

Witnessing and Evangelism

A Love Response

Lesson #10 for June 9, 2012

Scriptures: 1 John 4:18,19; Romans 3:19,20; John 15:13; Romans 5:6-8; John 6:28,29.

1. What motivates us? Is it obligation? Guilt? Or, shame? As a church we have focused on the Ten Commandments. We read passages like John 14:15 which say, "If you love me [*agape*], keep my commandments," perhaps forgetting that there are other commands which Jesus gave us. What about, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19,20; Luke 15:7)
2. Motivation is a very challenging issue. It is sometimes hard to even identify our own personal motivations. Consider these words from Ellen White:

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 97.3-98.0 (1900)

A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. [**If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints.**] Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul.—*MS 20*, 1897 (*MR # 970*); *Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897, par. 11 (3*ST* 400:2:1) - section in [. . .] omitted in *That I May Know Him* p. 120.4; 12*MR* 236.1, compare *COL* 159.3; *GC* 555.1

3. Can we learn to do what is right because it is right? What should be the correct motivation for witnessing? Did the disciples love Christ so much that they could not keep quiet about it? Could that be true of us in our day? How would you identify a true love response? (*DA* 339)
4. Long-term commitments are hard to maintain. They require a high degree of motivation. Perhaps, the best examples we could give in modern times are parents' commitment to the success of their children. Do moms and dads take care of, feed, clothe, house, and educate their children just because they think they have to? Or, because they truly love them?
5. Do we really love God? Or, are we just hoping to get eternal life from Him? How does it make you feel to know that God loved you first? (Romans 5:6-11) Or even that God loves us at all? Why does 1 John 4:18,19 tell us that love casts out fear? How many people are afraid of God? Would it be possible to love God without truly knowing Him? And how do we get to know Him personally? Is that the role of Scripture? **Do we read Scripture as a codebook of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned? Or, do we read Scripture as a revelation of the truth about God?** Do you love God enough to be motivated? Do we love God because He forgives us? What does it take to get us to act?
6. We know historically that—in western Europe particularly—the church dominated society for hundreds of years, claiming that they controlled access to God. They demanded submission even of kings if they wanted to win God's favor.
7. In more modern times, how often has the church tried to motivate its members by guilt? Have you ever felt guilty because you did not participate in some activity that the pastor pleaded for you to be a part of? Does that sort of appeal really motivate you?

8. But, what about Romans 3:19,20? In this passage *guilty* suggests accountability. Seventh-day Adventists have often suggested that the law is like a mirror. It points out our defects of character and behavior and encourages us to do better. But, when we fall short, do we begin to feel guilty? What do we mean when we say that "Christ has washed away our guilt"? In what sense are we "covered by the righteousness of Christ"? Do we "stand in Him perfect, guiltless, and forgiven"? What do we mean when we say that "our sins and guilt have been atoned for"?
9. Read James 2:10. How can it be true that breaking one commandment is equal to breaking all of them? Does this teach us something about the very nature of sin? If sin is lawlessness or rebelliousness and we choose to go our own way instead of God's way in any part of our lives, does that not make us rebels? We are all sinners. (Romans 3:1-23; Ecclesiastes 7:20) That is very clear from Scripture. Perhaps our greatest sin is our desire to exercise the selfishness in which we were born. Exercising selfishness makes us a part of Satan's kingdom because that is what motivated him.
10. So, what about motivation? Could one be motivated and still not do anything? If we loudly proclaim our commitment to church programs but never get involved, what does that suggest?
11. Read Romans 5:6-8. How does it make you feel to know that Christ died for us while we were still sinners? Surely, we would agree that the greatest love a person could show for another person is to die in their place if that would solve the problem. (John 15:13) But, were there other reasons why Christ died? What did the universe learn from the life and death of Christ here on this earth?

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto [69] Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.2) **This is the great controversy.**

12. Jesus Himself said that those who believe in Him, trust Him, have faith in Him will do what He did. (John 14:21) What was He talking about? What is the relationship between love and trust? Could we have love for God without a loving relationship? Could we actually be motivated to do what is right for wrong reasons? Would that make any difference? What is implied by the statement we made earlier that we should do right because it is right?
13. Many Christians down through the generations have fallen into the trap of legalism. They believe that they must do many things to earn their salvation. They are not comfortable in receiving something that they do not "deserve." Others, believing that they need to do all of those things, realize that they are not able to and become discouraged.
14. Read the following texts about legalism: Romans 10:1-4; 11:5,6; and Galatians 2:16. The Jews kept the law not because it was the right thing to do so much as they believed it was a way to earn salvation and prove their righteousness. Paul, having been a Pharisee of the Pharisees, stated categorically that we can only be put right with God through faith, never by observing or doing what the law requires. From his personal experience, had Paul learned the problems with the legalistic approach?
15. How should we relate to people who actually believe that they are living up to all of God's requirements? (See Matthew 19:20) They might even feel proud and arrogant! In his early days,

would Paul have agreed with the rich young ruler? They believed that if one was good, God would bless him and make him rich. So, if one was rich, that was a “proof” that he was good!

