

# ***Biblical Missionaries***

## ***Cross-Cultural Missions***

Lesson #8 for August 22, 2015

Scriptures: John 4:4-30; 12:20-32; Matthew 8:5-13; 15:21-28; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 17:11-19.

1. This lesson focuses on the challenges of reaching out with the gospel message to people who are not of our own culture or language. There are at least six examples in which Jesus reached across cultural and linguistic barriers to touch the lives of those who needed Him. What can we learn from those examples?
2. Read Matthew 4:15 and Isaiah 9:1-2. Jesus grew up in Galilee. Why is it referred to as “Galilee of the Gentiles”? Most likely, it is because there was a significant number of non-Jewish population and significant non-Jewish influence in that area. Nazareth itself was located near Sepphoris, a Roman city, and major travel routes carrying Roman army units and merchant caravans. Thus, Jesus, no doubt, had many contacts with non-Jews.
3. Read John 4:4-30. In the days of Jesus, the primarily-Jewish areas of Galilee and Judea were separated by Samaria. The Samaritans were descendants of Jews who were mixed with other nationalities including people imported after the Assyrians conquered the nation of Israel in 723/722 B.C. In this story, Jesus and His disciples apparently decided to take the direct route through Samaria as they were going from Judea to Galilee. This would have led them through mountain passes and past the small town of Sychar. It was in the middle of the day, and it was hot. As the disciples went to town to purchase food, Jesus waited by the well. According to Jewish customs, Jesus should not have spoken to a foreigner and especially not to a woman who was not a member of His own family. But, they were in Samaritan territory. By asking her for a favor, Jesus was able to open up a conversation that led to the evangelization of that town. Jesus knew that He would not get many more opportunities to witness at that place. Thus, He miraculously revealed to the woman that He knew about her background and also told her that He was the Messiah. In doing all of that, do you think Jesus was outside of His comfort zone? Later, as they talked among themselves, what do you think the disciples had to say about that experience?
4. Read Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10. Compare *Desire of Ages* 315-318. Jesus had adopted the city of Capernaum as His hometown. He apparently lived with Peter and his family. In that city there was a Roman officer of centurion rank, meaning that he was commander of 100 men. He had come to have great respect for the Jewish religion. Despite the prominent hatred between Romans and Jews, this centurion had arranged for and paid for the building of a synagogue for the benefit of the Jews. What do you suppose that centurion knew about Jesus? Was he aware of the many miracles that Jesus had performed? That centurion had a Jewish servant who was seriously ill. He needed the help of Jesus. But, he knew that a Jew was not supposed to enter a Gentile’s house. So, he requested the elders of the Jews to approach Jesus and ask for healing for his servant. (Luke 7:3) When the elders approached Jesus, He immediately agreed to go and began to work His way toward the centurion’s home. When they informed the centurion that Jesus was coming to his house, he rushed out to meet Jesus and said that he himself did not consider himself worthy to approach Jesus. Think what an incredible statement that was for a Roman centurion, speaking to an apparently humble Galilean Rabbi. But, that centurion had developed a great deal of faith. He asked Jesus simply to speak, and the servant would be well. Jesus responded by saying He had not seen such faith, even in Israel. What cultural barriers were broken in that incident? The centurion recognized that Jesus was in charge of unseen forces.
5. Read Luke 8:26-39; Matthew 8:28-33; and Mark 5:1-20 and another story recorded in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. These stories tell about two occasions when Jesus apparently intentionally went quite a distance out of His way to perform a miracle on behalf of a foreigner. Jesus had asked His disciples to take Him across the sea of Galilee. As they reached the other shore, they were met by one—or two according to Matthew—demon-possessed man/men. Those men were apparently ready to attack Jesus and His disciples when Jesus halted their progress.

Following a brief conversation, He cast the demons out of them and into a herd of pigs. The pigs rushed down the cliff and drowned in the Sea of Galilee. Have you ever wondered what the Jews thought about using water from the Sea of Galilee after that experience? Or, eating fish from that sea? The owners of the pigs and others came rushing out and saw the man/men who had been demon-possessed sitting quietly by Jesus and asked Jesus to leave their territory because of the financial loss that they had experienced. Jesus and His disciples turned around and left that area. The demoniacs asked to go with Jesus, but He insisted that the demoniacs remain behind, as the first Gentile missionaries, to tell their amazing story.

