

The Christian Life ***Mission***

Lesson #13 for June 27, 2009

Scriptures: Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:45-47; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 4:11-15; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Revelation 14:6-12.

1. This lesson is about the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Do we understand that mission clearly?

The words *mission* and *missionary* come from Latin words meaning send and one sent. . . . The English Bible usually uses the noun *apostle*, which also comes from the Greek word that means one sent. . . . Thirty-nine times the Gospel of John says that Jesus was sent by God.

Thirty-nine times, then, Jesus is defined in that book alone as a missionary or apostle.—Jon L. Dybdahl, “Missionary God—Missionary Church” in Erich W. Baumgartner, ed., *Re-Visioning Adventist Mission in Europe* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1998), p. 8.

2. You do not have to travel across oceans or learn to speak a foreign language to be a missionary. Apostles were sent by Jesus to carry the gospel to the then known world. Has He not also sent us?
3. Do you believe that you have been commissioned or appointed to speak the gospel to others? If so, how are you doing it? If not, why not? The Holy Spirit has promised to pour out the latter rain at the end of this earth’s history upon those who are correctly representing God. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has taken as its charter the preaching of the three angels’ messages. (Revelation 14:6-12) Do we understand how to preach that message in a way that attracts people instead of scaring them away? Could you give a clear explanation of the three angels’ messages that makes God look good? In our early church history, we went through stages where we believed that we were giving the first angel’s message, and later, the second angel’s message, and finally, the third.
4. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has become a large international organization. There is a terrible danger that we have—or will—become a self-sustaining, self-oiling organization that looks after its own needs rather than an organization designed to reach out to every part of this world.
5. While we recognize that individual Christians have been given different gifts by God, (1 Corinthians 12:11-28; Ephesians 4:11-15) every one of those gifts is intended to be a tool for spreading the gospel. How are you using your gifts to correctly represent Jesus and His mission here on this earth? The church was not put here just to be a church. It was put here to reach out to the world!
6. Why do we need to witness? Why has God chosen to work through us rather than sending the Holy Spirit or even angels to spread the gospel? Would angels scare us if they came to witness? (Revelation 19:9,10) But remember that Abraham and Moses not only spoke face-to-face with angels but with God. (Genesis 18; Exodus 32-34) The Holy Spirit and angels will help us in the end. (John 16; Hebrews 2:14) Christians have argued about the plan of salvation

and its effects for hundreds of years. Some believe that everyone will eventually be saved. Others believe that some will be given a second chance to be saved. But the Scriptures tell us that there are only two ways to go. Is that why, according to a recent survey, Christians who are regular church goers are more in favor of torturing Muslim extremists than those who are non-church goers? We can align our lives with the life and mission of Jesus Christ, or we will be lost. Jesus clearly stated that He is the only way to salvation. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11,12) But, how are we to include apparently contradictory verses such as Romans 1:20 and Romans 2:12-16?

7. If we were doing everything that God wanted us to do—correctly representing Jesus Christ to the world—how long would it take the Holy Spirit to pour the latter rain out on us in ways that would reach everyone on planet Earth? **What is the real reason for the delay? Is God waiting for us, or are we waiting for Him? (2 Peter 3:10-12) Are we so busy trying to keep our churches alive that we have forgotten why the churches are here?** Why does God choose to finish the work using human beings? Wouldn't it be much more efficient to use just the influence of the Holy Spirit or perhaps even angels to do the work? Couldn't angels appear as human beings and reach every part of the world in a short time? With our modern means of communication, all one needs to do is to do something unusual and the whole world hears about it overnight! If we were prepared to represent God correctly and willing even to die for the truth, how long would it take the Holy Spirit to get the message out through us?
8. What do you expect to see happen when the "latter rain" is finally poured out?

June 3, 1903: "There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; his hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. **Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time. The Lord calls upon every believer to consecrate himself wholly to his service. All are to work for him, according to their several ability.**"—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 5, 1906. par. 35

Is it possible that many new people will join God's true people during the latter rain? Will it be people who are hearing the message for the first time? Crises lead to more rapid changes. So why hasn't it happened yet? People are asking more relevant questions. Religion is becoming a big topic—even though most of the talk is negative!

