

Witnessing and Evangelism

Equipping for Evangelism and Witnessing

Lesson #8 for May 26, 2012

Scriptures: Matthew 4:19; 10:1-14; 11:1-11; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:9.

1. This lesson discusses the final organization and preparation before going out to witness.
2. So, when will we be ready to witness for the gospel? Do we need to have a lot of facts and verses memorized? Do we need to have written out plans to follow in detail? Some may find these helpful, but others may find this approach too mechanical. (*Evangelism* 442.2)
3. We must have a close spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ if we are going to share the need for a closer relationship with Him. And what is the gospel? Remember that the gospel is not about us or even about our church. The good news or gospel is always about God. We are all sinners. Our church is a hospital for sinners. All through the Scripture, He has told us the truth. The Devil is the one who has lied. God loves us. He wants to save every one of us. Those who witness effectively must learn to show His love and His concern for them.
4. People must be convinced of the truth before they begin to develop trust and faith and before they will confess their belief in the truth and become converted. It is a personal relationship.
5. Read Ephesians 4:11,12 and Matthew 9:37. God assures us that the harvest is plentiful, but there are never enough people ready to spread the good news and reap the harvest. Remember that our task is to prepare a people to be a part of the buildup of the body of Christ. The work of spreading the gospel is not our work. It is not the church's work only. It is primarily God's work. He is the One to guide us in what we do.
6. Read Matthew 4:19 and 28:19,20. God still calls us to become fishers of men and women. And to become fishers of men and women, we must go to all the world teaching them the gospel. The first disciples were asked to leave everything and follow Jesus. Are we being asked to do that? Acts 6-12 make it quite clear that they were not yet ready to go to all the world. At that point in time, the disciples thought that it was only the Jewish nation which was worthy to be given the gospel. It took several major revisions to their plans before they were ready to go to all the world. They did not want to talk even to Samaritans.
7. After we have had the classroom training and have become somewhat familiar with our Bibles and are spiritually prepared to witness, we need to see how it is actually done.
8. Read Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; and John 6:1-14. Review the background of this story. Two-by-two, the disciples had been sent out to travel through Galilee to practice their skills. When they returned, they were tired, and they were excited about what had happened. They wanted some private time with Jesus to discuss their experiences. Jesus called them down to the water, and they took a boat across a corner of the Sea of Galilee to find a quiet place by themselves. But, it was the time of year when people normally gathered in large groups to travel to Jerusalem for the Passover.
9. Many of these Galileans believed that the time had come for Jesus to be made king. (John 6:14,15) He had been healing, teaching, and preaching, and His disciples had been baptizing for a full year in Galilee. Jesus was being mobbed wherever He went. Crowds wanted to follow Him. When He and the disciples entered a boat to start across the Sea of Galilee (which is really nothing more than a big lake), the crowds saw them depart and watched them go across the lake. Some of the people followed in boats. Others ran along the shore to find Jesus when He landed. Jesus only had a short time with His disciples to listen to them and rest. Soon, the crowds were gathering. Patiently, Jesus healed and taught. This went on for the rest of the day until evening was approaching. People had been intent on listening to Jesus and watching everything He did. Many of them were healed of their illnesses. Nobody had stopped to eat. The disciples, who had themselves been tired and weary from their work

around Galilee, reminded Jesus that it was time to send the people away to get food and rest.

