

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

Seeing People Through Jesus' Eyes

Lesson #3 for July 18, 2020

Scriptures: Mark 8:22-26; 12:28-34; John 1:40-41; 4:3-34; Luke 23:39-43; Acts 8:26-38.

1. The very name *Christian* means to be Christlike. Are we truly seeking to be like Jesus? Think of the ways Jesus reached out to people of all classes to win them for the gospel. Are we doing that? There is no one who does not need God. Wherever He went, Jesus saw souls in need of the truth. Are we able to see that? Of course, Jesus had supernatural insight that He received—probably every night—as He was directed by His Father and the Holy Spirit to approach the right people with the right message. Would They do that for us? How can we know if God is guiding us to witness to someone that we have come to know?

Mark 8:22-26: ²² They came to Bethsaida, where some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him. ²³ Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. After spitting on the man's eyes, Jesus placed his hands on him and asked him, "Can you see anything?"

²⁴ The man looked up and said, "Yes, I can see people, but they look like trees walking about."

²⁵ Jesus again placed his hands on the man's eyes. This time the man looked intently, his eyesight returned, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus then sent him home with the order, "Don't go back into the village."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Mark 8:22–26). New York: American Bible Society.

2. There are several things we need to notice about this story. This blind man's **friends** brought him to Jesus and begged Jesus to touch him. We know nothing about the blind man's faith; but, we do know about the faith of **those who brought him to Jesus**. By exercising our faith, could we bring others to Jesus?
3. How can we bring people to Christ? We cannot physically bring them to Jesus as people did while He was on this earth. Could we invite them to a Bible study? Could we invite them to our Sabbath school class? Could we offer them Bible studies? Or, should we just be friendly? Do people like us and want to be around us? If not, it will be hard for us to attract them to the gospel.
4. Of the 25 or more miracles of healing performed by Jesus that are recorded in the Gospels, this is the only time in which He took two steps to complete the healing. Why do you think Jesus did it that way on this occasion? We know nothing about the relationship between this blind man's friends and the blind man himself. Clearly, they wanted him to be healed. And they made an urgent appeal to Jesus to touch him.
5. Are we afraid to invite someone to learn about Jesus? If so, what is the reason? Are we worried about what they might think about us? Or, about Him?
6. After His two-part healing, why did Jesus tell that man not to go back into the village? More than once, Jesus told people who had been healed not to tell anyone. One reason for this was that in cases of leprosy, the person healed was required to go back to the priests and to be declared clean before he could return to his home. If word had reached those priests that Jesus had been the One who healed him, they might have given a false report in order to try to discredit Jesus.
7. On other occasions, Jesus was so beset by people wanting to be healed that it was hard for

Him to teach the people about the gospel.

Mark 3:7-8: ⁷Jesus and his disciples went away to Lake Galilee, and a large crowd followed him. They had come from Galilee, from Judea, ⁸from Jerusalem, from the territory of Idumea, from the territory on the east side of the Jordan, and from the region round the cities of Tyre and Sidon. All these people came to Jesus because they had heard of the things he was doing.—*Good News Bible*.^{*} [Some of these people had walked up to 100 miles to see Jesus.][†]

8. People were coming from all the countries around because they had heard what Jesus was doing, and they had heard about His miraculous healings. If He had allowed Himself to be distracted by such people wanting healing, He would not have accomplished anything else.
9. Always, when healing someone, Jesus sought to point them to the truth and win them for the gospel. That was His main goal.
10. For those of us who are physicians, nurses, or other healthcare professionals, do we try to heal people not only physically but also spiritually? How long do we want them to live? A few more years? Or, for the rest of eternity?
11. How often do we not see people for what they really are? Do we sometimes see people like “trees walking,” not recognizing their need of God and the potential that they could be—even for God’s work?
12. Probably the most successful evangelistic team that we know about in the Bible was the team of Paul and Dr. Luke: A minister and a doctor working together.
13. On one occasion, I personally had the privilege of working with a minister and doctor team in a small church in Maryland and saw absolutely incredible results. In a short time, the membership of that church almost doubled. Are we taking the necessary steps to make it possible for doctors and ministers to work together for the success of the gospel?