16. Read John 6:28,29. Jesus stated plainly that all that we are required to do is trust or believe in the One who was sent down to this earth. What does that mean?
17. The Bible makes it clear that we were once slaves to sin, but through Christ we have been released (Romans 6:6), set free (Galatians 5:1), delivered (1 Thessalonians 1:10), adopted (Romans 8:15), and born again (1 Peter 1:23). What is implied by these verses?
18. Is it an oxymoron to suggest that God sets us free to be slaves? Are we ever really free? Or, do we just move from being slaves to sin to being slaves to Jesus Christ? What is the difference between these two types of slavery? Do we become voluntary slaves? Read Philippians 1:1; James 1:1; and 2 Peter 1:1. Why did Paul, Timothy, James, and Peter refer to themselves as slaves? The love of God was burning so strongly in their hearts that they could not keep quiet!
19. What are the implications of being a slave to Someone who is absolutely committed to the freedom of His “slaves”? In what ways do we serve God?
20. Do you really believe that the Christian lifestyle is the best possible way to live? Do we voluntarily follow all the restrictions in the Adventist lifestyle? Would you continue to do all those things if there were never any reward beyond this life?
21. We know that the hallmark of Satan’s kingdom is selfishness. Have you ever wondered how Satan and his evil angels get along? We are all born in selfishness! The hallmark of God’s kingdom is love. It is the only way that free beings can live together in harmony for eternity. If everyone living in a certain place were absolutely committed to doing what is right because it is right, then there would never be a problem!
22. We are set free from sin so we can become slaves to doing what is right. (Romans 6:17,18) So, how does all of this relate to witnessing and evangelism? Do we have a long-term commitment to it? In order to maintain a long-term commitment to witnessing and evangelism, we must do several things: 1) We must become personally committed and connected to the program. 2) We must see where the program is going and have a personal vision of what our goals are. 3) We must continue to communicate with all those involved to keep the fellowship alive. 4) We must keep up the enthusiasm, and the best way to do that is to see results. And finally, 5) We must maintain our focus on what the program is supposed to accomplish without getting sidetracked. (See *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Friday, June 8)
23. The watchful Christian is a working Christian, seeking zealously to do all in his power for the advancement of the gospel. As love for his Redeemer increases, so also does love for his fellow men. He has severe trials, as had his Master; but he does not allow affliction to sour his temper or destroy his peace of mind. He knows that trial, if well borne, will refine and purify him, and bring him into closer fellowship with Christ. Those who are partakers of Christ’s sufferings will also be partakers of His consolation and at last sharers of His glory.— Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 261.
24. Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men [551] to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom they associate. Christian workers who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked.—Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 550.3-551.0
25. Are you motivated to witness and to share the gospel? Do you think that it is an obligation—something that you have to do? Do you feel guilty if you do not do it? In light of our discussion about slavery, who do you think are happier: The slaves of sin with their selfishness

or the slaves of righteousness with their love? Do we actually feel the love of Christ? Does that love motivate us? How does God treat His slaves? How does Satan treat his slaves? Do slaves make the best ambassadors? Do you feel like a slave when you go out to witness?

It's been called one of the most barbaric, "scientific" experiments ever conducted. In the thirteenth century, Frederick II, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, attempted to discover what language God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He theorized that if newborn babies were isolated from all spoken language, they would grow up to speak the "natural language" of humankind. And so the emperor prepared his experiment. He took a number of newborns from their parents and gave them to caregivers who were forbidden to speak to, cuddle, or play with the infants. The babies were even handled with special instruments to ensure they never experienced human touch.

But Frederick didn't get a chance either to prove or to disprove his theory about "natural language." Despite being regularly fed, bathed, and clothed, each one of the babies died before reaching the age of speech. Why? Modern scholars have attributed the babies' failure to thrive primarily to the absence of love, as expressed through human touch and voice.—Daniel G. Amen, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life* (New York: Three Rivers Press®, 1998), p. 73. (Quoted in *Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, page 121)

26. Why is love so essential to our existence? Does it have something to do with the One who created us? That same person is seeking an ongoing relationship with us. (Zephaniah 3:17; Luke 13:34; Revelation 3:20) Even the angels in heaven rejoice when one of us chooses a new relationship with God. (Luke 15:7,10)
27. The word used to describe love in the New Testament is *agape*.

Second-century Christian writer Tertullian recorded how Christian love attracted pagan attention: "But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. 'See,' they say, 'how they love one another.'"—*Apology*, chap. 39. Even the Emperor Julian, no friend to the Christian church, acknowledged in A.D. 362 that the "impious Galileans support not only their poor, but ours as well."—Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press®, 1996), p. 84. (Quoted in *Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, page 122)

28. Ellen White said: "Love can no more exist without revealing itself in outward acts than fire can be kept alive without fuel." —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 695.
29. In light of all that we have discussed, what things motivate you to be a Christian and to witness? Is it fear? Guilt? Shame? Or, do we truly serve God out of love? Are we like the Pharisees who loved human approval rather than God? (John 12:43)
30. Do we go about our evangelistic tasks so that we can win souls like notching another number on our belts? Or, are we trying to truly develop disciples for Jesus Christ?
31. "God might have committed the message of the gospel, and all the work of loving ministry, to the heavenly angels.... But in His infinite love He chose to make us co-workers with Himself."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 79.

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