

Witnessing and Evangelism ***Every Member Ministry***

Lesson #2 for April 14, 2012

Scriptures: Ephesians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 5:15-20; John 4:35-42; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8; Acts 14:27.

1. In our first lesson, we noted that this series is going to focus on evangelism and personal witnessing. Who is supposed to be doing the witnessing in your church? Is it the pastor who is paid to do that? Or, is it possible that every church member should be witnessing in one way or another? What would God say? How would He evaluate us?
2. If God sent an inspection team to check out our Sabbath School class or our church to see how well we are witnessing, what grade would we get? What is a personal witness? We discussed that last week. It would include the story of how at some time in your life you had felt called and made a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is your story. Only you can give that. And, it is pretty hard for anyone to argue with you about your personal witness.
3. If you do not feel you have a personal witness, would it be correct to say you need a closer relationship with God? In our postmodern society with a culture that is saturated with sound bites and television and other forms of media, is it possible to witness in any way like the apostles did? As we come down to the final moments of this earth's history, how are we supposed to be witnessing? What does God expect? Do those around you know that you are a Christian? A Seventh-day Adventist? Do they think you are strange? If the second coming of Jesus were dependent on your personal witnessing, when would it happen?
4. Read Ephesians 4:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:15-20. How can we let God speak through us? Are we friendly? Are we afraid to speak about God? Each of us is supposed to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ. Do we represent Him correctly? Do you consider yourself to be an ambassador for Him? How are you representing Him? Are you sure that you are representing Him correctly? Are you sure that God is counting on you to do something for Him?
5. What do we mean when we say "Christian ministry"? Is that a job just for the pastoral staff? Or, are all church members supposed to be involved in one type of ministry or another? Even us?
6. The Bible suggests that our pastors are supposed to be equipping us as church members for ministry. Is your pastor doing that? How would s/he do that? What could you do personally as a means of witnessing? Do you give thanks to God when good things happen to you? Are you proud to be a Christian? Or, embarrassed about it? People do not seem to have any trouble talking about their favorite hobby or celebrity, why not God? Does witnessing include speaking as well as action? Are we worried about what people will think about us? If you had some help in the form of materials, could you take a group through the Bible book by book in your home?
7. Read Acts 8:1-4. A time of terrible persecution hit the Christian church in Jerusalem. But, when they scattered to avoid the persecution, they carried the gospel with them. **Do we need persecution to get us moving?** If you knew that there was only a short time left before Jesus would return, would you find more time to witness? What would you do differently?
8. Jesus stated plainly that He did not come to be served but to serve. (Matthew 20:28; Luke 22:27) He also stated clearly that His followers were to be servants. (Matthew 23:11; 20:26,27) In what way(s) are we to be servants? (John 15:15) Does that include some form of personal witnessing in ministry to others? Why do you think there is so little active evangelism among North American Adventists in our day? Are we embarrassed about Jesus? Are we embarrassed about our church? Do our fellow employees suspect that we are SDA Christians? What do they think of the SDA Church? What do they think of you as a member of that church? And, by far the most of important question of all is, what do they think of God? Do they know our God?
9. In our secular society, is it hard to witness? Are we ready to serve? Or, are we still waiting to be

served? Do we still think that the pastoral staff are the ones who get paid to do witnessing? Read John 4:35-41. When the Samaritan woman realized that Jesus was at least a prophet, she raced to town. Despite her reputation, she witnessed to every person that would listen.

10. How should we go about putting in a good word for the Lord today? Could we do what the Samaritan woman did? What has happened to us about which we can witness? Do we know how to witness without turning people off? Are we more worried about our personal reputation or perhaps the reputation of our church than we are about the reputation of God? When judgment day comes at the third coming and the wicked are outside the city and the righteous are inside, if you saw a person standing out there that you could have witnessed to, how will you feel?
11. Read 2 Peter 3:9 and Matthew 9:36-38. What do these words mean to us? Who is the Lord of the harvest? What are we supposed to be asking Him for? Why is Jesus asking us to pray for more witnesses? How would that affect us personally? Could we do anything to make such a prayer come true? If we cannot do anything, what do we expect God to do? It should be clear that God does not want anyone to be lost. All of us are His children.
12. Think back over your experience during this past week. Were there times when you could have witnessed for your faith? How does God view those missed opportunities? Are we embarrassed about the fact that we are Christians?
13. In the more developed countries, Seventh-day Adventists tend to have 2 to 3 hours of exposure to the church or church activities once a week. Is that enough time to train us to be witnesses? Is the pastor(s) doing that in your church? God intends for churches to be communities with all members working together as closely as the parts of the human body. And the purpose of this united effort is to reach out to others and tell them about God. What kinds of witnessing programs is your church conducting? Are you involved? Read Ephesians 4:16. What happens to a human body if an important part is missing? What was the apostle Paul implying by this verse? The church will grow if all the members are alive and active. Is that true of your church?
14. Consider what the Thessalonian church did with the gospel when it reached them. (1 Thessalonians 1:5-8) What did Paul say to them? How did they speak about the gospel? Was it just among those who were already Christians? If not, how did they spread the news without upsetting the Jews? What about the Roman government?
15. What would happen if your entire church got involved in a program of witnessing to your community? What factors do you think are keeping church members from witnessing today? Isn't it fear about what people will think about us? How many of us find it easier to sit back and enjoy a fairly comfortable lifestyle and hope someone else will do the witnessing?
16. God is longing for our cooperation in spreading the gospel to others. How could we know that we are doing it the right way in God's eyes?
17. The Holy Spirit is the Member of the Godhead who seems to be most involved in assisting us in witnessing and evangelism. (Read Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9) Paul suggested that some are planters, some are waterers, and some are reapers. Of course, God would be delighted if you or I or any of us found an opportunity to witness to another church member or preferably to someone outside of the church and s/he became a true Christian. We should not expect immediate results. Won't God open doors for us to witness? Are we worried about who will get the credit?
18. Surely, there is sufficient evidence in Scripture to convince us that God loves us. (John 3:16) Shouldn't the fact that Jesus came and lived and died for our benefit and also the fact that God loves each one of us be sufficient motivating factors to get us out there?
19. God is not expecting us to operate independently. Read Matthew 17:14-21. God is waiting to do His share if we do ours. Whatever form of witnessing or evangelism in which we become involved, we must recognize that we are being fellow workers with God. Are we prepared for that?

