

# ***Making Friends for God: The Joy of Sharing in His Mission***

## ***Why Witness?***

Lesson #1 for July 4, 2020

Scriptures: James 5:19-20; Luke 15:6; Zephaniah 3:17; John 7:37-38; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

1. There is nothing God would love more than to have every single human being: 1) Respond to His love, 2) Accept what He offers, and 3) Be saved in His kingdom. God will weep over every sinner who chooses to rebel against Him; He will even weep over Satan. He wants you and me to be saved. In fact, He wants to save us more than we want to be saved!
2. So, do we share in this desire that God has?
3. Have you ever had the privilege of witnessing to someone and then having them make the decision to join God's church? Is there any joy equal to that? The leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church gets very excited about new additions to its membership. But, we know that just joining the church is no guarantee of salvation. Many Seventh-day Adventists do not understand the great controversy theme which is so important to our understanding of the gospel and our understanding of so much of Scripture. Shouldn't we also rejoice when we help a fellow church member understand this important truth?
4. So, what is **witnessing** all about? **It is really about sharing the good news about our Friend, Jesus Christ.** If, in fact, He is our best Friend, we should want to talk about Him on every occasion that we get.
5. The great controversy is all about God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Do we understand all the accusations that Satan has made against Them? Do we understand God's answers? That is the truth about Jesus that the world needs to hear.
6. How often do you get an opportunity to share what you believe about God? It is really not our responsibility to open up opportunities; God is the One who will open opportunities. We just have to be awake to see them when they happen. Are we watching every day for opportunities that God is placing in our paths to witness to the truth about Him/Them? Or, are we afraid to speak up about the truth?
7. How many of us miss opportunity after opportunity because we are afraid to speak up? Or, we are not sure what to say? Or, is it that we do not want to seem to be different?
8. Do we understand clearly why Jesus came to this earth to save human beings?

**Luke 19:10:** "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Luke 19:10). New York: American Bible Society.

**James 5:19-20:** <sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, if any of you wander away from the truth and another one brings them back again, <sup>20</sup>remember this: whoever turns a sinner back from his or her wrong way will save that sinner's soul from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.—*Good News Bible.\**

**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 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*\* 68.2-69.0 (1890).<sup>†</sup> Compare *Reflecting Christ* 50.3-4 (1985) [which quotes John 12:31-32 (*KJV*) as saying, “I ... will draw all **men** unto me” but *men* is in italic type in the *KJV* meaning that word was not in the original manuscripts].<sup>‡</sup>

9. How would you feel about being offered a job working alongside God? Is there any better opportunity of which we could take advantage? Is there any safer occupation? Paul wrote a lot about this whole idea in his book to the Romans. He recognized that Gentiles have seen God in action in nature, and he recognized that even those who have God’s revealed will do not always obey it. Then, he went on to describe how salvation works. Notice these very significant words.

**Romans 3:1-4,25-26:** Have the Jews then any advantage over the Gentiles? Or is there any value in being circumcised? <sup>2</sup>Much, indeed, in every way! In the first place, God trusted his message to the Jews. <sup>3</sup>But what if some of them were not faithful? Does this mean that God will not be faithful? <sup>4</sup>Certainly not! God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says,

**“You must be shown to be right when you speak;  
you must win your case when you are being tried.” ...**

<sup>25-26</sup>**God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous. In the past he was patient and overlooked people’s sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.**—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

10. These are the only verses in the Bible that specifically talk about why Jesus had to die; they say three times that **Jesus died to demonstrate God’s righteousness**. It is all about God. These verses talk about God’s righteousness and God putting us right.
11. God has won, and will win, His case by the many ways in which He has demonstrated His righteousness!

**Philippians 2:10-11:** <sup>10</sup> And so, in honour of the name of Jesus

all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below  
will fall on their knees, [including Satan himself]

<sup>11</sup> and **all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,**

to the glory of God the Father.—*Good News Bible*.\*††

12. When the great controversy is over, **even Satan will be down on his knees, recognizing that God has always been right and God's ways have always been best.** There is so much more to the gospel and the truth about Jesus than most people recognize. What can we do to spread that truth to others? There are so many people in our world who have not really heard and understood the gospel. And why not? Is it because we do not teach it?