I have been surprised at being asked by physicians if I did not think it would be more pleasing to God for them to give up their medical practice and enter the ministry. I am prepared to answer such an inquirer: **If you are a Christian and a competent physician, you are qualified to do tenfold more good as a missionary for God than if you were to go forth merely as a preacher of the word.** I would advise young men and women to give heed to this matter. Perilous times are before us. The whole world will be involved in perplexity and distress, disease of every kind will be upon the human family, and such ignorance as now prevails concerning the laws of health would result in great suffering and the loss of many lives that might be saved.—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*^{*} 503.3-504.0.[†] [See also *Ev* 523.3.][‡]

I am deeply interested in the subject of medical missionary work, and the education of men and women for that work. **I could wish that there were one hundred nurses in training where there is one.** It ought to be thus. **Both men and women can be so much more useful as medical missionaries than as missionaries without the medical education.**—Ellen G. White, *The Medical Missionary*,^{*} December 1, 1892, par. 1.[†] Compare *Special Testimonies Relating to Medical Missionary Work (PH082)* [1893]; *CH* 503.1.

14. Why did Ellen White make these statements? What advantage do health care workers have in bringing people to Jesus? Every day, health care workers have people come to them who are in need and asking for help. That is a perfect time to help them in the best ways we can and then “bring them to Jesus.”

15. How was it that Jesus was able to see people, not for what they were but for what they might become? Could we somehow gain that kind of insight? An excellent example from the Bible is found in **John 4:3-34** describing Jesus at the well of Sychar. In order to understand what was going on in this story, we need to notice some important background information.
16. The *Archaeological Study Bible* makes this interesting observation about the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans:

“The rift between the Samaritans and the Judeans dates from an early period. According to 2 Kings 17, the Samaritans were descendants of Mesopotamian peoples who were forcibly settled in the lands of northern Israel by the king of Assyria in the wake of the exile of 722 B.C. They combined the worship of Yahweh with idolatrous practices.”—*The Archaeological Study Bible* (Zondervan Publishing, 2005), p. 1727.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, July 13].
17. Later, the Jews returning from Babylonian captivity refused to allow the Samaritans to join them in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. (Ezra 4:1-4; Nehemiah 2:1,19; 4:1-23)
18. Even later, the Jews went to war with the Samaritans and destroyed their temple on Mount Gerizim. <https://www.biblewalks.com/mountgerizim#Background>
19. The most direct route from Jerusalem to Nazareth, or any part of Galilee, was directly through the middle of Samaria. But, the Jews did not like to travel that way because of the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. Thus, they usually traveled down to Jericho, crossed the Jordan River, traveled up on the east side of the Jordan River until they could cross the Jordan River again near the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, and then, back into Jewish territory. But, Jesus saw someone in need in Samaria, and He went there to reach out to her. At the same time, He was hoping to break down huge walls of prejudice between Jews and Samaritans. In the middle of a hot day, Jesus sat down near a deep well and asked a woman if He could have a drink. In the Middle East in ancient times and even in modern times, it is considered to be an offense against God not to give someone water under such circumstances. And what a conversation Jesus had with that woman. He may have told her something that He had not yet even explained to His disciples when He said, “I am he [the Messiah].” (John 4:26, *GNB*[†])
20. How many other times did Jesus reveal to people directly that He was the Messiah? When He returned to Galilee and told the people in His hometown—even indirectly by quoting from Isaiah—that He was the Messiah, they tried to take Him out and stone Him! (Luke 4:16-30)
21. When Jesus had finished talking to the woman at the well at Sychar, His disciples returned and were surprised to see Him talking to her. When the disciples questioned Jesus about what He had been doing, He said something strange: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” (Matthew 9:37, *NKJV*^{*})
22. By reaching out to this Samaritan woman, Jesus was able to witness to an entire village. Are we willing to be used by God to reach out to those around us?
23. In response to the rejection by the Jews, the Samaritans had establish their own priestly line and temple on Mount Gerazim. They mixed heathen practices with the Jewish religion. But, all of that did not really matter to Jesus. He saw souls who needed God.
24. And what lesson was Jesus trying to teach His disciples through that experience?

