.17:14-21). Why did the disciples fail to cast the demon out on their own? As witnesses we should focus on what God can do for people, rather than ourselves. If we cannot save ourselves, we certainly cannot bring salvation to others. It is the power of God and His saving grace that makes our witnessing successful.

The most powerful statement you can make is with your life.

2. Witnessing with your life is more effective than witnessing with words. I have learned that you can say you're a Christian all day, but people want to see action. All my life I have explained to my non-Adventist

friends the significance and principles of the Sabbath. Nevertheless, they would always invite me to Friday night functions. My witnessing obviously fell on deaf ears. But when, as captain of the basketball team, I did not attend Friday night games, they finally understood. The most powerful statement you can make is with your life. Guard your actions carefully because people who know you are a Christian will use mistakes you make to disclaim Christianity. How you act everyday makes or breaks your witnessing process.

3. In witnessing, our job is to plant seeds, but making them grow is the work of our heavenly Father. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6. What can we draw from this text about our role and God's role in saving souls?

The book of Acts is a story of how the powerful witness of a few men changed the world. Though the fruits of the disciples' labor were plentiful, we must remember that people are allowed to reject the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. God does not force anyone to obey or accept Him, and as a witness we must do the same.

The word *Islam* in the religious context means to surrender to God. Like all religious followers, Muslims have customs and rules, but their main criterion is simple: surrender to God. As Christians who have the truth of Jesus Christ, we should make our personal goal and our aim as witnesses simple: surrender to God and encourage others to follow.

Witnessing in the New Millennium

OPINION

2 Pet. 3:9

If you want to share Christianity with others, where do you begin?

First, pray for an opportunity to witness about His love. As long as you have a willing and passionate heart, He will create opportunities for witnessing to take place. We, in turn, have the responsibility to be aware constantly of these opportunities by listening to the Holy Spirit. If we dangerously distance ourselves from God, we will fail to seek and share His truth.* Ask for the Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart so as to prevent a missed opportunity to witness and to ensure that you'll always have the presence of mind to talk about Jesus.

**Being a Christian
should be a lifestyle,
not a holier-than-thou
proclamation.**

Jesus has called us *all* to preach to the world what He has done (Mark 16:15). It's easy to feel overwhelmed or unworthy to spread the gospel, but look at the fishermen Jesus chose as His disciples who were not the most schooled in the Scripture. Those who were so schooled (the Pharisees) were the very people Jesus had problems with. As witnesses for Christ, all we need is faith.

The most important kind of witnessing is by your living example. Being a Christian should be a lifestyle, not a holier-than-thou proclamation (Col. 3:17). With an attitude of being a heavenly representative, we can witness in a way that becomes an everyday and enjoyable aspect of our lives (Titus 2:1-5). When we live as the Lord commands, the blessings that follow will witness to others His eternal love. Who would want Christianity if Christians were always sad and gloomy? We need to show the world how happy Jesus makes us.

In witnessing here are some basic things to remember:

- **Never take the defensive.** When people see you angry or anxious, they question your sincerity. When Jesus spoke with the Pharisees, He countered their attacks as well as witnessed in a composed and informative manner.

- **Pray.** Speak to God more than to anyone else. Remember to let God do the speaking (Acts 1:8). All He needs is a willing vessel and He will take over. In the end it's the work of the Holy Spirit that saves souls.

- **Love.** This should be the focus of any discussion of God. Let the love of Christ clutch the heart and everything else will fall into place.

*See *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 706.

Friday
June 30

Can I Get a Witness?

EXPLORATION

Matt. 28:19, 20

CONCLUDE

How do we succeed in witnessing?

First of all, we shouldn't take up the job before meeting some qualifications: (1) a personal encounter with the love of Christ; and (2) a conversion experience. At this point, we will not only be qualified, we will be motivated.

Even then, we may not meet with great success. Does that mean that we need to show more muscle in dragging the heathen to the baptistry? No. The responsibility of the Christian is to sow the seeds of God's love and correction. After that, the Holy Spirit takes over. It is His job to soften hard hearts. Like the disciples, we will fail to cast out any demons if we try to do it in our own power.

CONSIDER

- Looking over your CD or cassette collection and selecting a song that you feel is a compelling witness to the love of God. Meditate on the words of this song.
- Calling a parent (if he or she is a Christian) and ask what is one message about God that he or she tried to communicate to you while you were growing up.
- Making a study of the fastest growing Christian denominations. What are the keys of their success?
- Examining the items in your toolbox. Is there a way to use any of these tools that will be a witness to Christ?
- Sketching a cross-stitch project that you feel would be a witness if it hung in your home.
- Composing and sending an e-mail message to a friend or relative that includes a personal expression of what God has done in your life.

CONNECT

Matthew 9:35–11:1.

Acts of the Apostles, chap. 11.

Philip G. Samaan, *Christ's Way of Reaching People*; Fordyce W. Detamore, *Seeking His Lost Sheep*.

Are **We** having **Fun** yet?



“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33, NIV).

Sabbath
July 1

Memories of My Grandfather

INTRODUCTION

Matt. 10:19, 20

My grandfather welcomed me into his den. My memories of him were of two kinds: inside and outside. Inside sitting on his easy chair, a stack of newspapers and a magnifying glass to one side, shelves of short-band radio equipment to another. On the wall hung a photo of me, clasping my hands and showing my teeth in a smile, posing with this old man.

Outside sitting on a lawn chair, dogs barking in the background, cats winding between chair and people's legs, trees reaching to the sky. In every memory he wore black work shoes and a pair of blue overalls.

**In every memory
he wore black
work shoes and
a pair of blue
overalls.**

I'd seen my grandmother at church, but never him. When my grandmother and their sons joined the church, he remained violently opposed. For as long as I'd known, he'd been almost wholly out of our family picture—a shadowed, enraged figure.

I could see a change now. It had begun after our family became acquainted with the prayer ministry of Christian author Roger

Morneau, and we felt the Holy Spirit's gentle urge to change our own attitudes. Our family had slowly forgiven this man we barely knew who'd so forcefully affected our characters. With that forgiveness and prayer came a softening in his actions and attitude toward us.

I prayed again now. "God, you've changed my heart, and now I ask once more that you'll change his. May he glimpse You through me."

As I told him of my present work and studies, I sensed a mood I'd never felt so strongly before. I felt a joy of life that seemed almost surreal. My face cracked into a persistent smile. I felt the Holy Spirit, fresh, heady, and joyous, permeate my personality. I wondered, *Is this what intoxication feels like?*

My grandfather pulled out a new wallet. "Could you use this?" he asked.

"Yeah, I could," I said, pulling my tattered old wallet from my back pocket. "I've needed a new one for a long time. Thank you very much."

"I hope to see you again," Grandpa said, "if I haven't gone on to the other side."

The next time I saw him was in church, a tie around his neck, at rest. After a series of strokes, one mysterious voice and localized healing, and evident soul-searching, he'd apparently accepted Christ into his heart. I wondered, did the look on his face merely reflect the common solemnity of the dead, the expertise of the funeral home, or a greater peacefulness he'd reached?

Got Grace?

EVIDENCE

Acts 4:33

Luke likes people. He loves God, and that extends to his concern for people. His gospel records the most number of parables and miracles. He is a doctor and believer in Jesus Christ, a man dedicated to easing human suffering. In Acts, he concentrates on the beginnings of the Christian family. He describes the joy each believer has in Christ—an emotion that transcends cultural, racial, societal barriers, and it grows greater when shared.

Acts 4:32 mentions “of one heart and one soul” (NKJV). There is no discrimination, no division, no well-dissected study of any particular demographic. These are people not concerned about who made the most, who has the best, or who will lead; their thoughts are of Jesus. For those who did not fully comprehend, the Holy Spirit through the disciples “gave witness” of that day (verse 33, NKJV). In believing, a “great grace” descended upon them (verse 33, NKJV).

Grace: “the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ . . . and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues.”* To Luke, believing is not a short-lived emotion. It is coming together with no barriers, testifying the Resurrection, and *doing* something about it.

The witnessing of God’s love, demonstrated in the Resurrection, does not demand conversion. Witnessing is an act of love, not to prove a point, but to share the joy of the Resurrection. Conversion is the choice of the individual.

That “great grace” encouraged the early believers to share: without wanting, without forcing, without insecurities. Truly believing in the Holy Spirit does that. In today’s world of beating the apocalyptic clock and racking up those baptism statistics, we need to take note of what the first believers did: they came together in one accord, leaving behind all that did not belong in Christianity, and

**That "great grace"
encouraged the
early believers to
share**

believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Believing, a desire to share came upon them all (verses 32, 33, 35). The sincere witnessing of God’s love does not demand conversion, but it sure is tough ignoring Good News! (11:23, 24).

REACT

How do all the projects that are aimed at converting the masses compare with the witnessing of the early believers? What are the similarities and differences?

**Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, Wash.: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1885).

Monday
July 3

Power to the People!

LOGOS

Acts 1:5, 8, 14; 2:1, 14-21; 4:23, 31; 6:1-5; 7:54-56; 9:7-9, 18, 19;
11:22-24; 13:1-3; 14:21-23

Only God could communicate to us the truth and excitement of the times recorded in Acts in a way that was faithful to the experiences: no exaggeration, no liberally interpreted viewpoint, no rambling. Through Luke's account, God speaks to us today of the encouraging history of His acts among the early Christian believers—a victorious history God is eager to repeat.

Unfortunately, however, bubbles are not new inventions. It always has been human nature to want the easier road. And when it comes to witnessing for Christ, that means wanting to stay within the bubbles of anonymity, apathy, and fear. Peter was no exception. When Jesus was in need of support, Peter was not willing to stand up and acknowledge Him. Matthew 26:74 says that “he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, ‘I don’t know the man!’” (NIV). All people can relate to this experience. But the Bible promises the option of change.

Consider Peter after the resurrection of Jesus became a reality for him. Only seven weeks after the resurrection, Peter stood up before the same people who crucified Jesus and preached under the influence of the Spirit one of the greatest sermons the world had ever heard. Three thousand were baptized that day (Acts 2:41). Though Peter had before been too frightened to speak for Christ, through a miracle, God had led Peter to experience that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17, NIV). It is the same Spirit that offers us freedom from our fears of witnessing.

And God calls everyone to share in this ministry; not just apostles. Consider Stephen, who was asked by his local church to be the head cook and dining room director because he was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5, NIV). Though not schooled in any theological institution, Stephen achieved great things for God, so much so that great opposition arose from the Jews who sought to bring him down. “They could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke” (verse 10, NIV).

This is the great news about witnessing. Being an effective witness for Jesus has more to do with your reliance on and guidance by God than any talent or intellect you may possess. Why? Because it is God who does the work through us. Jesus said about witnessing, “I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict” (Luke 21:15, NIV). In effect, the extent to which God can use us as witnesses is directly proportionate to the extent to which we daily offer ourselves to Him for this purpose. Any who are willing will receive the Holy Spirit into their lives because Acts 2:39 says, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (NIV).

It is not all chocolates and roses, however, outside the bubble. Witnessing for Jesus in a world of sin is fraught with danger. Jesus said, “Go! I am sending you

out like lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3, NIV) and “All men will hate you because of me” (21:17, NIV). We are not in heaven yet. Not everybody that we love as Christ loved will appreciate it. Jesus called us salt (Matt. 5:13). Wouldn’t it be easier to be sugar? The accounts within the Bible make it plain that in the short term, many Christians might have seemed better off if they chose to sugarcoat their witness. Being filled with the power of the Spirit doesn’t guarantee short-term safety or popularity. Consider Jesus and Stephen. They became martyrs for the truth and love they brought. They were martyrs at the hands of the people they sought to save.

On the other hand, others accept the life you introduce them to with joy, people who will never be the same. For these people God was willing to give His life, and by the power of the Spirit, so are we. It’s what Paul gave his life for. It’s why he spoke of the immense joy that was his on many occasions as he traveled, seeing individuals and communities accepting the love of Christ. This then is a truth that is realized by all who witness: some will love you and some will hate you. The Bible is “sharper than any double-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12, NIV). To love as Jesus loved will bring the best and worst out of others, depending on the receptiveness of their hearts to God’s love.

So where does that leave you? Scared? Excited? Those who have spent their lives witnessing for God will tell you that there is nothing on earth that compares to the rush of sharing in the ministry of Jesus for the salvation of people, a ministry we can all share in. And the blessings that Jesus gives are beyond this world. It is little wonder that during this time “with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33, NIV).

**Jesus called us salt.
Wouldn’t it be easier to
be sugar?**

REACT

1. Take a little time to relive some of your experiences with witnessing.
2. Make a list of as many different forms of witnessing as you can see yourself being involved in. Do you think the Spirit could expand your list? Explain.
3. It seems as if it would be easy to share good things with other people, but the experience of witnessing can prove otherwise. Imagine you were given a paper bag stuffed with hundred dollar bills and your mission was to share the bills with as many people as possible. What difficulties might you encounter?
4. Describe a time when you have seen the Holy Spirit at work in a witnessing experience.
5. Why do you think that being approached with the gospel often brings out either the best—or the worst—in people?

Tuesday
July 4

Bench-pressing Scripture

TESTIMONY

2 Cor. 12:9

"As we cherish and obey the promptings of the Spirit, our hearts are enlarged to receive more and more of His power, and to do more and better work. Dormant energies are aroused, and palsied faculties receive new life."

"The humble worker who obediently responds to the call of God may be sure of receiving divine assistance. To accept so great and holy a responsibility is itself

"The more he seeks to impart light, the more light he will receive."

elevating to the character. It calls into action the highest mental and spiritual powers, and strengthens and purifies the mind and heart. Through faith in the power of God, it is wonderful how strong a weak man may become, how decided

his efforts, how prolific of great results. He who begins with a little knowledge, in a humble way, and tells what he knows, while seeking diligently for further knowledge, will find the whole heavenly treasure awaiting his demand. The more he seeks to impart light, the more light he will receive. The more one tries to explain the word of God to others, with a love for souls, the plainer it becomes to himself. The more we use our knowledge and exercise our powers, the more knowledge and power we shall have."

"Every effort made for Christ will react in blessing upon ourselves. If we use our means for His glory, He will give us more. As we seek to win others to Christ, bearing the burden of souls in our prayers, our own hearts will throb with the quickening influence of God's grace; our own affections will glow with more divine fervor; our whole Christian life will be more of a reality, more earnest, more prayerful."*

REACT

1. If you expect to be a powerful weightlifter, what do you have to do to reach your expectations?
2. If you expect to be a powerful witness for God, what do you have to do? Be specific.
3. What has God promised to do for you when you consistently work out with Scripture and in actual witnessing for Him?
4. What parallels do you see between the experience of giving financially to God's work and the experience of giving our time and energy to Christian ministry?

* *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 354.

Seeking the Spirit

HOW-TO

Acts 1:7, 8

Before Jesus returned to heaven at the end of His earthly ministry, He promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would be sent to them. In this way, they would be enabled to spread the gospel message throughout the world. The book of Acts chronicles dramatic events in the early church, including the outpouring of Pentecost, miraculous healings, and angelic visitations.

While we as modern Christians certainly understand the call to witness, we may be intimidated by the enormity of the task or perhaps even be unclear as to how to go about performing it. Some of the same fundamental rules that applied to members of the early church can still guide us today.

1. Recognize that power comes from God and acknowledge that He gives specific gifts to particular individuals. God, through the Holy Spirit, is the true energizer of any attempts on our part to communicate His love to others. No strength of our own will ever be enough. We must also allow God to use the special talents we possess. I may not be able to preach like Peter or Paul, but I might be able to make cookies for my elderly neighbor or play basketball with the kid next door. Caring actions often help to soften hearts and, in this way, people may be reached who otherwise would have no use for the Word of God.

2. Request power from God and believe that He will provide it. The Bible records many instances in which the Spirit was poured out on the believers after they had prayed. This action indicated a willingness on their part to be used by God and a belief in His ability to strengthen and care for them. God wants volunteers who trust in Him even when difficult circumstances seem impossible to overcome.

I might be able to
make cookies for my
elderly neighbor.

3. Remain faithful. Life is never easy, particularly for Christians whom Satan is attempting to discourage, dissuade, or destroy. In fact, many of the early church leaders died for their beliefs. Yet, in spite of the many trials and hardships they experienced, they were able to maintain their faith in God. Often we may be confronted with setbacks or disruptions that seem insurmountable. But take heart and cling to the One who will never leave you or forsake you. In the end, your faithfulness will be rewarded. Like Stephen, you will see God.

REACT

1. Is it possible to bring new members into your church without the power of God? Explain your answer.
2. Is being nice an effective way to share the gospel? Why or why not?

Thursday
July 6

Catch the Spirit's Vision

OPINION

Acts 2:17

It was a late, muggy summer evening in England. We were relaxing, just kicking back, and killing another summer evening. Out of the blue, Jeroen asks, "How do you know if you are filled with the Holy Spirit?"

I sputtered a lame response: "Ah, you just know. As soon as you accept Jesus, you receive the Holy Spirit." But Jeroen was not satisfied. "Is it a feeling? Do you really just know? Do you think differently? How do you know?"

I was glad we were interrupted and never finished the conversation. But the question has stayed with me for nearly two years.

I have an answer for you, Jeroen, finally! Young adults from around the world are filled with the Holy Spirit. From England to South Africa, from the Pacific Islands to North America, from the Far East to South America, young adults have caught the vision and are running with it.

Young adults in England continue to make an impact on the streets of cities and towns across the United Kingdom. In Australia, young adults are literally storming the streets with the gospel message. In North America young adults recently shared their ministry dreams at the General Conference and now are living those dreams. In Africa and South America, young adults are the forerunners in more than 50 percent of the evangelism projects. Young people are establishing churches. Young adults are the pastors, the elders, and the deaconesses. In the Far East, students are preparing to enter China through service-oriented projects in a major evangelism project.

In fact, in the divisions where we are in the front and running evangelism projects, the church is growing at a rate faster than in the divisions where young adults are in the back seat. One more fact: 80 percent of the church membership in the South Pacific islands is young people under the age of 30.

How do you know if you are filled with the Holy Spirit? When you take the initiative to step out and dream a new ministry. When you begin to live that ministry. When you step out of your comfort zone and live with a tribe of people in Papua New Guinea just because you want them to know Jesus as you do. When you are so on fire for God that you can't contain it. When you catch the vision of the Holy Spirit and run with it. When you live Christ unashamedly. That's when you are filled with the Holy Spirit!

**I have an answer
for you, Jeroen,
finally!**

Filled With the Spirit

EXPLORATION

Acts 4:33

CONCLUDE

When we are united and willing to see people as God sees them, ourselves included, God can fill us with His Spirit and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true—not by wishing upon a star, but by depending on the Maker of our universe for the vision and for the power.

CONSIDER

- Dipping or pouring a candle. Every time you burn it, think of letting your light shine through good works that glorify God.
- Comparing and contrasting “easing human suffering” with “sharing the joy of the risen Savior.” How are they alike? How are they different or distinct? Present your conclusions in an informative format.
- Writing your own story of the time the Holy Spirit was the most real to you and what resulted in your church or in your life. Share this with your Sabbath School class.
- Singing several songs about the Holy Spirit (use the topical index of popular song books for titles). Choose some that would make a nice medley for a praise service.
- Acting out trust in God by leading a blindfolded friend through an obstacle course. If you wish, label the obstacles with things that are problems in your life.
- Using a magnifying glass to focus the sun’s rays on dry leaves and start a small fire to illustrate what it would mean for your group/class/church to come together in one accord.
- Closing your eyes and visualizing a new ministry—or new twist to an old one—and where you would fit into it. Journal as you develop your vision and as you take each step in the transformation of your dream into reality.

CONNECT

Acts of the Apostles, chaps. 5, 27.

Philip Yancey, *What’s So Amazing About Grace*; Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

More than an Occupation



“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him”
(Acts 5:32, NIV).

The Witness of Shoeing Horses

INTRODUCTION

Acts 26:16

When I was a young Christian, every so often it happened that some of my older fellow Christians would ask me: Don't you think that God might be calling you to become a youth leader? A Pathfinder guide? An editor or newswriter?

Usually I listened and wondered. At that time mostly my own thoughts went in other directions: engineering, shipping, foreign service, etc. Did I sense a conflict of interests? Could I serve my church only through the avenues of pastoring, teaching, or nursing?

Eventually I found my call. I became convinced that God was calling me to the ministry. I prepared for the ministry. And since then I have found myself doing a lot of things that were included in my dreams as a young Christian. The inner feeling of being just where God wants one to be, combined with the experience of doing something that is stimulating oneself and at the same time benefitting others, is the most fantastic joy that I know.

No matter what your occupation, God is able to use you as a witness for Him. "Get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you" (Acts 26:16, NIV). According to Luther, this kind of call applies to any kind of occupation, and he reckoned it to be just as spiritual to serve God by shoeing horses as to serve Him in any kind of denominational services.

Protestant churches over the years seem to have forgotten this. They have promoted an idea that values the professional witness higher than the lay witness. God does not evaluate witnessing in terms of professional/lay involvement. God is more than willing to cooperate with any Christian.

According to Russell Burrill: "Adventism was born as a dynamic, mission-centered movement. Passion for sharing the message reigned in the minds and hearts of the early pioneers. They labored until bone weary; they sacrificed health and possessions in attempting to reach the world with the saving news of Jesus Christ and the third angel's message. Mission drove them! Mission motivated them! Mission was the flame that burned within them!"*

**Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Hart Research Center), p. 11.

**Protestant
churches over
the years seem to
have forgotten
this.**

LOGOS

Acts 5:12; 9:36; 12:5; 13:1-3; 16:6-10; 18:22, 23; 19:1-6, 8-12; 20:28; 21:8; 26:2-16; 2 Cor. 5:15-20; 1 Pet. 2:9

In Acts 26:2-16 Paul witnesses as a prisoner. Imprisonment seemed to be a common circumstance under which Christians witnessed (Heb. 10:34; 13:3). Here Paul has an opportunity to address the Governor Felix personally with some of the radical aspects of the gospel (Acts 24:25). Felix tries to evade any convictions about Paul's message, but we see that Paul eagerly grabs this opportunity to witness bravely and honestly.

Christians in the New Testament participated in the spread of the gospel in many different ways and under a variety of circumstances. Some, for example, witnessed as an immediate reaction to something that Christ or one of His followers had said or done. These responses, often spontaneous, could range from excited outbursts and shouts of joy (3:7, 8) to an unstoppable urge to tell and retell the experience and its implications (Luke 8:38, 39; John 4:28, 29, 39, 40). Others were able to witness as a result of sanctions, confinement, or other forms of punishment (Acts 26:10). This was often the case with Paul the apostle (2 Cor. 11:23).

Notice that witnessing did not always gain adherents to the Christian life. For example, under the heat of conviction, Felix sneers at Paul and dismisses him until he feels comfortable enough to listen to Paul again (Acts 24:25). To be a witness would at times provoke hostility, ridicule, or persecution (26:11). In fact we derive our understanding of the word *martyr* from the idea of one who bore witness even though it would cost one's life.

You do not need to be a pastor or evangelist to be a witness. In 1 Peter 2:9 Peter refers to all Christians as witnesses, using the priestly terms that were once used exclusively for the nation of Israel: "chosen generation," "holy nation," and "royal priesthood" (KJV). These are key concepts in the Christian teaching we know as the priesthood of all believers. It shows ultimately that by belonging to Christ all Christians are witnesses as opposed to only a select few. All Christians are obliged to express the gospel in their lives.

Some New Testament Christians did, however, extend their witness under specific mandates of the Holy Spirit. Today we often refer to such mandates as "calls." Though to be a Christian is to be called, not everyone will feel called in the same way or to the same challenges. Some Christians were mandated to take care of one or more of the growing number of groups of believers. These were the early Christian pastors. Others were mandated to take the gospel strategically and systematically beyond its confines to other countries and communities. These we often refer to as evangelists (the word *evangelist* is used in only three places in the New Testament: Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Ephesians 4:11). Peter and the other apostles saw themselves in this category of mandated believers. Their specific contributions to the church's witness was not particularly to work among

existing believers (Acts 6:2, 4), but rather to give their efforts to prayer and to emphasize teaching the gospel to those who had not yet heard it.

Paul the apostle was also mandated to carry the Christian message generally to those outside the community of believers and specifically to non-Jews (Acts 9:15; Rom. 15:15-18). Neither the 12 apostles nor Paul saw their roles as superior to that of other Christians.

Not everyone will feel called in the same way or to the same challenges.

(This is the main argument of 1 Corinthians 12.) The apostles and Paul, however, did regard their work as crucial to the ongoing witness of the whole Christian movement and an act of obedience to Jesus (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 26:16-18).

Each New Testament witness could not express the entirety of the gospel and all its implications (John 20:30, 31; 21:25); but each, in his or her own way, was a participant in expressing the truth about Jesus. For some, their immediate intention was not necessarily to proselytize, but often that was the inevitable effect of their witness—what they said and the way they lived (1 Thess. 1:8, 9). That thought might help us toward experiencing Christianity more as a way of life than merely as a job to be done.

