

The Role of the Church in the Community

Jesus Ministered to Their Needs

Lesson #9 for August 27, 2016

Scriptures: Mark 2:1-12; 5:22-43; 10:46-52; John 5:1-9; Psalm 139:1-13; Acts 9:36-42.

1. This lesson will give us multiple examples of how Jesus and His disciples as well as others in more modern times have reached out to the poor, the needy, and the helpless to meet their needs.

He [Jesus] went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of [12] His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His knees and gaze into the pensive face, benignant with love.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 11.2-12.0. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

A retired Seventh-day Adventist woman in an African country did not wish to stop ministering in retirement. Her community needed healing because of the ravages of HIV/AIDS. The most urgent need was that AIDS orphans didn't have adequate nutrition. In 2002, she and her church started feeding the children in the community a solid meal six days a week. They started with 50 children and, as of 2012, were serving 300 children per day. That led them to start a preschool, and now 45 of those children are attending. Other services include distributing clothing from ADRA, sharing vegetables and maize from a garden that they maintain, and taking care of the sick. They started a skills-development program for women, who teach one another skills that help them earn a living. This demonstration of the love of Jesus spawned a new church. There were five members in the beginning, and, as of 2012, 160 were attending. God provided means for building an orphanage and a new church building in 2012.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath, August 20, 2016.

2. What would happen today if Jesus or one of His messengers walked into a hospital like Loma Linda University Health and healed everyone there? How would it be reported on social media and television that day or in the newspapers the next day? How do you think the community would respond?
3. How would you compare the story of the African woman and how she and others have reached out to care for widows and especially orphans with the story of Jesus? Was Jesus ministering to the needy in that situation?
4. What kind of a project could a Seventh-day Adventist church in the more developed world carry out that would bring similar results? What would be the response?
5. For many of us in the 21st century, our lives are full of hustle and bustle. Depending on the kind of work we do, some of us experience interruptions again and again. Sometimes, there are interruptions to an interruption!
6. Read Matthew 9:18-26 and Mark 5:22-43. In this sequence, Jesus was interrupted from His busy teaching to heal a young girl who was about to die and then did die. He was further interrupted on His way to help her by a woman with a severe bleeding problem. Are

interruptions a problem?

7. In 2016, what kind of examples could you think of that would match this one from the ministry of Jesus? We, of course, could never raise someone from the dead; but, how often are we interrupted and given an opportunity to minister to the needs of another?
8. When we are interrupted at our work, is our initial response annoyance? Or, do we see interruptions also as opportunities to minister to the needs of others? Are there times when just because we are annoyed at being interrupted, we refuse to minister to the needs of a truly needy person?
9. Read Mark 10:46-52 and John 5:1-9. These passages tell us about two disabled men who were helped by Jesus. The story recorded in John 5 came early in the ministry of Jesus; the story of blind Bartimaeus came at the very end. In John 5, Jesus was walking around Jerusalem alone early in His ministry. In the story of blind Bartimaeus recorded in Mark 10, Jesus was traveling in the crowd that was going up to Jerusalem, expecting to crown Jesus as King of the Jews one week before His crucifixion. What kind of faith did these men have?
10. Why do some modern versions omit John 5:3b-4? Is that a result of higher criticism? How did those verses get in the Bible in the first place? Those verses are not present in the earliest manuscripts; they found their way into later manuscripts. Who do you think wrote them? Why? How did they get into the later manuscripts and end up in the *King James Version*? Should we cut them out of our Bibles? There is no way that God would be responsible for such an arrangement at the pool. If God had been responsible, He would have arranged for some way to reach out to the most needy and not just to those who could get into the pool the quickest. The quickest people would almost always be those who were the least sick. In the text of John, someone probably wrote a note in the margin of the text so that people who were not familiar with the situation at the pool in Jerusalem and did not understand why people would be gathered there would understand. Later, when most Christians had never been to Jerusalem, someone decided that those words should be included in the text so that future generations would also understand. Does that worry you?