**Romans 10:14-15:** <sup>14</sup> But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? <sup>15</sup>And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, "How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!"—*Good News Bible*.\*

13. But, what about those people who have lived and died without hearing about Jesus? How will God judge them? And how will God judge us if we had opportunity to speak to them and we did not? There are multiple reasons why we need to witness. It is not to give people their only chance of being saved; but, it is to give them *their best chance* of being saved, assuming, of course, that we do a good job teaching them.
14. If you keep abreast of the news that comes up about events in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, you will read about mass evangelistic efforts that baptize thousands of people at one time. How many of those people are still in the church and growing in their knowledge of God after 1-2 years? What should or can we do to help new members grow and stay faithful?

Has anyone ever asked you, "How is your day going?" Or, "Is everything all right with you today?" What if you asked God those questions? "God, how is Your day going?" What kind of response do you think you would receive? Possibly it would be one like this: "My day has been extremely difficult. Tears filled My eyes at one thousand refugee camps filled with cold, hungry, crying children. I walked the streets of the world's crowded cities and wept with the homeless and destitute. My heart breaks over abused women and frightened children sold into sexual slavery. I witnessed the ravages of war, the devastating effects of natural disasters, and the painful agony of debilitating, deadly diseases." Would you respond back by asking, "But God, is there anything that makes You rejoice? Is there anything that brings joy to Your heart? Is there anything that makes You sing?"—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, June 29.

15. Are you happy with the life you are living? Are you convinced that you are obeying God's will for you? Look at Luke 15 to see what would make God really happy.
16. **Luke 15:6-7,9-10,22-24,32:** <sup>6</sup> "And carry it back home. Then you call your friends and neighbours together and say to them, 'I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!' <sup>7</sup>**In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 respectable people who do not need to repent....** <sup>9</sup>When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together, and says to them, 'I am so happy I found the coin I lost. Let us celebrate!' <sup>10</sup>**In the same way, I tell you, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.**" ... <sup>22</sup> "But the father called his

servants. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup>Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! <sup>24</sup>For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.' And so the feasting began.... <sup>32</sup>'But we had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.'—*Good News Bible*.\*†

All heaven rejoices when the lost are found. In a world filled with disease, disaster, and death, we can bring joy to the heart of God by sharing the “good news” of salvation with others. One of the greatest motivations to share Christ’s love is the knowledge that witnessing brings joy to the heart of God. Every time we reveal His love, all of heaven sings.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Monday, June 29.

17. Luke 15 tells us of three parables that Jesus gave when He was on this earth. Consider the **parable of the lost sheep**. What does it teach us about God? God goes after the one lost sheep. He is not willing for anyone to perish unless that person absolutely insists on going the wrong way. He will not let them go easily. Furthermore, God does not give up. He pursues people until He finds them. In the days of Jesus, if a near-eastern shepherd lost one of his sheep, he went out looking for it until he came home either with the lost sheep or with what was left of its carcass. He knew each of his sheep by name. As soon as one was missing, he knew exactly which one was missing.
18. And what happened when the shepherd found his lost sheep? He came home rejoicing, inviting his friends to celebrate with him. That is God’s response when one of His children comes back to Him.
19. Wouldn’t you like to make heaven rejoice? Wouldn’t you like to be responsible for making God happy? It has been demonstrated again and again that the best way to witness is to speak to a friend that you know personally and convince him/her to listen to the truth. Personal witnessing is most effective. And personal witnessing makes God and the angels rejoice because, sooner or later, someone is going to choose to follow God and leave his/her sinful ways.

The Dead Sea marks the earth’s lowest elevation. At 1,388 feet below sea level, it ranks as the world’s lowest sea. The river Jordan flows out of the Sea of Galilee and winds its way through the Jordan Valley until it dead-ends in the Dead Sea.

The hot, dry climate, with the intense sunlight and desert conditions, causes the water to evaporate quite rapidly. Since the Dead Sea’s salt and mineral content is 33.7 percent, little survives in its waters. There are no fish, no plants, only some microbes and bacteria at the bottom.

In our Christian lives, if the grace of God that flows into our lives does not flow out to others, we will become stagnant and all but lifeless like the Dead Sea. As Christians, that’s not how we are to live.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Tuesday, June 30.