9. Suppose your guardian angel could appear to you as a human being right now to discuss what you have accomplished toward the finishing of the gospel. What grade would you get? Would you be like the useless tree in the parable Jesus told—just cumbering the ground? (Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24) Or have you accomplished something significant for the gospel? Do you have a clear picture in your mind about what must be accomplished to finish the gospel?
10. We often—at least subconsciously—seem to say that the work will be finished when Seventh-day Adventists are known throughout the world. Is it essential that someone be a Seventh-day Adventist in order to be saved? Is that why we are focusing on "the 10/40 Window"? Roman Catholics believe that one must be a Roman Catholic. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints believe that one must join them to be saved. Other churches may not be so vocal but teach something similar. Does it really matter what church group you belong to? The thief on the cross never had a chance to join any church or do anything to prove his faith! Do we need to do more than just “accept Jesus Christ”? What is the purpose of the gifts that we have been given? Even though He was doing many wonderful things for them, the Jews killed Jesus because He would not accept their version of the “gospel”! He refused to be their kind of “messiah.” What would happen if Jesus came to our earth today in a way similar to His first coming? How many would accept Him? It is not the denomination that matters but our relationship with God. Ellen White suggested that at the end of time, some of our “lights” will go out (GW 378) and even some of our relatives will oppose us!

11. Who finally decides whether or not we will be saved? Is God judging human beings right now and making decisions about their eternal destiny? Some Christians believe that those decisions were predestined long ago! What is implied about the judgment in John 3:17-21? Is it really true that we are judged ultimately by our response to the truth?
12. Read 1 Peter 3:15. Have we taken seriously this call from Peter to be ready at any time to give a reason for the hope that is within us? Near the end of His ministry, Jesus clearly commissioned His disciples and His other followers to carry on the work which He had started. (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:45-47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8) Jesus left no doubt in His statements in these verses that His followers are expected to be witnesses for Him, to teach others, to baptize them, to instruct them concerning repentance and forgiveness, and to warn them about disobedience. There is work to do! He promised the blessing of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in reaching out “to the ends of the earth” to witness. Those who oppose us will look for any way possible to “demonize” and accuse us to others. The Devil has been doing that work very successfully for thousands of years! We must be ready to stand firm for the right no matter what happens or what people say.
13. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is currently working in more than 200 countries. There are only a few major countries in which we do not have an organized work: North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen—because in those countries, church organizations, especially Christian missionary organizations, are forbidden. But there are ways to witness even in those countries! Some Adventist friends worked for a while for USAID in Somalia. They were not allowed to speak openly about their religion. But they “threw away” English language gospel material every week right on the top of the trash in front of their house. None of those materials ever got to the dump because people would grab them out of the trash! There are Christian traditions that suggest that Thomas spread the gospel as far as India and perhaps even China. Later, however, the Muslims did everything they could to destroy any trace of Christianity. Why did God allow that to happen? Today, many of those countries are being blanketed by radio and TV messages about Christianity! There are a number of other smaller countries that also are not open to the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But those are not the only challenges for Adventists. There are some twenty thousand separate groups of people that have been identified worldwide. Many of those “unreached” groups are in what we call the 10/40 Window. Why have we been so unsuccessful in reaching those groups? Will the Gospel only be finished when we find ways to reach to the interior of China and to crack the barrier of Islam? How successful have we been at that?
14. Are there groups within our own society that we are not reaching? What about the young

people who believe that Christianity is no longer relevant to their lives? Are we reaching business communities, intellectual communities, working communities?

15. Seventh-day Adventists have taken the three angels' messages as their charter. Can we explain those messages in a way that is consistent with the teachings of all of Scripture? Can we correctly explain the meaning of *fear*, *fire*, *wrath*, and *forever* as used in Scripture? Who are the three angels?

The angels are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, proclaiming to the world a message of warning, and having a direct bearing upon the people living in the last days of this earth's history. No one hears the voice of **these angels, for they are a symbol to represent the people of God who are working in harmony with the universe of heaven. Men and women, enlightened by the Spirit of God, and sanctified through the truth, proclaim the three messages in their order.**—*Life Sketches*, p. 429.