At certain seasons the waters of this pool were agitated, and **it was commonly believed that this was the result of supernatural power**, and that whoever first after the troubling of the pool stepped into the waters, would be healed of whatever disease he had. Hundreds of sufferers visited the place; but so great was the crowd when the water was troubled that they rushed forward, trampling underfoot men, women, and children, weaker than themselves. Many could not get near the pool.—Ellen G. White, *the Desire of Ages* 201.2; *MH* 81.2; see also *2SP* 157.1. [Bold type is added.]

11. In dealing with people's needs, Jesus often asked them to express their needs. Blind Bartimaeus said, "I want to see." The man at the pool of Bethesda/Bethzatha said: "Sir, I have no one here to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am trying to get in, somebody else gets there first." (*GNB*) By asking these disabled ones to articulate their needs, was Jesus encouraging them to express their faith? In any case, Jesus was listening. Do we need to be more specific in our prayer requests?
12. Why is it so hard for many of us to stop and listen? Listening is a way of saying that you care. Many people can be helped immensely by just finding someone who is willing to listen. When you go to the doctor's office, you expect him/her to listen to your problems. If we show a real interest in people and their needs and as far as possible assist them, we will make new friends. Why is it so much easier for most of us to speak than to listen? Do we need to learn to become better listeners? Is listening a natural talent? Or, a learned skill?

To these our friends who expect soon to go from us to other lands, I wish to say: Remember that you can break down the severest opposition by taking a

personal interest in the people whom you meet. Christ took a personal interest in men and women while He lived on this earth. Wherever He went He was a medical missionary. We are to go about doing good, even as He did. We are instructed to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the sorrowing.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, November 11, 1902, par. 5; *Welfare Ministry* 162.2.

13. There are a number of passages in Scripture suggesting that Jesus knew people's needs before they even opened their mouths. See Mark 2:8; John 4:18, etc. Psalm 139:1-13 tells us that God knows everything about us from the time we are conceived until we die and even thereafter. Is that even possible?
14. Read Mark 2:1-12. What did Jesus know about this young man? How was Jesus involved in his healing? Jesus had inspired faith in this young man even while he was still at home. He had drawn him and encouraged him to bring his case to Jesus. He brought conviction to his conscience. When he repented of his sins, believing in the power of Jesus to make him whole, he felt the blessings of Jesus in his heart. (See *Desire of Ages* 216.1.)

The palsied man was entirely helpless, and, seeing no prospect of aid from any quarter, he had sunk into despair. Then he heard of the wonderful works of Jesus. He was told that others as sinful and helpless as he had been healed; even lepers had been cleansed. And the friends who reported these things encouraged him to believe that he too might be cured if he could be carried to Jesus. But his hope fell when he remembered how the disease had been brought upon him. He feared that the pure Physician would not tolerate him in His presence.

Yet it was not physical restoration he [the paralytic] desired so much as relief from the burden of sin. If he could see Jesus, and receive the assurance of forgiveness and peace with Heaven, he would be content to live or die, according to God's will.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 267.3-4. [Content in brackets is added.]

15. Coming forth from spending time in the evenings and early mornings in prayer with His Father, Jesus was aware of the needs of the people He was going to meet each day. Could we do that in our day? How should we relate to "spiritual healers" including those on television in our day?
16. Around us are people who are hurting in many ways. Many do not realize even their greatest needs. Do we crave the assurance of salvation and the knowledge that God loves us? Is that because we do not trust God's Word? Or, just because we are humans?
17. Read Acts 9:36-42. Compare Mark 10:8. In this passage we read of Tabitha/Dorcas and the way she ministered, especially to the widows in Joppa. We do not know exactly what happened to Dorcas; but, we are told that, as a result, she died. The Christians in the area, realizing that Peter was nearby, rushed to him for assistance. The widows, especially, felt the tremendous loss that would be theirs if Dorcas was gone. How do the people in your town, village, or city feel about the presence of you and your church?
18. The Bible makes it clear that we have a special responsibility to those who are fellow believers. (See Acts 2:42-47.)
19. And what about people's spiritual needs? Are there members of the SDA Church who still need to be taught the full truth about God and His love for us? Do we fully understand why Jesus had to die and what He is doing now in the heavenly sanctuary? Do we understand clearly why there has been such a long delay since the Great Disappointment in 1844? Do we still mistakenly believe that Jesus has to plead with His Father to get Him to forgive us?

