

## ***Witnessing and Evangelism***

### ***Corporate Evangelism and Witnessing***

Lesson #7 for May 19, 2012

Scriptures: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Psalm 37; Philippians 1:5-18; Ephesians 4:15,16; Colossians 1:28,29.

1. Is it God's plan that church members work together to become an effective team for evangelism and witnessing? There are many examples in the New Testament and even among the disciples of Jesus in which that was the plan. But, who should be the leader? And, what part did the other members of the group play? (DA 350)
2. Does your church have recognized leaders who are actually witnessing? Is there any kind of active witnessing program going on? Are there people giving Bible studies on an individual basis? Are there groups working together in various forms of witnessing? Do you think you could be a part of such a team?
3. Read Acts 13:13,50; 14:1. Paul and Barnabas seemed to be a very effective team on their first missionary journey together. We do not know exactly how they worked together. But, they managed to start a number of new churches in Gentile areas. It does seem quite clear that Paul did most of the talking. Paul went to synagogues. Where should we go? One Adventist we know teaches a Sunday school class! Think of all the effort to which we go to earn a living. To how much effort do we go to prepare ourselves and others for eternity?
4. What happened when they prepared to go out on their second missionary journey? Barnabas wanted to take John Mark; Paul said, "Nothing doing!" As a result, the two split, and Paul took Silas with him. We do not know much about what Barnabas did with John Mark, but they went off in a different direction from that which Paul went.
5. Does God ever allow misunderstandings or conflicts between evangelistic leaders to break up teams so that there are more teams doing work in a greater number of areas?
6. Who are the evangelistic team leaders in your church? Are they clearly identified? Do they make regular reports to the church members, telling what progress is being made?
7. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. It is a well-known principle that two or three working together are much more effective than one working by himself. So, how should those small teams be formed for witnessing? Do we wait for the church to show the way? What if we do not see any evidence that the church on the local level is doing any evangelism? Should we ask the pastor? Should we move forward on our own, looking for others with whom we can work? Why aren't there more small teams scattered around the world doing evangelistic things? Is it that church members do not care about spreading the gospel? Or, is it that they are not sure what to do? Are they given any guidance?
8. Read Acts 16:14,15,31,33,34. Earlier in this chapter, Paul welcomed Timothy to his team. Help was given by Lydia and Silas. Even the jailer welcomed Paul and Silas into his home, feeding them and taking care of them. This shows us that there are many things that individuals can do as a part of an evangelistic team. Not everyone is expected to lead out in a Bible study or stand up and preach. So, what role would you feel most comfortable playing? Has anyone from your church approached you and asked you what role you might be willing to play? Before we can work together as a team, we must understand our different gifts, our different roles, and how we can effectively work together.
9. *The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* states that one of the chief concerns of the

church board is the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases. Is it clear in your church that the church board is focusing on that as one of its main projects? What kind of training programs are being sponsored to prepare people to witness?

10. First Corinthians 12-14 is a story of Paul's dealing with the problems of speaking in tongues in the Corinthian church. He concluded by stating in 1 Corinthians 14:39,40 that everything should be done decently and in order. When thinking in terms of evangelism, that means we should begin by setting our goals, talking about strategies, and then, making a definite plan. As many people as possible should be involved in doing this at each step. A very important part of a successful program is to get "goal ownership" by a number of people. The greater the number of people who believe that the success of the program depends at least partly on them, the more likely the program is to move forward. One church organized a variety of clubs focused on different activities, for example, cycling, to involve non-Adventists.
11. Read Psalm 37. There are many very encouraging promises in this chapter. If we are intent upon doing God's will and spreading the gospel and if we pray and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us, God will bless us in what we do.
12. Read Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:12-16. These verses give three different accounts of how Jesus chose His disciples. Jesus had spent the whole night prior to that in prayer, talking to His Father about plans. Then, Jesus spent some time with them, going around through the villages of Galilee spreading the gospel. Not too long thereafter, He sent them out two-by-two. (See Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:1) How many church squabbles would cease to exist if the church members had a common goal of evangelism or witnessing? How did Jesus end up with a betrayer in His core group? (2SP 202,203)
13. Read Philippians 1:5-18. In what way were the Philippians helping Paul? By reading between the lines in his letter, it seems that they made a regular practice of financially supporting Paul. We do not know if the Philippian church was particularly well-off financially compared with the other churches. Paul's words suggest that they were also more effective in their evangelism.
14. How do you understand Philippians 1:15? Paul managed to witness even while he was in prison. In what sense could someone preach the gospel because they were jealous and quarrelsome? Still, Paul was happy that the gospel was being preached!
15. For the members of the teams who are choosing to go out to witness, how important is it to be humble?
16. One of the major challenges in the church in the early days was conflict over Jewish tradition between the formerly-Jewish believers and the formerly-pagan or Greek believers. As a result, there are many, many texts in the New Testament that talk about getting along in the church. (See especially Acts 15) Church members were expected to love one another, (John 15:12) forgive one another, (Ephesians 4:32) even pray for one another. (James 5:16)
17. And, what is the goal of all that togetherness? Read Ephesians 4:9-16. (Contrast Matthew 18:1-4) The most important thing about a child is his capacity to grow. The church will never stand firm until its members grow up and are mature and no longer are tossed about by every wind of doctrine/teaching. The goal is to have a mature church. And, that mature church will find itself working together just as different parts of the body work together to accomplish goals. This is certainly the ideal for the Christian church in every location. We should take new church members through the Bible book-by-book asking what it says

about God.