Those who have the Spirit of Christ will see all men through the eyes of divine compassion. No matter what may be the social position, no matter what his

wealth or how high his education, if a man is in Christ, he will not be unkind, uncourteous, hard-hearted, and merciless. Since every soul is entirely dependent upon God for every blessing he enjoys, how patient, how merciful, we should be to every creature. God looked upon man in his lost condition, in his degradation and guilt, and paid the same price for the ransom of the poor and the outcast that he paid to ransom the rich with all his intrusted talents. There is no respect of persons with God. All are candidates for heaven or hell. All need to be taught every hour of God, to be diligent students, that in their time they may make a wise use of their intrusted ability, that they may be living agencies to cooperate with the heavenly intelligences for the saving of men's souls, that with tender hearts, overflowing with mercy and true goodness, they may work as Christ worked. The apostle says, "Ye are laborers together with God." You are to look after the poor, you are to look after the fatherless ones, who need your wisdom, your care, your love, and help. You are to look after the widow. You are to look after those who go in want, in hunger, in rags, who are depraved in principle; for Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost. God cares for the outcast, and do you think yourself too good, too honorable, to bear the yoke with Christ, in seeking to save the perishing? Will you despise your fellow-men? Will you become an offense to God by slighting and despising his image in man? In distinct lines Christ has revealed the relation of man to his fellow-man. Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, has settled that question forever in the example he has set to the world. Ask yourself: Am I my brother's keeper? And who is my neighbor?—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* June 20, 1892, par. 2.

25. Are there people around you that you consciously or unconsciously look down on and you are not willing to make an effort to win them for Christ? Could we come to have the same attitude toward those people as Jesus had toward the Samaritans?
26. In our efforts to try to reach out to others, one thing we must recognize is that the place where we must start is wherever we are. There is no other place to begin.
27. It is very easy to think that the job of building up the church is the work of the pastor. After all, he gets paid to do that. But, **God has a very different plan for His church. He wants everyone to be witnesses for Him.**
28. Can you identify times when God has opened the door for you to witness? Did you take advantage of those opportunities. If not, why not? Should we expect every sinner to welcome the opportunity to learn about Jesus? Certainly, they do not. If we try to witness to people, could we cause barriers to be erected between us and them?

John 1:40-41: ⁴⁰ One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ At once he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah." (This word means "Christ".)—*Good News Bible*.* [The Hebrew word, *Messiah*, means the same as the Greek word, *Christ*.]†

John 6:5-11: ⁵ Jesus looked round and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, so he asked Philip, "Where can we buy enough food to feed all these people?" ⁶ (He said this to test Philip; actually he already knew what he would do.)

⁷ Philip answered, "For everyone to have even a little, it would take more than two hundred silver coins to buy enough bread."

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, who was Simon Peter's brother, said,

⁹“There is a boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two fish. But they will certainly not be enough for all these people.”

¹⁰ “Make the people sit down,” Jesus told them. (There was a lot of grass there.) So all the people sat down; there were about 5,000 men. ¹¹Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God, and distributed it to the people who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, and they all had as much as they wanted.—*Good News Bible*.* [That boy likely told that story all his life!][‡]

John 12:20-26: ²⁰ Some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship during the festival. ²¹They went to Philip (he was from Bethsaida in Galilee) and said, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.”

²² Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus.

²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has now come for the Son of Man to receive great glory. ²⁴I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains. ²⁵Those who love their own life will lose it; those who hate their own life in this world will keep it for life eternal.