Are there people in our churches who have unanswered questions, serious doubts, or a faltering faith because no one has helped them understand the teachings of the Bible?

20. Read John 13:34-35 and John 15:12. What is implied by these verses? Is it really true that if Christians loved each other as Jesus loved us, the whole world would notice? Is it an impossible challenge to love as Jesus loved? What is the relationship between your church and your community? Is it possible to really love without knowing anything about Christ?

Amy Sherman describes three styles a church can use in serving its community. The first style, the *settler* style, focuses on meeting the needs of the community around your church. The woman with the HIV/AIDS ministry chose her nearby community as her “Joppa.”

The second, the *gardener* style means developing ministry ties with neighborhoods outside your church’s immediate area, as gardeners view their gardens as an extension of their homes. Sometimes several churches partner to operate a community service center outside of each of their communities. In one city, several churches ran a health food store—out of which a new church started.

The third, the *shepherd* style is serving one targeted population rather than a specific geographic neighborhood.—Adapted from Ronald J. Sider et al., *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2002), p. 146. (As quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Wednesday, August 23.) [Italic type is in the original.]

21. Seven churches of different denominations have partnered together to run a large pantry at the Community Health Center where I work. It serves thousands of people every week. Do you think that would be an effective outreach?
22. Does your church have a clearly defined mission to your community? You may not feel comfortable leading out in such an adventure; but, you can contribute in one way or another. How do you determine what is the right outreach for your church? Here are some suggestions: (1) Input from biblical and Spirit of Prophecy principles, (2) Knowledge of community needs, and (3) Input from the congregation. You can do community surveys, participate in brainstorming sessions, or just look around the community to see what needs you can discover. Would God show each one of us, or a group of us, what He wants us to do?
23. Read Luke 14:25-35. Are we prepared to make the commitment necessary to truly be disciples of Jesus? How many people in the 21st century are willing to make Jesus their first priority? Does God really expect us to love Him more than we love father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters? Could we love Jesus more than we love ourselves?
24. In this statement made by Jesus some time before the Passover week in which He was crucified, He said: “Those who do not carry their own cross and come after Me cannot be my disciples.” (Luke 14:27, *GNB*) What do you think His followers thought He was talking about when He mentioned the *cross*?
25. One thing that must be considered when taking on a project is: Do we have the necessary means, talents, time, and commitment to finish it? Should we start off with a smaller project? Success breeds success. If you have success in a small project, you may feel comfortable taking on something a little bit larger.
26. The commitment that is being suggested in Luke 14:25-34 and Matthew 10:37-38 seems like a lot to us. But, remember that God is planning to give us eternal life in an environment of

bliss. So, is such an effort now too much to ask? Look at the Adventist pioneers!

27. What kind of planning and preparation does one need in order to launch a project?
28. Read Acts 17:16-34. Does it sound like Paul's efforts in Athens were a waste of time? How did Paul go about finding what approach he should take in speaking to the Athenians? Notice that he was even aware of some of their most famous poets.

He who taught the people the way to secure peace and happiness was just as thoughtful of their temporal necessities as of their spiritual need.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 365.4.

29. So, if we are going to strive to be like Jesus, we must reach out to other people in their needs. And what is the ultimate goal? Wouldn't it be to provide the greatest salvation and happiness that we possibly can?
30. Why do you think Jesus spent so much time meeting people's physical needs? Shouldn't He have spent all of His brief time trying to spread the gospel?