10. But, Jesus had a very different idea. He asked His disciples what food was available among the crowds. Andrew found a small boy with five small bread rolls and two fish. It was about right for a small boy's lunch. Amazingly, he had not eaten it during the day. Even he was fascinated by everything Jesus was doing and saying. The boy's lunch was brought to Jesus. He told the disciples to organize people into groups of between fifty and one hundred and to have them sit down on the green grass. Jesus could have created bread from the stones on the ground. He could have created for them a meal like they had never eaten before. But, He gave the people the common, ordinary food that they were accustomed to eating. (DA 366.1-367.0) He recognized their physical needs. But, He wanted them to go home remembering what they had seen and heard more than what they had eaten. When the people went home, what do you think they said to their families and friends? Did they focus first on the meal they had eaten? Or, on the teaching and healing of Jesus?
11. Then, He prayed over the food asking His Father to bless and multiply it. That is exactly what God does every day through growing crops to feed a hungry world. The fishes and the loaves were multiplied in the hands of Jesus and then in the hands of the disciples. How do you suppose that actually happened? Did people follow them around to watch it?
12. Jesus did not perform this miracle by His own divine power. He called upon the Father to work this miracle. We need to recognize that we have been given gifts, and we are to use those gifts, and by using them they also will be multiplied. We should not get discouraged because the task seems impossible. It certainly seemed impossible to feed a crowd of up to 20,000 men, women, and children with five small bread rolls and two small fish.
13. No one but God could perform such a miracle. There must have been Pharisees and scribes in that crowd. They must have eaten some of that miraculous food just as the others did. What did they have to say about this experience? After everyone had eaten, they gathered up the fragments, and there were twelve baskets (*kophinoi* held two gallons or more each) of food left over. Nothing was wasted. What do you think happened with the leftovers? People were anxious to take the leftovers home with them to their friends and relatives to let them taste of this special food and hear of the wonderful experiences of that day. What did the children say to their friends?
14. We may think that we have no means to spread the gospel. But, the command of Jesus to go into all the world and preach the gospel is a promise that He will be with us and show the way. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19,20) We have received this most precious commodity, and we are to share it. In the process of sharing the gospel, it is a general principle that the more we impart to others, the more we receive. Believing, trusting, receiving, and imparting are the steps we need to practice in spreading the gospel. (*Evangelism* 443.3) The more we practice, the easier it becomes.
15. After everyone had eaten, Jesus sent them away. Did any of the disciples ever perform a miracle like that? Then He commanded His disciples to depart in the boat back to Capernaum. He Himself went up into the hills to pray and to plan His next day with the Father. Somewhere around three o'clock in the morning, He was walking on the water, and it was on this occasion that Peter tried to walk on the water as well. (Matthew 14:29-32)
16. Why do you think Jesus performed this miracle? Was it to prove that He was the Messiah—even the divine Son of God? Was it to prove that He had complete control over the natural world? Is feeding the hungry one way in which we can open the door for evangelism?
17. Before Jesus ate and before He multiplied the loaves and fishes, He looked up to heaven and prayed to His Father. Do you suppose that the large crowd heard every word? What do you think they expected to happen?
18. In every endeavor that we undertake, first of all, we should turn to heaven to ask for guidance,

blessing, and assistance.

19. Early the next morning in Capernaum, the people began to gather around Jesus. They wanted another meal. The food was very good, and the price was right! Jesus knew exactly what they had in mind. After feeding the multitudes the prior day, the disciples had been bitterly disappointed that Jesus had not allowed them and the crowd to make Him king.
20. It was time for a major turning point in the ministry of Jesus. He told the people that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood if they were going to be truly His people. (John 6:25-58) Those who had come to Jesus for another meal soon faded away. Jesus had recently received the news that John the Baptist had been beheaded. Jesus recognized that the time had come for Him to move on to the next step in His ministry. Shortly thereafter, He took His disciples away from Galilee, up into Tyre and Sidon, and later, over to Caesarea Philippi away from the crowds so He could teach them what they needed to know before He left them.
21. Read Matthew 10:1-14. The disciples had had a full year of watching Jesus in His ministry. They saw how He laid His hands on people and healed them. They were familiar with how He raised people from the dead and cast out demons. They were amazed to see Him even heal the lepers who were thought to be completely cursed. They had heard His sermons many times and seen various other miracles. Then, He gave them the power to perform miracles, to cast out demons, even to raise the dead. (Matthew 10:8)
22. But, He also gave them other instructions. He told them that if they entered a village and they were not welcomed, they were to shake the dust off their feet and go somewhere else. In order to witness to the world, we must go to where the world is. We must engage them, talk with them, and become their friends. The disciples were encouraged even to stay in the homes of those people. We may see all sorts of reasons why it is not the right time for us to spread the gospel in a certain area. But, remember that the work is God's and not ours. If we are ready to work, He will guide us. How much did the disciples' lives change after they met Jesus?
23. Read 1 Peter 5:8. We must never forget that when we go out on such a mission, the Devil will be right there to oppose us. He does everything possible to limit the spread of the gospel at every step. In our time approaching the end of this world's history, do you think the Devil is disturbed more by those who witness to nonbelievers and convince them to become converted and baptized? Or, is he more disturbed by those who by careful Bible study, prayer, and witnessing are becoming so settled into the truth "both intellectually and spiritually" that they cannot be moved. (4BC 1161.6; LDE 219.4) Remember that when God has a group of sealed saints, the Devil's days are numbered, and he knows it. (Revelation 7:1-3)
24. There are times and there will be more times when things do not go the way we plan. Read Matthew 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43; and Luke 10:17. Why did the disciples fail to cast out this demon? Why couldn't they heal the man's son? That experience should have been a humbling one for the disciples and an opportunity for them to search their own hearts for stumbling blocks to the spread of the gospel. What should they—and what should we—have learned from that experience? Thomas Edison would assure us that nothing is a failure if we learn something from it. We must study the situation to decide how we can avoid making the same mistake again.
25. So, what have we suggested? There are two major areas of preparation needed for effective witnessing. We must learn through instruction from others and our practical experience how to do it successfully. But first, we must have the spiritual preparation that comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This will lead us to take the same approach to the unconverted as Jesus did.
26. Read 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Corinthians 3:6. God does not want to lose even a single person. God loves everyone. We are all His children. And as we have success in spreading the