²⁶Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honour anyone who serves me.”—*Good News Bible*.*

29. Try to imagine yourself in Andrew’s position when he first met Jesus. The Jews had been waiting for the Messiah for more than 400 years! What would you have done if you had just discovered that the Messiah had come? Andrew could not wait to tell his brother, Peter. Later, Andrew brought the little boy with his lunch to Jesus. Still later, Andrew brought some Greeks to Jesus. He knew what to do: Bring them to Jesus.
30. Are our eyes open to seeing the spiritual needs of those around us? Do those people see something in us that attracts them? Are we compassionate and caring? Do they see in us a peace and a purpose in living? Are our lives an advertisement for the gospel?
31. Sometimes, we see beggars or other homeless people doing things with which we are very uncomfortable. Do we quietly despise those people? Or, do we recognize them as potential members of the family of God?

None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 258.6.

32. Read Matthew 4:18-19; Mark 12:28-34; and Luke 23:39-43.

33. Under very, very different circumstances whenever He saw an opportunity, Jesus tried to reach out to people. Look at these very interesting comments about the thief on the cross.

To Jesus in His agony on the cross there came one gleam of comfort. It was the prayer of the penitent thief. Both the men who were crucified with Jesus had at first railed upon Him; and one under his suffering only became more desperate and defiant. But not so with his companion. **This man was not a hardened criminal; he had been led astray by evil associations, but he was less guilty than many of those who stood beside the cross reviling the Saviour. He had seen and heard Jesus, and had been convicted by His teaching, but he had been turned away from Him by the priests and rulers. Seeking to stifle conviction, he had plunged deeper and deeper into sin, until he was arrested, tried as a criminal, and condemned to die on the cross.** In the judgment hall and on the way to Calvary he had been in

company with Jesus. He had heard Pilate declare, "I find no fault in Him." John 19:4. He had marked His [750] godlike bearing, and His pitying forgiveness of His tormentors. **On the cross he sees the many great religionists shoot out the tongue with scorn, and ridicule the Lord Jesus. He sees the wagging heads. He hears the upbraiding speeches taken up by his companion in guilt: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." Among the passers-by he hears many defending Jesus. He hears them repeat His words, and tell of His works. The conviction comes back to him that this is the Christ. Turning to his fellow criminal he says, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" The dying thieves have no longer anything to fear from man. But upon one of them presses the conviction that there is a God to fear, a future to cause him to tremble. And now, all sin-polluted as it is, his life history is about to close. "And we indeed justly," he moans; "for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss."**

There is no question now. **There are no doubts, no reproaches. When condemned for his crime, the thief had become hopeless and despairing; but strange, tender thoughts now spring up. He calls to mind all he has heard of Jesus, how He has healed the sick and pardoned sin. He has heard the words of those who believed in Jesus and followed Him weeping. He has seen and read the title above the Saviour's head. He has heard the passers-by repeat it, some with grieved, quivering lips, others with jesting and mockery. The Holy Spirit illuminates his mind, and little by little the chain of evidence is joined together. In Jesus, bruised, mocked, and hanging upon the cross, he sees the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. Hope is mingled with anguish in his voice as the helpless, dying soul casts himself upon a dying Saviour. "Lord, remember me," he cries, "when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 749.3-750.1.†

34. It is clear that we live in a world that is hurting. Everyone on this earth needs to hear the truth about God and to be attracted by the loveliness of Jesus. But, how many of them recognize that? They may feel a heart hunger for something beyond themselves; but, they do not recognize what it is that they need.

Seek God for a seeing eye, a listening, sensitive heart, and a willingness to share the Christ you know and love with others, and you will be on your way to an exciting journey of a lifetime. Life will take on a whole new meaning. You will have a sense of satisfaction and joy that you have never experienced before. Only those who work for souls can know the satisfaction it can bring.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, July 15.

35. Paul was, no doubt, the most outstanding evangelist in New Testament times. He was constantly looking for new places to witness. He was persecuted. He was stoned and left for dead. He was imprisoned; but, he continued to witness.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13: ¹² When I arrived in Troas to preach the Good News about Christ, I found that the Lord had opened the way for the work there. ¹³ But I was deeply worried, because I could not find our brother Titus. So I said goodbye to the people there and went on to Macedonia.—*Good News Bible*.*