The Lord Jesus is our example. He came to the world as a servant of mankind. He went from city to city, from village to village, teaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing the sick. **Christ spent more time in healing than in teaching.**

As our example, Christ linked closely together the work of healing and teaching, and in this our day they should not be separated. In our schools and sanitariums, nurses should be trained to go out as medical missionary evangelists. They should unite the teaching of the gospel of Christ with the work of healing.—Ellen G. White, *The Gospel Herald*, May 1, 1908, par. 4; RH, September 10, 1908, par. 4; *Special Testimonies Series B*, 08 22.1.

During His ministry **Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 350.3. [Bold type is added.]

31. We as the Seventh-day Adventist Church have invested an unbelievable amount of effort, time, and money in healthcare institutions and educational institutions. Are these premier ways to spread the gospel? Are we too much involved in these areas of outreach?
32. Many of us have been going to the same church and going through the same routines in our worship for years. If our ideas of God have not changed in the last year by real growth, are we worshiping a static "idol"? Should we be praying to God and asking Him to open our eyes to hidden needs? While recognizing the need for professional help for those who have serious problems with anxiety or depression, what could we do to help people who are depressed, discouraged, or lonely? What is the connection between people's physical needs and their spiritual needs? Christianity has been noted from its beginning in the ways it is reaching out to the poor and needy. Look, for example, at this story.

In 1902, Harry and Maude Miller graduated as medical doctors from what is today Loma Linda University. They both felt an irresistible calling to go as medical missionaries to China.

Both were elite graduates and faced the lure of fame and fortune in the United States. But they were ready to leave it all behind to live and work among China's poor. Dr. Harry Miller ended up devoting 50 years of his life in China, and he became deeply loved by the people of that vast country.

Dr. Miller was friend and physician to General Chiang Kai-Shek, leader of the Republic of China, and his wife, Mao. But he also, at times, lived among the poor in a "beggar's den"—a hut open to mosquitoes and lice. He cared for the

aristocracy and also knelt by the beds of the poor. He performed highly skilled surgery but also spent countless hours working on a viable formula for soy milk—because he was concerned about babies dying from allergies and malnutrition.—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 120.

33. The Bible tells us that each of us has been given at least one spiritual gift. Have we sought out ways to use our spiritual gift(s)?
34. When people are recognizing their personal needs, they are most open to help. A loving touch can transform a life.
35. Think of all the things that Jesus did to help us. (Matthew 8:17; 9:35, Isaiah 53:4)
36. While it is clear that the book of Matthew is not primarily organized chronologically, it is interesting to note that as soon as Jesus had finished giving the Sermon on the Mount, He set about in a flurry of activity, healing the following people (See *Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 121.):
 1. A leper (Matthew 8:3)
 2. The centurion's servant (Matthew 8:13)
 3. Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:15)
 4. Demon-possessed people including the men/man beside the lake in Gadara (See Matthew 8:16,28-34; compare Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39.)
 5. A paralyzed man (Matthew 9:1-7)
 6. The hemorrhaging woman (Matthew 9:22)
 7. A ruler's daughter (Jairus's daughter) (See Matthew 9:25; compare Mark 5:21-42.)
 8. Two blind men (Matthew 9:29-30)
 9. A mute man (Matthew 9:33)
37. According to Mark and Luke, these miracles were scattered over some time; but, Matthew put them all together. Why do you suppose that he did that? And remember that in the midst of this list as recorded in Matthew 8:23-27, He saved a boatload of disciples who were about to drown during the storm!
38. The motto of Loma Linda University is "To Make Man Whole." Would that be an appropriate model for the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Does God ask us to meet people's needs physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually?
39. The time when it is easiest to help somebody and make the biggest impact on their lives is when they feel the greatest need. How do we discover when and where people are hurting and needing the most?
40. When blind Bartimaeus started calling out to Jesus, the disciples tried to silence him. But, what was Jesus's response? He stopped, took time out of His busy schedule, and healed the man. Is it any surprise that he followed Jesus, praising God. (Luke 18:43, *NIV*)
41. Do we find that serving others brings us great joy? If not, why not? If we truly love others as we love ourselves, wouldn't service be an automatic response? Look around your community. What are the greatest needs in your community? Which of those needs is most amenable to some activity that you or your church could become involved in?

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