20. Let us not be like the Dead Sea! Remember that the truth about God has often been compared to fresh water.

**John 7:37-38:** <sup>37</sup> On the last and most important day of the festival Jesus stood up

and said in a loud voice, “Whoever is thirsty should come to me, and <sup>38</sup>whoever believes in me should drink. As the scripture says, ‘Streams of life-giving water will pour out from his side.’ ”—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Luke 6:38:** “Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands—all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but **in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work**. In order to enter into His joy,—the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice,—we must participate in His labors for their redemption.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 142.2.†

Those who would be overcomers must be drawn out of themselves; and the only thing which will accomplish this great work, is to become **intensely interested in the salvation of others**.—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*\* 207.1.†

21. Are we truly “intensely interested in the salvation of others”? If not, how can we fix that problem? Seventh-day Adventism is supposed to be a participatory Christianity.
22. So, why are we not witnessing as we should? Is it because we do not want people to think we are strange? Is it because we are so selfish that we do not want to give up our time to witness? Could we be truly excited about our church?
23. What have been your own experiences in witnessing to others? Praying with others? Ministering to the needs of others? How have these experiences impacted your own faith and walk with the Lord?
24. Surely, we would all recognize that true loyalty to Christ requires a commitment to do His will. And we know exactly what following His will involves.

**1 Timothy 2:3-4:** <sup>3</sup>This is good and it pleases God our Saviour, <sup>4</sup>who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**2 Peter 3:9:** The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.—*Good News Bible*.\*

25. For over 6000 years, God has been fighting a war against the misrepresentations of Satan. **God has done everything possible to correct misinformation and to help us to understand His character and His government fully**. The gospel or good news is never about us; it is about God, Jesus Christ, and God’s plan for us to join Him in a perfect kingdom forever.

**Acts 13:47:** “For this is the commandment that the Lord has given us:

‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles,  
so that all the world may be saved.’ ”—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Isaiah 49:6:** The LORD said to me,

“I have a greater task for you, my servant.  
Not only will you restore to greatness

the people of Israel who have survived,  
but **I will also make you a light to the nations—  
so that all the world may be saved.**”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

26. From the time when God called Abraham until our day, His foremost purpose in calling any person or group of people has been to make them witnesses to others about God's love and care for them. (See Genesis 12:1-3.)
27. Unfortunately, the Old Testament tells us about the story of the Hebrew people who turned inward and cared more about themselves than they did about sharing the gospel with their neighbors. Could that happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Has that happened? Could that be true of our Sabbath school class? Why do so many of us think of the church as a kind of social club that we like to attend, perhaps to see our friends once a week? **God says that the only reason for having a church is for spreading the gospel!** How many of us are doing that? If not, is there any reason for our church?
28. Why should we witness? First of all, we want to be partners with God. We want to make heaven rejoice by sharing the good news with others. But, witnessing also has a massive beneficial effect on us. It has often been demonstrated that the best way to find out if you understand something is for you to try to explain it to someone else. Wouldn't that be true of our understanding of the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Could you clearly and convincingly explain what you believe to a person from the world who knows nothing about Christianity?
29. Think of the stories of the apostles. Peter, Paul, and others were willing to give their lives and become martyrs while doing their best to represent God correctly. Why did they do that? They were filled with love of God.

Love must dwell in the heart. A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart love for his Master. Up through the roots of his affection for Christ springs an unselfish interest in his brethren.—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*<sup>\*</sup> 490.1. Compare *The Adventist Home* 425.4.

30. What does the life and death of Jesus teach us about God? Is that important to you? Is the truth about God important enough to you that you would be willing to die for it, like Peter and Paul did? Did the disciples know that they would end up being martyrs?

The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. **It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel.** All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*<sup>\*</sup> 822.2.<sup>†</sup>

**Christ intends that His ministers shall be educators of the church in gospel work. They are to teach the people how to seek and save the lost. But is this the work they are doing? Alas, how many are toiling to fan the spark of life in a church that is ready to die!** How many churches are tended like sick lambs by those who ought to be seeking for the lost sheep! And all the time millions upon millions without Christ are perishing.