16. Why is it so easy for the Adventist church to slip from missionary mode into maintenance mode? Look at the organization and activities of your church. Is it focused inwardly or is it focused outwardly? If we spend most of our time just trying to keep the wheels moving within the church, have we lost all our reason for existence?
17. With the promise of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself by our side exercising their gifts that they have promised to give us, is there any way, if we follow Their guidance and direction, that we could fail?
18. Have you experienced the Holy Spirit working "in your heart"? Have we been adequately trained for the work which God has called us to do? The disciples received intense training for at least two years. How much training do we need?
19. Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3; Ephesians 4:13-15. What was Paul trying to tell us in these verses? Compare 2 Peter 3:18? How do we "grow up" or "grow in grace," knowing Jesus Christ? Are your Sabbath school class and your church "growing" institutions? **When was the last time you spoke to someone who was not a Seventh-day Adventist about your faith?**
20. Read Matthew 10; 1 Corinthians 12:11-28; 1 Peter 3:15. In these verses there is a clear progression: 1) Disciples were chosen and commissioned; 2) He gave them the benefit of training and gifts to use in their work; and 3) He expected them to witness. The Seventh-day Adventist Church cannot witness. Only its members can witness.
21. Do you worry about what you would say if someone questioned you about your faith? Are you afraid to speak up for fear that you won't know what to say? Do we believe the promise of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit that He will give us the right words to speak? (Matthew 10:20; Mark 13:11) Or is the problem that we have not sufficiently filled our minds with the truths of Scripture and the writings of Ellen White?
22. What tools did Jesus give His disciples to help them in their work? What would you do if God gave you power over demons and the power to heal the sick, to cleanse lepers, to announce the kingdom of God, even to raise the dead? (Matthew 10:8) Will those who receive the latter rain be given those abilities?
23. What is included in the command to "share Jesus"? Can we share something that we do not have ourselves? We have been told repeatedly that false prophets even false Messiahs will

appear in this world. (Matthew 24:23,24) How can we make it clear that our witness and the Jesus we are sharing is not false? Have we been set free by knowing the truth? (John 8:31,32) **Do we know Jesus so well that we could never be deceived by a false picture of Him? A false messiah is coming! We know that for sure. Do we understand His character and what He expects of us?**

24. Many false doctrines have been taught and preached down through the centuries. What is the source of false doctrine? The Devil! Can we be certain that everything that we are teaching is correct doctrine? Or should we just do away with doctrines and tell everyone only to be like Jesus? What is the role of doctrine in the mission of the church? Remember that *doctrine* is just another word for *belief* or *faith*. Satan is going to make his deceptions look as much like the truth as he possibly can. If it were possible, the very elect would be deceived. (Matthew 24:24) Do we really know the “Jesus” we believe in?
25. Look at Paul’s approach to the Athenians and later to the Corinthians. (Acts 17:16-33; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5) What was different in those two approaches? Paul did well as an intellectual, “matching philosophy with philosophy and logic with logic,” etc. (AA 235.2) But when he went to Corinth, he determined to know Christ only. What does that mean? Did Paul think that his previous approach had been too intellectual? What was wrong with what he said in Athens? Are we taking the “logical” approach?
26. How can the church—your church—use modern technology in an effective way to spread the gospel? Has the Internet been invented specifically so that a small group of people can reach the entire world with their message?
27. What have we learned about God in this lesson and in this series of lessons? What does it say to us about God that He expects us to be His associates and assistants in carrying the gospel to the world? Could He fail in getting us to carry the gospel? Are we ready to “do our part”? God has promised every gift imaginable to help us. Are we taking advantage of those gifts? Do we see the working of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father in our lives on a day-by-day basis? How does God feel as He looks down and sees what you, your Sabbath school class, and your church are doing to finish the gospel? If every Christian were doing as much as you are doing, would the gospel be finished quickly? When was the last time you invited a non-Adventist to share with you or go with you to church? Sabbath school? To your home? That is our challenge!

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