REACT

1. What words do Christians use today to refer to witnessing?
2. How could expressing the idea of witnessing in new ways encourage more Christians in their personal witness?
3. To preach is to witness but to witness is not necessarily to preach. Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.
4. What is, for you, the most natural or genuine way to witness?
5. How do you think your personal witness will help someone become a practicing Christian? Be specific.
6. What would you do if someone in your neighborhood or local community asked you how they could become a Seventh-day Adventist? Be specific.
7. What place, if any, do verses like Luke 12:8, 9 have in a discussion about witnessing?
8. Given that according to the New Testament all Christians are witnesses and ministers, and given the vast number of unreached people, should official, paid pastors of existing churches be the exception or the rule? Explain your answer.
9. The vast majority of Christian resources—financial and human—is spent in areas with existing groups of Christians. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this?
10. What practical steps could help us take the gospel strategically and systematically to people in our own neighborhoods?

Monday
July 10

Keeping Connected

TESTIMONY

John 15:15, 16

In John 15 Jesus talks about the vine and the branches. He tries to explain the purpose of God's mission. Jesus the vine—we the branches. What kind of value does a vine have without branches? Using a metaphor, Jesus explains the importance of the connection between vine and branches (John 15:1-6). After talking symbolically, He continues on a personal level (verse 7).

How strange it sounds when Jesus, in verse 15, continues: "I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning" (The Message).

To understand this statement, we need to have an idea of oriental habits. A servant was treated as a slave. Students were treated as servants of their teacher because they followed his instructions. Because teachers feared rivalry, intrigue, and competition, they didn't share all their knowledge with their students. Jesus was completely different. He wanted His disciples—now new friends—to grow in knowledge so they were able to replace Him when He was gone. They weren't His competitors;

**Jesus takes
away all our
illusions.**

they were much more His heirs. But that wasn't all He had to say: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (verse 16, NIV).

What a Jesus! Doesn't everything in us strive against this idea? We would like to choose and be independent. We would like to earn praise and make a career. But Jesus takes away all our illusions. When He calls us to be His witnesses, He has one purpose in mind—to bear everlasting fruit. All selfishness and self-glorification is gone. The purpose of a witness isn't to point to oneself. It is much more to share what one has experienced. In reaching out to people, Jesus was an example. He came down to earth to bring people into a new relationship with God.

Our world needs witnesses, people who are willing to share what God has done for them through Jesus Christ. People are wanted who will walk in His footsteps, people who are willing to leave their own secure world.

Because God left His realm and came down to earth, we can be saved. Now He is searching for followers who are willing to listen and change their lifestyles. He seeks people who realize that they are envoys and not masters; followers who are willing to give up their ideas and go to places where people are in need of Christ.

God makes no distinction among people. He "wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4, NIV).

Burkhard Olschewski, Bern, Switzerland

The Lecture Hall of Tyrannus

EVIDENCE

Acts 19:8-10

The events in today's key text are surprising, to say the least. Often I have received the advice: "Don't let your studies destroy your faith. Remember the church!" and so have probably many believers engaging in nontheological studies. Yet the text tells how Paul left the synagogue and entered a school, continuing his ministry there. Why would Paul do such a thing? Surely the synagogue—or the church, in our terminology—is the right place for preaching. Had there been committees at that time, certainly one of them would be worried by this step.

Paul thought differently, and apparently it was a wise decision. In verse 10 we are told how "this went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (NIV).

Paul chose to move his ministry to a more open forum, a place where debate was the norm. There is a point for us to learn in Paul's choice of place for preaching. At the surface there seems to be a conflict between the discussions of a lecture hall and true ministry. Discussions are about being critical: Never take anything at face value. Ministry is about getting people to do just that: taking God's unconditional love at face value. To believe it.

Today this conflict is artificial, if it ever was real. As the world is becoming more and more educated, faith cannot be brought about by a chain of arguments based on prophecies and timelines. People generally do not trust a person or a message with too many answers, so it is essential that we "take our ministry to the lecture hall," and openly discuss our

**Paul chose to move his ministry
to a more open forum**

questions as well as our answers. A ministry embracing the unanswered questions of faith while preaching the wonderful answers we do have, is much more credible to a world fed up with "final truths" and the disappointments they inevitably bring.

This, I think, is what Paul's move into the lecture halls teaches us. And a tremendous relief it is for those of us with at least as many questions as answers: we may equally well be ministers and witnesses for God.

REACT

1. How can the gospel bless some people with questions and other people with answers?
2. Do you agree that final truths inevitably bring disappointments?

Which Part Do I Play?

HOW-TO

1 Cor. 12:4-11

In the Bible the church is compared to a body. A body functions best when all parts work (1 Cor. 12:12), not individually but together, coordinated by the brain. In our church the brain is, hopefully, God. We are the body parts.

Our key text defines the spiritual gifts that are available to us through the Holy Spirit. But what resources do we actually have in our church? How do we detect these gifts?

Identify your spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift doesn't come prepackaged, but has to develop. It's often hidden within us. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you find it. Have people you can trust help you detect where your strength lies. Spiritual gifts are tools to be used in furthering God's work.

Encourage one another. Learn to appreciate all gifts. Not only the obvious ones but also the hidden ones. We are all different and are maturing in various ways in our faith, so be considerate and encouraging. Remember that one spiritual gift is not more important than the other.

Work together. We are *all* needed in witnessing the Gospel (Rom. 8:30). Witnessing can be more than singing, preaching, or teaching a Sabbath School class. Being a friend, listening, or even praying in silence can be just as effective a testimony of God's love to others.

Spiritual gifts are tools to be used in furthering God's work.

The most powerful way of witnessing is no doubt the way we live our lives. Can people tell that Jesus lives in your heart? Do you witness to others by the way you live your life?

If Yes, wonderful! But are you really being honest, or are you trying to score points with God? He sees through hypocrisy.

If No, why don't you? Have you been discouraged one way or another? Have you ever considered that you might already be witnessing without knowing it? What is your definition of witnessing? Does it have to be conducted in a specific way? What works in one church might not in another.

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22, NIV).

Remember that God is calling you to play a part in spreading the gospel. Don't be afraid to try your own limits, but only you can choose which part to play. "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32).

Everyone Is a Minister

OPINION

Acts 1:8

When Christ ascended to heaven, He left His followers with a mission. He sent out all His disciples to work for Him, and when they had finished the work He would return. That same challenge faces every professing Christian today: to take up the cross and tell the whole earth about Christ. This is our mission—not only that of the preacher. Each of us must take on the responsibility to witness. We have our different talents and spiritual gifts, but we have one common goal: to represent and glorify Christ.

Are we indeed witnessing to people around us? Are we filled with the same joy in our hearts that Mary felt when she—as the first of Christ’s followers—was sent to witness with the message: He is risen? Are we filled with the same joy and urgency to tell our families, friends, colleagues, and neighbors about Him? Are we carrying our cross? Are we glowing for Christ? May we expect, when Christ returns, to hear “Well done thou good and faithful servant”?

The nature of a Christian’s experience includes sharing the good news. This has never changed. Our mission is no different today from that at the time of Christ. Have we changed? Why are some of us so reluctant to minister on His behalf? Each of us has at least one talent that can be used in reaching out to our fellow humanity.

God does expect me to help out. God intended for me to work and take part in His work, and only in actively doing this will I at His return be able to listen to His words of appreciation.

REACT

1. What specific factors work against our enthusiasm for sharing the gospel with our families, friends, and colleagues? What can we do to combat those factors?
2. What gifts has God given you to help build up His kingdom, and what specific ways can you use them this week?

**Our mission is
no different
today from that
at the time of
Christ.**

EXPLORATION

Acts 2:1-21

CONCLUDE

An employer challenged his employees: “Those who are not fired with enthusiasm, will be fired—with enthusiasm!” The word *enthusiasm* derives from two Greek words that literally mean “in God.” We are transformed when we are “in God,” and this transformation renders us as enthusiastic witnesses. Wherever there is true church, there is mission. A nonwitnessing church is an oxymoron. Our God-given mission is worship and witness and is reflected in what is often called *The Great Commission* (see Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8). The early church embodied this. So should we.

CONSIDER

- Listing 10 to 12 activities that some have called witnessing. Rank them, from the most effective to the least effective, making notes to explain your evaluation.
- Listening to, or singing, Kurt Kaiser's song *Pass It On*. Then think about, or discuss with friends, ideas you can use to create the *sparks*.
- Praying for a friend who has not accepted Jesus, asking God to show you how you can be used to reach him or her.
- Walking through your neighborhood in the early evening, making mental notes about who your neighbors are, thinking in terms of how you might witness to those who are older, younger, or different from you ethnically or economically.
- Gathering information about countries where the gospel has struggled to advance and then plotting the information on a world map.
- Observing the elements of nature; then write out how these *silent* witnesses testify about God (see Ps. 19:1-4).
- Watching the video, *The Mission*, focusing on what motivated the missionaries.

CONNECT

Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:17-20; John 15:26, 27.

The Acts of the Apostles, chap. 5.

Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith*; Rebecca Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker*; Paul Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism*.

The Target

audience



“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

INTRODUCTION

Acts 1:8

I have heard it said that the best way to be an effective witness is just to live a good life and let people learn by observing. I've also talked with those who suggest that aggressive evangelizing is the only way to win people for God. Yet somehow in this vigorous discussion of what we should be doing, we overlook whom we are trying to influence. It seems to me that this is our biggest problem.

To witness is to relate to someone what you have seen or experienced. What we have experienced is the salvation of a loving, listening God. To put this successfully into action is not to act—at least not in traditional terms—but to listen. To listen to what others have to say, to win their trust so that through our

Christ did not travel the Galilean countryside simply to preach and move on.

love for them they will ultimately understand the Father's love. We are called to witness—to share what we have seen. But in the term *share* lies the key. We must receive as we are giving, learn from those around us, and offer them our friendship as we are offering them Christ's story. A person may initially

refuse the church, but a genuine friend is rarely turned away. We must be focused—first on God—but second on those we witness to: civil authorities, children, intellectuals, even non-Christians who might at first reject us.

Christ did not travel around the Galilean countryside simply to preach and move on. Instead, in addition to talking with those He met, Jesus listened. Children flocked around Him, chattering questions in addition to hearing stories. The church leaders and intellectuals who met Jesus found not only a man willing to teach them but one who offered them His friendship.

When we become overwhelmed by the thought of witnessing to the multitude of different kinds of people in the world, we can find comfort in Jesus' example. It may be difficult to preach to an unwilling audience, but there are few people who would reject a friend. What kinds of people do you encounter on a regular basis? Whom do you most easily connect with, and how can you stretch your comfort zone to reach out to others? How can you initiate a friendship with someone who needs to know the Lord? More importantly, *when* will you initiate a friendship with someone who doesn't know what you know—that we have been saved by an awesome God who offers not just His grace but His love.

The Potent Ingredient

EVIDENCE

John 14:16, 17; Acts 1:8

Before Christ ascended to heaven, He promised His disciples a Helper that would guide them through the climactic events of the end times. Jesus was referring to another person in the Trinity. "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter, and he will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who leads into all truth" (John 14:16, 17, TLB). This promise gave hope for the misunderstandings of Christ's departure. The Lord continued His promise when He said He would never leave or forsake His people back in the Old Testament. In other words, Jesus is still with us now—not in human form, but in Spirit.

When the apostles were commissioned, they were not to depend solely on their talents or techniques. Instead, they were given a potent ingredient that guaranteed ultimate success. The Lord told them that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word used for *power* here is *dunamis*. This is where our English word *dynamite* comes from.¹ Witnessing without the Holy Spirit is like baking bread without yeast.

So, why aren't we taking advantage of a gift provided for us as we share the good news? And if we decide to use the Holy Spirit, how do we cooperate without getting in the way? I'm sure that one can witness without using the Spirit, but this will eventually lead to failure.

First of all, the Spirit transforms us. "When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven."²

Not only does the Holy Spirit change us into better witnesses, but He also convicts the unconsecrated into accepting Christ. "But it is the Spirit of God moving upon the heart that will give true success."³

We must remember that we are mere instruments. The Spirit provides us the right words to speak in specific situations. When we have come to accept Christ, it is our duty to share the grace of Christ with everyone we come in contact with. If we are willing to surrender ourselves wholly to His service and cooperate with divine guidance, then our work will have dynamic results.

**Witnessing without
the Holy Spirit is like
baking bread without
yeast.**

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 124.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

3. *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 108.

Monday
July 17

Faith, Reason, and the Cities

LOGOS

Prov. 22:6; Mark 10:13-16; Acts 4:1-7; 6:7; 8:9-19; 10; 13:6, 7; 17:16-34;
19:18-20

It is not unusual to hear critics declare religion to be the antithesis of reason. Even some Christians manifest similar sentiments, suggesting that logic and reasoning make for cold religion. Some have suggested that reason should be subordinate to faith.

Paul's display of eloquence on Mars Hill in Athens, however, testifies that reason and faith are complementary and not opposite poles. At Mars Hill Paul demonstrated that reason could be one of Christianity's strongest influences.

Reading Acts 17:16-34 makes us aware that Paul was not timid in setting before the Athenians a rational gospel. He was not hesitant to appeal to philosophers and poets of his time in a manner that was relevant to his audience. Rather, by his appeal to the intellect, Paul demonstrated that Christianity was a rational religion, just as rational and intellectual as Greek philosophy (Acts 17:16-34). But more importantly, he demonstrated how the Holy Spirit can use the gift of wisdom to spread the gospel.

Paul used logic, but not just to enhance his preaching. He employed logical methods and strategies to carry the gospel beyond rural Palestine and into the stronghold of the Roman Empire: the cities.

Historians today agree that a great part of the success of Christianity in the Western world resulted from the evangelization of the cities. They also agree that Paul played a key role in the process.

Cities were the great centers of intellectual activity, power, and social interchange. Paul was cognizant of this. Hence, he planted the seed of the gospel in the centers of learning—Athens, Ephesus, and Corinth. With such strategies he was able to reach people of different social and intellectual levels. Not only did he reach the humble, but the affluent and

**Not only did he reach
the humble, but the
affluent and influential
as well.**

influential as well. This influential and upper-class component of the church has often been neglected, but it forms an important aspect of Paul's contribution to the development of Christianity.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:26 Paul mentions that *not many* of the Corinthians were wise, wealthy, or powerful by worldly standards. By implication, there must have been at least a few that were wise, wealthy, powerful, and upper-class citizens (of noble birth). Their presence in the church is attested to by individuals such as Chloe, an estate owner (verse 11), and Gaius, who owned a

house large enough to accommodate the entire church (Rom. 16:23). Erastus, Corinth's "city treasurer," is mentioned in Romans 16:23. This name, appearing in a Corinthian inscription found in Corinth in 1929, is believed to correspond to the biblical character. The archaeological piece describes this Erastus as "city administrator" and benefactor. It is relevant to note that city officials often funded public projects from personal funds, so it may be safe to infer that they must have been persons of significant means.

Although not recorded in Scripture, we know several other persons that may have been influenced by Paul's ministry to the cities. One of these is Pomponia Graecina (the Greek). She is described by Roman historian Tacitus as a woman of the senatorial class (the highest of six Roman classes) who adopted a strange form of religion in A.D. 57. This is the time around which 1 Corinthians was written. Historians today agree that Pomponia was a converted Christian.*

There is no doubt of the impact that Paul's ministry had on the early Christian church. God used the apostle Paul in a very special way. We are just left to wonder what Christianity would have looked like without Paul's visit to Athens and Corinth.

REACT

1. In 1 Corinthians 1:17–2:18, Paul seems to be undermining the importance of wisdom. Was he contradicting himself? Explain your answer.

2. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:6, 7. Do you see any distinction of how Paul uses the term *wisdom* in the two verses? In context, explain what kind of wisdom Paul was denigrating.

3. Read Romans 12:1 in the New International Version. Why, in your opinion, was the word "reasonable" (original Greek, *logike*) placed as a footnote instead of being included in the main text? Compare different versions of this text.

4. If it's the Holy Spirit's role to convict people to accept Christ, is it right to teach various witnessing methods to influence people to make decisions? Why or why not?

5. What are the signs of witnessing by human power rather than Holy Spirit power?

*Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1997), p. 31.

Tuesday
July 18

How's Your Reception?

TESTIMONY Acts 10

Cornelius was a "righteous and God-fearing man, . . . well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation" (Acts 10:22, NIV). Ellen White continues, "Believing in God as the Creator of heaven and earth, Cornelius revered Him, acknowledged His authority, and sought His counsel in all the affairs of life. . . . He dared not attempt to carry out his plans or to bear his responsibilities without the help of God."¹

"As His representatives among men, God does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took humanity that He might reach humanity. . . . And to men and women has been committed the sacred trust of making known 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' Ephesians 3:8."

"In His wisdom the Lord brings those who are seeking for truth into touch with fellow beings who know the truth. It is the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness."²

**God is seeking for souls
among the high as well
as the lowly.**

"It was not for physical food alone that Peter hungered . . . he hungered for the salvation of his

countrymen. . . . It revealed to him the purpose of God . . . the world-wide extent of the divine plan . . . that through Christ the heathen may be made partakers of the blessings and privileges of the gospel."³

"In obedience to the directions just received from God, the apostle promised to go with them."⁴ "Today God is seeking for souls among the high as well as the lowly. There are many like Cornelius, men whom the Lord desires to connect with His work in the world. Their sympathies are with the Lord's people, but the ties that bind them to the world hold them firmly. . . . Special efforts should be made for these souls, who are in so great danger, because of their responsibilities and associations."

"God calls for earnest, humble workers, who will carry the gospel to the higher class. . . . There are in our world many who are nearer the kingdom of God than we suppose. In this dark world of sin the Lord has many precious jewels, to whom He will guide His messengers. . . . Constrained by the love of Christ, they will constrain others to come to Him."⁵

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 133.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 136.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 141.

Doing Something at Home

HOW-TO

Matt. 28:17

Growing up as Adventists, we always pictured missionaries going off into the world and preaching the message. These stories of courage and of sacrifice encouraged us to go out one day and do the same. So when the opportunity came along in college, I decided to follow that route. After all, didn't Christ say to us to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations"? (Matt. 28:19, KJV). With this in mind, I spent an exciting and rewarding year in Japan. Many are the experiences that I could relate to you, but I realized something when I returned home.

It is extraordinary to be able to go to the mission field and witness for the Lord, but it is a lot harder to do so in your own backyard! As a student missionary, you devote all your time to doing the Lord's work. But at home you have so much going on in your life that you do not allow time to witness. You tend to forget the commission in Matthew 28.

Now, we may not have the time or the resources to go out into the mission field, but we can do something here at home. Even if we are shy, the Lord can work through us. Here are some suggestions:

1. Be like Him. Everything we do or say should be Christlike. Our actions should be telling others who we are. Living in this world, some will wonder why we live our lifestyle. When we are willing to explain it to them, it gives us a chance to tell others about Christ.

**Witnessing is a lot harder
in your own backyard!**

2. Always be receptive and communicate. Most people think that we should just preach to people the message and they should listen. But it is also important for us to listen to what they have to say. Why are they refusing to listen? If you need help explaining a concept, talk to your pastor or others better qualified for help.

3. Be excited about the Word. If we are not excited about Christ, then how can we tell others about Him? When you go about your daily routine, think about all the good the Lord has done for you and smile. When asked why you are smiling, you know what to do.

When you answer the question, What does being a witness mean to you? you will then know what you can do. All these little things you do will bring up questions in people's minds. Planting these little seeds of curiosity will open up a path that the Lord can use to touch people.

Thursday
July 20

Fire and Brimstone

OPINION

John 3:18-21

Why does no one talk about damnation these days? We say plenty about grace, love, and salvation, but no one asks, "Salvation from what?" We'll talk for days about sex or better communication between spouses, but never once will the words hell or damnation come up. Have we given up those outdated notions?

We live in a time of rabid individualism. We are bombarded by messages to stand out. Some results of this are sickening, such as the shameless use of individualism by huge corporations to promote their mass-produced products, as

**People hear the word
hell and immediately
tune out.**

if buying the same item as millions of others is going to make one unique. There are some good points to this trend, such as increased respect for other cultures. The fact that people are different from us is no longer an acceptable reason to oppress them.

However, we have gone too far. We are afraid to tell others that the way they are living is wrong, that they will be damned if they continue to live that way. We are afraid to try to convince people of other religions that their beliefs are wrong. If we believe that the Bible and Christianity contain truth, why are we afraid to say so?

Part of the problem lies in the bad example of others claiming to do God's work. So-called Christians bomb abortion clinics, beat gay people, and extort millions of dollars through televangelism. This is a tragic misrepresentation of Christianity. Because of these influences, people hear the word *hell* and immediately tune out.

Damnation is an important concept. If I were dying I would want someone to tell me, especially if I could prevent it. The only way we can talk about complete Christianity is in the context of a loving friendship. When I talk to my friends, I can say things that I wouldn't say to a stranger. This is because my friends know that I love them, that nothing I say is meant to put them down. Of course, if I say things impolitely, they probably won't be my friends for long; but I can be considerate and not water down what I say. To witness, we must have the compassion to become friends with everyone and the courage to tell the whole truth about the gospel.

REACT

1. How is it possible to talk about damnation without using it as a scare tactic?
2. In the Old Testament the children of Israel were told to wipe out the heathen nations surrounding Canaan. What are the parallels, if any, between this and abortion clinic bombings?

Dennis Brand, Angwin, California

Into *All* the World

EXPLORATION

Matt. 24:14

CONCLUDE

We've all heard of the great commission, but sometimes we act as if it were intended only for ordained ministers. It isn't just for ministers; it's for everyone who loves Jesus. We also sometimes fail to carry out our commission by neglecting to reach all potential believers, regardless of their economic or social status. Often we overlook two vital ingredients of successful witnessing: the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of friendship. God has a love message for everyone, and a special someone whom He has chosen to deliver it. That *someone* can be you or me if we will only allow Him to use us.

CONSIDER

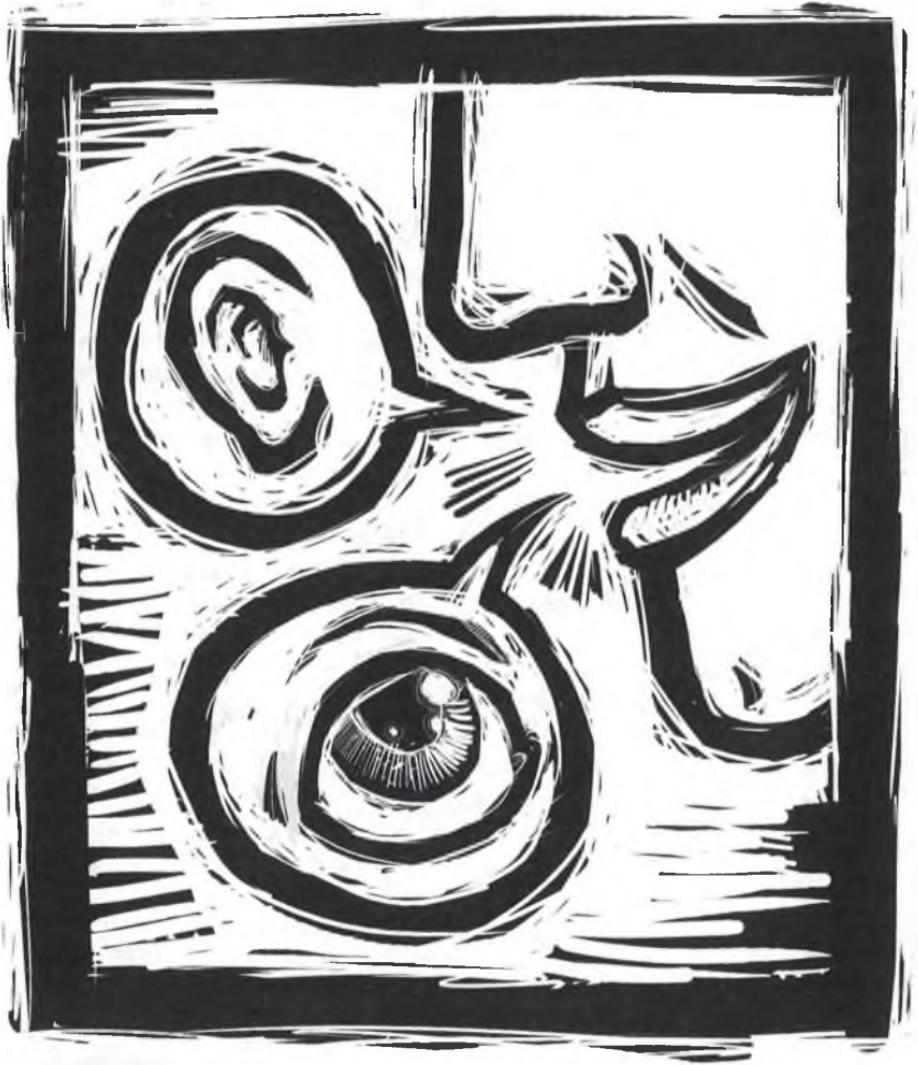
- Extending friendship to someone you don't know well and who wouldn't normally be included in your social circle. Invite a newcomer at church to dinner at your house, or ask a new coworker to join you for lunch.
- Getting involved in inner-city outreach, i.e., a street-evangelism program, puppet ministry, food-for-the-homeless project, or community health-screening program.
- Starting a prayer journal that specifically relates to outreach. Pray daily for new witnessing opportunities. Then chronicle your experiences in your journal. Share these stories with others whenever you can.
- Getting together with some friends to talk about how to witness effectively. Have pairs role play typical situations. Then as a group, discuss how they did and what they could have done better or differently.
- Reading Galatians 5:22, 23 and listing the fruits of the Spirit. Then choose one item from the list and brainstorm ideas on how you can use this fruit to witness in a new and different way.
- Writing a poem about what Jesus means to you or what He has done in your life. Design a greeting card, using the poem as your text. Decorate the card attractively and send it to someone who needs encouragement.