18. Read Acts 1:12-14. What happened in the upper room between day 40 and day 50 after the resurrection? One hundred twenty people gathered together, forgave each other, prayed together, received the special blessing of the Holy Spirit, and then, went out on Pentecost morning to carry the gospel to the world. Three thousand people were baptized in one day. Could one of our modern Seventh-day Adventist churches have such an experience? What would be the result?
19. Look back over the last year or so in your church. What have been the major issues that the church has talked about? Sometimes, those issues involve what kind of music should be played, what form the church service should take, even who should be leaders! If all of us were focused on evangelism, how many of those internal issues would fade away?
20. It has been suggested that “Christianity that does not begin with the individual does not begin, but Christianity that ends with the individual ends.”
21. Even if we have put together a team that is effective in evangelism, we must have a church which is prepared to receive the new converts. More than that, the new converts must feel welcome, and they must be nurtured. It is impossible for any one individual to do all of that. So, the church must have a specific plan for nurturing new members. (Colossians 1:28,29)
22. Isn't working for the maturity of new converts just as important as working to get them to accept Christ and join His church? If we do not understand this issue, the church will never grow up, and the gospel will never be finished. God is waiting for us. (2 Peter 3:12; Ev 695)
23. What programs in your church are ideal for new members to join? Many studies have been done about the problem of new converts coming into the church, staying for a relatively short period of time, and then, leaving through the proverbial “back door.” Why is that? Were they not properly prepared originally? Did they not understand the gospel? Or, was it that they were not nourished after they became members? Never forget that the Devil wants them back! God is waiting for a core group to be completely settled into the truth.
24. It seems clear from all we have discussed so far that the better organized an evangelistic program is, the more likely it is to succeed. If the program is fairly large and involves a number of members, it raises questions of affordability, achievability, sustainability, and eventually, it must be evaluated. As a church organization, how successful have we been in accomplishing these tasks?
25. Ellen White states:

**In laboring where there are already some in the faith, the minister should at first seek not so much to convert unbelievers, as to train the church-members for acceptable co-operation. Let him labor for them individually, endeavoring to arouse them to seek for a deeper experience themselves, and to work for others.** When they are prepared to sustain the minister by their prayers and labors, greater success will attend his efforts.

Nothing lasting can be accomplished for churches in different places unless they are aroused to feel that a responsibility rests upon them. **Every member of the body should feel that the salvation of his own soul depends upon his own individual effort. Souls cannot be saved without exertion.** The minister cannot save the people. He can be a channel through

which God will impart light to His people; but after the light [197] is given, it is left with the people to appropriate that light, and in their turn to let it shine forth to others.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 121; *Gospel Workers*, p. 196.

26. Have you ever been trained to witness or been part of an evangelistic team? Is your church organizing such training?
27. Isn't it obvious that if a church is squabbling over various issues internally, it is likely that it will not become an effective evangelistic organization. If we are determined to solve all our internal problems before we turn to evangelism, don't you suspect that the Devil will make sure that there is an ongoing supply of problems raised in the church so we never get to the evangelism?
28. Have you ever been a part of a church that was busy evangelizing? What was the overall attitude among church members?
29. How can we be assured of the Holy Spirit's guidance as we launch into any new evangelistic program? Is there a clear way to find out what the gifts of the different members are so that we can better organize into a team?
30. There are many promises in the Bible suggesting that God will work with us if we will just work with Him. Do we want Jesus to join our team? Or, do we want to be on His team?
31. Does each member of the team need to have a committed, close, personal relationship with Jesus Christ for the team to be effective? Or, is working together as a team for an evangelistic goal one way of growing our relationship with Jesus? Isn't it clear that if we are involved in a program, praying about it, and studying to make ourselves ready to participate, that would be one of the ways in which we could develop a more effective and better relationship?
32. If you have prepared to begin such a program, one of the things that you will soon discover is that there are times when you have to be patient. Patience is not easy. It is reported that one person said, "Lord, I need patience, and I need it right now!" Remember that patience is one of the fruits of the spirit. (Galatians 5:22,23) Self-control is another.
33. So, how about it? Are we prepared to make evangelism and witnessing be among our top priorities? One thousand years into eternity, will we look back and wish we had spent more time in entertainment? Watching TV? At our job? Or, working toward bringing others into the kingdom?
34. Those of us who believe in the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation believe that just becoming a member of the church is not enough. That is only the first step. We need to take members through the Bible book by book and show how the great controversy plays itself out through the pages of Scripture. New members need to understand that the issue in the great controversy concerns, "Who is telling us the truth?" This impacts our entire understanding of the Bible from beginning to end. How effective are we at that kind of witnessing?

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