Divine love has been stirred to its unfathomable depths for the sake of men, and angels marvel to behold in the recipients of so great love a mere surface gratitude. Angels marvel at man's shallow appreciation of the love of God. Heaven stands indignant at the neglect shown to the souls of men. Would we know how Christ regards it? How would a father and mother feel, did they know that their child, lost in the cold and the snow, had been passed by, and left to perish, by those who might have saved it? Would they not be terribly grieved, wildly indignant? Would they not denounce those murderers with wrath hot as their tears, intense as their love? **The sufferings of every man are the sufferings of God's child, and those who reach out no helping hand to their perishing fellow beings provoke His righteous anger. This is the wrath of the Lamb.** To those who claim fellowship with Christ, yet have been indifferent to the needs of their fellow men, He will declare in the great Judgment day, "I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke 13:27.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 825.3-4.†

31. Why did it take so long for the Christians to spread out from Jerusalem? Did they really need persecution to motivate them to leave?

**The persecution that came upon the church in Jerusalem resulted in giving a great impetus to the work of the gospel.** Success had attended the ministry of the word in that place, and there was danger that the disciples would linger there too long, unmindful of the Saviour's commission to go to all the world. Forgetting that strength to resist evil is best gained by aggressive service, they began to think that they had no work so important as that of shielding the church in Jerusalem from the attacks of the enemy. **Instead of educating the new converts to carry the gospel to those who had not heard it, they were in danger of taking a course that would lead all to be satisfied with what had been accomplished.** To scatter His representatives abroad, where they could work for others, God permitted persecution to come upon them. Driven from Jerusalem, the believers "went everywhere preaching the word."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*\* 105.2.†

32. **Do we need persecution?**

33. Look at Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; and John 20:21. Why do you think each of the Gospel writers ended with this message from Jesus that we are to go out and share the good news with everyone in the world? Are we taking these challenges seriously? What are we doing personally to spread the gospel?
34. Repeatedly, Jesus told us that if we want to see the Father, we need to look at Jesus. If we have seen Him, we have seen the Father. **Try to think of all the things we have learned about God through the life and death of Jesus.**
35. Contrast that with the incredible number of lies and falsehoods that have been spread by Lucifer/Satan since he left heaven. Is God a vindictive judge? Is He a wrathful tyrant? Not at all! He is our loving Father, and He wants every one of us to be saved. Can we demonstrate that in the Bible, even in places like the third angel's message? We need to remember that witnessing is simply telling people about our best Friend, God. Why wouldn't we want to participate in that mission?

36. If God is so committed to sharing the good news, why doesn't He send His angels to do it? The first answer, of course, is that we need the experience! We need to learn truth so well, backwards and forwards, that we can explain it to anyone who asks us. (1 Peter 3:15)
37. There is no better time to witness than at times of crisis. When someone has moved, or when they take on a new job, or perhaps when there is a international crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, isn't that a good time to share our picture of God? Aren't people asking themselves, "Where is God in all of this?" What better time is there to speak up about God? There may be lots of things that we can learn about God from nature. But, we look at nature and also see many disasters. Is God responsible for all those disasters? Why do insurance policies call them "acts of God"?
38. We may learn a lot of things from nature; but, it will not reveal to us why there is both good and evil or how evil got started. So, what can we do? First and foremost, we need to understand and study the life and death of Jesus backwards and forwards until we know it like the back of our hands. Then, when someone raises a question, we will be able to come up with the right answer, one that puts God in a good light.
39. We also know that witnessing is one of heaven's means for bringing joy to the heart of God. For what greater goal could we possibly hope. We should witness because it is one of the best ways to grow our Christian experience. It is one of the most important ways we could grow to become like Jesus.
40. In a world of crisis when disease, death, lost jobs, and fear are everywhere, it is a perfect time to talk about God. And there is nothing else we could do for God that would make Him happier than to speak about Him correctly and encourage others to love Him as we do.

The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character, and brings peace and happiness to its possessor.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*\* 80.2.

41. Do we believe the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive? (See Acts 20:35.)
42. Think of each individual that you know personally and with whom you associate from time to time. Ask God to create an opportunity for you to witness to that person with loving spiritual guidance. God will find an opportunity. You just need to be ready when it happens.
43. So, looking at what is happening in our world right now, aren't the current economic crisis and the health crisis with the pandemic an opportunity for us to talk about God?

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