CONNECT

Mark 2:14, 15; John 4:7-9; 7:13; Matthew 10:32, 33; 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. *Conflict and Courage*, p. 249; *The Upward Look*, p. 264.

Philip G. Samaan, *Christ's Way of Reaching People*; Daniel W. O'Fill, *What to Say in a Whole New Way: New Words for Witnessing*.

Please **Speak** up!



“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20, NIV).

A Witness Till the End

INTRODUCTION

Acts 4:20

Recently a friend sent me this story over the Internet about the purpose of life which spoke to me of the importance of witnessing by our lives.

In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10-year-old boy named Timmy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat down at a table. The waitress put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" he asked.

"Fifty cents," replied the waitress. Timmy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied a number of coins in it.

"How much is a dish of plain ice cream?" he inquired. Some people were now waiting for a table and the waitress was a bit impatient.

"Thirty-five cents," she said brusquely. Timmy patiently counted the coins again.

"I'll have the plain ice cream," he said. The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. Timmy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier, and departed. When the waitress came back, she began wiping down the table and then swallowed hard at what she saw. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies—her tip.

Let's remember as we go through this week about the little things that Christ has done for us. Let's not neglect the importance of sharing our Christian experiences with our family and friends, as they can serve as first hand accounts of Christ's power within our lives.

Talk about Jesus, think about Him, ponder what He would have done in your place. You see, that's the important question. And people will notice, even if they don't show it. Take the above story for example. What does this boy's example say about Christ's way of dealing with people? Can we see Christ's love operating in such a simple, generous act? Can we go further and witness to His love by sharing what He has done?

As you study this week's lesson, try to put yourself in situations in which someone is witnessing to Christ and see if you would be convinced about Him. Do *you* have something to share? "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, NIV).

**"How much is a dish
of plain ice cream?"
he inquired.**

Sunday
July 23

Action Words Demand Action

LOGOS

John 15:26, 27; Acts 5:32, 42; 8:1-8; 14:20-22; 15:35; 17:2, 3; 18:5, 9; 20:20; 28:23, 24

As you are sleeping one day, you are awakened to your little brother shouting, "Fire! Get out of the house!" at his toy soldiers nearby. The feeling invoked is nothing short of annoyance. You tell him to shut up, and you are back to sleep in minutes.

The next morning again your brother shouts, "Fire! Get out of the house!" Two times in a row your sweet slumber has been disturbed. As you sit up to shout at him, you notice the smoke that has begun to creep up to the ceiling through the half-open door. The thought of going back to sleep leaves your mind, and you are fully awake.

Words in themselves do not carry much meaning. We usually determine their importance by the circumstances that accompany them. If you had gone back to sleep the second time, what could have happened?

Healing a Lame Man (Acts 3:1-4:22)

In Acts 3 a lame man is healed by Peter and John and becomes living testimony because the miracle that had been wrought could not be denied. This man simply proclaimed what God had done for him, and it resulted in many people glorifying God, laying the foundation for the apostles to build on. The apostles then taught and proceeded to prove that it was through Christ's power that the man had been healed, showing them from the Scriptures that what the prophets predicted had come to pass.

Arrested for Teaching (Acts 4:8-12, Luke 12:8-12)

The two apostles continued to preach the resurrection of Christ, until the priests and the Sadducees came and arrested them (because the apostles' teaching was contrary to their law). Led by the Holy Spirit, Peter proclaimed that Christ's power was what healed the man and that only through Christ can one be saved. The promise in Luke 12:8-12, of Christ confessing us before the angels of God if we confess Him before men, no doubt resonated in Peter's mind. The Holy Spirit's leading was also a direct fulfillment of what Christ promised in verse 12.

In these events, sequence is uncovered that is echoed in other stories. A healing takes place, testimony is offered, and teaching follows that uses the Scriptures to show that Jesus is the Christ. The result is confrontation with the authorities and conversion of many people.

Letting God Lead (Acts 11:15-18)

The apostles were not always successful when it came to convincing people

to accept fully what they said, even after going through the sequence outlined above (Acts 28:23, 24). The apostles were not discouraged, though, because they knew that people who were Christ's true children would hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27). In addition, persecution served to strengthen them because it was simply a more direct fulfillment of Christ's words (15:20).

Cornelius was one of those who heard His voice. This took the apostles by surprise because he was a Gentile (Acts 10:44-46). In fact, Peter went to Cornelius only because he allowed God to lead him (11:15-18). The Holy Spirit not only convicts the listener of truth (persuasion), but He also impresses those who are willing to testify, teach, prove, and proclaim. One of the main reasons for the apostles' great success was that they understood this important fact: If there was a problem, it was them, not a lack of power on the part of the Holy Spirit. Thus they prayed for boldness (4:29, 30) that the Holy Spirit could use them more effectively.

"Fire! Get out of the house!"

Testify! Teach! Prove! Proclaim!

Many of us hear the above words and feel nothing. We've sat up and then gone back to sleep so many times it's become a habit. Read 1 Timothy 3 and see if you can draw any parallels with our present society. If you still don't think you are in a burning house, neither did the people in Sodom and Gomorrah! *Wake up!*

Christ puts it best when He says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" (Luke 10:2, NIV).

REACT

1. List five more action words that you can think of and your reasons for choosing them.
2. How do we differ from the apostles regarding our witnessing?
3. How does 1 Timothy 3 relate to our present age? (Give specific examples.)
4. Why do some churches grow rapidly and others remain stagnant?
5. Is the Holy Spirit a guarantee of success in witnessing? If so, why do so many witnessing efforts fail even though people have prayed for the blessing of the Holy Spirit?
6. In many cases people in countries with religious freedom are less enthusiastic about witnessing than people in countries with restricted freedom. What can we learn from this?
7. List some of the advantages you have received in proclaiming the gospel. Be specific.
8. How far should we go to meet people where they are? Be specific.
9. Most highly educated people are atheists and agnostics. Are you therefore less likely to be saved the more educated you become? Explain your answer.

Monday
July 24

Crossing All Boundaries

TESTIMONY

Acts 8:4-8

As we trekked the over-10-kilometer journey from Nkukuasa to Akropong, the rains poured for almost three hours, soaking our clothes and bags. As I envisioned the many hills to climb on this typical Ghanaian rugged road to our final destination, I encouraged my soul with this inspirational phrase: “We are

Matthew 28:19 removes selfishness, bigotry, and exclusivity from us.

called upon to lift our eyes to the ‘regions beyond.’”¹ My friend and I were returning home from a series of Bible seminars in this unentered community in our 20-church district. It

was then in my ministry, as a young pastor-intern, that I understood the real meaning of the gospel commission.

Witnessing is taking action to advance Christ’s kingdom. Witnessing has its challenges no matter where one lives. Notwithstanding, as Christ’s ambassadors we receive so many blessings that go with the gospel commission. Matthew 28:19 removes all selfishness, bigotry, and exclusivity from us. We then become conduits through whom Christ extends His heirship to others.

In the gospel commission is embedded the assurance of Christ’s presence with us no matter the vicissitudes of life. “It is in doing Christ’s work that the church has the promise of His presence. . . . ‘and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’”² Christ urges His disciples to go to the farthest part of the habitable globe and be assured that His presence will be with us even there. We are to go from Angola to Australia, Benin to Bosnia, Greenland to Ghana, Panama to Papua New Guinea—with the assurance that He is with us.

In a world in which the struggle for power has become the popular rhetoric, Christ states emphatically that the privilege of receiving power lies in acting in accordance with the gospel commission. “To take His yoke is one of the first conditions of receiving His power. The very life of the church depends upon her faithfulness in fulfilling the Lord’s commission.”³

These action words also avail us with the missionary charter of Christ’s kingdom. “[Christ’s] disciples [are] to work earnestly for souls, giving to all the invitation of mercy. They [are] not to wait for the people to come to them; they [are] to go to the people with their message.”⁴

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 823.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 825.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 28.

All Things to All Men

EVIDENCE

Acts 17:2, 3, 16-34; 1 Cor. 9:19-23

As Christians we seek to proclaim the gospel to a changing world. Traditionally, we have used approaches that appealed to other Christians. The Western world, however, is now best described as post-Christian. Media and university are thoroughly secular. Thus we need to develop ways of sharing the gospel with modern pagans whose worldview has little in common with ours.

Paul faced a similar dilemma, and with wisdom from God, he varied his message. Whenever he preached to Jews, he used the Scriptures. He showed them from their Bible that the promised Christ must suffer. He then declared that Christ had indeed come, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He proclaimed that Jesus had proven His messiahship by rising from the dead. Many Jews and sympathetic, monotheistic Greeks became Christians with this approach.

In preaching to a pagan audience, however, Paul began with their beliefs (cf. Acts 17:22, 23), their writers (verse 28), their reason (verse 29), and then sought to build a bridge to the Creator. He then demonstrated that this Creator God acted in history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and testified to the truth of this by bearing witness to the resurrection (verses 30, 31).

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Paul presents this principle. He willingly sets aside his own wishes, traditions, and comfort to reach people where they are. Thus to reach the Jews, he lived like a Jew. For example, he circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3), fulfilled the requirements of a Nazarite vow (18:18), and underwent a seven-day cleansing service to calm Jewish apprehensions (21:20-26).

To reach the Gentiles, he lived like the Gentiles (1 Cor. 9:21). What this meant in actual lifestyle is not clear, but Paul was able to distinguish between principle and standards based on tradition. There was no real compromise. To reach all peoples, he became "all things to all men" (verse 22, KJV).

**The western world is
now best described as
post-Christian.**

For us the question remains: How should we put into practice this principle in our evangelism today? It is not easy to codify—in fact, it should not be reduced to a formula. Above all, it requires an attitude of adaptability and openness. It requires attention to the needs and concerns of those we are trying to reach. What are their values? How can we find common ground without compromising principle?

REACT

If we were to take Paul seriously, how would our services and programs change?

Wednesday
July 26

Witnessing = Faith + Actions

HOW-TO

1 Cor. 10:31; Acts 8:4

Imagine being on fire for the Lord—and do something about it. In this day and age it is so easy to sit back and talk about what needs to be done without actually doing anything. For some reason we lack the drive or knowledge to act.

What a thrill it would have been to be a part of the early church. Just imagine the disciples' enthusiasm. They were poor Galilean peasants, and Jesus tried to teach them the mysteries of the kingdom. But when they met the resurrected Christ, they were on fire. They finally understood who Jesus really was—our Savior. They were so excited they had to share. Even when people persecuted them they couldn't be stopped.

**They were poor
Galilean peasants.**

We have the same opportunity and privilege as the disciples did. Jesus is inviting you to turn "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6, KJV). From these action words of witnessing we can be the disciples of today.

1. Study "to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). Honest searching of God's Word enables us to be prepared to share it with others.

2. Go "and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19, NIV). Share the gospel with all people. This is the gospel commission given to each of us.

3. Testify of what God has done for you. Paul preached, "Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord. . . . But join with me in suffering for the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:8, NIV). Someone else's experience is never as strong and convincing as your own. So create your own gospel-according-to-you.

4. Reason. As God invites us to reason with Him (Isa. 1:18), we also should reason with those we witness to. Through reasoning we will learn from others as we grapple with the gospel truth. As Paul reasoned with the community on three successive Sabbaths, we too, should have persistence while witnessing.

Challenge yourself to be like Christ at all times to all people. You never know whom you will affect.

REACT

1. A long-standing debate in education circles has been whether the emphasis should be first on teaching the student or on teaching the subject matter. Based on what you read in the Bible, which side would you come down on in regard to sharing the gospel with people?

2. Which do you think is the more effective method of witnessing: giving a subjective personal testimony or objectively reasoning about your faith?

No Credible Witnesses

OPINION

Luke 2:42-49

At an evangelistic seminar, the facilitator outlined methods for community outreach through a free video Bible study. Participants were told how to knock on doors, how to convey the content of the study material, and how to respond to interest or refusal. The facilitator explained that in follow-up sessions with interested candidates, we should not debate. He suggested that the Holy Spirit would convict the individual, and perhaps those who pursued such determined discussions are resisting such conviction.

This prompted the question: What about those who are convinced only *after* having debated what they have heard and read? We explained that as students at a secular university, we are to witness to those who sincerely believe they have evidence disproving God's existence and who formulate challenging questions for those trying to spread the gospel. The facilitator then explained that he was unsure whether the highly educated would respond to this method. He said the focus was on individuals of average education, and that an approach for the highly educated has not been developed!

The focus was on individuals of average education.

This approach may reach the average person, but who is average in God's kingdom? We are called upon to "Go . . . and teach *all* nations" (Matt. 28:19, KJV emphasis supplied). Secular forums exist to provide effective speaking and business skills for reaching diverse populations. The church, however, does not equip the laity for credible witnessing to the entire world.

Many are called to witness to the world's brightest minds. Will such ministry be effective without debate? The story of salvation is simple, and to the willing heart it brings conviction and new life. We live in a skeptical world, however, and avoiding deep thinkers is disobeying God. Paul knew how to debate (Acts 17:2, 3). He provided the learned and the untrained with sound reasons for his beliefs, thereby giving them reasons to believe (28:23, 24). Jesus did likewise (John 3:1-21).

As a church, although we spread the gospel through several media (from simple discussion and written material, to satellite transmissions and the Internet), we have neglected to teach believers to be critical thinkers and debaters. We must address this oversight soon because this battle will be fought in the mind.

REACT

Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement: Higher education is unimportant because of Christ's imminent return.

Friday
July 28

A Household of Miracles

EXPLORATION

Acts 4:20

CONCLUDE

The book of Acts opens the records of seasoned apostles and disciples—new believers—who pressed forward in ministry despite knowing the perils and sufferings awaiting them in all dimensions of their lives. We are introduced to witnesses who were both tender and tough—miracles of grace. Because they were accepted where they were and nurtured to be what they had never imagined they could become, they were open and honest in telling their stories. Each person's experience was just what someone else needed to hear. So is our own. We have personal evidence. We can share it effectively through the power of the Holy Spirit.

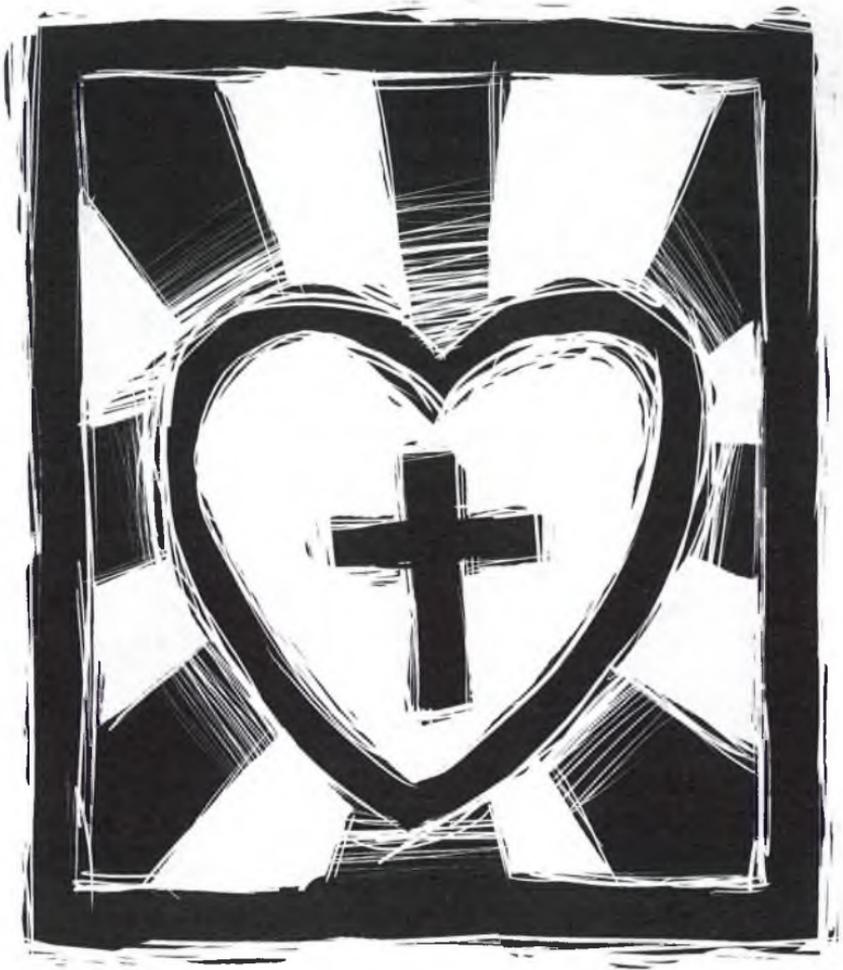
CONSIDER

- Listening to Babbie Mason's rendition of "Each One Reach One" on CD or cassette.
- Analyzing either *The Desire of Ages* or *The Ministry of Healing* to find Christ's methods of speaking up about His Father's business.
- Matching key media reports this month with hymns, anthems, and gospel songs that give direction and comfort. Prayerfully share your work with someone.
- Making a quilt that depicts the scene in Acts 4:20 and hanging it where it will stimulate conversation.
- Practicing active listening so that you can determine unbelievers' world views and how to gain entrance into their inner circle for the cause of Christ.
- Listing points of common ground with neighbors and coworkers with whom you wish to share the good news.

CONNECT

Adventist Mission in the 21st Century, chaps. 6, 7; *Rock Solid Living*, chap. 2.

More than one Way



“He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord”
(Acts 11:24, NIV).

What Are You Wired For?

INTRODUCTION

1 Tim. 4:14, 15

Have you ever had to do something that just didn't come naturally? Something that made you feel awkward?

Soon after my wife and I tied the marriage knot, we noticed that we didn't share the same recreational likes. She went out and bought me a pair of brand new ice skates. She was a figure skater and thought it would be romantic to skate together like those couples in the Olympics. What she didn't take into account was that I am six foot six and somewhat uncoordinated.

I remember the day we went to the skating rink. It was me, my wife, my sister, and my 5-year-old niece. As we stepped onto the ice, everyone started gliding away, leaving me to conquer my new recreation. As I made my way around the side boards, my 5-year-old niece would swoop by yelling, "You look funny, Uncle Mark!" It was all the humility I could take. After an hour of clutching the sideboards, I decided to venture out into the middle of the rink. When I looked up, a large girl was coming directly toward me.

I yelled, "I can't turn."

She yelled, "Neither can I!"

All of my 230 pounds landed directly on my tail bone. I looked up just in time to see my newfound friend falling on top of me. She pinned me to the ice. When she finally got up, I crawled to the side of the rink, climbed over the wall, took off my skates, and gave them to a kid sitting in the bleachers.

I'm not wired to ice skate. Ice skating is for shorter, coordinated people.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the Bible teaches that God has wired each of us a little differently: some of us to be great preachers; others to be great hosts in their homes. Some would be great church counselors; others would be better at teaching Sabbath School. God has wired each of us to enjoy doing something that will strengthen and build His church.

**God has wired each
of us a little
differently.**

The book of Acts is full of "wired" people, each having unique, God-given talents. Many of them used their gift mix to strengthen the church. This week we want to take a closer look at how God wired these people and plugged them into His church.

Something to think about: How can you incorporate your hobbies, the things you like to do, into strengthening and building your local church?

Why Witness?

EVIDENCE

1 Cor. 1:18

If the thought of witnessing makes you squirm, you aren't alone. Many of us feel uneasy about sharing our faith with others. Why? Maybe we have failed at past attempts. Or perhaps we feel nervous or self-conscious.

In many ways our experience parallels that of Jesus' disciples. Before the cross, they sometimes felt embarrassed by Jesus. They betrayed Him though they considered themselves loyal. They had good intentions, but like us, they just didn't get it.

**The disciples witnessed
Christ staring into the
blackness of hell itself.**

Something happened, however, that changed these self-focused men into the most powerful witnesses for Christ this world has ever known. The book of Acts tells of their courage in the face of danger, persecution, and death.

Why the dramatic change? The disciples witnessed the cross: Christ suffering the wages of their sin, staring into the blackness of hell itself. Feeling utterly forsaken by God and humankind, His soul cried out, "Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. . . . I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God" (Ps. 69:13, NIV).

They beheld their much-loved Master trembling under the weight of their sin: "My soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave. I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength" (88:3, 4, NIV).

They saw. They believed. They were transformed. No longer ashamed of Jesus, Peter electrified thousands when he preached, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36, NIV).

Stephen fearlessly testified of Christ even as stones were hurled at him. Paul equated the cross with power: "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18, NIV). Recognizing this, he "resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2, NIV).

God's love demonstrated at the cross knows no parallel in the history of the universe. And it was this *agape* love that energized the disciples with a testimony so compelling it turned the world upside down.

Jesus says, "'You are my witnesses'" (Isa. 43:10, NIV). The lesson of the disciples is for us today. We cannot witness until we have first seen the cross as they did. If we see it, we must believe it. If we believe, we will witness, because the message of the cross compels us (2 Cor. 5:14).

Monday
July 31

Why Jerks Don't Make Good Witnesses

LOGOS

Acts 6:5, 6, 8-15; 7:57-60; 8:1-5, 26, 40; 11:19-21; 12:25; 13:5; 15:37-39; 18:1-3, 24-26; 28:8, 9

Acts 11:24 is refreshing in its description of an effective witness. Three traits ascribed to Barnabas make him an effective witness. First, Barnabas is described as a "good man" (KJV). Although there are "none righteous" (Rom. 3:10, KJV), none who are good in the strictest sense of the word, Barnabas is called a good man. Is goodness important in the midst of generations who do "evil continually"? (Gen. 6:5, KJV).

I would suggest that without being changed toward goodness, our witness is weak. Lack of inner change does tremendous harm to the religion of Christ. Christianity claims not only the ability to save us from the penalty of sin, which is death, but also to deliver us from sin's domination of our lives (Romans 6). When we are come into the faith, and later discover that the evangelist, the pastor, and the church members are as much jerks as anyone else, it challenges the legitimacy of Christianity in our minds.

When the truth merely sets us free from pork chops, tobacco, and too much make-up, but fails to do anything for inner struggles with envy, lust, anger, and pride, can we be much of a witness to the cause of Christianity? When our goodness makes only a few skin-deep adjustments, we tend to feel superior to others. When we smugly tell them the error of their ways, unimaginable harm is done to the cause of Christ. We may win a few but alienate hundreds.

Genuine spirituality brings goodness, albeit from the indwelling Christ. Our world is longing to see Christianity that truly makes us merciful, kind, compassionate, and self-controlled. When Seventh-day Adventists divorce, are abusive, and show rudeness and lack of warmth, our witness is compromised. Soon the newly converted will discover that although we can tell them about the state of the dead and have a well-developed eschatology, we aren't what we first appeared to be. Jesus moves us to goodness.

I will never forget a somewhat frail, 82-year-old living example of goodness, retired General Conference Vice President Duncan Eva. When my wife's health was in serious question, he walked up my long, steep, unpaved driveway with a large bucket of strawberries. He came to encourage us, to pray with tears for us. He came to love us. He was the real thing! He not only understood the gospel, but lived it. None of life's disappointments kept him from becoming a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. My life is still touched by his witness, although he now rests in the ground, awaiting His Lord. I want to be like him when I grow up.

To be good is to be truly spiritual. As Jesus put it, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him" (Matt. 12:35, NIV). The apostle Paul develops a theme

that true believers have the treasure of His glorious presence inside. We have the immeasurable power of God's spirit to counteract our sinful human natures and change us toward goodness from deep within. We must be changed toward goodness to be an effective witness.

The second point of Acts 11:24 is that Barnabas was "full of the Holy Spirit" (NIV). The Holy Spirit is the launching pad and the engine for truly changed lives (See Romans 8:3, 4.). Effective witnesses walk according to the Spirit.

It is precisely this lack of spirit-filled members that challenges the health of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, indeed all of Christianity. At times it is hard to see the wheat for the tares. Good people, full of the Holy Spirit, will encourage others rather than judge and condemn. The great struggle of the church is not that it is too conservative or too liberal or has lowered the standards. The great struggle, which occurs in my heart and yours, is to be truly spiritual. Without Christ, none of us is very nice.

