

Witnessing and Evangelism

Personal Evangelism and Witnessing

Lesson #6 for May 12, 2012

Scriptures: Acts 4:13-14; John 1:37-50; Psalms 139; 1 Peter 3:1-15; John 4:37-38.

1. This lesson is about how we might witness personally and how that witness might affect the church as a whole. What grade would you give yourself on witnessing? Your church?
2. How does your personal witness affect the witness of your church? Are you witnessing at all? If you really want to get to know something, you need to try teaching it! This requires a commitment. You have to really care about the cause.
3. During the last year, how many people have you invited to attend a church service, a Sabbath school class, or some other church function? Do they think you are strange for going to church on Saturday? Does your church hold meetings that you feel comfortable inviting non-Adventists to attend? If not, why not? What would you do if one of your Sunday-keeping friends invited you to his church? Is there something that takes place that makes you feel uncomfortable doing so? How many non-Adventist friends do you have that you would feel comfortable inviting to an Adventist service? Have you ever done so? It may seem fairly easy to invite a homeless person or even someone from a lower socioeconomic level to church. But, how do we invite prominent citizens who will claim that they are always occupied and have something else going on? What if our Sabbath school classes are so boring that even the Adventist members do not all come?
4. Why is it that the personal witness or invitation of a friend seems to be the most powerful incentive for someone to attend such a service? Eighty-three percent of new converts considered the influence of a friend or family member as being very significant in their conversion. Sixty-four percent of those who attended a public evangelistic series did so at the invitation of a close friend. How many of us have a variety of non-Adventist friends? It takes a while to develop such friends. What would it take to get you to invite a non-Adventist friend to some church function? You might get a CD or DVD of some pastor or teacher that you think is good and offer to loan it to him/her to listen to if it is on a subject that you think s/he might be interested. When your non-Adventist friends take a look at you, do they see anything that attracts them? Matthew 5:16 suggests that they should be able to look at us and give thanks to God.
5. There are those who say that the best measure of our Christianity is the measure of how many others we have brought into the church. Is that fair? Is there a direct parallel between our own personal relationship with Jesus Christ and our efforts and success at attracting others? What factors are most important in our efforts at witnessing? Does your personal lifestyle as seen by your non-Adventist friends seem attractive to them? In light of what they know about you, would you dare to invite them to your church? Or even pretend that you are a Christian?
6. Is it possible for people to be attracted to your church through you if you do not care about them? When Jesus looked at the crowds, He had compassion on them. (Matthew 9:36) Was He able to see each individual case and know what his/her individual problems and needs were? How many non-Adventist friends do you associate with that you would feel comfortable inviting to church?
7. Read *Evangelism* 43.1. How would you feel if someone in the end says to you that s/he is lost because you did not speak to him/her? An interesting question to ask people is: What

do you think about God? A lot of people will talk about God when they will not give you a moment of their time to talk about religion.

8. What factors keep you from attempting to witness to non-Adventist friends? Have you ever been responsible—at least partially—for the conversion and baptism of another person? If not, why not? If a person is willing, is God able to use that person to serve as a witness no matter what his/her limitations may be? There is a story told about an elderly blind man who would go to peoples' doors and say: "I have a book here called *The Great Controversy*. Would you be willing to take a few minutes and read to me from this book?" Then he would ask questions. As a result, he led many people to the truth. Could we do as much? Did he have an unfair advantage that we do not have? Or, do we have advantages that he did not? What advantages might we have?
9. Even Moses thought that he was not qualified to be the leader of God's people when God called him to lead His people out of Egypt. (Exodus 3:11; 4:10) Didn't God know in advance how successful Moses would be? Is that why He called him? Are we willing to let God use us as He wishes? Are we willing to admit that God might know us better than we know ourselves?
10. Read Psalm 139. How did David know that God was omniscient? Are these the exact words that God revealed to him? Did David try to test God in any way? How do you explain Psalm 139:19-22? Does that seem out of place in this Psalm? Are Psalm 139:23,24 a response to what he said in Psalm 139:19-22? Could we be as honest as David was in asking the Lord to examine us and to lead us to do what He wants us to do?
11. How important is it that your words and your actions give the same message? You may not recognize that people are watching you. And even if at the present time they show no interest in your profession of Christianity, they will be watching to see if your actions match your profession. Are we afraid that we might say something wrong? How many of our non-Adventist friends even know what Adventists believe? What do we do if someone asks us a question that we cannot answer? Are we afraid that we might be thought strange? (*Fundamentals of Christian Education* 289.1) Why are people of the world so ignorant of biblical matters? How often do people lose interest in what we say because we use Christian clichés? Would Jesus tell us not to witness? (See *Amazing Grace* 118.6)
12. Look at 1 Peter 3:15,16 (*GNB*): "Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, ¹⁶but do it with gentleness and respect." How difficult is it to give back blessings to those who curse us? Do we always answer even our spouses with kindness and respect? In our day, how difficult is it to always do what is right because it is right?
13. Try to imagine what it would have been like for a woman in Paul's day to come out of paganism and become a Christian. (1 Corinthians 7:12-16) How do you suppose her husband might have reacted? Assuming that she loved him, how might she try to win him to the truth? Might she be tempted to argue with him about his beliefs and practices? Just by living quiet Christian lives, how often do you think such women actually won their husbands to the truth?
14. You may not think that you are witnessing or that you are qualified to witness, but the truth is that you are witnessing every day to those around you. What kind of witness are you giving? Is your behavior matching your profession?
15. Each Seventh-day Adventist church has a collective witness. That collective witness is