6. But the purposes of Christ were not thwarted. **He allowed the evil spirits to destroy the herd of swine as a rebuke to those Jews who were raising these unclean beasts for the sake of gain. Had not Christ restrained the demons, they would have plunged into the sea, not only the swine, but also their keepers and owners. The preservation of both the keepers and the owners was due alone to His power, mercifully exercised for their deliverance.** Furthermore, this event was permitted to take place that the disciples might witness the cruel power of Satan upon both man and beast. The Saviour desired His followers to have a knowledge of the foe whom they were to meet, that they might not be deceived and overcome by his devices. It was also His will that the people of that region should behold His power to break the bondage of Satan and release his captives. And though Jesus Himself departed, the men so marvelously delivered, remained to declare the mercy of their Benefactor.—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 515.1. [Bold type is added.]
7. Some time later, after being rejected in Galilee, Jesus took His disciples far to the west and north to the area of Tyre and Sidon. The only thing that we know that He did while there was to heal the demon-possessed daughter of a Canaanite woman. When the woman first approached Him, He treated her as He knew a typical Jew would have treated her. But, the woman would not be dissuaded. After testing her faith, He healed her daughter.
8. The Saviour is satisfied. He has tested her faith in Him. By His dealings with her, He has shown that she who has been regarded as an outcast from Israel is no longer an alien, but a child in God's household. As a child it is her privilege to share in the Father's gifts. Christ now grants her request, and finishes the lesson to the disciples.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.3-402.0.
9. Read Luke 17:11-19. Nazareth was located in Galilee but quite close to the border of Samaria. Apparently, along that border there were lepers living together who had come from both sides of the border. When Jesus passed near the border, some or all of those lepers recognized who He was, called Him by name, and pleaded for healing. Jesus, recognizing what they would have to do to be accepted back into Jewish society, (See Leviticus 14:2.) told them to go to the priest to be checked.
10. How did those lepers know about Jesus? Had they heard about other lepers He had healed? Apparently, there was a single Samaritan in the group of ten. And he was the only one who upon recognizing that he was being healed, returned to thank Jesus. What do you suppose that man did after he was healed? What did the nine Jews do? Did they return to their homes to praise and thank God and tell their stories to others? How did those lepers know to call Jesus by name?
11. How many things has God done for us for which we need to be thankful? Do we remember to thank Him each day for the blessings He has given us?
12. Read John 12:20-33. At His birth, wise men came from the east. Just before His death, Greeks came from the west, seeking Jesus. We do not know how they happened to know about Jesus. Did they hear people around Jerusalem talking about Him? Why were they in Jerusalem? Were they Greek converts? Or, Greek-speaking Jews?
13. The disciple Philip had a Greek name. Do you suppose that he spoke Greek? Were the Greek-speaking seekers directed to him because of his Greek name?

14. Jesus was greatly encouraged by that incident. We do not know exactly what He said to those people. But, the fact that a Voice from heaven was heard in the court of the temple must have attracted a lot of attention.
15. In the book of John, the story about the Greeks seeking Jesus comes immediately after the story of the triumphal entry. Was it because of that event that the Greeks heard about Jesus?
16. How do you understand the conversation between the Father and Jesus on that occasion? Jesus was clearly dreading the approaching crucifixion. But, He said: "Father, bring glory to your name!" (John 12:28, *GNB*) Then a Voice spoke from heaven: "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again." (John 12:28, *GNB*)
17. Read John 12:31-33. What did Jesus mean when He said: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Me"? Notice that if one is reading the *King James Version* of the Bible, the word *men*, instead of *everyone*, is in italics, meaning *men* was supplied. *Men* is not in the original.
18. It is important to recognize that Jesus had a much larger, broader, higher, and deeper purpose in mind as He spoke those words.