**We may win a few but
alienate hundreds.**

My daughter and son are 17 and 15. Panic is setting in as I realize that they will not be home much longer. Am I a good man? Am I full of the Holy Spirit? How much hypocrisy have they seen in me? How I long for all shreds of it to be obliterated from me, that my children might have a better witness from their father.

The third element that made Barnabas a wonderful witness was faith. Hebrews gives many examples of faith and provides a good degree of definition. Perhaps the most quoted verse on faith reads, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb.11:1, KJV). Not very scientific is it? But how profoundly important it is to accept God at His word. Barnabas believed in what had already occurred (the Cross and the Resurrection). He believed in the things that were yet to take place (Christ's return). He also believed that Christ resided in His heart by faith and was affecting the course of his everyday life. Hebrews 12:2 tells me not to get a puffed-up ego regarding faith. Barnabas was a man whose faith was coming to maturity. He was full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit—a good man!

REACT

1. How do you account for really good people who don't believe in God?
2. If there were more "good people" in the church, would it solve our inability to keep people in after their baptisms? Explain your answer.
3. If there were more truly good people in the church, how would it have affected the civil rights movement in the sixties, the holocaust in the forties, etc.?
4. What will happen when we see (witness) Jesus as the early apostles did?
5. What does it mean to witness or see the cross of Christ?
6. Is it possible to believe and not witness? Why or why not?

TESTIMONY

Mark 5:1-20

As Jesus and His disciples landed on the beach, two men came running toward them from the caves of the dead. Their hair was matted with dirt. Their physical strength, mental prowess, and will power had been prostituted to the power of death. No human could free them from their self destruction. Their mouths loudly proclaimed the words of six thousand inner companions. "Since the announcement to the serpent in Eden, 'I will put enmity' . . . (Gen. 3:15), Satan had known that he did not hold absolute sway over the world. There was seen in men the working of a power that withstood his dominion."¹

Jesus' presence caused that long-restrained enmity against evil to be resurrected in the demoniacs. Jesus spoke the command that gave them freedom to control appearance, mind, will, and mouth. The locals were afraid of Jesus' power and begged Him to leave. Before He left, Jesus commissioned the former demoniacs to stay and show their neighbors that He had given them the power of life. They thus became "the first missionaries whom Christ sent to preach the gospel in the region of Decapolis."² They were made witnesses by their saving experience because "they bore in their own persons the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah."³ People "marveled as they listened to the wondrous news. A door was opened to the gospel throughout that region. When Jesus returned to Decapolis, the people flocked about Him, and for three days . . . thousands from all the surrounding region, heard the message of salvation."⁴

**We were all
tomb people
until we met
Jesus.**

Teachers often use demonstrations to illustrate an idea. The observer can draw a conclusion by the weight of evidence, not by the authority of the words of the teacher. This is what godly witnessing is like. As His witnesses we become "channels of light, messengers of the Son of God."⁵ We were all tomb people until we met Jesus. The power of death controlled us until His mercy set us free. Our changed lives demonstrate the great things the Lord has done for us. "We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing."⁶

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 115.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.* pp. 340, 341.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

6. *Ibid.*

Using Opportunity and Ordinary Talent

HOW-TO

Isa. 58:7, 10; Matt. 25:35; Gal. 6:10

As Christians we are called to share the gospel, and the Lord has created us with some built-in preparedness, called natural talent. The Bible recounts stories of how ordinary talents and ordinary things were used by God. Moses' shepherd's rod became a tool for miracles. David's sling slew a giant; his harp calmed an angry king. A little boy's lunch fed thousands. A widow's two mites inspired millions.

We all have abilities. God calls us to His service at times that may seem unlikely, in places that are strange, and in peculiar ways. He also provides the opportunities, great and small. We just need to be willing to hear His call and make use of our opportunities and talents. Both may begin small, yet they will grow as we allow His strength to grow in us. So, how to begin?

1. Connect with Jesus daily. Our Bible study and prayer time keep us in tune to His way of doing things through us. Any talents we have will be of no value if we don't have the love of Jesus reflecting through us (1 Corinthians 13).

2. Take notice of your natural talents. God put these talents in you. He will also gift you with special talents through the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants all of them for His glory. Warning: snooze on talents and you lose (Matt. 25:24-30).

God calls us to His
service at times that may
seem unlikely.

3. Take notice of the needs around you. As we meet those needs around us, new opportunities open up. Plain and simple: we grow in Christ.

4. Be willing to work effectively. God can't use the lazy; and the workaholic will most likely focus on self-strength. The effective working balance always begins, develops, and ends with Christ as the central focus (Phil. 4:13).

5. Share your story. Witnessing is just that: your story of how Jesus is personally involved in you. It's a form of worship and a spiritual boost to hear of God calling each of us in so many different ways. Don't be surprised to encounter both the traditional callings (i.e., ministers, teachers, nurses, doctors, missionaries, etc.) and the unusual callings (i.e., clowns, balloonists, illusionists, puppeteers, actors, etc.).

Whatever your age, whatever your situation in life, the most important comment of your witness, using your opportunity and talent, will be at our Lord's second coming: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40, NRSV).

Thursday
August 3

Evangelizing or Proselytizing?

OPINION

Luke 24:47, 48

When I was in academy, several friends and I decided to go witnessing in a small town: we would stand on the street corner and wait to engage passersby in a conversation about Jesus and pass out some literature. Unfortunately, it was late winter in Nebraska and the weather was very cold and windy. No one was outside walking around. We were less than successful.

You don't see many Adventists using this method of witnessing anymore. With radio broadcasts, television shows, and satellite systems, technology is being utilized to our advantage to increase baptisms and boost membership lists.

Several years ago I attended our local conference constituency meeting. During

**Stop proselytizing
and begin
spreading the
gospel.**

one session a conference official reviewed statistics regarding membership. During the years reviewed, the number of baptisms went up and down. Over the years there was a steady stream of people leaving the church. One year, the number of those leaving the church equaled the number of baptisms.

Is there a connection between methods of witnessing and resulting baptisms, and the number of people who leave our church? Is it OK to be excited about the baptisms, yet barely acknowledge those leaving our ranks?

Could it be because our focus is on proselytizing rather than evangelizing? We seem dedicated to converting those who already know Jesus, rather than searching for and converting those who have never met Him. What if we focused solely on reaching people who don't know Christ? How would that change our goals and methods of outreach and witnessing? What do you think would happen if we tried three things:

- Stop proselytizing and begin spreading the gospel. Be more concerned that new members know how much God accepts them just as they are, and less about whether they have memorized our 27 fundamental beliefs.

- Increase our focus on membership retention. Maybe if we were more Jesus-focused and Christ-centered when people joined our church, they wouldn't rush out the back door so fast.

- Share the Jesus we know. If we don't know Jesus, we won't be succeed.

First Corinthians 2:1-5 gives us a clear description of what should constitute our witness. Let's know nothing "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (verse 2, NIV) and let the power of God do the work.

Kitty Ratzlaff, Candler, North Carolina

What's Your Thing?

EXPLORATION

1 Pet. 4:10, 11

CONCLUDE

Barnabas is the perfect example of witnessing—He did more than travel from church to church, playing administrator. The Bible says he was a good man, full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit. Witnessing is living and breathing God's love, using everything we have for God's glory. So, to be *real* witnesses, we must begin by asking ourselves: What do I have that I can use to live and breathe God's love? What are the special functions that God has created me with? How am I gifted? How can I boldly use these gifts to live a life of faith?

CONSIDER

- Taking inventory of your special gifts and talents by asking others and yourself what your strengths are, and deliberately trying to use some of those skills every day.
- Creating a business card or poster that offers free services of your special skills to those in your community, church, or work place.
- Starting an herb garden that reflects your relationship with God—plant a new herb for every major trial you overcome by trusting God completely.
- Setting aside a specific time (about 10 minutes) every day to go to God in prayer and submission, and asking Him to reveal His will and to use you as He sees fit.
- Decorating a quiet corner or room in your house where friends and family can relax, reflect, and reconnect with God. Fill it with photo albums, devotionals, poetry, music, potpourri, soft cushions, and knick-knacks.
- Watching the video *Dead Poets Society*. In this film, the teacher urges his student to “seize the day.” What does this mean to you as a Christian?

CONNECT

Daniel 2:19-30; Ephesians 4:11, 12; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.

Counsels on Stewardship, chaps. 24, 70; *The Faith I Live By*, chap. 6; *Evangelism*, chap. 5.

Arthur F. Miller, Jr., *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be*, chaps. 2, 7; Donna Partow, *Becoming a Vessel God Can Use*.

What is Ev[angel]ism?



“Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42, NIV).

Witnessing: It's Easy

INTRODUCTION

Acts 5:42

Have you ever tried to fit a square peg in a round hole? As a child I had one of those toys where you put the star block in the star hole, the square block in the square hole, and so on. You know the drill; every hole has a block shaped to fit it perfectly.

When God designed us, He also designed a God-shaped hole in each of our hearts. But we try to fill that hole, temporarily at least, with drugs, sex, alcohol—nameless vices that never quite seem to fit the ideal and have eternal consequences. The only block shaped to fit our hearts is the love and peace that comes from knowing Jesus Christ.

So I don't understand why witnessing needs to be so difficult. Anyone who has even a small knowledge of Christ can make a big difference to God's people.

I have a friend who sings with me from time to time. He grew up living next door to Christians, singing with Christians, and going to school with Christians. His family isn't all that keen on religion, but he's real keen on being a Christian. See how it rubs off?

I was talking to him recently about the joy I get from serving God. I was trying to explain why I sing—why I want to show God's love to the people I meet. There's a certain spiritual high you get when you allow God to use you as a tool for evangelism. Minister, singer, deacon, church cleaner, or friend—it doesn't matter. What does matter is the desire in your heart to serve Christ's purpose above your own.

My friend is desperate for the "upper room" experience. He wants to feel the Holy Spirit move in him as he serves with me. He wants to know the conviction that comes from allowing yourself to be used as a tool for God's ministry.

God can even give "ground floor" Christians an "upper room" experience. Why am I so sure? I've seen the love of God in my friend when he sings and serves with me. Best of all, I know anyone with any gift or talent from God (and that includes you!) can be an effective witness for God.

**God can give
"ground floor"
Christians an
"upper room"
experience.**

We're here to share the story of the square peg in the round hole—to show people how God alone can make a difference in their lives. Witnessing is easy because we know what nonbelievers need.

The benefits? I'll tell you the same thing I tell my friends: You can't spell evangelist without using the word angel. Get the picture?

LOGOS

Acts 2:44-47; 8:5, 26-38; 9:32-42; 19:8; 21:37-22:21

According to Jesus, becoming a witness is easy. “‘Come, follow me,’” He says, “‘and I will make you fishers of men’” (Mark 1:17, NIV). The only requirement is that we follow Him. If we do, He promises to make us fishers of men.

It’s worth noting, however, that the process doesn’t necessarily happen quickly. Three years after Jesus says to Peter, I’ll make you a fisher of men, we see Peter squirming and denying he even knows Christ. Some witness! Hang in there with Peter for a few more weeks, however, and we see him—full of the Holy Spirit—boldly speaking to, and converting, thousands of people. Jesus fulfilled His promise to make Peter a fisher of men. The Holy Spirit can also transform us. All we have to do is follow Jesus and hang in there.

Here are some of the ways the Holy Spirit can equip us for effective witnessing:

1. Public speaking (Acts 4:31)

The Holy Spirit makes powerful speakers out of ordinary people. If I told you to stand before several hundred unbelieving people and tell them about how Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead, you’d probably feel petrified.

This is beyond all of us if we attempt to do it on our own. With the power of the Holy Spirit, however, even a meek person can carry this task out and change the lives of others.

Take Paul for example: “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom. . . . I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Cor. 2:1-5, NIV).

Paul gives the impression that he isn’t much of a speaker compared to some of the orators of his time. Still, he’s willing to speak in front of people who are flagrantly opposed to his message. And, through the Holy Spirit, this public speaking has a positive impact on some of those who hear him.

Not everyone is called to this kind of witnessing, and it appears speaking ability isn’t necessarily a prerequisite. The only prerequisite is the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Meeting people where they are (Acts 8:29)

Here Philip, responding to the gentle urging of the Holy Spirit, goes to meet the Ethiopian eunuch. He forms a relationship with the man and is able to meet his spiritual need. Philip leads the eunuch from a position of inquiry and uncertainty to a position of comprehension and conviction, as indicated by his desire to be baptized.

This form of witnessing is more personal. It still involves speaking the gospel, but more importantly, involves good listening. Christians should be good listeners, because good listeners make people feel understood—a significant human need.

Being a good listener also helps identify where the gospel can speak to other people. Philip had it easy because he was led to a man puzzling over the book of Isaiah, but the principle is the same. Good listening and the guidance of the Holy Spirit opens up the possibility of communicating the gospel in a meaningful way.

**We see Peter
squirming and denying
he even knows Christ.
Some witness!**

3. The power of the changed life (Acts 9:32-35)

Here's a form of witnessing involving even less speaking and, for that reason, may be the most effective tool. The way we live our lives and the way the Holy Spirit remakes our lives is seen by people.

Dramatic examples of this in the book of Acts may not relate directly to our experience—like the paralytic walking again—but the principle still applies. When people see a life that demonstrates generosity, integrity, honesty, patience, and self-control (or, in other words, the fruits of the Holy Spirit), they notice. It may not have the same sudden impact as the paralytic walking—it may take 20 years—but there's still impact in a life lived in this way. In the most literal way, this is how following Jesus can make you a fisher of men.

REACT

1. What could your local church do to “meet people where they are” more effectively?
2. Is it possible to live a life demonstrating the fruits of the Holy Spirit and not be Christian? Why or why not?
3. What is it in a Christian's life that would reflect Jesus to others that is different from that of a nice, generous, honest, and patient non-Christian?
4. What are the secret keys to meet people where they are? Use some examples from the life of Jesus to explain your answer.
5. What experiences in your own life could serve as a tool for witnessing to others?
6. What do you think it means to be willing and ready to witness at all times?
7. In what other ways can we witness to others besides with our words?
8. How can you make sure that your witnessing is not lifeless and legalistic?
9. How do you make true disciples rather than merely well-informed baptismal candidates?

TESTIMONY

Luke 7:22, 23

Testimonies used to make me feel nervous. But now, as I grow older, I'm realizing that sharing your testimony doesn't necessarily mean telling the whole story of your religious experience—it could be a particular experience, the realization of a truth or an answered prayer.

I've spent the past three months—my holidays—living out of a suitcase, constantly moving from place to place. Returning home to Brisbane, I helped my parents pack, then moved to Sydney, then to Avondale College, and then to my parents' new home in Fiji. The whole experience was disorientating as I pulled up roots but seemed unable to put them down anywhere. I felt I was living in limbo, that I no longer belonged anywhere.

It was then I realized earth is not my home. God showed me He was with me wherever I was. And He promises to lead me home to be with Him and the saved forever. With Him I feel secure.

This testimony has changed the way I see things. It's something I want to share. Good news is no secret. That's what personal evangelism is all about: telling what you know and what you've experienced.

Jesus says, "Go back and report . . . what you have seen and heard" (Luke 7:22, NIV).

So does Ellen White: "As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus

**I've spent the past
three months living out
of a suitcase.**

step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we have tested His promise, and found the promise true. We can bear witness to what we have known

of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing."¹

"Open the Scriptures to some one that is in darkness, and you will not complain of weariness and lack of interest in the cause of truth. Your heart will be awakened to an anxiety for souls, and joy in the evidences of the faith will fill your heart, and you will know that 'he that watereth shall be watered also himself.'"²

As you gain the courage to tell others your testimony, you will lead them to the Bible and to Christ. Seeing these people come home to live with you in the New Jerusalem will be the incredible reward.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 340.

2. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 13, 1888.

Fruitless Witnessing?

EVIDENCE

Matt. 10:14

I asked the local pastor what he'd do if no one came.

In the hectic week preceding the opening night of an outreach program in northern Queensland recently, I asked the local pastor whom I was working with what he'd do if no one came. How would he react and what would he say to the church members to encourage them to continue reaching out? "God won't let all our efforts come to nothing," he replied. In a broad sense I had to agree, but the specific questions remained. All who've been involved in outreach know the frustration of having apparently little to show for our efforts.

Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me" (Matt.10:40, NRSV), and we must remember it's God we're presenting to others to be accepted or rejected—not ourselves. But it's still difficult to handle our disappointment and questions.

Disappointing witnessing experiences test our faith, especially after we feel we've put in a significant effort. Many of the prophets recorded in the Bible experienced disappointment too. Hebrews 11:39 records some of their experiences and commends their faith: "None of them received what had been promised" (NIV).

Our disappointments should not be a signal for us to give up on witnessing. Perhaps our apparent failures call for a refocusing of our efforts or the use of different approaches.

Jesus' instructions to His disciples, and to us (see Matthew 10), indicates that witnessing for Him won't necessarily be easy, but that it's important we do it anyway. It's important to God, it's important to those around us, and it's important to us.

REACT

1. How do you react when, despite your best efforts, your attempts to reach out and share your faith seem to have little or no effect?
2. Is it our fault if our witnessing seems fruitless? Could it be God's fault? Explain your answers.
3. In sending out His disciples, Jesus instructed them to shake the dust off their feet and move to another town if they or their message were not accepted (see Matthew 10:14). Where do we draw the line between shaking the dust off our feet and moving on, and persevering in our witnessing?
4. Looking at the different tools and approaches that can be used in witnessing, how can you witness most appropriately to your community?

Wednesday
August 9

Witness Effectively: Live the Life

HOW-TO

2 Pet. 1:8

I help organize conferences and dinners at a hospital, so I have started evaluating a computer program called Events. Several modules, or screens, consisting of doctor details, name tags, and financial reports are connected to a comprehensive information list—a database. When you make changes to a module, other screens are automatically updated to reflect the correct information.

Your life is an event as well. God planned it long before you came into being.

God wrote the database
and gave you a variety of
life modules to move
through.

He wrote the database and gave you a variety of life modules to move through. People with whom you come into contact will view your life. They don't necessarily have access to the reasons for your choices or behavior, so it's critical that the information you reflect is

accurate, and that Christ shines at every moment of your life.

The most powerful method of witnessing is the way we choose to live. Jesus' life reflected His relationship with His Father, and so should ours. But the idea that our lives can inspire or discourage someone's relationship with Jesus scares me. What a responsibility! Although there's no need to worry because God, my "Event Manager," has taught me three things:

1. Pray constantly. God has planned the event from beginning to end. He knows, sees, and feels everything. When plans begin to change, as they sometimes do, talk with the Manager. Jesus felt the need to communicate with His Father every day, so how much greater is the need for us?

2. Persevere in Bible study. We need to familiarize ourselves with the database of information God's given to us. Read and pray for five minutes each day. At first it will be a chore, but you'll find it soon stops being tedious and becomes enjoyable. Your time will grow from minutes to hours. Keep that goal in mind and beware, the devil will try everything to discourage you.

3. Live the Word. Don't just read the Word, live it! (See Col. 4:1-6.) The fruits of the Holy Spirit are a great place to begin (see Gal. 5:22, 23.) Let these seep into every aspect of your life so Christ directs your words and actions.

Each morning recommit yourself and look to Jesus as the ultimate example. "If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:8, NIV).

The Prime Witnessing Tool

OPINION

Acts 5:42

We've been learning about the different kinds of tools we can use to spread the gospel of Christ, but one's missing. There's a gap on the wall right next to the "hammer of health" and to the left of the "trowel of testimony."

God needs only one tool to showcase His power—a willing heart. But it's not a heart that talks and thinks. It's the willing heart of a worker, a heart that does. Once we have willing hearts, the Holy Spirit is free to work in our lives.

The early Christians put everything on the line to witness for Christ. They were constantly threatened with death and mocked by their peers. "They never stopped . . . proclaiming the good news" (Acts 5:42, NIV).

They were no longer living ordinary lives. Through the strength of God, they became extraordinary servants of Christ. They held true to the promise: "He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor. 5:15, NIV).

So if willing hearts are all we need, what's stopping us? Are we ceaseless in our attempts to teach and preach the good news? It's hard to answer Yes, isn't it?

Life on earth is orchestrated by Satan, and we can't overcome him on our own. That's why we need to let Christ become the focus of our lives. When we do, others will see our living example every day of every week of every year, and, hey, presto, we're teaching and preaching the good news without ceasing.

Whether it be through the testimony of our lives or through times when the Holy Spirit moves us to action, we should always be restless. Opportunities can pass by without our even realizing them. Be alert, self-controlled, and open to Christ, so when God calls we can answer, "Willing and ready."

There's a gap
next to the
"hammer of
health" and
the "trowel of
testimony."

REACT

1. Is God calling you to pause and grow closer to Him or is He impressing you to put into action a specific task? Do you need to *be* more or *do* more?
2. What does Paul mean in practical terms when he says in 2 Corinthians 5:15 that we should no longer live for ourselves but for Jesus?
3. Who are some people with whom you come in contact regularly but have not witnessed to? What creative ways can you think of to reach these people?

Friday
August 11

"We've Just Gotta Tell 'Em!"

EXPLORATION

Matt. 28:19, 20

CONCLUDE

As Christians, we made a covenant at our baptism to tell others about Jesus and what He's done in our lives. Yet many of us struggle with giving our testimony. God doesn't expect us to be cookie-cutter disciples. There are numerous ways of evangelizing others. Our testimony is only as living and vibrant as our daily relationship with Jesus. If we're not spending time being forever friends with Him, we'll find it difficult to tell others. When we don't see results, we can't give up. Remember: Noah witnessed for 120 years and only eight entered the ark.

CONSIDER

- Listening to the song "The Mission" from the album *The Mission* by Steve Green. How does this song speak to you in light of what you have learned this week?
- Thinking about your testimony; write it in one hundred words. This makes it succinct enough to share. Make a point of sharing it with one non-Christian in the next week.
- Making a tableau of the varied ways you feel comfortable witnessing. Think about why you feel more comfortable with some ways than with others.
- Finding someone to mentor. Help him or her become successful in sharing the good news.
- Refuting the claim of someone who has told you he likes his lifestyle just fine. He has a good job, a nice home, money in the bank. What more could he want?
- Calculating how long it would take for your church to witness to every individual in its community. Devise a plan to determine how many people each member would have to contact. What would you do to implement it over a two-year period?

CONNECT

Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 5:1-20; 2 Timothy 2:1, 2; 4:2-5.

Evangelism, pp. 15, 24, 429-431.

Daniel O'Ffill and Carol Johnson Shewmake, *What to Say in a Whole New Way*; Jon Paulien, *Present Truth in the Real World*, chap.10.

Improving **Your** approach



**"I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will
of God" (Acts 20:27, NIV).**

INTRODUCTION

John 6:44, 45

Meet some of my friends and acquaintances:

● Viola—Before her dead father reappeared, she didn't think God existed. Now she believes that God is looking down on us but not personally involved with humans.

● Brennan—Loves to play in his high school rock band and likes roller hockey. I don't know for sure, but maybe he thinks about God.

● Susie—Having been born into an Adventist home, she has known about God all her life. But she hasn't seen His love in the people who claim to be His followers, so she got out.

So now what am I supposed to do? Sometimes it seems that I have more friends my age who are former Christians than current! How do you reach someone who has quit caring about having a relationship with God? How do you tell someone who's never even had a relationship in the first place?

A couple of years ago one of my best friends, Susie (the same girl mentioned above), called me up. "Hey! Lets go to Québec City! We can roller blade, eat crepes, and practice French!" she said.

"I'm in!" I responded and we made plans. Immediately I brought my case before God: "Father, make the most of my time with Susie. Give me wisdom as I share You with her." I made an agreement with God that only as Susie asked questions about Him would I talk about religion.

We met in Montreal and started for Québec. We weren't on the road long when Susie asked: "So when you preach, what do you preach about?"

This was the indication I had prayed for. Soon a flood of questions about God came tumbling out. For more than two hours we discussed God and how real He

**I have more friends
my age who are
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than current!**

is! A couple weeks after the trip I got a note from Susie. "Thanks," it said, "you inspire me to know God better." All I could say was, "Thanks again, God!"

Christ says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44, NIV). When someone

wants to know about God, it is because God is taking the initiative. We don't have to cram the gospel down someone's throat! God draws them and we join Him in His work when they come asking.

So now what am I supposed to do? Pray and watch. Here's my prayer for Susie: "Father, give Susie a desire for You. Forgive Susie of any sins. Alert me! so I hear when Susie starts asking about You."

Seeing Is Believing

EVIDENCE

Acts 16:21-32

The Olympics are arguably one of the world's most popular sporting events. The five circles of the Olympic symbol have meaning in every part of the world. To get an Olympic medal gives an individual the highest form of recognition that can be achieved in athletics.

When tickets went on sale for the Sydney Olympics, lines stretched for blocks for eager fans to obtain the best tickets. Some popular events had to be allocated by lottery. Television networks have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to air Olympic action, and further millions have paid for the right to use the Olympic logo to endorse consumer products. No doubt there will be people outside the Olympic events trying to sell black market tickets to prime events. This is a show not to be missed. The buzz of witnessing an Olympic event appears priceless to some.