made up of all the individual witnesses given by its members. How is the collective witness of the church affected by the presence of one or two hypocrites?

16. Read John 4:37,38. How did the Samaritan woman witness? (John 4) She said, "Come and see." (We might ask, "Would you be interested in listening to this CD?") In the area of witnessing, we are not all gifted with the same skills. Some of us may be good at sowing seeds. We may drop hints or make suggestions to our non-Adventist friends. Others are skilled at nurturing and watering that seed. They can ask and answer questions with dignity and respect. Others may be able to convince those who have been thinking about Christianity for some time to actually make a commitment and join the church. Each skill is needed in the church. No one should feel that his/her abilities or skills are useless.
17. How effective was the witness of the Samaritan woman? Did she give a lengthy explanation about the gospel? What did she say to her neighbors and friends? She only said, "Come and see! Could he be the Messiah?" (John 4:29, *GNB*) In response to her brief testimony, Jesus was able to win many people from that village.
18. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11,12. God has gifted each one of us with certain skills. We may not even be aware of some of our skills. Sometimes, we may need our friends to tell us what our gifts are. Those gifts have been given to us for the purpose of spreading the gospel. Many of us do not even know what our gifts are!
19. How can we best recognize when a seed is lying in the soil ready to sprout? How can we patiently fertilize and water that seed? Maybe you cannot give a sermon, but you can cook an excellent meal. What about contributing to a vegetarian cooking school?
20. When you finally get up the courage to speak to someone about his or her beliefs, does it make it easier for you to do so again on another occasion?
21. What is our responsibility for nurturing, cultivating, and watering those who have recently become members of the church? As soon as they become members, are our responsibilities over? When people first join the church, that is an excellent time to invite them to join us and our friends in a trip through the Bible book by book.
22. While we may be reluctant to speak of spiritual things to those we work with or come in contact with on a day-by-day basis, we must always remember that the Holy Spirit is the One who is in charge of the work. How should we pray for guidance to know when to speak and what words to say? How does the Holy Spirit guide in this work? Does He give us impressions about what we should say or do at any given moment? What role do Bible study and prayer play in preparation for that work? Is it primarily through Bible study that the Holy Spirit speaks to us?
23. When we are reluctant to speak a word on behalf of God and Christianity, is it because we really do not have anything significant to say? Or, is it more likely that we are afraid of what people might think of us? Do we need to daily die to self, surrendering our will to God, before we can become effective witnesses?

To all who are working with Christ I would say, Wherever you can gain access to the people by the fireside, improve your opportunity. Take your Bible, and open before them its great truths. **Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart.** By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by

the most able discourse. The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches.—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 193.2

24. Why do you think that is true? How do we learn how to do that? How often do people turn away when we merely present to them biblical doctrines or teachings? How do we reach out to them in Christian love in a way that makes them want to respond to the truth?

The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. **The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.**

The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.—Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, pages 415, 416.

25. Can we truly manifest God's glory in our lives? (Matthew 5:16) What does that look like in a human life? How do we go about inviting people to come to a church service? How do we explain to them why we behave the way we do? Would it be appropriate at times for us to simply say, "Come and see" as the woman of Samaria did (John 4:29); and as Jesus did (John 1:39); and as Philip did (John 1:46)? But, we cannot invite people to come and see unless there is something to see! Would you dare to invite someone to attend your Sabbath school class? What about your church service?
26. Have you ever been asked about your beliefs, your church, or even your God by someone who was not a Christian? How did you respond? Consider the experience of Peter and John shortly after the resurrection and Pentecost when they were brought before the Sanhedrin after healing the man who was born crippled. (Acts 4:13,14) Several things happened in rapid succession. 1) Despite the potential threat to their lives, Peter and John spoke very boldly. 2) The Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the scribes were amazed to see that those men with no formal schooling could speak so clearly and convincingly of the truth. 3) They concluded that the answer was, "They had been with Jesus." Have we been with Jesus?
27. When Moses came down from the mountain with his face shining so brightly that the people could not look at him, it was clear that he had been with God. Could we ever be so bold? What might the response be in our day? We may not need to say anything more than, "Come and see."
28. Those of us who believe in the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation have something more to reveal—even to other church members—about God and the real meaning of the conflict between God and Satan over the character and government of God. Are we willing to invite them to "come and see"?

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