

## ***Witnessing and Evangelism***

### ***Evangelism and Witnessing as a Lifestyle***

Lesson #4 for April 28, 2012

Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 3:2-3; Matthew 9:36-38; 1 Corinthians 9:20-22; Mark 5:1-19; John 17:11-19.

1. How well are we doing at witnessing by our lifestyle and the way we live?
2. It should be obvious to every thinking Christian that the second coming of Christ has been long delayed. (1 John 2:18; Revelation 7:1-3) In 1868, Ellen White said that the second coming had already been long delayed. (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 194 (1868); *Ev* 694.2) If it is true that the three main pillars of our faith are Bible study, prayer, and witnessing—as has been repeatedly suggested—what do we need to do? Are we being effective in all these areas? Do all of these aspects go along together in those who have a real, live relationship with God? Or, are we more defective in witnessing? More defective in Bible study? Or, more defective in prayer?
3. If we actually lived Christlike lives, how long would it be before we would be in heaven? How long before people would notice?
4. For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.—*Manuscript 4*, 1883. (*Evangelism* 696.2; compare *Christian Service* 8.1)
5. What gospel are we preaching? What is the gospel? The gospel—the good news—is always the truth about God. The good news is not about us. We are all sinners. The good news is about God. By watching us in our day-by-day activities, do people suspect that we are Christians? Why? The early Christians were set apart and could be identified by the fact that they loved each other. (John 13:34,35; Acts 4:13) What about us? Are we truly more loving than our secular neighbors? (*DA* 142)
6. Many years ago, John Donne wrote, “No man is an island.” So, how are we influencing other people around us on a day-by-day basis? Are we unconsciously influencing them for the right? Or, should we make conscious efforts to correctly represent our God and our church? Do we always “do what is right because it is right”? Edgar A. Guest wrote:

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;  
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.  
The eye is a better pupil, more willing than the ear;  
Fine counsel is confusing, but example is always clear,  
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,  
For to see a good put in action is what everybody needs.
7. What was it that set the disciples and the early Christians apart from those around them? Pharisees, Roman soldiers, peasants, and fishermen could be identified by their dress and their behavior. What kind of dress and behavior identified the followers of Christ? Is it really true—as apparently implied by Jesus' statement—that only Christians are truly loving toward those around them? Did they demonstrate God's love so clearly that everyone around them could see it and recognize that they were different from others? By contrast, why does “religion” turn people off?
8. Do Christians need to *act* lovingly? Or, do they need to *be* loving? Is it possible to put on a loving face? Or, would it be true that if we act lovingly long enough, we will, in time, become loving? An elderly lady who went through the Bible with friends looking for the picture of God once said, “I have always been taught to ‘love’ God, but now I like Him!”
9. How does God expect us to show love to people not of our faith? In what appropriate ways are we to associate with them? When Paul said that the church members in Corinth were like a

letter written on their hearts, (2 Corinthians 3:2,3) what was he implying? "Smile, parents; smile, teachers. If your heart is sad, let not your face reveal the fact." (CG 148.1) God loves you.