**Lines stretched for
blocks for eager fans
to obtain the best
tickets.**

Despite the controversy that has surrounded the Sydney Olympics, it is still a popular event. Nothing can take away from the glory of the spectacle. People want to witness and be involved in the Olympic spirit. Its spirit needs to be shared.

I like Paul's approach to witnessing when he and Silas were put into prison (Acts 16:21-32). They spent the night singing and praying in jail. This would have been some event! "The other prisoners were listening" (verse 25, NIV), but they had no choice. They were a captive audience! The event that put Paul and Silas on show was pretty spectacular—an earthquake. Given the opportunity to escape from prison, they decided to stay. The jailer could not believe what he saw and knew that God must have been acting for them. The effect was instant. "What must I do to be saved?" (verse 30, NIV). This was the easiest conversion recorded in Scripture.

No preaching. No theological debate. No drawn-out study. Only a humble witness could impact the jailer. The natural witness of Paul and Silas was sufficient to make Christ stand out.

REACT

1. How can we use our everyday life to witness for Christ?
2. Nonaggressive witnessing as seen in Acts 16:21-32 works. Is there a point at which an aggressive approach becomes necessary to capture a decision for Christ?
3. What type of witnessing do you do that may be more effective if performed in a less aggressive manner?

Monday
August 14

A People Thing

LOGOS

**Matt. 10:32, 33; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:37; 16:30, 31; 18:5; 22:16
Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 2:2.**

Christianity is a people thing. That is, it is not essentially programs, buildings, or money that keeps Christianity alive from one generation to the next. It is one person sharing his or her faith with another person. Think about it. If all Christians from today, who actively share their faith, stopped doing it, within one generation Christianity would become extinct. Think about it. If all Christians today, who are not in the habit of sharing their faith, joined Christians who are in the habit of sharing their faith, imagine what would happen.

I once calculated that if during a year, one person successfully shared his or her faith with another person, by the year's end there would be two Christians. If both Christians repeated the process the next year, at the end of the year there would be four Christians. Repeating the process over a total of 10 years would result in 1,024 Christians from just one person.

Jesus is central to faith-sharing (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 16:30, 31; 18:5). Doctrines, that is, Bible teachings, have two goals. First, to inspire people in regard to how to best live life as God intended. Second, to provide a way of life for people who become Christians. Like the frame of a house, doctrines give shape to a person's expression of Christian faith. Doctrines, as such, provide the means by which we are able to live life as a disciple of Jesus. As necessary as Bible doctrines are, it is the presentation of Jesus, the founder of Christianity, that is central to Christian faith-sharing.

There are a variety of methods that can be used to present Jesus. However it is done, at the right time, in the right ways, sharing your personal experience of faith in Jesus with family, friends, and school/work associates is what it is all about. A reading of the book of Acts makes it evident that this is what the New Testament Christians did.

If Jesus is not central to your faith-sharing, the chances are you will often be presenting only lifeless doctrinal information that may be applied to life legalistically. The unique characteristic of Christianity as a religion is that it teaches that it is not by obedience to a set of doctrines that restores a person to God. Restoration to God is determined by a faith-based relationship with God, thanks to His work in coming to earth as a human called Jesus. This is what we are called to share in as many ways as possible. Faith-sharing is best done in relationships. Christianity is an experience and an education.

Baptism is a public rite of passage to a new life as a Christian (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16). Symbols are important. In visible ways they reflect realities that exist. For example, when two people love each other and make a commitment to live together, they will usually demonstrate that commitment by publicly declaring their intention in some form of marriage ceremony.

Baptism is a symbol. It provides a public opportunity for a person to

acknowledge and confirm a decision to be a disciple of Jesus, to live with Him. It evidences the commencement of a new life as a Christian and active membership in church.

When Peter encourages his hearers to repent and be baptized, he is not suggesting that being baptized makes the person right with God. He understood the value in having a person act upon his or her decision. This encourages a sense of belonging. Baptism can also be an anchor to hold a person in times of doubt and difficulty.

The goal of faith-sharing is not to baptize as many people as possible just for the sake of baptizing people. Making disciples is the goal. Baptism is an essential part of the faith-sharing process.

Faith-sharing evidences identification with Jesus (Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 2:2). In connection with physical exercise, you have perhaps heard words to the effect that "if you don't use it, you'll lose it!" The idea is that strength, stamina, and ability grow with practice. The same applies for faith-sharing. When you share your faith with someone, you not only make an impact on the other person's life, you will also strengthen your own commitment. If you want to keep your faith, give it away—share it with someone else in the course of your everyday life.

Sharing your faith will help you grow in your understanding of the plan of salvation and what God has done and is doing for you. As you share with other people what it means in your experience to be a Christian, you will also grow in your ability to express your faith and in your level of comfort with being identified as being a Christian. Sharing your faith does not bring you into a higher level of favor with God. Faith-sharing is not a work you can do to achieve salvation. If you personally trust God, you already stand in His favor. Faith-sharing is about sharing what you have with other people so they can also enjoy the benefits of being Christian.

**Christianity is an
experience and an
education.**

REACT

1. Describe the ways you could make faith-sharing part of your everyday way.
2. What is the difference between helping a person make a decision for Jesus and helping a person become a disciple of Jesus?
3. To what extent is faith-sharing a requirement for Christians?
4. How could you share each one of your beliefs with a friend in such a way the he or she would experience the belief rather than just hear it as information?
5. In what ways has your view of the purpose of or meaning of our doctrines changed through your life?
6. In what ways does witnessing to others strengthen our own faith?

Tuesday
August 15

Witnessing—Depending on the Holy Spirit

TESTIMONY

Matt. 10:32, 33

**This unexpected
battle continued
in my mind.**

Spirit came? Would they become totally different people? Would their inhibitions leave them? Could this small group really take the gospel to the whole world? Even though they all had their own special prayers, they were all praying that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit so that they could be used by God

to spread the Word so that Jesus would be back real soon!

I had packed my cases for the flight from London to Chicago. I decided to include my paperback copy of *Steps to Christ*. Who knows? I might be in a row by myself where I could sit and read undisturbed and unnoticed.

I found my place in a crowded plane jammed in beside a lady already settling in for a long flight. I buckled in too—there goes my empty row. As the hours passed and passengers began to fall asleep, I put the gossip magazine away and began to think about the copy of *Steps to Christ* in my bag. Should I get it out? Would anybody notice it? Would they think I was a religious nut? I decided to chance it.

Bowing my head I asked the Holy Spirit to be with me, ending my prayer: *Father if I am to be a witness for You, You are going to have to show me how to do it. And please don't let me make a fool of myself or You.*

As I read, I became aware that the lady next to me was waking up. Had she noticed what I was reading? I didn't look up. *What was that? Give the lady the book? No way! I can't be pushy with religion.* This unexpected battle continued in my mind. Was God trying to tell me to do something for Him? No, surely it was just my imagination. But this thought wouldn't go away, and the plane was beginning to descend. The struggle in my mind intensified. The plane touched down. It was now or never. I didn't know what to say. *God, help me!*

"Here, you can have this." I almost threw the book at her. I was so nervous.

"Thank you. I was hoping you'd give it to me."

Wow! So close, God! I almost let You down.

I learned that day that the Holy Spirit doesn't prompt you to do things when He hasn't prepared the way. God doesn't mind having fools on His side. There is a job for all of us! Just ask what it is you are meant to do, and be ready to do it!

Kathy Burns, Warburton, Australia

Witnessing—Stay in Your Comfort Zone

HOW-TO

Mark 5:19

Let's be honest. For most of us the very thought of going out to witness is terrifying. Give me anything else to do. I'll count the offering, mow the church lawn—even assist with the teens. But don't ask me to witness.

If this is your first reaction to witnessing, chances are that you've inherited a model that doesn't sit comfortably, a model that involves approaching strangers, using lures and manipulation, or being someone that you're not. Relax, witnessing shouldn't bring on an attack of sweaty palms.

The madman, healed by Jesus in the region of the Gerasenes, wanted to follow along and change the world. What did Jesus say? “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19, NIV). What do we learn here?

- Our primary audience for witnessing is our family, friends, and neighbors.
- The basis of our message to this group is to tell what Jesus has done for us.

It doesn't take a tertiary degree to do this. If Jesus has done something for you, if He has changed the direction of your life or given you a new view of the world, then you have the best raw material for witnessing.

Archimedes, a third-century mathematician and inventor, was asked to solve a big problem. Was the king's crown pure gold or had the goldsmith replaced some of the gold with an inferior metal? Archimedes was highly intelligent, but this problem had him stumped. The obvious solution was to weigh the crown and compare the weight against an equivalent volume of gold. But how could he accurately measure the volume of something so irregular? One day while lowering himself into a very full bath, Archimedes noticed that an amount of water equivalent to his own volume splashed out. In a moment of insight he had the solution: find out how much water is displaced by the crown and measure that volume. Archimedes was ecstatic.

Witnessing shouldn't bring on an attack of sweaty palms.

This was one discovery he wasn't going to keep to himself. The bath was forgotten along with the bathrobe as he ran naked through the town toward the palace yelling like a madman “Eureka.” “I've found it.”

Archimedes had made a discovery that he couldn't help sharing. Discovering Jesus is something we will want to share—not because we have to, not to ease our conscience. Witnessing should be a natural extension of our everyday life.

OPINION

Acts 5:42

Mark went out to lunch with his boss and the president of the company. Everything seemed to go well. The conversation was lively and he felt at ease. The waiter brought the food, and suddenly Mark was faced with a decision. Should he pray before eating his meal? And if he did, how would he go about it? Would he have to excuse himself, or should he ask for a moment to bless the food? Any of these options had the potential of making him look bad, so he settled on an express prayer in the back of his mind as he tackled his salad.

Witnessing for Christ is not a popular concept in a society that asks us to keep our ideas about God to ourselves. It isn't cool to hand out tracts; it isn't acceptable to share with others the joy of knowing Christ. In that context, modern witnessing has taken on a comfortable shape. We have developed a delicate balance where

**It is time we dared
to go beyond the
passive, private,
armchair-witnessing.**

we can still feel as though we are obeying the command, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19 NIV); but we don't have to take the initiative to reach out. Have you ever heard that you don't have to say anything; you just have to live your witness? The first time I heard that concept, I breathed a sigh of relief.

Now this I can do, I thought. But after years of being silent I wonder if this is the best approach. I'm not suggesting preaching to everyone you know, but consider this: When you discover something you're excited about, like a new diet, a great book, or a fantastic sale, isn't your instinct to tell someone? I would dare say that you would tell as many as you could. Why wouldn't we do the same about the greatest thing ever to come into our lives?

Maybe we ought to redefine the idea of living our witness. *Webster's New College Dictionary* defines witness as "someone who gives evidence." Are we giving evidence of what God has done in our lives? It is as revolutionary as saying a prayer before a meal in front of unbelievers; as easy as not changing the Christian music on the radio when your friends get in your car; as powerful as sharing an encouraging verse with a hurting friend.

Knowing Jesus is a very personal thing with very public effects. It is time we dared to go beyond the passive, private, armchair-witnessing, to the reality of a world dying without God, and our responsibility in showing them the way to life.

REACT

1. How can I give evidence of God's love in my life?
2. When is it appropriate to make a statement for Christ?

Trolling for Disciples

EXPLORATION

Acts 20:27

CONCLUDE

How do you witness with grace and style? (1) Let God take the lead. He opens the way by instilling hunger in others for knowing Him. He also creates opportunities for us to feed that hunger. (2) Don't get caught up in arguing doctrine. Legalities bore people. They want to know what difference Jesus has made in your life. Tell your story to family, friends, and neighbors. Then let God bring them into fellowship with Himself. God starts the work and finishes the work, but He still lets us share the sweet joy of success.

CONSIDER

- Listing the habits of your Christian lifestyle that might be noticed by non-Christian friends. Beside each item, write "Admirable," "Annoying," or "Who Cares?" depending on what opinion you think your friends have of each habit.
- Choosing a piece of Christian music and sharing it with an unconverted friend or relative.
- Taking a walk in nature and finding five things that witness to God's love.
- Reading a portion of a biography or autobiography that tells of a conversion experience.
- Adding to your web site a page with your personal testimony.
- Spending some time in prayer asking for God to give you an opportunity to witness.
- Videotaping a friend or family member telling about their conversion and how people witnessed to them.

CONNECT

Acts 2.

The Acts of the Apostles, chap. 14.

Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Salt Shaker and Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*.

Whom do you See?



“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:31, NIV).

If Your Church Were a Person

INTRODUCTION

Acts 2:42-47

In my healthcare consulting practice, I use a technique to try to understand how people perceive their organization. I ask them to describe their company as if it were a person. Some people pick a famous individual who personifies how they see their company. Others offer a series of adjectives describing personality, attitude, and style. On a recent project, one participant described the hospital as a "A father who really intends to go to his child's baseball game but is too busy and never seems to make it." A lot can be learned from this simple exercise.

What would you learn if you tried this exercise on your local church? If your church were a person, how would you describe it? What are its qualities? Give it a try. Be brutally honest. Do you like the person you described? Are you drawn to it?

If you're like your peers, you might not be satisfied with the person you described. A few years ago, young Adventists responded to a survey called Valuegenesis. Most of those surveyed didn't feel accepted by their church, and the majority didn't consider their church to be warm and friendly.

These young Adventists have been to your church. They've been to my church. Apparently, most of them are not finding the type of church life they need.

They could be finding judgment instead of acceptance, social cliques instead of warmth, or a church family that makes its appearance from 9:30 a.m. to noon instead of all week long. Most likely, they are finding a church family distracted by minor matters instead of focused completely on what really matters.

"Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plentitude."*

The Holy Spirit had the attention of the early church. They were transformed. As a result, we find a church that was prayerful, accepting, selfless, sharing, humble, and happy. Every day people were drawn to be part of this close-knit family of early believers.

We need to let the Holy Spirit get our attention. When we do, we'll be happier with the person we see when we describe our churches. We might hear a description that sounds much like Jesus. You might even hear, "I see Jesus."

*The Acts of the Apostles, p. 50.

**If your church were a
person, how would
you describe it?**

LOGOS

Acts 1:14; 2:22-24, 32, 33, 36,42-47; 4:23-30; 8:14, 15; 11:26; 12:1-19

Within less than a hundred years, the early church went from being an insignificant group of Palestinian Jews to a major force of Jews and Gentiles spread across the entire Mediterranean for Christ. After reading about the breathtaking growth and life of the church in Acts, one has to ask, "Why is the description of the church in Acts so unlike most churches today?" What's happened to the church? Part of our challenge today is that our concept of what it means to be a church is radically different from that of the believers in the book of Acts.

The Biblical Terminology

Today we typically use *church* to refer either to a specific denomination or a physical building where people meet for worship. That was not the case in Acts. The Greek word behind our word for *church* today is *ekklesia*. The term was originally a political term used 500 years before Christ, and it referred to the assembly of citizens in which political and judicial decisions were made (e.g., Acts 19:32, 39-41). As the early believers looked for a term that could describe them, they picked up on the etymological meaning of *ekklesia* (*ek* = out; *kalew* = to call) as the "called-out ones" and began applying it toward the followers of Christ. The term is used 111 times in the Bible.

The term for church was first used with several qualifiers (e.g., 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14), but eventually became the assumed term. What is significant for our understanding, however, is that *church* was never used in the Bible to refer to a

***Church* was never used in the Bible to refer to a denomination or to a physical building.**

denomination or to a physical building. The term is used only to describe a group of believers (e.g., Acts 5:11; 14:27; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1, 2; etc.). For the early Christians the church was an entity without walls. Church was not a sacred building, but a sacred body of believers in Christ.

An unfortunate change, however, took place over the years. Due to external persecution and internal divisions, the church began to look to creeds and centralized, hierarchical structures to solve its problems. The definition of church was drastically affected by those changes. Rather than the church referring to a body of believers, it was considered more as a sacred building.

This definition of the church engendered a false separation between a physical building and the real church, which is the people. The shift in understanding has led people to look to church buildings, to emblems, pews, and stained glass windows to find hope, and to encounter God rather than to find these things in the real church—the believers. This viewpoint also led believers to fail to comprehend

the tremendous source of healing and power that God wants them to be in society, and often leads one's spirituality to be tied to a building or an institution.

The Twin Pillars of the Apostolic Church (Acts 2:42)

Having looked at the biblical terminology of the church in Acts, we need to look now at two elements that made the church, the people of God, such a dynamic force in the ancient world.

1. *Doctrine.* The Greek word (*didache*) *doctrine*, simply means teaching. The apostle's teaching was of course a reference to the truths of the gospel. The church cannot exist without such truth (John 8:32; 14:6). The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15, KJV). It was the apostles' inspired teachings that provided instruction, meaning, and direction in the lives of the new believers.

2. *Fellowship.* The early believers, however, did not only view themselves as the depository of truth, but also as a fellowship of believers. The Greek word translated *fellowship* in Acts 2:42 is *koinonia* and in the Hellenistic world referred to the close union between human beings. The term was later picked up by Greek philosophers to denote the highest ideal of Greek society. In the New Testament, the term refers to the close unity and fellowship brought about among believers by the Spirit. What had been only an ideal for Greek society had become a reality among the brothers and sisters in Christ. The early believers didn't see fellowship as something secondary to doctrine but as something that couldn't be separated from real doctrine (e.g., Acts 2:42-47; 1 John 1:7). Philemon 4-6 indicates that such fellowship (*koinonia*) was a powerful tool used in witnessing. The power of such fellowship attracted and intimidated the unbelieving world, while doctrine gave them direction for life.

If the church of today will ever resemble the church of Acts, we must begin to redefine our definition of church from being a physical building to being a body of believers. In addition, we also must not only look at the church as the depository of truth, but as a fellowship of believers.

REACT

1. How do you tend to use the word *church*?
2. Why do you think some churches might think of fellowship as secondary to doctrine?
3. To what extent does your church exhibit doctrine and fellowship?
4. What are some dangers if a church emphasizes doctrine over fellowship or vice versa?
5. *Doctrine* can seem a heavy term. But what the early church believed (i.e., doctrine) turned the world upside down. How does that work?
6. How does what you believe (doctrine) relate to church relationships (fellowship)?
7. What's wrong in thinking of the church as a building? What's right?

TESTIMONY

Acts 12:1-19; Heb. 10:19-25

The night before his execution was to take place, Peter was “sleeping the peaceful sleep of perfect trust,”¹ while “the entire church engaged in fasting and prayer.”² With such an awesome example of faith, how are we (the church) preparing our lives as a witness to the world?

How do we act in times of prosperity? How do we act in times of distress? The world watches—for we are the testimony of God’s power. Through our actions, we could be the only Bible they read. Do our lives tell of a living faith or a lack of

**Through our actions, we
could be the only Bible
they read.**

trust? “The world will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives.”³

As effective laborers in Christ we will “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the

assembling of ourselves together, . . . but exhorting one another” (Heb. 10:24, 25, NKJV). Let’s consider some essential areas of helping to prepare one another.

Bible Study. “A familiarity with the truths of the Scripture will give the teacher of truth qualifications that will make him a representative of Christ. The spirit of the Savior’s teaching will give force and directness to his instruction and to his prayers.”⁴

Secret Prayer. “Prayer . . . is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved.”⁵

Faith. “True faith and true prayer—how strong they are! They are as two arms by which the human suppliant lays hold upon the power of Infinite Love.”⁶

Courage. “The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward in faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus.”⁷

REACT

What does it mean to “pray without ceasing”? Be specific.

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 146.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 16.

4. *Gospel Workers*, p. 252.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 265.

Can “Cool” People Witness?

EVIDENCE

Mic. 6:8

When I was a child, my parents encouraged me to go Harvest Ingathering. They insisted this was Christian witnessing. So I carried my battery powered candle, practiced the speech my church provided, and toughed it out. At the end of a cold night of caroling, and having doors slammed in my face, I'd collected twenty dollars to help “those people less fortunate than you and me.” After these witnessing expeditions, I still felt empty and a bit nerdy.

But my parents' fervor didn't end there. They continued to teach me how to witness by conscripting me to join them in Sunshine Bands almost every Sabbath. Again, I felt nerdy playing my clarinet for those old folks. As I grew older, I questioned whether this was really Christian witnessing.

Members of the early Christian church witnessed during very progressive times. In fact, they were fairly progressive themselves. They had to be. In the book *The Life of Paul*, Benjamin Robinson says, “The time of Augustus was a sort of Golden Age. The policy of universal toleration of all religions and creeds gave Christianity a chance to make its appeal.” He also says, “Navigation lines and well-paved roads connected all important points of the empire. Travel had never been so easy nor so safe as in the first century. Religiously, the peoples had awakened.”*

**If the early church
could be progressive,
so can we.**

The early church was progressive. They may have been as progressive in thought as we are today. Many of the physical restrictions they had were no longer binding. This continues to be true for us today. We are at an information crossroads. Communication lines around the world and door to door are simple to access. How should we use these tools to witness for Christ?

If the early church could be progressive, so can we. Christian witnessing isn't just Harvest Ingathering and Sunshine Bands. It's e-mail messages between friends. It's website development that leads people to learn about the absolute truths in our Adventist message. It's video conferencing between people in different nations. It's anything that brings people together to learn about the Good News.

Harvest Ingathering and Sunshine Bands aren't that bad. They are teaching grounds for the real battle that lies ahead. They teach us how to approach people, where they live and in their reality, so we can be mirrors of Christ's character.

* Benjamin Robinson, *The Life of Paul* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1918).

HOW-TO

Luke 4:18, 19

Thanks to fallen Lucifer and our original parents, sin has wrapped her cloak tightly about earth's shivering shoulders, shutting out the light from the masses leading desperate lives. Some are numbed by the cold. Others are blinded by the fakery of quick fixes and false futures. But most cry for an escape. This is why Christ calls the church to be the lantern that shatters the darkness.

And this is what the Acts church was all about. The early church begged for large helpings of the Holy Spirit, who empowered them to broadcast boldly the good news of salvation to their world. But they didn't just preach light. They lived

Christ calls the church to be the lantern that shatters the darkness.

light. Because of this, "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47, NIV). If we are to be true to the Christ to whom we have committed our lives, and if we want our churches to turn the

world upside down for His sake, we do well to model the Acts church by doing the following:

Pray for the Holy Spirit to take over. He will give direction, delight in God's will, and have passion for the lost.

Preach the Christian experience. How can we not share with others the way of escaping eternal death, the security of acceptance through Christ, and the reality that we can be free from overpowering desires, long-held grudges, and other slave masters that destroy one's peace and happiness?

Provide a safe place where we care for those who suffer physically and spiritually. We must also look after those who struggle to make ends meet; the Acts church "sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" (verse 45, NKJV).

Prepare our community for "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19, KJV). Jesus is coming soon! This message of future hope is what so many long for—whether they realize it or not.

Praise God always. The Acts church thrived by "praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people" (Acts 2:47, NIV). There is nothing more attractive than an attitude of praise and thanksgiving!

REACT

1. Discuss how your church prays, preaches, provides, prepares, and praises.
2. Does your church fall short in any of these areas? Explain your answer.
3. Brainstorm for new, innovative ways for your church to accomplish these things.

Find It or Change It

OPINION

Acts 2:42

As I read the characteristics of the early church, I wanted to say that I found those characteristics in my own church. But I haven't and I didn't. Instead, I am confronted with some uncomfortable questions. Do we have what they had? Do I see the Holy Spirit active in my church today? Too often the answer is No.

This week's lesson outlined specific dimensions of worship and witnessing. Are they any less applicable today? Of course not. But do we really live that way? I fear we have become too comfortable, self-absorbed, or culturally numb to change this instantly.

One characteristic of the early church was joining "together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14, NIV). This has not been my experience. It doesn't always seem to be the tenor or aura of the church. It's been comfortable, right, sociable, and sometimes uplifting. We certainly dress better on the Sabbath than on most days. But do we have a deep, soulful, corporate yearning for the Holy Spirit—so palpable in the air that even a visitor can sense it? Again, sadly I fear the answer is No. Why? What's missing? Is there a lack of desire or initiative? Or maybe there's a lack of discernment? Or perhaps it's just not a priority?

Is it still our calling to invite others to Christ? Paul admonishes us that believers are fundamentally filled with the Holy Spirit and are dead without it. Furthermore, we are called to be an active witness in our daily walk. When was the last time you told an acquaintance, a nonbeliever, of God's love and invited him or her to join you at church?

Consider our early roots as a church. What would we do now if someone danced down the aisle praising God or went into a vision? We would probably commit them to the hospital for 72 hours of observation. Or we might look the other way in embarrassment. Yet this is part of what made the early church exciting and meaningful.

Within your local church, look around.

Have the courage to step back and see the congregation as it is. Is there an urgency to walk the walk in Christ? Are the services fresh, vulnerable, and sincere in yearning for God? Would non-Christian friends, neighbors, and coworkers feel welcome and warm? The Bible says that's where church is—where the Spirit of God is welcomed. Be willing to compare the characteristics found in Acts to your current community. And I challenge you, and myself, to ask the Lord how we can be a part of the solution and mobilize changes that glorify Him.

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of the early church
was joining
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constantly in
prayer."**

Friday
August 25

How User Friendly Are We?