gospel—whether it is watering the ground, preparing the soil, adding fertilizer, planting the seed, or harvesting—we can learn through our successes.

27. “Every church should be a training school for Christian workers.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 149. Is your church a training school for evangelism?
28. We can be sure that Satan always has his plans to tear down and destroy God’s church. With such a formidable foe, how can we succeed? We can succeed because it is not our work—it is God’s work; He will defeat the Devil if we work with Him according to His plans.
29. So, what are the steps in organizing a church evangelistic program? In general, there are four steps that we must go through: 1) instruction, 2) observation, 3) participation, and 4) cooperation. We must be instructed on how to work with Christ. More than that, we need to observe how to witness not only by studying our Bibles but also ideally by watching someone else do it successfully. Then, we ourselves must actually participate in an evangelistic program. Finally, we must work cooperatively with others to carry out more evangelistic programs.
30. When one program is finished, we need to have an official time to sit down and evaluate what went well and what did not. Do we need additional training in certain areas? Do we need to target a different group of people?
31. What tools would be useful in carrying out either personal or group evangelism? In some cases it may be something as simple as handing out mail-in cards to sign up for a Bible study course. Others may find pre-prepared lessons useful in giving their own Bible studies to families. Many will find it useful to use a computer with Bible software on it and even perhaps a projector to show on a wall or screen the verses that he or she is looking at. Every task has its appropriate tools.
32. What kind of emotions were running through the mind of Jesus as He was grieving the loss of His cousin, John the Baptist, and at the same time rejoicing at the success of His disciples in their witnessing campaigns through Galilee?
33. Read 2 Timothy 3:12. What are we supposed to learn from this verse? In Paul’s day, virtually every successful evangelist was pursued by government forces or Jewish opponents, and they were persecuted. Is persecution something that could happen in our day? What kind of persecution could take place in a free society like the one we live in?
34. You can be sure that while the disciples were traveling through Galilee practicing their witnessing, Jesus was not idle. There was never a time when Jesus said, “Stop everything, I need rest.” But, when the disciples came back from their witnessing tours, Jesus called them to rest. When working as a team in an evangelistic program, we need to recognize the needs of the other team members.
35. Interruptions are a way of life. I am sure that Jesus had hundreds of interruptions every day. Crowds on every side were clamoring for His attention. Remember the story of the woman who simply reached out to touch the edge of His garment. (Mark 5:24-34; Matthew 9:18-22)
36. Are we doing all that we can to spread the gospel? Are we reaching out even to other church members to share what we know about the great controversy and the truth about God? We should be practicing every day.

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