10. Even at a young age, children learn to read between the lines. They can detect when one's speech and words do not agree with one's behavior. As we grow older, this skill becomes even more fine-tuned. Is our genuine spirituality apparent to those with whom we associate daily?
11. How are we affected by observing people whose actions do not match their claims? How are we affected by those whose actions and claims clearly do match? How does the presence of the hypocritical Christian affect the picture secular people have of the entire church?
12. To whom should we attempt to witness? Every day, we have casual, perhaps even fleeting, contact with many people. We pass by them on the street, maybe we meet them in the cafeteria or restaurant, we wait with them in lines. Sometimes, we even smile or wave. Is it possible to influence them in some way even in those fleeting moments?
13. As a family we always pray before eating, even in public places. Not long ago, we had two young people come up to us after we had prayed in a public restaurant to say thank you for being a good witness! In another restaurant as we were praying, an employee who originally came from Belarus in Russia came up to us as we were praying. That man had worked in that busy restaurant for years. He stated that although he had seen people praying before eating in movies and heard about it from books, etc. we were the first ones he had ever seen actually doing it. Of course, we have no idea how either of these brief contacts may have affected the people involved. But, it was clear to us that people notice. Is our witness genuine and true?
14. Read Matthew 9:36-38 and Luke 10:2. What was Jesus implying by His words? Does God have workers waiting to work who are not at work because we have not asked for their help? Are we those workers? Do we have to be working in the field before we can pray for God to send more workers into the field? Surely, it would not be appropriate for us to ask God to send other workers into the field so that we would be able to sit and watch them work!
15. There is no question about the fact that we live in a world that is hurting. People are troubled and distressed. Are we reaching out to them? In Jesus' day, those who were supposed to be the spiritual guardians and guides were clearly not doing their job. What about us? Are we more like Pharisees, or more like Jesus? If we are doing a poor job of representing God correctly, will others be attracted to Him? Might they then become workers as well?
16. There is so much work to be done and so many people that need to be witnessed to that, surely, no one would suggest that all the work should be done by the pastoral staff or perhaps by a limited number of church members. Every one of us needs to be witnessing.
17. Christians have sometimes taught that every person has a need for God. They may not recognize it. They may deny it. But, they feel some kind of need. Are there people around us watching us because they really want to know what Christianity is like? Do they want to see Jesus while they are looking at us? Are they getting a clear picture? Are we exercising true compassion as Jesus did? How do we find out what people really think are their needs?
18. There is an old native American proverb that says that one should not criticize a person until after walking in his moccasins for two weeks. It is very difficult for selfish human beings to actually put ourselves in the position of others and understand their problems and their needs from their perspective. But, that is exactly what Jesus wants us to do. Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-22. Did some of the church members think Paul was being hypocritical by acting like a Jew when he was among Jews and then acting like a Gentile when he was among Gentiles? Jesus came down and lived among us to be an Example. Isn't that the ultimate Example of trying to walk in someone else's moccasins.
19. Do we have examples in the Bible of Paul trying to be all things to all people so that by all means he might win some? Read Galatians 2:11-14. Was Paul's dealing with Peter a good example? Read *Acts of the Apostles* 397-405. Paul actually compromised with church leadership more than he should have. Are there times when we could live too much like a Gentile among the

Gentiles? Or, too much like a Jew among the Jews? In Paul's case, he ended up in prison.

20. When Jesus was here on this earth, He spoke to the woman at Jacob's well about water. When dealing with farmers, He spoke about sowing seeds, about the harvest, and about the weather. To fisherman, He spoke about fish, nets, and storms. Again and again, Jesus spoke about common things with which everyone was familiar and drew out lessons that were so plain and clear that everyone understood. Some of them did not like it, but they got the message. Some of them even became fishers of men. Could we do that? Do we understand others' lives?
21. Before people will listen to us, they need to feel loved, understood, and accepted? What is the role of hospitality in Christianity? Do our neighbors and our fellow associates and fellow workers feel comfortable in coming to us and talking about issues? Do they feel comfortable in listening to what we might have to say? Do they value our advice because of what they see in our lives?
22. Read Mark 5:1-19. That formerly demon-possessed Gentile was sent forth as the first missionary to Gentiles! What did Jesus tell him to do? He did not tell him to go back and preach the gospel to the town or the cities around his area. That man hardly knew anything about the gospel. Jesus told the man to go to his home and tell what the Lord had done for him. The news of his story spread like wildfire throughout the territory. Many, many people already knew about his demon possession. This created an immediate interest in his story. All he had to do to stir up an interest in Jesus was to tell a brief account of what had happened to him. When Jesus came back to that area a few months later, thousands of people flocked out and spent three days in the wilderness just to hear what Jesus had to say! (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10)
23. There was a remarkable response to this former demoniac Gentile telling his story. Compare the response to Jesus when He came to this earth. (John 1:11) Why the difference?
24. Some very interesting studies have been done among Seventh-day Adventists. In general, when someone first becomes a Seventh-day Adventist, he tends to speak to his former friends about his newfound faith. But, within seven years, almost all Seventh-day Adventists have restricted their circle of friends to people who are already Adventists. Why is that? Have we become like the Pharisees? How can we develop more non-Adventist friends?
25. Read Luke 14:12-14. Do you know anyone who is actually doing this? Would it be safe to invite people off the street into your home? So, how should we practice hospitality? Should we focus on our friends first? If we really had the love of Christ in our hearts, would reaching out to others become natural? Is Jesus actually expecting us to act in our circumstances in some ways similar to the way He acted in His circumstances?
26. There are a few people out there honestly reaching out and looking for help. They might ask us what they can do to become a Christian. But, it is much more commonly the truth that we need to reach out to people to contact them where they are.
27. Is our church more like a fortress where we all live safely inside and only occasionally send out a team on a campaign or mission to bring others in? How many meaningful relationships do we personally have with non-Adventists? Read Jesus' prayer in John 17:11-19. What was He asking the Father to help us do? Compare Colossians 4:2-6.
28. In light of what is going on in the world around us, Christians and Seventh-day Adventists have become very much afraid of being sucked into the patterns of behavior that are characterizing our world. As you look around you, do you see the world becoming more like the church? Or, the church becoming more like the world? Are we going forth like sheep among wolves? Are we trying to look and act like the "wolves" around us?
29. Notice specifically what Jesus prayed for in John 17. We are to be in the world but not of the world. We are not yet to be taken out of the world. We are to be sent into the world. Is that safe? Is our Christianity so firmly established that we cannot be shaken? (Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 5:11-6:3; 4BC 1161.6) Are we so busy competing in the workplace—working so hard and such long hours to earn the money that we think we need—that we do not have time to