EXPLORATION

Acts 9:31

CONCLUDE

If my church were a person, would she be vibrant and progressive, warm and understanding? She will be if we are, and we can be as we commit ourselves and submit ourselves to the ministry of being Christ's body—right here, right now.

CONSIDER

- Making a collage of all the things that demand your attention/your church's attention. Draw a pair of binoculars and cut them out. Label them "Holy Spirit" and place them on top of your collage to indicate how you can see life from God's perspective.
- Making a chart that rates the church of Acts and your own church on characteristics of a successful church. Share your findings with your church board.
- Brainstorming practical ways to help those in need in your immediate area, from fixing sandwiches to conducting finance classes. Try one of these next week.
- Writing a story or poem in which a progressive church welcomes someone who is unconventional. If you feel comfortable doing so, share your work during Sabbath School.
- Fabric painting or making a computer-generated iron-on patch for a T-shirt advertising "Koinonia—We Are the Church."
- Journaling about each of Monday's categories (Bible study, prayer, etc.), your own ideas of what the church teaches, what you actually do in real life, and what steps you choose to bridge the gap between the two.

CONNECT

Elizabeth O'Connor, *Call to Commitment*; Richard Foster, *Living Streams* and *Celebration of Disciplines*; Edith Schaeffer, *L'Abri*.

Who is on Your list?



““I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth”” (Acts 13:47, NIV).

INTRODUCTION

Acts 2:46, 47

I am engaged to be married to a wonderful, God-fearing man. Both sides of the family are ecstatic. However, I am increasingly tempted to elope. Imagine the cost and hassle my fiancé and I could save. Take for instance, planning the proverbial wedding dinner banquet. The high costs aside, there is the social equivalent of treading on quicksand to contend with.

**Social protocol
has forced us to
invite everyone
we ever remotely
knew.**

First you invite one, then you have to invite the other, and because you've invited her you've got to invite him, so on and so forth. Soon social protocol has forced us to invite everyone we ever remotely knew, and some whom we don't know but were

invited because he's fifth aunt's brother-in-law's nephew. Sink, sank, sunk. However, a significant lack of funds necessitates eliminating a huge proportion of the potential invitees.

How different it is with God. He has all the resources to hold a huge banquet for the entire human race, and He intends to! He's sending out the invitations for the ultimate wedding banquet in heaven. And as His friends, we have been commissioned to send the word out, to make sure that this invitation reaches every single human being, and to help get ready for the ultimate wedding banquet. Entrusted with such an awesome responsibility, how can we effectively deliver God's invitation to our friends and family members?

A Different Kind of Witness

EVIDENCE

Acts 2:46, 47; 12:12

This week we are looking at ways of sharing our faith with others. Perhaps you have been involved with a group that has gone out on the streets to witness or you may have gone on a mission trip to some exotic place. For some, however, this may be an opportunity you have never had. Perhaps you think, *I don't have the money, or I don't have the courage to be in front of people.*

Christ has commanded us to go into the entire world and spread the gospel, but for many we need to realize that just because we cannot go to far off places it is not an excuse for us not to witness. God can use our talents anywhere. And as our texts for today show us, witnessing is not all preaching.

In today's world everything seems to be work, work, work. We barely have a chance to catch our breath and then we're off again. This past year I had the opportunity to be involved in a small-group Bible study. Every night we would meet together and inevitably get involved in some huge debate. Everyone was out to prove his or her point. Bible study became a task just like every homework assignment and every essay. Our group decided to address the issue. We decided that by planning a night of rest and relaxation, a night of socializing, we might not only become better friends, but perhaps get more out of our studying together.

The results were amazing. That one night a week not only gave us something to look forward to, it not only helped to cool the tempers that would flair in our heated discussions the rest of the week, but it gave us the chance to invite others as well. Our group that started at five grew to ten, and continued growing to the point that we had to split into two groups. It was wonderful.

Stop saying that you can't do anything for God. Act. Our texts for today show us that fellowship is an important tool in witnessing, one that we shouldn't ignore.

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and inevitably
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debate.

REACT

1. Do you see yourself as part of the sharing ministry of the church? How?
2. How would you give a Bible study without a Bible? How can you introduce spiritual ideas about God into everyday conversation?
3. How would you react to the statement "In witnessing, it's vital to listen before speaking"?

In the Sandals of the Apostles

LOGOS

Acts 1:8; 2:46, 47; 5:42; 9:31; 12:12; 14:21-23; 18:1-3, 18, 24-26; 22:21

"Therefore 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20, NIV).

"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command:

**They were
duly rewarded
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heaven that
was Babel
reversed.**

'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit' " (Acts 1:4, 5, NIV).

Jesus' disciples clearly remembered His words. After He ascended, they set about to pray for the promised power (Acts 1:8). They were duly rewarded ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, with a miraculous visitation from heaven, so amazing that it was Babel reversed (Acts 2:6-11). It was so astounding that skeptics labeled them drunk (Acts 2:13). Never

before had the world seen such a manifestation!

A Good Problem

Put yourself in the sandals of the apostles. After Peter preached his spirit-filled sermon, your heart would have been warmed by the enthusiastic response to the gospel. One moment you were part of a motley crowd of 120. The next, you were part of a crowd of three thousand plus. In your joy you also realize that things could never be the same again. Just what are you going to do now with this harvest of three thousand souls who had to be taught, disciplined, and sent out as heralds of the gospel? How do you manage three thousand new and eager believers? How would you also disciple the thousands more who would soon join your cause? How would you also ensure that there will be ready and able workers to work the ripe harvest?

Instant Recall

As a first-century Christ-follower, would you have turned to books churned out by the church growth experts? Or the topnotch seminaries of your day? Obviously not. For you would have possessed the best source possible—the instructions of Jesus, the Master Teacher. You would have racked your brains to recall every morsel of truth that graced Jesus' lips. Gems like:

● “‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’ ” (John 13:34, 35, NIV).

● “‘And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father’ ” (14:13, NIV).

● “‘Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me’ ” (15:4, NIV).

● “‘Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete’ ” (16:24, NIV).

● “‘Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world’ ” (17:17, 18, NIV).

Harvest Work Principles

From our Master’s words, several principles must be adhered to in harvest work:

● God is the Source of our wisdom. The Bible is thus our inspiration and guide.

● Maintaining a vibrant relationship with Jesus is nonnegotiable in harvest work.

● Prayer unleashes supernatural power. Prayer is an indispensable factor in harvest preparation.

● Love for one another is both a foundational unity principle and witnessing tool. Through love, we remain united in purpose. Through love for one another, we witness to unbelievers.

The Harvest’s Limiting Factor

The Pentecost incident also displayed what Jesus meant when He said the harvest was plentiful. (See Matt. 9:37, 38; Luke 10:2; John 4:35.) The fields are ripe for the picking. The limiting factor is the lack of workers. Willing and able workers are still needed today to reap the harvest.

The first step is to ask God for help. Before praying for unsaved people, we should pray for concerned disciples to join us in reaching out to the lost.

REACT

Though the church today may be a far cry from the first-century’s followers, the following questions remain relevant:

1. What is the most effective way of reaching out to the harvest? Be specific.
2. How do we motivate and prepare our church members for service?
3. How do we disciple new believers to be productive workers for the harvest?

What Will the Harvest Be?

TESTIMONY

John 4:36-38

Evangelism is hard work. I felt this even more when I tried door-to-door witnessing. It's easy to get discouraged when we don't see results. I have learned, however, that we can't be a harvester to all the people we meet. Jesus presented this principle when He said His disciples would reap what they did not sow. Following in their Master's footsteps, they would harvest from the seeds He sowed.

Similarly, we need to understand that evangelism is a process involving more than one person to complete the task. "To-day in His great harvest-field God has need of sowers and of reapers. Let those who go forth into the work, some to sow

**Evangelism is a
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and some to reap, remember that they are never to take to themselves the glory for the success of their work."¹

While we labor in the harvest-fields, it would be wise to heed this caution: "Do you expect that Satan will readily allow his subjects to pass from his ranks to the ranks of Christ? He will make every effort to keep them bound in fetters of darkness under his black banner. Can you expect

to be victorious in winning souls to Christ without earnest effort, when you have such a foe to face and battle?"²

Our enemy will make every effort to keep people from knowing the saving grace of Jesus. Indeed, we can't be victorious in winning souls without earnest effort, prayer, and dependence on Jesus. There is no place for complacency. "What will the harvest be? . . . Every word you utter, every act you perform, is a seed which will bear good or evil fruit and will result in joy or sorrow."³

Whether we be sowers or reapers in the harvest, we have a responsibility to share God's light with others. We can claim the promise as we go out into the harvest field that He will be with us unto the end of time.

REACT

Where are your harvest fields? What will it take for you to sow seeds among these fields?

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 409.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 151.

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 363.

Missionary to At-risk Kids

HOW-TO

Acts 1:8

I work in a social work project for students at risk because of delinquent behavior. This project involves equipping these kids with basic literary skills, teaching them life management, and one-on-one counseling.

When I first worked with these teens, I was shocked! It seemed that I had stepped into another world of attitude, language, and mannerisms. They showed no respect for authority and were constantly getting into trouble. *What made them so angry at such a tender age?* I wondered. Every day I asked, "Lord, grant me wisdom, patience, and love to deal with these kids."

After laboring for some time, I realized that I was a missionary of sorts. I come from a different subculture. If I were ever to reach them, I must first understand their needs. Consciously opening my heart, I discovered that underneath their tough veneer, these students cry out for:

- 1. Affirmation.** They live in a world of put-downs and sarcasms.
- 2. Listening ears.** Because of their labels, hardly anyone listens to their needs.
- 3. Guidance.** Though they may appear to know their way around, they are crying out, "I need somebody to show me the way!"
- 4. Sense of belonging.** Being labeled misfits, they feel displaced by society. This explains why they gravitate so easily to gangs.
- 5. Love.** They behave promiscuously because sex is often the only intimacy they experience. They need the power of genuine love to permeate their lives.

Though I feel that I may not be able to meet all their needs, I am able to point out the Source of solutions, Jesus Christ. This I do by becoming a friend and planting positive thoughts during what I call "windows of opportunity," moments when the kids are willing to listen. But these moments disappear as fast they appear. I realized also that spending extended time together, like in camps and overnight retreats, paves the way for many windows of opportunity to appear.

My advice for all missionaries to troubled youth is:

1. Pray, pray, pray. This is spiritual warfare. We have to bathe ourselves in prayer before dealing with these youth.

2. Be a friend. Become a loving, caring friend, genuinely interested in their needs and fears.

3. Accept them although you may not approve of what they do. Show them that you love them but that you don't approve of their destructive behavior.

**When I first worked
with these teens, I
was shocked!**

“Beeing” Part of God’s Plan

OPINION

Prov. 30:25-27

**We are given a task
to accomplish as
well as the tools
required.**

We enjoy the sweetness of honey. Lots of bees worked hard to make just a teaspoonful of the honey we so casually slather in huge quantities (for a bee) on a piece of toast. Bees work together, and each has a part to play in the hive. They may have a queen, but they certainly don’t get orders from her. Without any training

whatsoever, a bee knows its duties from the moment it crawls from its cell. It will work together with the hive in any number of capacities throughout its short life, from nurse to guard to scout, and each is performed with the skill of a veteran.

The Christian church has been given a task: “Go and make disciples of all

nations” (Matt. 28:19, NIV).

So in our role as God’s ministers to our families, schools, missions, workplaces, and cities, we have a specific goal: evangelize the world. This daunting task requires formidable resources and many people working together to bring Christ to this dark world. But like a beehive, we accomplish nothing by working independent of the body of Christ. Working together, we will attain the goal.

So we train, teach, learn, and grow. But the church is not a corporation, a bureaucracy of members and pastors, presided over by conferences and delegates, campaigning and giving speeches based on global market research and opinion polls. Instead, we are a body of people working together to save this dying planet through the power of Jesus Christ.

Our bodies are a whole, made up of parts working in concert: cells forming specialized organs, which in turn provide nourishment to bone and muscle, giving rise to thought and action. And it all happens without a thought, involuntarily. “He . . . gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:11, 12, NIV).

But no program to spread the gospel will succeed if the hearts of its ministers are not in tune with the Creator. Each of us has fallen, and each must take hold of the salvation so freely given. Through a new birth into the family of God, we grow into new people, with hearts and minds attentive to the still, small voice of His Spirit. And like the ant or the bee, we are given a task to accomplish in spreading the gospel, *as well as the tools required*. The power of God is ours, and will manifest itself through our spiritual gifts. Together, we will attain the goal.

Passing the Torch

EXPLORATION

2 Tim. 2:1, 2

CONCLUDE

Faith is extended by those who believe to those who *will* believe. The Holy Spirit directs the actions in the great drama of human history, leading His people to those who are receptive to the good news. Successfully passing the torch to each succeeding generation of new believers is a divine science that is accomplished only when we listen carefully to the Spirit's instructions. In relay races, the critical factor in winning is successfully to pass the baton. Disqualification results if it is passed too early or too late. If it is dropped, it is virtually impossible to make up the time lost and win. In spiritual matters we must be equally careful about passing the torch.

CONSIDER

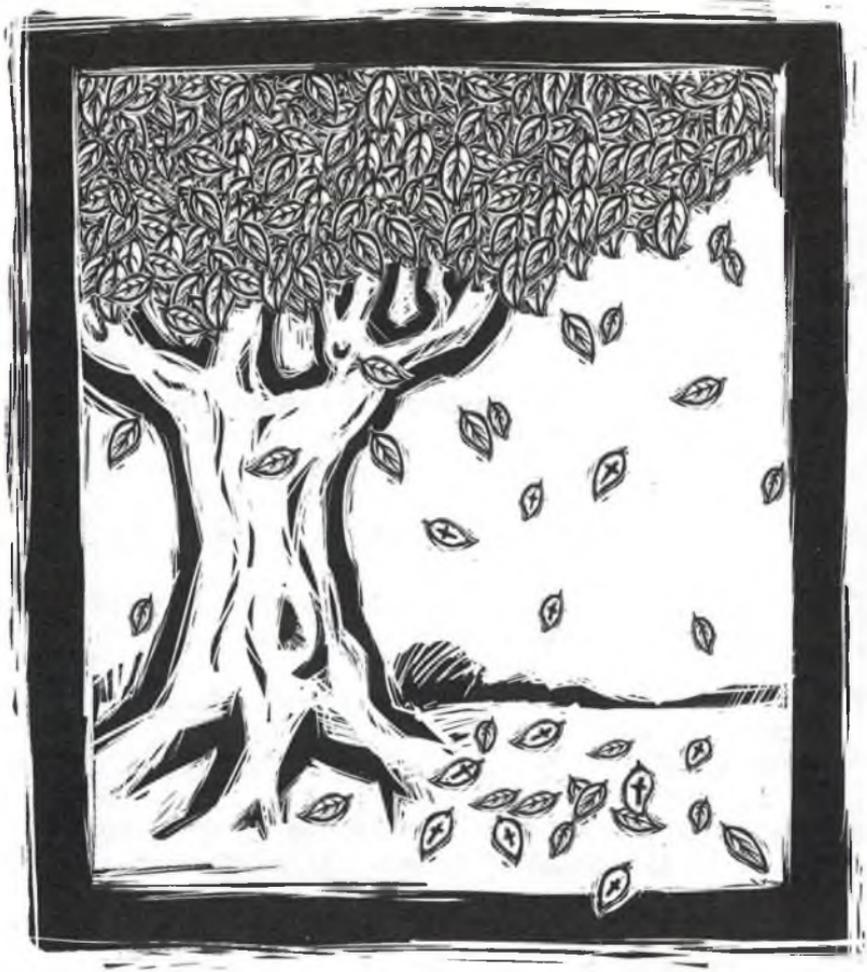
- Photographing groups in a public setting like a parade or a mall. Focus on several *different* people in your pictures, conjecturing what you might have in common with them that might serve as a bridge for you to share your faith.
- Calculating how many might be won to Christ in a year if you led one person to Christ each month and everyone you led to Christ led one to Christ the month after their conversion, and *everyone* led to Christ, in this chain, did the same.
- Paraphrasing Luke 15:11-32 for Haitian immigrants (or any group you choose).
- Listening to, or singing, William Reynold's song, *People to People*. Think of how your unique gifts, talents, and sufferings enable you to share Jesus with others.
- Baking a loaf of bread or a dozen cookies for a neighbor whose spiritual condition is unknown to you then deliver it as a way of getting acquainted.
- Interviewing people on a street corner with the question, "Who do you think Jesus Christ is?"
- Projecting into the year 2005 and writing a short biography of how the Lord has used you to lead souls to Him over the previous five years.

CONNECT

The Acts of the Apostles, chaps. 16-21.

Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made, Not Born*, chaps. 5-11; Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*; Win & Charles Arn and Carol Nyquist, *Who Cares About Love?*, chaps. 9-13.

Places and Occasions



“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4, NIV).

Friend or Foe?

INTRODUCTION

2 Tim. 4:2

Fiona walked slowly to her mailbox while enjoying the autumn breeze and the profusion of color from the changing leaves. As she sorted through her mail, her eyes landed on the familiar writing of her former college roommate. With an exclamation of delight, she tore open the letter, but her expression changed to one of horror as she read these words:

My Friend

I stand in Judgment now
And feel that you're to blame somehow.
On earth, I walked with you day by day,
And never did you point the way.
You know the Lord in truth and glory.
But never did you tell the story.
My knowledge, then, was very dim;
You could have led me safe to Him.
Though we lived together on the earth,
You never told me of the second birth.
And now I stand this day condemned
Because you failed to mention Him.
You taught me many things, that's true.
I called you friend and trusted you,
But I learn now that it's too late,
You could have kept me from this fate.
We walked by day and talked by night,
And yet you showed me not the Light.
You let me live and love and die;
You knew I'd never live on high.
Yes, I called you a friend in life
And trusted you through joy and strife.
And yet on coming to the end,
I cannot, now, call you my friend.

Obviously, people will not write letters from hell. If it were possible, however, for people to know what their eternal fate would be, would there be a few letters like this one in our mailboxes?

Sunday
September 3

Go Ye Into All the World

LOGOS

Acts 5:42; 10:1, 2, 21, 22, 24; 13:42-44; 16:13-15; 17:16

God's desire and vision is that the gospel be proclaimed in a loud voice (clearly and powerfully) to every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev. 14:6).

Everybody, everywhere is a target of the gospel.

God's message to humankind is aimed at every individual. "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26, 27, NIV).

**For the
gospel to
succeed
God uproots
prejudices.**

"As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the

same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10:11-14, NIV).

Acts 10:1, 2, 21, 22, 24 shows that for the gospel to succeed God uproots prejudices as well as enmity in human hearts and paves the way for a friendship that enables those who were once enemies to sit round the table and share Christ.

Let your prejudices go and use your God given gift of friendship to reach out to others for Jesus.

Acts 5:42; 20:20; 28:17-31 clearly publicize the great fact that every house has been considered for a plot on God's salvation road. Every house must be taught the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Let every house you see be to you a signpost of God's mission station.

Acts 16:13-15 and 18:1-4 show that Sabbath is "holy time" to lead souls systematically into gospel truth. Don't take it for granted that everyone who comes to church on Sabbath is a decided follower of God.

Let your Sabbath class lessons be fishing hooks for Christ.

Acts 13:42-44 amplifies the advantage of not neglecting to meet with one another, especially as we see the day approaching (Heb.11:25). Remember,

evangelism works when and where Christ is. Where two or three are gathered in His name, Christ is there.

Let your church worship hour serve as a fishing net for Jesus.

Acts 17:16 tells us that civilized cities are quite often very ignorant of God the Creator. Athens of old was full of idols despite being a center of great intellectual abilities and know-how. Your city could be one of them.

Therefore, brighten the corner where you are. Someone in your city may be in idolatry (sin); help him or her out of idolatry to the foot of Jesus.

REACT

1. Why is God interested in our going out to preach Christ?
2. How can I introduce Jesus to my friends who don't know Him?
3. Is there an area in my town where people seem to have no regard for God?

What should be done to help them know God?

4. How can our church worship hour be used as an evangelism tool?
5. What would help most to turn our Sabbath School class into an evangelism unit?
6. How do we face the fact that "all the world" means people we don't like?
7. Sometimes we have very traditional ideas of what evangelism is. What are other ways of sharing the gospel that do not just follow traditional ways?
8. Some traditional churches see evangelism by Adventists as "sheep-stealing." How can we best share Christ with those who are members of other churches?

Monday
September 4

Do Place and Occasion Matter?

TESTIMONY

Acts 5:24

Naturally when a new idea is introduced, there is always opposition. After the 1844 disappointment, a new system of running the church was rejected. Most Adventists believed that organization was inconsistent with the perfect liberty of the gospel. Ellen White insisted in some form of organization as being necessary to prevent confusion, but her testimony and labors were opposed.

"The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected," she wrote. "Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven.

God has a message for every generation.

There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth. . . . And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before; for, as God unites His children, Satan and his evil angels are very

busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it."¹

Some oppose the church's system of evangelism. Witnessing programs set up by the church have been opposed, calling them compromised truth.

We must understand that God has a message for every generation. It is not intended only for one particular time and place. The message must suit the current setting. Here are some of the examples:

1. Study the Word of God. As Scripture transforms your personality, its influence will be felt around you. God will pour His Spirit upon you and you will manifest a power and boldness never experienced before. Others will behold the glory of God in you.

2. Have the personal ministries leader in the church divide the residential areas surrounding the church into zones. Every zone should have a zone leader who will collect all information from zone members on how they have witnessed during the week; e.g., how many are willing to join Sabbath School, those in need of material assistance, etc. The zone leader should ensure that on Wednesday and Friday evenings all members meet at one member's home to coordinate their program after a season of Bible sharing and prayer. "I saw that the servants of God should not go over and over the same field of labor, but should be searching out souls in new places."²

As we thus follow God's plan, our Lord will bless us and multiply our efforts.

1. Ellen White, *Early Writings*, p. 97.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

“Not of This Fold”

EVIDENCE

Acts 19:1-7

Why do some Christians evangelize among other Christians as do the Seventh-day Adventists? What's the need? The earnest Adventist evangelist must have come to face this question.

The other day a Christian worker appealing to the listeners on one of our local TV stations said, “Everyone was free to join any denomination in the land.” This I believe to be valid. Everyone indeed is free to join any denomination of their choice. But when she added, “the important thing is that you are worshiping Christ,” I became concerned.

As an Adventist, I believe God has only one physical, visible church which is His own. That is the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Rev. 12:17). This may sound to some as if I believe that only Adventists will be saved. No. “Other sheep I have, said Christ, which are not of this fold” (John 10:16, KJV). Jesus says He has the visible and the invisible church. These two, however, it is Christ's object to make one. He went on to say, “Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (verse 16, KJV).

This is basically why the Adventist evangelizes among other Christians as well as all others. In the book of Acts, Paul also evangelized among other believers.

For example, he found some disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1). After a short discussion with them, he discovered the inadequacy of their Christian experience. They were sincere and living up to all the gospel they had thus far received. Because of this, Luke (the writer of Acts) calls them disciples.

But a discipleship of erroneous Christian experience is not satisfactory; hence, as Christ put it, “them also must I bring” in (John 10:16, KJV). As in the book of Revelation, a voice is heard calling to them to come out of Babylon (18:4). Paul expressed this same message to the disciples of Ephesus. He echoed that John the Baptist “did baptize . . . and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4, KJV). This, Paul taught them, was the reality about John's baptism and “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5, KJV) into the church. This is Christians evangelizing Christians.

**He discovered the
inadequacy of
their Christian
experience.**

Seventh-day Adventists today must work among all other denominations so that there shall be “one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16, KJV).

Christian Waves in Action

HOW-TO

Acts 5:42; 10:22-24; 13:42-44

When I was young, I enjoyed throwing pebbles into the swimming pool. What I liked to see most were the waves that reached the four sides of the pool. At that time I didn't understand much of the science behind it. I just enjoyed the fun. But 25 years later I came across an illustration in Ellen White's inspired books. She explains that as the waves move from one point to all directions at the same speed and wave length, that is how Christians should exert an influence of their profession. The four sides of the swimming pool in the context of a Christian are:

1. Evangelism Through Friendship. In our interaction with friends in our neighborhood, schools, and workplaces, our lives must direct people heavenward.

**Our lives must
direct people
heavenward.**

A firm handshake while wearing a smile on your face will do much to bring refreshment to a soul burdened with worries. Invite your friends for church meetings. As our experience with our Lord grows, our lives will show the presence of the Holy Spirit, thereby

exerting an influence on the followers of Christ.

2. Home Evangelism. The best place in which to witness or demonstrate the Lord's wonderful works is in the home. Each family member must have values and principles anchored in the rock Christ Jesus. Parents are expected to inculcate these values in their children not only through instruction but also through their trust in God. Parental guidance should be exercised in the selection of television channels viewed in our homes.