**But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto [69] Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.2. [Bold type is added.]**

19. Jesus recognized that by what He was about to do, He would answer questions that would draw the entire universe closer to Him. He knew that the entire universe was watching every step He made from that point on. God treated Jesus as if He were a sinner in order to show us what will happen if we hold onto our sins. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
20. Read Matthew 8:11-12. Could strangers and foreigners, even those relatively ignorant of scriptural truth, be admitted in our place to the heavenly feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Do we understand clearly the basic doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Do we know how to explain them in a winsome, convincing manner to those who might ask us about them?
21. The death of Christ on the cross was not only for the benefit of all humans but also for the benefit of the entire universe. We are all God's children. Those of us on this planet are all sinners. But, we are still God's children. Given that we recognize that we are a part of God's universal family, is there any basis for thinking that we are somehow superior ethnically, socially, financially, or culturally to others of God's children? It might be easy for those of us living in the western world to think of ourselves as educationally and theologically more advanced than some in other parts of the world. But, compared to angels, where do we stand? We will spend the rest of eternity learning more details about the plan of salvation, God's love, and what it means to be a part of God's family. What we might know now is a mere drop in the bucket. It certainly is not a basis for being proud! In fact, the church on this earth is supposed to be a witness to the rest of the universe. (Ephesians 3:9-10, *GNB*) Angels are to learn about God by watching what He does for us.
22. How many of us have regular opportunities to witness across cultural barriers? Or, do you have to travel to other parts of the world to have that kind of an experience? Those of us who live in

California, must recognize that California has become a miniature melting pot of cultures. There are people here legally and illegally from almost every part of the world. How could we reach out to them? Are you reluctant to reach across cultural barriers? Linguistic barriers? It takes a great deal of patience and empathy to really witness across such barriers. While Jesus based His ministry almost entirely in the Jewish territories, He clearly intended for the gospel to spread out from there. As we learned in our last lesson, He calls us to do that job. And He expects results! Read Revelation 7:9.

23. There have been many examples of missionaries trying to witness across cultural and linguistic barriers, making mistakes that seriously misrepresented the gospel. Clearly, Jesus is calling us to a challenging mission. Why do you think some of these non-Jewish people such as the centurion and the woman of Sidon were able to develop such faith when the Jews seemed to be so slow to do so?
24. Clearly, God worked with the Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham, during the time of the Old Testament. But, it is also clear that He intended for them to spread the true message about God to all around them. Unfortunately, they dismally failed. Read Hosea 2:23 and Romans 9:25-26. Even 700 years before Christ, God was calling to His people, asking them to reach out to others.
25. Truthfully, do you think the people of Africa, India, and China will ever be able to hear the full truth of the gospel? How much do you think they will need to know to be saved?
26. Review the stories in 1 Kings 17:7-24 and 2 Kings 5. Jesus had returned to His hometown of Nazareth. After listening to the local synagogue leader give a rousing sermon about how the Messiah was coming at the head of armies to drive out the Romans, Jesus stood up and asked for a copy of the book of Isaiah. He read the passage from Isaiah 61:1-2 and then announced that that same prophecy—which was known to be a Messianic prophecy—was being fulfilled before their eyes. He mentioned the fact that God had reached out to the woman of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian leper instead of just working with people within the Jewish community. It made His fellow citizens so angry that they wanted to kill Him. What should we learn from those stories?
27. *Contextualization* is a term used by missiologists which unfortunately is seldom understood correctly. To many people, it seems to suggest that we should water down the gospel. But *contextualization* means that we will try to present the gospel in a context which is most meaningful to the people to whom we are trying to witness. As we have seen, Jesus did that. The apostle Paul did that. (1 Corinthians 9:22) Others did also.

The people of every country have their own peculiar, distinctive characteristics, and it is necessary that men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people and so introduce the truth that they may do them good.—Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers*, No. 3, p.46.1 (1895); *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 213.1.

28. So, what are the essential truths that we must convey to our neighbors, associates, and friends? Considering all our resources and education, does God expect more of us here in the United States than He does of the peoples in some other parts of the world where resources and education are less?
29. Should we develop small groups of people within our church community who focus on how to reach out to different educational, cultural, and professional groups? Do we need to approach plumbers differently from the way we approach doctors? Could we even develop modern parables to illustrate the gospel truth appropriately to people in our day? Are you willing to try that?

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