witness? Is our biggest challenge in witnessing that we are too busy trying to earn more money so we can be more like the world? How many of us would be willing even to take less salary if it would give us an opportunity to witness? We have developed many instruments, such as pamphlets, leaflets, and books, that we sometimes give out asking the world to come to us. Jesus told us instead to go to them. On a practical level, how should we do that? Should we be going to bars and restaurants, maybe even dances? Are those appropriate places to witness? Where should we witness? Should we go to the public areas of the world and stand and shout our message?

30. So, what have we learned so far from this lesson? What are we personally doing to reach out to others not of our faith? For those of us who believe in the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation, how well are we reaching out even to other Seventh-day Adventists to share our beliefs with them? Is church one day a week—or even a half day a week—enough? Or, does our Christianity affect every part of our lives?
31. Too often the influence of the sermon preached from the pulpit is counteracted by the sermon preached in the lives of those who claim to be advocates of truth.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol 9, p. 21.
32. How effectively is your church witnessing? Do we have stories to tell about what God has done for us personally? If not, why not? Who receives the greatest blessing when we practice our Christianity and reach out in love to serve a neighbor or friend? Is it the neighbor or friend, or is it us? Have you ever been touched by the kindnesses of a friend? How did that affect you?
33. In his writings, Paul repeatedly called himself a slave. Why did he do that? Paul was so caught up in the gospel—his soul was burning so intensely—that he could not keep quiet about his faith despite whatever dangers were around him. Wherever he went, he was a witness for the truth. Could the same be said about us?
34. “Talk doesn’t cook rice,” states one Chinese proverb. “A promise is a cloud; fulfillment is rain,” according to an Arabian proverb. The Italians wisely observe that “between saying and doing many a pair of shoes is worn out.” “When deeds speak, words are nothing,” says an African proverb. And the wisest man who ever lived asserted, “Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool” (*Prov. 19:1, NKJV*). (*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 49)
35. We all recognize it, but why is it true that “actions speak louder than words”?
36. Among your acquaintances, your fellow church members, even your friends, do you have people you regard as true and faithful Christians and also people you regard as hypocrites? How do those different groups of people impact you personally? Which ones do you like to be around?
37. Paul had a fairly simple approach to spreading the gospel in new cities. First of all, he would go to the Jewish synagogue. He would behave as a good, faithful Jew. When given an opportunity to speak, he would speak about Christianity. Usually, within a relatively short period of time, he would be thrown out of the synagogue. Then, he would take his message to the Gentiles. Should we follow a similar pattern of conduct? Who are the “Jews” today? Who are the “Gentiles” in our day? How would that work out in modern society? Are we giving a faithful and true witness to anyone at all: neighbor, friend, even family member? If not, when will we start? Do we really want Jesus to come back?

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Last Modified: April 4, 2012

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