3. Worship Evangelism. It is important that each family unit should participate in worship activities such as music, Adventist youth programs, women's ministry, Adventist men's organization, etc. In Acts 13:42-44 the Gentiles begged that God's Word be preached to them the next Sabbath. After the main service, devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas into the vestry. We later see that almost the whole city came to listen to the Word of God on the Sabbath (verse 44).

REACT

1. How are we to conduct worship in our homes? Be specific.
2. How would you answer the idea that religion is a personal matter and should not be forced on someone else?
3. Sometimes we are more concerned to get across our doctrines rather than stress a positive relationship to a loving God. How do we achieve a good balance?

Will We Cause World War III?

OPINION

Matt. 28:19

One wonders how to turn the world upside down. Many times I have heard Christians say that they will do this. Whenever I hear of this, many questions come to mind, and I am tempted to think that the Christians are going to be instigators of World War III. What is it that the Christians can do to turn the world upside down? How can Christians who are full of fear and are not in one accord shake the world with their influence? How can Christians who are not filled with the Holy Spirit astonish the hard-hearted sinners of this world?

We have a very big challenge: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19, NIV). This is the great commission from our Master.

It is not World War III that will turn the world upside down. It is the Word of God. The Word, however, needs an instrument by which it should be proclaimed and witnessed. You are the instrument. This instrument has been designed and made according to standard specifications so it can accomplish its purpose. As an instrument, you need to be molded and filled with the Holy Spirit for you to achieve the objectives of witnessing. You need strength and power from the Holy Spirit. Are you among the number of those who preach Jesus Christ in speech, conduct, manner of dress?

**The Word needs an
instrument by
which it should be
proclaimed.**

Let us not be tempted to think that witnessing is only for pastors or evangelists. It is a command from our Master and Lord Jesus that we all witness to those around us. We should not wait for the church to organize a crusade. Let us evangelize our friends, relatives, workmates, and all those around us.

Your Christlike character will turn the world upside down. Wouldn't you want to be part of this wondrous work of God? Invite the Holy Spirit into your heart now and get the driving force to turn the world upside down.

REACT

1. Why is it more effective to witness through your character than through preaching in the pulpit?

2. How can we evangelize through our character to people of different cultural backgrounds? Be specific.

Friday
September 8

Turning the World Upside Down

EXPLORATION

Isa. 43:10

CONCLUDE

When we think about our target audience for witnessing, we often limit potential candidates. In reality, everyone, no matter who they are or what they profess, is a viable target for the gospel. Wherever we go—at home, at church, in the workplace, in the streets, at school, or in our neighborhoods—there is someone we can witness to. And remember, we witness not only by sharing the gospel, but by living it—through our words, our appearance, and our actions.

CONSIDER

- Making a list of everyone you know. (Write each name on a separate line, leaving space in between.) Think about it, then write down next to each name a creative way to witness to or encourage that person.
- Inviting your non-Adventist neighbors to your home for a vegetarian feast. Make the event special by planning it around a theme or holiday.
- Starting a prayer ministry for evangelism in your church. Ask for names of Bible study or other contacts with whom church members are working. Organize a prayer group to pray regularly for these people.
- Inviting a musical group from another denomination to sing at your church, or arrange for a music group from your church to sing at another church.
- Devising a systematic plan for personal Bible study to prepare and strengthen you for witnessing.
- Brainstorming creative ways to witness. Use these ideas to list personal witnessing goals you will strive to accomplish over the next 12 months.
- Writing a note of encouragement along with a Bible text to a member of your family. Slip the note in a lunch bag or under a pillow.

CONNECT

Matthew 28:18; Acts 17:16-23; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

Evangelism, p. 102.

Bob Johnson, *You Can Witness, Yes, Even You*.

When the Going gets Tough . . .



“They returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, ‘It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God’” (Acts 14:21, 22, NRSV).

INTRODUCTION

Acts 1:8; 11:21

I needed directions. I searched for a “direction helper” in the throngs of working people. I chose her. She was very helpful. I got directions to where I wanted to go, but also to her church. In addition, her name and number. I accepted her invitation card and went on my way. And on my way I retained my life lesson. It takes just one moment to impact someone’s life. She had an impact on mine. I thought—and I’m still thinking—Do I have an impact on others?

“I used to be an SDA. Do you want to know why I’m not?”

They knocked at my door. Two mature Jehovah’s Witnesses. I listened to their door-to-door speech and accepted their magazine. Conversation terminated. Suddenly I reacted: I found two verse cards from the ABC, ran out of the flat into the street, and gave them each a card. “Just to encourage you as you go, and I’m an SDA.”

One of them replied, “I used to be an SDA. Do you want to know why I’m not?”

I said, “No. That’s your decision. I’m an SDA because I’ve searched, read about, and experienced Christ. This is my choice. The only person you have to reckon with is Christ.”

We parted. They never visited again. I left an impression. Today I still smile.

“One Christian can’t do much ‘tis true brought his friend to Bible study then there were two. Two earnest Christians each won one more that doubled the number, then there were four. Four sincere Christians worked early and late. Each one another and then there were eight. Eight splendid Christians if they doubled as before, in just so many weeks, we’d have 1,024!”²

“Silence is golden except when it comes to witnessing—then it’s just plain yellow.”³

“If you want your neighbor to know what the Lord will do for him, let him see and hear what He has done for you.”⁴

As you go through this week, develop new approaches to witnessing. Two ideas: 1-2-1 ministry (sharing Christ through friendships at college and work), and G-ministry (“Garments for God”—wearing your belief to initiate conversation). At the end of the week, see if there is at least one new method/technique of witnessing that the Lord has impressed you to try.

1. Greg O’QUIN ‘n’ Joyful Noyze, *Conversations* (Word Entertainment, 1998).

2. Author unknown. Source: proseuche@youthpages.org

3. Vern McLellan, *Quips, Quotes and Quests*, p. 51.

4. Ibid.

Singular Marketing

EVIDENCE

Phil. 4:13

Witness. The reggae-gospel artist jumped onto the stage with his lyrical manifestations, ground jumping, and heart-pumping beat, thrilling us in our seats. Is he a witness or in title alone? Is his genre acceptable in church worship?

Religious philosophies have found their place in the business world as powerful motivational tools. *Enlightened Management, Jesus and Leadership, and Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work* are now highly acclaimed business resources. In the workplace, an emergence of individuals capitalizing on their long-held religious values is evident. Others prefer to nurture their inner spirits, which will subsequently influence their behavior and lifestyle.

Haven't we as Seventh-day Adventists always had the Bible as our guide? Why aren't we living examples to the fact now unearthed by researchers that "a deep spiritual life is essential to happiness"?¹ What is our testimony?

With such emergent theories and practices in communication, I wonder if the more we run slowly in neutral gear the less we believe? In fact, have we become passive? Here are two active inspirations to revive your inertia:

● "I am only 1, but I am 1; I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I ought to do. And what I ought to do, by God's grace, I will do."

● "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man (or woman) completely dedicated to him."²

Is his genre
acceptable in
church worship?

REACT

1. In the content of your witnessing technique, should you aim to bring people to Christ or to your denomination? Discuss the appropriateness of the content and any other relevant factors.

2. Society is beginning to validate the need for spirituality in every facet of one's life. How can you use this development as a means of sharing God's unique message of salvation and hope?

3. What difference exists between "pop spirituality" and "biblical spirituality"?

4. How can the understanding of Seventh-day Adventists of biblical spirituality contribute to meeting the spiritual search of contemporary society?

5. Does pop spirituality make it more difficult or easier to witness to people today?

1. *People Management*, 24/12/98, vol. 4, No. 25, p. 28, adapted.

2. Vern McLellan, *Quips, Quotes and Quests*, p. 169.

LOGOS

Acts 2:4-11; 6:1-7; 13:13; 14:8-18; 15; 16:1-3

A major setback to witnessing comes from within. It stems from a lack of fellowship with Jesus and a lack of meaningful fellowship with each other—discord and disunity. The early church demonstrated through their fellowship that the Cross was able to transcend and dismantle any barrier (racial, cultural, or economical). Hence, it is love that leads to unity and harmony, not segregation and conformity. Love accepts people as they are and values them not in the hope that they will be like us, but in the realization that they belong to God.

A visitor to a mental hospital was astonished to note that only three guards were watching over a hundred dangerous inmates. He asked his guide, "Don't you fear that these people will overpower the guards and escape?"

"No," was the reply. "Lunatics never unite." Christ desires not the disunity of lunacy, but that we all may be one (John 17:21).

In addition, we need to change our perspective from institutionalism to discipleship (Matt. 9:37). Today we have many church buildings that house hymn-singers, tithe-payers, pew-warmers, faultfinders, and disrupters—but few true disciples of Jesus. There is a lack of understanding of what it means to be a disciple. The Laodicean church looked inward.

There are four people in the church, whose names are Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. The church needs to witness. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it. But you know who did it? Nobody. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

**"Lunatics
never unite."**

Only when we see ourselves as a "chosen generation" can we escape the institutionalized church syndrome. Our mission is to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19, NRSV), so that our "good works . . . give glory to [our] Father in heaven" (5:16, NRSV).

What can be done? First, look at Christ's example:

- "The Saviour 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.'"

- "He "met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs."

Would you go to a doctor who earned the reputation of treating symptoms instead of finding the cause of the disease? No! Christ, unlike Maslow's hierarchies of needs, gives self actualization instantaneously—as He meets *all* our needs!

Now with nerves aside, from Christ's method, you have found the core competence that guarantees success then and now. To be an effective witness, you must take an interest in people and their needs. Try to involve those you're

trying to reach out to in topics that interest them. I have discovered the acronym F-O-R-T in a recent seminar that could be a guide for your conversations.

F - Family

O - Occupation I've found that people talk easily in these areas.

R - Religion There is a tendency to view those of the world in need of guidance to be like us (who are just in the world). Try not to consider others to be inferior to you; they will detect your condescending attitude and reject anything you share.

T - Testimony Unless you have an experience with Christ, your witnessing experience will be disappointing.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, the angels asked Him, "Did You accomplish Your task?"

"Yes, all is finished," He replied.

"We have a second question," said the angel. "Has the whole world heard of you?"

"No," said Jesus.

Then an angel asked, "What is your plan?"

Jesus said, "I have left 12 men who must tell others to carry the message to the whole world."

The angel looked at Him and asked, "What is Plan B?"³

There is no Plan B! Jesus desires your witness and mine for the world to believe in Him. When will we begin?

REACT

1. What are some of the things that keep God's people from being united? How can we overcome them?

2. The Bible declares that God has followers in other denominations. How do believers of other faiths figure into God's plea for oneness among His followers?

3. What is the function of the Holy Spirit in unifying the church and witnessing in general?

4. Do you see any differences/similarities between the way Jesus did evangelism and the way the church does it today? Explain your answer.

5. What differences exist between "making disciples" and "baptizing"?

1. *Christian Service*, p. 119.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

3. P. Michael Green, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1989).

Christ Set the Captives Free

TESTIMONY

Acts 2:1

Ellen White speaks passionately of witnessing and explains how each soul that has been given light should not shut up this light within the church. Instead, it is to be spread abroad, into the dark places of the earth.¹ We need to humble our hearts, pleading God's forgiveness for our neglect to fulfill the commission.

"Heavenly intelligences are waiting to cooperate with human instrumentalities, that they may reveal to the world what human beings may become and what, through their influence, they may accomplish for the saving of souls."

"The doing of this work will bring rays of heavenly righteousness to wearied, perplexed, suffering souls. It is as a fountain opened for the wayworn, thirsty traveler. At every work of mercy, every work of love, angels of God are present."²

Christians have "cherished hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil. They

**Each soul that has
been given light
should not shut
up this light within
the church.**

have made questioning and faultfinding and accusing the chief business of their lives. Their hearts are not right with God. They have hidden their light under a bushel.' . . .

While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march upon us."³

"I heard some one say," Ellen White continues, "We knew that the judgments

of God were coming upon the earth, but we did not know that they would come so soon.' Others, with agonized voices, said, 'You knew! Why then did you not tell us? We did not know!' On every side I heard similar words of reproach spoken."⁴

REACT

1. How may we hinder God's work? Be specific.
2. Why did God choose to use imperfect human beings to share a divine message?
3. How does Satan use our past to prevent us from telling others about Jesus?
4. In what way does personality/temperament affect the way you witness?

1. *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, pp. 293, 294.

2. *Lift Him Up*, p. 275.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 29.

4. *Christian Service*, p. 111.

Keep the Faith— Keep Representing!

HOW-TO

Mark 16:15; Rom. 12:2; Phil. 2:5

It's all very well exhorting each other to witness, but do we have something to witness about? For those of you who don't realize it, you'd better recognize that only by *knowing God for yourself* (not vicariously through parents, pastors, teachers, etc.), and understanding exactly just what He's done for you, can you become excited enough to want to tell someone about it. My prayer for you is, "All my heart desires is a closer walk with You, I want to know You like no other one, 'cause I just love the things You do."¹

OK, so you're ready to testify? Here are some general points.

1. Pray for guidance. A devotional life is essential to maintain a clear connection.
2. Start with your circle of friends who may be Adventists, *Adventwists* or non-Adventists. Be a real friend. Don't give the impression you are interested only as far as the baptismal pool (Rom. 14:1).

3. Accept that not everyone may be receptive. Still be a friend (1 Cor. 7:15). Getting others to come to church isn't the aim. Introducing them to Christ is.

4. Target a particular need and show your friend how Christ can fulfill that need (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

5. If a debate is entered into, pray for wisdom, avoiding denominational bashing, but rather discussing personal beliefs in the context of the Bible.

6. Make the most of an opportunity (Eph. 5:15,16). "The trouble with opportunity is that it is always more recognizable going than coming."² Practice recognizing opportunities for Christ.

Getting others to
come to church
isn't the aim.

Finally, be "confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6, NIV).

REACT

1. Is the spiritual gift of evangelism the same as personal witnessing? Explain your answer.

2. What factors contribute to not witnessing besides not having a relationship with Jesus?

1. Greg O'QUIN 'n' Joyful Noyze, *Conversations* (Word Entertainment, 1998).

2. Vern McLellan, *Quips, Quotes and Quests*.

Thursday
September 14

The Paralysis of Analysis

OPINION

Phil. 4:9; Acts 4:20

As we spend time in Scripture and in prayer, it is important not to get caught up in the paralysis of analysis to the point at which we fail to act. God has given us clear instructions to share Him and His Word with those who have not heard. It is here that I ask: Do you have a relationship with God? Are you eager to tell others about Him? Or are you ashamed? I know personally from experience that when you love someone “everybody ought to know” whether through your big mouth or your body language (you know those secret smiles when he or she crosses your mind). This, my friends, is witnessing.

Jesus is our friend. Having a relationship with Him means you know He has your best interests at heart. You can’t help telling others what He has done for you and through you (“Everybody ought to know who Jesus is”). Therefore, a barrier to witnessing could be that you don’t truly love Jesus. Spend time developing your relationship with Him on a daily basis wherever you are, so that He can lead

**“Everybody
ought to know
who Jesus is.”**

you to the people He wants you to reach.

A friend of mine was a former drug user, raver, and many more unspeakable things. Now, however, he can’t help telling others about what God has done for him. He witnesses in clubs, on buses, and even in the courtroom! Another friend was much like my previous friend, and she, too, found Christ. Now when asked by others about the source of her happiness, she is able to share a testimony that leaves her hearers with the desire to gain what she has.

To take it to an even more personal level, I enjoy witnessing too. I am a member of an animated puppet gospel choir. I have found this medium to be appropriate in conveying the gospel to the deaf, dumb, adult, and child. I also participate in street witnessing. In the heart of London, others and I present Christ in 1-2-1 contact. There is no greater joy than introducing others to Jesus (and seeing the results). “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20, NIV).

REACT

1. Which is more effective: Telling someone about Jesus or living a godly life? Why?
2. What is your personal style of witnessing?
3. How do past “worldly” experiences enhance or limit your testimony?

Silton Young, London, England

A Full-Service Arsenal

EXPLORATION

Acts 4:14, 21, 22

CONCLUDE

In the book of Acts the disciples model a method for building up new believers: share the joy, the responsibility, and the resources—preach, teach, counsel. Bible students find that Christ arms believers with both the fruit of the Spirit and a full arsenal of ministry tools, so believers can thrive, not just survive in this world. The message is that, despite the opposition that results from union with Christ, believers need neither wither nor retreat. So believers' living testimony should reflect both the gentleness and boldness of Christ Himself.

CONSIDER

- Designing a logo or using someone else's design that reflects a spiritual truth that you'd like to display on a T-shirt, hat, or blazer patch.
- Baking a batch of cookies or preparing a vegetarian entree or other food item to use as a conversation starter at a community dinner or with a neighbor.
- Arranging a synchronized swimming routine to perform to a religious piece of music and perform it at a public pool.
- Telling your story at a local prison ministry meeting, nursing home program, or your family reunion.
- Sculpting in clay or paper a symbol of your faith.
- Creating a business-size card that identifies you and your ministry.
- Composing lyrics and a tune or new lyrics to a well-known tune that your ministry audience would relate to. Hum, sing, play it instrumentally.

CONNECT

Psalm 23.

Rock Solid Living, chap. 10; *Over and Over Again!* pp. 92-94.

What do we Do next?



“After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples” (Acts 18:23 NIV).

Save the Sheep

INTRODUCTION

Acts 20:28

"I have a job for you, boy."

"A job? For me? What can I do?"

"The most wonderful place is on the other side of this bypass. If you follow these instructions, you can get yourself and these sheep to a place like none you've seen before."

That doesn't sound too hard, thought the boy. "I'll do it!" He took the written instructions in hand.

"Not so fast. There are risks. People, even your friends, may laugh at you, and your life could be threatened along the way. You won't know the full rewards until you are there."

"It's all right; I've nothing better to do."

So he took off down the trail with the sheep. After a month's travel, the sheep seemed to know the way. The shepherd boy feared nothing.

There's no way that they could go wrong, he thought.

As time went on, the sheep had scattered. Some were far ahead and some were weeks behind. Others had left the path and were lost to eternal death. The instructions remained tucked in the boy's pocket, unread.

When he reached the end of the bypass, there was a huge gate. No sheep had arrived ahead of him as he had thought. In the weeks that followed, not one sheep arrived. He leaned on the gate and heard a crinkle of paper in his pocket. The instructions were clear, he had not followed them.

Many people enter churches, remain for a while, and slip quietly out the back door. Just about everyone knows somebody who used to go to church but quit coming for some reason or other. Paul teaches us through his example that we need to nurture each other in the church. He traveled back to the churches that he founded, to make sure that they were on the right track (Acts 18:23) and provided encouragement along the way (14:21-23). He never trusted, as the shepherd boy did, that they weren't going to need him. It's too easy to forget what our goal is.

Even Paul required encouragement from God. God knew what was going to happen, and Paul relied on His strength to see him through the difficult time. God put Paul on some difficult paths just as Paul put his new converts on some difficult paths. But neither expected their disciples to go it alone as the shepherd boy did. God knows that commitment takes time to grow. Without an example, without a friend, without a leader, God's children can become lost (11:25-30).

I challenge you to take responsibility for each other and encourage one another down the path that has been chosen.

The sheep had
scattered all
around.

LOGOS

Acts 11:25, 26, 29, 30; 13:43; 14:21-23; 15:36, 40, 41; 16:4, 5; 18:8-11, 23; 20:13-36

On a group tour to Israel, I met a woman from one of our churches in a major metropolitan area in the United States. Several years before, she had responded to the Bible truth she had heard during an evangelistic series by one of our church's outstanding evangelists. She and more than 40 others were baptized. It was one of the most successful series of meetings held in that state for years.

Yet in talking with Sherry (not her real name,) I learned that she and one or two others were the only ones from those meetings who were still attending church. Unfortunately, across North America the situation isn't much better. Even in places like Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the dropout rate among converts following recent large evangelistic series has been troubling.

**The problems we
face in the church
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new.**

The problems we face in the church today are nothing new. The early New Testament church faced many of the same challenges. Fortunately, the book of Acts gives us some insights on how we can integrate new believers into the life of the church and help them feel needed.

Staying in Touch

One of the keys of success in the apostles' evangelistic endeavors was to remain in the cities where they had preached Christ. After a particularly successful preaching tour, Paul and Barnabas returned to the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen and encourage the new believers (Acts 14:21, 22).

Many times today, evangelists hold meetings for four to six weeks and then move on to another place never to be seen again by the new believers. This, however, was not Paul's method. Paul returned to the places where he had preached to visit with his new friends in Christ (15:36; 18:23).

Though itinerant evangelism was the primary method used by Paul and the other apostles to proclaim the gospel, it's clear that they needed at times to modify their approach. The Lord personally instructed Paul to put down roots in Corinth for a year and a half so he could more effectively reach those who were open to knowing the gospel (18:8-11).

Involving New Believers

Paul knew that to keep new believers actively involved in the church they must be involved in ministry. For a year Paul and Barnabas conducted one of the first spiritual gifts training seminars at the church in Antioch (11:25, 26). Paul realized that people would not remain a part of the church unless they felt needed.

He helped them see how they could use their gifts for the Lord.

Training Leaders

Paul knew all too well that he couldn't personally train all the people he had brought to Jesus. So he set out to carefully select and train lay ministers in each community who could do the work (14:23). He candidly told them about the challenges they would face (20:29-35). He shared his innermost thoughts and burdens with these leaders. Together, they shared the passion they had for telling others about Jesus (verses 17-28).

Tapping Into the Power

Despite his evangelistic success, Paul knew the Source of his power. Neither he nor the leaders he had selected could personally ensure that individuals would remain part of the church. Each person was free to leave if he or she chose.

Yet Paul and his brothers and sisters in ministry fasted and prayed for their fellow believers (14:23; 20:36). In addition to reaching out in love to the person, they prayed for the Holy Spirit to work on the person's life. The idea of losing even one of their friends was more than they could bear (20:29-31).

REACT

1. What is your reaction to itinerant evangelism?
2. What could be done to improve the long-term success of public evangelistic meetings?
3. Over the past few years, satellite evangelism has become a significant outreach tool for the church. What are the benefits and liabilities of such technology?
4. How do you feel about the Lord instructing Paul to remain in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 18:8-11)? Should we see this as proof of the superiority of relational or friendship evangelism? Explain your answer.
5. Paul didn't have to wait for the "nominating committee" to get new believers involved in ministry. How can we plug people into ministry positions without their having to get caught up in all the bureaucracy of the church?
6. Many GenXer's have little interest in filling a position or being a member of a committee. How can we get them excited about being involved in ministry?
7. How can you involve new believers without threatening or removing long-established members from positions of ministry?
8. In many churches 20 percent of the people are doing 80 percent of the work. How can we help those in leadership see that their responsibility is to work themselves out of a job?
9. Why is it so important to pray for those who are no longer attending church? What practical things can you do to reach out to let members of the church know that they are needed?

Monday
September 18

Care for Newborns

TESTIMONY

Heb. 6:1

Paul teaches that once we have established the “elementary teachings about Christ” (Heb. 6:1, NIV), we should move on to deeper study with new converts. The message is clear—don’t stop studying with people just because they’ve joined the church.

“After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after. . . . These newly converted ones need nursing—watchful attention, help, and encouragement. . . .

“Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God’s Spirit convicts sinners of the truth and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do.”¹

When we study and share with new converts, several other important needs are met. New members are now part of a small group, have a sense of belonging, and are initiating closer friendships with other members. Studies continue to show the importance of meaningful friendships within a church group.

Continued study should emphasize the need to share this good news with

**Don’t stop studying
with people just
because they’ve
joined the church.**

others. “Those who are most actively employed in doing with interested fidelity their work to win souls to Jesus Christ, are the best developed in spirituality and devotion.”²

“Teach the newly converted that they are to enter into fellowship with Christ, to be His witnesses and to make Him known unto the world.”³ The new believer should be encouraged to share what has been shared with him. “Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver.”⁴

REACT

What are some practical ways that you could help newer members become more mature in their faith?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 68, 69.

2. *Evangelism*, p. 356.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Christian Service*, p. 9.

Sustaining the Flock

EVIDENCE

John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 5:2-4

Without a doubt, believers are expected to spread the word of Christ's everlasting love and forgiveness. Christ's life on earth can be pointed to as a prime example of how to share God's love with others (Matt.11:1; Luke 9:60). In fact, Christ saw such a need for spreading the Word of God during His brief ministry that He gathered a group around Him to help in reaching as many as possible. Jesus' first two disciples were called with the following challenge, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people" (Matt. 4:19, NRSV).

The fishing metaphor is hard to interpret as anything short of evangelizing people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But are there any examples in the Bible in which believers were shown how to retain and guide new converts to prevent losing them to apathy or worldly influences?

**Paul and Barnabas
backtracked to
every city they had
previously visited.**

Yes, there are many examples in the Bible in which people of God were sent to churches to lift the spirits of those who had accepted Christ and who had become established in the faith. Paul's first visit to the churches in Derbe and Lystra is proof of this. Paul visited, established, and saw to the growth of the churches in these cities (Acts 16:4, 5). As these churches grew, they were visited by traveling ministers who attempted to encourage those new converts. In Acts 15:36, Paul and Barnabas backtracked to every city they had previously visited and preached the Word. Notice that Paul and Barnabas visited *every* city again.