What does that imply? Jesus seemed to live His life guided by God almost minute by minute? Did He get that guidance during the times when He was by Himself praying during the night?

20. If we are witnessing, do we bring our stories back to the group we meet with and explain what happened? Why is reporting our experiences with God an important part of witnessing?
21. Why did Paul and Barnabas report to the church at Antioch and later to the church in Jerusalem? Probably, first of all, because those churches wanted to hear what happened. And second, of course, Paul had opened up the work in those churches.
22. Read Acts 14:27 and 15:4. Paul and Barnabas had returned from the first major effort to evangelize Gentiles. Do you think the church in Antioch was anxious to hear what the results were? Were they wondering if the gospel had been accepted by Gentiles? If God has done something remarkable for us in a given week, shouldn't we be willing to tell about it so that others can benefit from the story and praise God?
23. Read Mark 6:30. Jesus wanted to hear what the disciples had done when they went out on their first missionary tour of Galilee. The disciples were excited about what had been accomplished. (Compare Luke 10:17-20)
24. When other church members hear what we are doing, they are much more likely to try to witness also. Thus, reporting back to the church is an essential part of witnessing. It also stirs up excitement among church members and makes them want to do something as well. (See Acts 21:19,20)
25. Have you considered what aspects of witnessing or evangelism you might become involved with in your church? Could you make a list of outreach activities that you would be willing to do? Which of those activities do you feel most capable of doing? Remember that witnessing takes time and effort. No doubt, many of us feel that our lives and our days are already too full with cares and responsibilities.
26. Which do we consider more important in the overall scheme of things: 1) The necessity of providing for ourselves and our families? Or, 2) The work of finishing the gospel?
27. Would you dare to actually volunteer to assist in some evangelistic outreach activities in which your church might already be involved? Could you suggest some new ideas that have not been tried yet in your church? Notice these words from Ellen White:

The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 352.

28. If your church does not seem to be doing any witnessing or outreach activities, what could you do to get them started? Paul thought that the gospel was so important to him that he could not keep quiet about it. Would that describe you also? Is it possible that the reason we are not witnessing is that we do not have a good relationship with Jesus Christ? Are our cares and worries about everyday life drowning out our desire to do something for God?
29. Could you find another person—or several other people—to work together with to make it easier to witness? Do you believe that God has given you spiritual gifts and talents that could be used for spreading the gospel? If so, what is your responsibility for those talents?
30. Every Christian has been called twice. Not only has s/he been called to be a child of God, but also each of us has been called to be a witness for Him.
31. The Christian church began in a very communal kind of way. Members came together, talked, ate together, and planned. In our individualistic society with very nuclear families, this may seem difficult. But, if we look at business and society, and especially at sports with which we are familiar, teamwork is almost always a more successful way to accomplish something than just doing it individually. What can we learn from this teamwork with others?

32. What is it that God actually wants us to say to others? Read 2 Corinthians 5:15-20. God wants us to reach out to others, explaining to them that God wants to be their Friend. We could actually become agents of hope and ambassadors of reconciliation. Wouldn't that be considered good news by almost everybody if they understood it? For what are we waiting?

33. Someday, hopefully soon, the final events of this earth's history will take place. Persecution, maybe even torture, ridicule, perhaps imprisonment will be used by Satan to try to prevent us from witnessing. If we are not witnessing now, how difficult will it be for us to witness then?

34. Ellen White said:

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming" (MS 173, Los Angeles, California, September 15, 1902). *SDA Bible Commentary* Vol. 4, p. 1161.6; LDE 219; *Maranatha* 200.2; FLB 287.7; OFC 83.6, 328.2; 1MR 249.2-250.0

35. Read Ephesians 4:11-16 and Hebrews 5:11-6:3. Are we still spiritual children tossed to and fro? How do we get our feet planted firmly on the gospel so that not even Satan himself can stop us from witnessing?

36. What did Paul and Barnabas do and say that convinced pagans to become Christians? How did they convince former Jews? Often, within a very short period of time, they were chased out of the cities where they were working. Even in that short time, they apparently were so convincing that people were ready to give their lives for the gospel. How did they do that?

37. Is there any evidence in Scripture that the church at Antioch sent financial support to Paul and Barnabas during their trip or even later to Paul and Silas on subsequent trips? Paul reported that he worked, sometimes all night long, so that he could preach all day. God is probably not asking many of us to do that. But, where is our zeal?

38. Do we have to travel to faraway places in order to have witnessing stories to tell? Couldn't we see the working of God right in our own communities?

39. You may not feel that your pastor has done an adequate job in training you for evangelism. But, hasn't God called you to do at least personal witnessing? Have you volunteered in church or to the pastor saying that you would be willing to do something? Do you clearly know exactly what your church is doing in terms of evangelism and witnessing? No doubt, there are planting, watering, and harvesting opportunities in your community. Can you identify them? What about such opportunities in your personal life? Hasn't God called you to become an active witness?

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