In these examples, we see how Christ worked during His time on earth with His own ministry. As followers of Jesus, we have a responsibility of reaching those who don't know Him. We also have a responsibility of reaching out to those who have known the Lord but who have become discouraged somewhere along the way. The examples of Jesus and Paul demonstrate how to nurture the church.

REACT

1. What could you do in your daily life to help spread the Word of God among the public-at-large as well as within your own church?
2. How important is it to keep in touch with new believers?
3. What benefits are there in having several people working together in reaching out to those who are discouraged in their faith?
4. The apostles taught doctrine, formed people into fellowship groups, and trained them for outreach. Which of these does your local church do best? Where could it use your help?

HOW-TO

Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:1-6

A sense of belonging is a need we all share, to feel loved, accepted, and included. I have visited various Adventist churches and at times have felt the opposite: just a visitor, an outsider. It's been easy to slip out the back door.

A sense of belonging is a need we all share.

I'm not a new believer. But what if I were? What would happen to me after I've been baptized and the excitement wears off? What if an unbeliever or a former member

picks your church out of the phone book and shows up one Sabbath morning? The witnessing must continue.

Here are some ideas to help keep the family of God together:

1. Friendship. A friendly church has friendly people. Greeting each person with a handshake or a hug can go a long way. Accept and love people the way they are as God accepts us and loves us. Make people feel they are welcome.

2. Socialization. Plan various activities for all ages and invite people. Have fun together and laugh a lot. Have a visitor potluck weekly and invite people to stay. Invite them to your home. Jesus Himself was a social being.

3. Involvement. Invite people to help with various church duties or outreach activities. Having something to do can help that person feel included and important.

4. Small-group fellowships. Provide a variety of Sabbath School classes that would interest different individuals at various levels in their walk with Christ. Establish small groups that meet outside church for Bible study, outreach, or just for fun. Get involved with women's, men's, or single's ministries. Plan and begin a special class on discipleship that would benefit newly baptized members and be a refreshing review for not-so-new believers.

The words of William and Gloria Gaither put it simply: "You will notice we say brother and sister 'round here. It's because we're a family and these folks are so near. When one has a heartache we all share the tears and rejoice in each victory in this family so dear. I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God. . . ."

REACT

1. Describe how you feel when you think of friends or family who are church members but rarely attend.

2. What effort will it take to build a bridge like this to another person? What new habits will I need to cultivate or what old ones should I drop?

3. Describe and compare with other class members what you think might cause a person to show up at church for the first time in a long time.

Long-Distance Teamwork

OPINION

1 Thess. 5:11

I'll make you a deal. You call up one of my brothers and I'll call yours.

I have four brothers and one sister. They all live two day's drive from my home, and they all need to get back to church. Most of them have an Adventist hymnal, a stack of Bibles, and at least a partial set of Spirit of Prophecy books in their possession. They've all graduated from Adventist schools and still have a few Adventist friends. I don't think believing is the real problem—belonging is. Or “rebelonging” as an adult, along with rediscovering God for themselves.

My sister will play her flute for special music, if she's asked. Need a chainsaw or a backhoe operator for a landscaping project at your church or school? Call Jim or John. Need a CPR class? Call Sandy again. She's a crackerjack emergency medical technician. Bruce might be a harder one to crack; he's an attorney. But he water skis, golfs a little, and is trying to find a sense of direction for his life. John is laid back and friendly, and his daughter is in church school—he'd be great with kids on a field trip or Pathfinder outing. My sister-in-law Carol would probably love one of those events where you make pages for a memory album.

So, you live where they are and I'm here in a metro area where one of your siblings or academy friends lives. Let's call them up and keep an eye out for them when they do show up at church or some event, even the grocery store! Don't give them a church office at nominating committee time, ask them to work *together* on a project *with you*. Every time you take on a ministry task try to find something they can do to contribute. *Invent* something if you have to!

You call up one of
my brothers and I'll
call yours.

I'll make you a promise. My antennae are out for every person 25-45 who walks through our church doors. My net here won't catch my brothers; but if you cast one where you are, it just might. And when I see your brother floating around, I'll do what I can to make him feel at home just as if it were Jim or Bruce or John. Remember, not all small groups are strictly Bible study, although that's an important format. There's handbell choir, fellowship luncheon teams, and other groups participating in ministry based on similar interests like camping, walking, gardening.

One tip. Whatever you do, make it practical. I think they'd go for a Sabbath morning class like the one Chris Blake described in the *Adventist Review*.* See the web site at <http://welcome.to/somethingelse> for a description.

*“The Little Sabbath School That Could,” *Adventist Review*, Feb. 18, 1999, p. 25.

EXPLORATION

Gal. 6:1-5

CONCLUDE

Almost as many members are leaving the church as are joining. What's wrong with this picture? There's more to evangelism than increasing membership. It is very important to disciple and nurture new and long-time members. That's what Paul did—he went around, church to church, strengthening people. A new member feels like a child adopted into a new family—everything is new and unfamiliar, you can't seem to connect with the family's traditions, memories, quirks, and jokes. Discipleship involves creating feelings of belonging, building friendships, getting involved, identifying common grounds, and keeping in touch.

CONSIDER

- Establishing a dinner-club for new church or inactive members. Take turns cooking for all club members (and their families) who will stop by to pick up their dinner. Each person cooks only one large supper a week.
- E-mailing a special treat once a week to new church members or neighbors: it may be a recipe, story, verse, quote, or newspaper clipping.
- Mailing prayer postcards and forming prayer bands—to encourage prayer for the community. Write synopses of local happenings (from newspapers) on postcards and mail to selected people.
- Asking for some wall space in your Sabbath School or fellowship hall and maintaining a bulletin board to encourage interaction among church members. Include features such as mystery member profiles (describe someone in the congregation), wish lists, and answered prayers.
- Throwing random parties at your church. Celebrate membership anniversaries. Build your reputation as the “spontaneous party giver!”
- Becoming certified in something you are naturally good at (financial counseling, grief recovery, etc.) and offering your services to your church.
- Making a promise to yourself that, at church, you will sit in a different pew each week, and have at least one meaningful conversation with someone other than family or friends.

CONNECT

Galatians 6:1-5; Philemon 1:7.

Evangelism, chap. 4; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, section 2; *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, “Faith Stewardship Required,” March 7, 1893.

Karen Dockrey, *Fun Friend-Making Activities*; Michael Green, *One to One*, chaps. 1, 2.

How do **We** keep **Score?**



“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21, NIV).

Reachable, Yet Untouchable

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 139:5, 7, 9, 10

One night there was a storm, a strong thunderstorm, where the thunder sounded so loud that it would shake the house as if it were an earthquake. If you would dare to look out the window, you would see the strong lightning as it lit up the sky, especially when the lights in the house went out. I remember being afraid and thinking that something bad was going to happen.

As usual, right on time, a familiar face walked into the dark room to comfort me. As she would grab hold and hug me, she would say, "Don't worry, the thunder is God bowling in heaven, and the rain is God crying for the things we do bad." It

**My mother's witness to
me made a difference in
my life.**

sounds hard to believe, but I believed every bit of what my mother said. I know now that when the thunderstorm comes it's not God bowling and the rain is not His crying. What was it that influenced me to accept God and the stories

that she told me? I do know one thing: from that day on, I always believed in God and looked for Him.

One day, Paul on his way to Damascus was struck by a great light from heaven (Acts 22:6). Jesus' confrontation with Paul had such an effect that from that day on, Paul chose to follow Him for the rest of his life. He became a witness for Jesus, and hundreds of others, through Paul's witness, accepted Jesus in their hearts and became witnesses (18:8). My mother's witness to me made a difference in my life, and now I want to do the same for the people I love and the people around me, so that they won't miss out on the beautiful gift that God has in store for us.

The Obvious Truth

EVIDENCE

Luke 12:9

I had a decision to make, but I was sluggish in responding to the call. I had been a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church earlier in my youth, and because of my active membership in that church, my parents threw me out of the house. I lived the Lord's timely prediction, the one found in Matthew 10:34-36.

Some five years later, having served a second term of enlistment with the U.S. Navy, I returned to be confronted with the identical decision anew: follow God or follow the world.

I returned to the church, but with one foot in the world. My employer required my working on Friday nights; I hadn't the courage to tell him of my religious affiliation with the church. To refuse reporting for work on Friday, a week day, was to forfeit employment completely. So I attempted to keep half the Sabbath, pleading with God to give me a sign, yet knowing what He wanted me to do.

The response came on a Sabbath morning. My mother was preparing breakfast for me. As I passed the dining room table en route to the kitchen, I spotted a pamphlet. "One of your church members left it this morning on the way to church," my mother said. On the cover of the pamphlet was a statement: "You May Not Know It, But . . ." Anxious to discover what I did not know, I turned to the next page, which said, in very clear terms, "Jesus kept the Sabbath!"

Here was evidence that a lady I did not know could witness with the printed page. I thanked God for His reply, bathed, dressed myself, had breakfast, then set off for church, having made my decision. If Jesus kept the Sabbath, then He would want me to. As a consequence, I lost my job, but I had God's approval, and the guarantee of greater and richer blessings.

**I attempted to keep
half the Sabbath.**

REACT

1. Is half-obedience generally better than no obedience at all? Explain your answer.
2. How can you maintain friendships and respectful workplace relations with non-Christian people while living by very different standards?
3. Experience is what people are looking for when they go to the movies, have relationships, go dancing, take drugs, etc. Is your Christian experience really as exciting as those things? As real? Should it be? Why or why not?

A Consistent Testimony

LOGOS

Acts 17:5-7, 32-34; 22:12-16; 24:25; 26:27, 28; 28:11-16, 23, 24, 30, 31; Rev. 14:6-10

Hezekiah's virtues helped him stand out as an exceptional leader. According to 2 Chronicles 29-31, he was a successful administrator, a good politician, had good relations with neighboring countries, and, above all, was the great religious reformer of his time. His preoccupation with the restoration of the true worship to God, in the southern as well as in the northern region, made him one of the most zealous guardians of the faith. At the height of his conquests, however, he was surprised with the news that he was going to die (Isa. 38:1). Hezekiah did not believe that this was the right time because he was young, had no heirs to the throne, and possibly, all his work to stabilize the kingdom would be lost. Then he received a promise that canceled out the first announcement.

Hezekiah shared his testimony and thanked God publicly for manifesting Himself when He gave Hezekiah the assurance that he would live. Isaiah 38:10-20, known as Hezekiah's psalm, is filled with this type of promises. Hezekiah's reaction is expected because in a way, the Lord had resurrected him. Furthermore, the things he was afraid to leave unsettled had he died, were resolved to his satisfaction: he would have children and the kingdom would not fall into enemy hands (38:6; 39:7). This was not a common gift. It could not be forgotten easily. This event would be so significant to the king's life that there would not be enough days to share the story.

It wasn't long, however, before the king failed to keep the promises that were still fresh in his mind. When the Babylonian ambassadors visited him, he lost the best opportunity to testify of God because he feared offending. It is possible that he took for granted that the visitors already had some knowledge of the God whom he served, so it would be better to use this time to strengthen the political ties of the nations. These emissaries were drawn by the clock's notable change in direction and the miraculous healing of the king, events they attributed to God (38:8). The time of testing had come, but the monarch failed at a time when his testimony could have influenced these men toward the true God. Instead, he showed off his wealth and power.

There was no place for God in the monarch's agenda. The priests were not called to offer a worship of gratitude at the imperial chapel. The sacred scrolls and everything that could awaken a religious interest were possibly hidden to prevent them from becoming a stumbling block in the process of the negotiations that were about to take place. It was the moment for the king to recognize publicly God's love and care.

Why was the king not able to honor his promise before the visitors? First of all, these men brought letters inviting him into an alliance to confront their common

enemies. The king knew that this plan did not have divine approval; nevertheless, he decided temporarily to separate God from his affairs. His choice brought consequences that contributed to the exile of the Jewish people.

Many of us act in similar ways. Daily God bestows immeasurable blessings upon us. Each day we have countless reasons to lift our testimony of gratefulness to Him whose only concern is to give and to watch over our well-being. Testifying about the blessings that fill our hands will make us healthier, fill us with hope, and bring within our reach the salvation of our souls. More than a commitment, it should be our lifestyle.

When we are troubled by unfortunate circumstances and the redeeming hand comes to meet us, we recognize and continually testify of God's goodness. These feelings, however, fade and are soon forgotten; or, even worse, we forget them at times when they seem unimportant. Unless we are consistent and are willing to put God first in all our transactions, without considering the consequences or conditions we will be exposed to, we can fall into Hezekiah's trap. If we do not include Jesus in our daily chores, neither will we search for Him when we face special situations. It is not possible to show that which we do not have.

**There was no
place for God in
the monarch's
agenda.**

Let's not take for granted the vitality we receive from our daily communion. Yesterday's experience is valid only for yesterday. It is necessary to maintain an invigorating relationship with the Lord on a daily basis, and this will encourage spontaneous expressions of acknowledgment and gratitude to God. Let's not allow a fleeting splendor of academic achievement, social pressure, or the desire for recognition to lead us to ignore the testimony of what He represents in our life. Neither prosperity nor adversity should ever prevent us from exalting before others what we are because of Heaven's grace. A firm and consistent testimony of our faith and gratitude to God will be, unlike Hezekiah's attitude, the key to reaching success in the Christian life. We should allow this experience to have place in our life.

REACT

1. Whom do you value most as a witness in you life?
2. What incident made you believe in God?
3. Can God communicate Himself through us? Explain your answer.
4. What "sacred scrolls" could you hide?
5. Some people in a new workplace or school will not be blatant about their faith, but keep quiet until they have had time to win credibility with people. What could be the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?
6. Someone said, "It is impossible to witness to Jesus and yourself at the same time." What are some ways in your life that you could confuse the two?

TESTIMONY

Acts 28:23, 24

It is clear that Paul, although chained, did not stop preaching the gospel and testimony of Jesus here on earth. He would testify at all times, if necessary. Although many Jews firmly opposed the gospel, there was always a small group that converted.

The same thing happens today with every Christian evangelist. God has given us free will; therefore, we have the right to believe or not to believe.

“As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us.”

“We are to tell . . . what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt.”

Since we know this glorious message, our duty is to preach this

gospel to all the world in our generation. Using the gifts and talents that God has given us, under His divine direction, and, of course, with much prayer, God will never forsake us.

Be a faithful witness for Christ. Share the wonderful things God has done for you and everything He has prepared for us. Jesus is coming soon! Be ready!

REACT

1. Why does your personal testimony work when a textbook talk may not? In the following list of possible reasons, which three are most important to you?

- You have emotions invested in it.
- It's real, a story rather than dry theory.
- You are someone the listener trusts.
- It fits more naturally into conversation about your life.
- It can be tailor-made for the listener.
- Other: _____

2. Many of us hate advertising because it often communicates empty words and pictures about a product that does not really deliver what it promises. How do you avoid making your Christian witness just as hollow and hyped?

**Christian Service*, p. 17.

What We Have Seen and Heard

HOW-TO

John 3:11; 1 John 1:1, 2

The most effective way to get others to know the Savior of the world is by our witness. We do not have to be great evangelists nor theologians to share with others the Good News of salvation. The best way to testify is sharing with others what Christ has done in us and for us. Our personal experience with Christ will be an argument difficult to refute.

The context of the primitive church's message was "What we have seen and heard" of God (1 John 1:3, NIV). This principle is essential today in our witnessing. We have heard God's words and we have seen His works. The world, however, is tired of hearing words and it's yearning to see works. These will give meaning to our words.

"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (2:6, NIV). "But we need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sick-bed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great city, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation. In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall walk in His steps."¹

To serve our neighbor is not an option, but a responsibility for those who know the Redeemer. "Thus Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering."²

**Our personal
experience with
Christ will be an
argument difficult
to refute.**

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour 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.'"³ May God give us the same compassion that was in Christ Jesus!

1. *Christian Service*, p. 186.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 637.

3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

Successful Harvest in Athens

OPINION Acts 17:32-34

**God's mathematics
does not measure
success by numbers
but by quality.**

Some believe that the scant fruits of Paul's effort derived from the wrong method he used for evangelizing. The book of Acts says that when Paul observed the idolatry and wickedness in the city of Athens "his spirit was stirred" (Acts 17:16, KJV). The apostle preached not only to the Jews and devout Gentiles, but to the Greek philosophers as well. Acts 17:18 states that Paul was telling them about the gospel of Jesus and the resurrection. As we read the context of the whole chapter, we do not find signs that he was debating with them. He testified before the scholars that the whole universe was the product of the creative hand of God. He called them to repentance, warned them about the coming judgment, and assured them that Jesus conquered death. If this isn't the gospel, then what is it?

How can we think that when Paul arrived at Corinth he lamented his small success in Athens? Verse 34 says that "Dionysius, Damaris, and others with them believed the gospel." What is our criterion to define a great harvest of souls? Don't we say that Jesus would have come to this world to save only one soul?

The apostle Paul must have felt great satisfaction to have planted the seed of the gospel in Athens. He did not need to feel frustrated for the small harvest. The same words he wrote to the Corinthians he could have written to the Christians in Greece: "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1, 2, NIV).

God's mathematics does not measure success by numbers but by quality. The positive results of witnessing are very valuable. When we analyze Paul's experience in Athens, we can conclude that it was successful in quality and quantity.

REACT

1. What does it mean that Jesus gave special attention to "an audience of one soul"?
2. Does the preaching of other Christian denominations contribute to the so-called finishing of the work? Explain your answer.

Walking Our Talk

EXPLORATION

2 Cor. 5:17-20

CONCLUDE

It's great to be able to say you're a Christian. In life it's easy to say one thing and actually do another. Can others see that you are living what you proclaim to believe? Do they see kindness and empathy? What about gentleness and true compassion? Or has the world begun its insidious insertion into your life? What do the activities you partake in say about your walk with Christ? Can non-Christians tell there is something different about you when you speak, drive, and work on a deadline? Take time to examine whether you are truly "walking your talk."

CONSIDER

- Composing a poem or song that contains your testimony. Perform it for Sabbath School or church.
- Organizing a bread ministry. Gather some friends and bake nut or whole wheat breads. Use these as a way to introduce yourself to neighbors, the postal worker, gas station attendants—anyone with whom you have casual contact. You could attach an encouraging poem or personal note.
- Making a collage of the characteristics of Jesus. What did He do that showed Him walking His talk? Identify which ones you feel you have in your life. Are there others you need to pray about and ask God to help develop?
- Experimenting with new ways to witness. What are ways that you can make a difference in someone else's life? Organize a group to brainstorm ways they can reach out to others.
- Researching the ways that members of the early Adventist church witnessed. They had a new message that not everyone wanted to hear. What were some of the things that worked particularly well then? How can we adapt these methods for today?
- Journaling your witnessing activities for the next month. Consider whether you are looking for chances to witness to others. Specifically pray each day for God to bring you into contact with someone to share His love.

CONNECT

2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 5:1, 2; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 2:22-26.

Evangelism, pp. 442-446, 644-655.

Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church*, pp. 33-43; Kim A. Johnson, *Spiritual Body-Building Lessons*, pp. 21-27.

Next Quarter's Lessons

WISDOM TO LIVE BY

Introduction to the Book of Proverbs

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for fourth quarter 2000, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: What Are Your Priorities?

Scriptures: Prov. 1:1-7; 2:1-11; 4:5-7; 21:3; James 1:5.

Theme: Learning is intended to make us wise. But what is wisdom? We often think that education is necessary for success in today's world. When we think that, however, we usually become so absorbed in striving for temporal success that we lose sight of the purpose and the importance of true education. Then education becomes a frantic struggle for academic success with financial security as the the ultimate aim.

"Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man."—*Education*, p. 13.

Lesson 2: A Star to Guide the Humble

Scriptures: Prov. 3:5, 6; 11:4; 16:9; 22:17-19; 28:26; Phil.4:19.

Theme: What is trust, and why is it important? Faith, the hand that lays hold upon God's resources, consists of more than just belief; trust is a vital part. But what is trust? How does it work?

Does trust belong in a compartment separate from daily life, preserved only for religion? Is it practical? Can it benefit anybody?

These questions deserve answers. Indeed we need these answers in order to survive.

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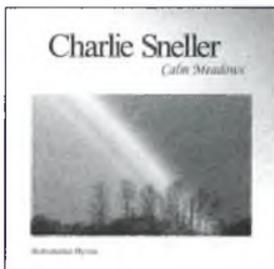
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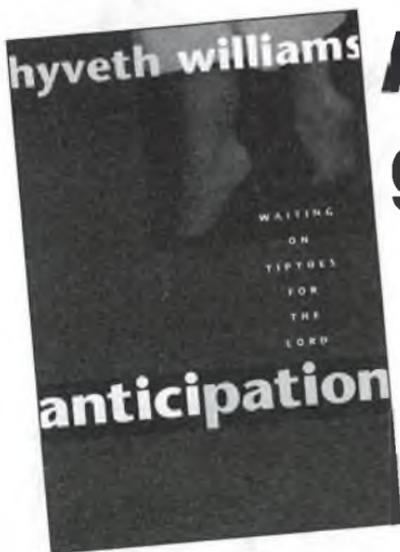
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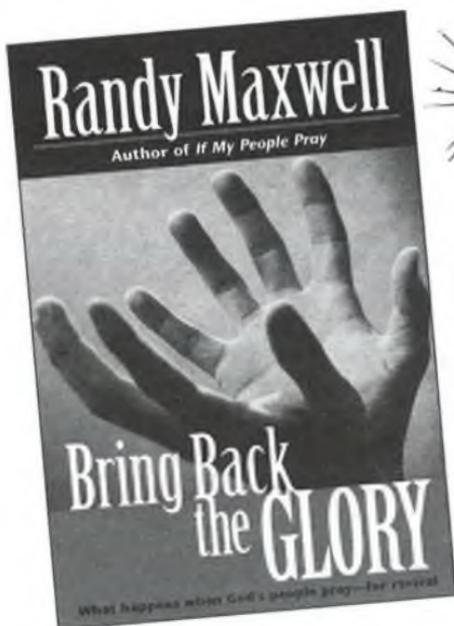
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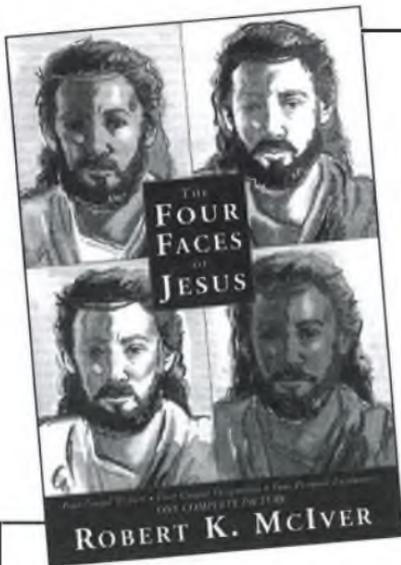
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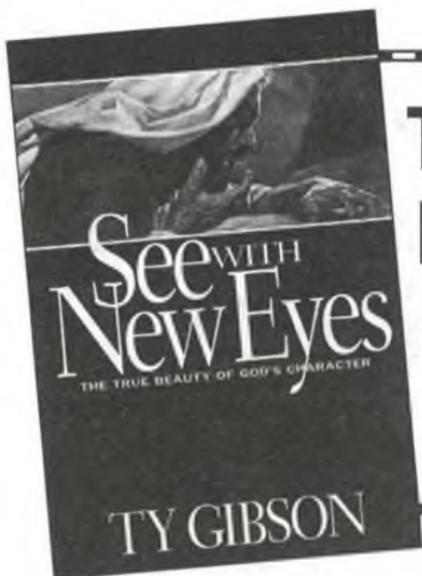
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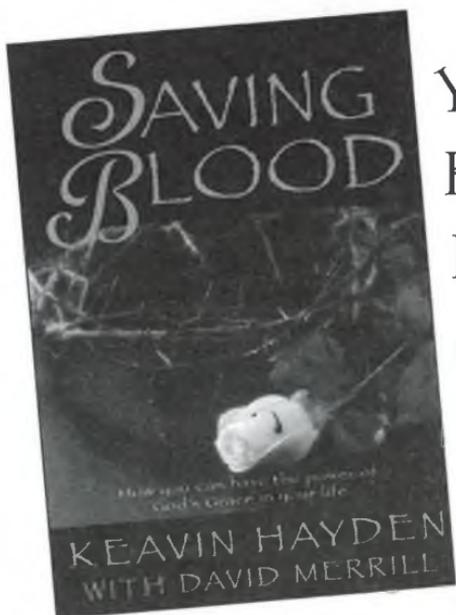
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M I S S I O N



NAME:
Amadeus Mhula,
age 21,
Xai Xai, Mozambique

BACKGROUND:
Amadeus was not
interested in attend-
ing his family's
church, but when a

friend invited him to a special program at the Adventist church everything changed. He began asking questions about why this church worshiped on Saturday. After six months of Bible studies, Amadeus was baptized. His family was amazed at his sudden interest in religion. Read Mission to find out how Amadeus and his family's life has changed



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