36. Paul had already spent about two years in Europe, mostly in Corinth, when he arrived in

Troas on that occasion. After he had left Corinth, things had gone bad there. So, Paul had traveled back to Corinth, probably by ship, and had been treated very badly by the people of Corinth. (See 2 Corinthians 2:1-4.) After returning to Ephesus where he had been working and after a lot of prayer, he sent Titus back to Corinth with a very strong letter to the people there! (That letter may be what we have in 2 Corinthians 10-13.) He did not hear anything from Titus for a long time. He was so worried that he decided to walk all the way around through Macedonia until he could find Titus and hear what had happened in Corinth and how they had responded to his letter. He wanted to know if they had repented. When he finally met Titus who was on his way back to Ephesus, he was delighted to get the good news that the Corinthians had repented and wanted him (Paul) to return to Corinth.

37. Read **Acts 8:26-38**. Philip was carrying on an important evangelistic work in the city of Samaria. Surely, God recognized the good he was doing there. However, God saw a specific opportunity that needed to be met. So, He whisked Philip away from Samaria and took him to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. There Philip saw an Ethiopian, traveling in his carriage as he was returning from having worshiped in Jerusalem.

An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. **The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.**—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 109.2.†

38. Imagine God guiding Philip: (1) To exactly the right place, (2) To exactly the right person, (3) To the person who was reading exactly the right passage, (4) To provide such a marvelous opportunity to witness. And right there, an influence was set in motion that has impacted the country of Ethiopia from that day until this.
39. Early in His ministry, Jesus had that opportunity as recorded in John 3 to witness to a Pharisee by the name of *Nicodemus*. With divinely inspired insight, He recognized what an important role Nicodemus would later play in the history of the Christian church.

With Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus had borne the expense of the burial of Jesus. The disciples had been afraid to show themselves openly as Christ's followers, but Nicodemus and Joseph had come boldly to their aid. The help of these rich and honored men was greatly needed in that hour of darkness. They had been able to do for their dead Master what it would have been impossible for the poor disciples to do; and their wealth and influence had protected them, in a great measure, from the malice of the priests and rulers.

Now, when the Jews were trying to destroy the infant church, **Nicodemus came forward in its defense**. No longer cautious and questioning, he encouraged the faith of the disciples and used his wealth in helping to sustain the church at Jerusalem and in advancing the work of the gospel. Those who in other days had paid him reverence, now scorned and persecuted him, and he became poor in this world's goods; yet he faltered not in the defense of his faith.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 104.2-105.1.†

In the trust given to the first disciples, believers in every age have shared. Everyone who has received the gospel has been given sacred truth to impart to the world. God's faithful people have always been aggressive missionaries, consecrating their resources to the honor of His name and wisely using their talents in His service....

It is [a] fatal mistake to suppose that the work of soul-saving depends alone upon the ministry. The humble, consecrated believer upon whom the Master of the vineyard places a burden for souls is to be given encouragement by the men upon whom the Lord has laid larger responsibilities....

Why is it that many more do not respond to the call? Is it because they think themselves excused in that they do not stand in the pulpit? Let them understand that there is a large work to be done outside the pulpit by thousands of consecrated lay members.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 109.3-110.3.^{†‡}

40. Are we willing to be used by the Holy Spirit? Are we willing to work with God as a partner?

Why not pray this prayer? “Lord, I am willing to be used for the advancement of Your kingdom. Open my eyes so that I can see the providential opportunities You are opening before me each day. Teach me to be sensitive to the people around me. Help me to speak words of hope and encouragement and share Your love and truth with those I come in contact with each day.” If you will pray this prayer, God will do some extraordinary things with your life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, July 17.

41. Winning souls to the gospel is not easy. Satan is alive and well! But, God needs willing witnesses every day in every place. Who do you come in contact with that you might be able to witness to?

42. Think of unexpected people that the Holy Spirit reached out and touched to win them for the gospel. Who would have guessed that Saul of Tarsus would become a leading evangelist? But, then, the experience on the road to Damascus happened.

43. Have you tried practicing seeing people through Jesus’s eyes? No matter what they look like or what position they may be in here on this earth, there is a high probability that they might be useful members of God’s church. Jesus reached out to that woman in Samaria. He reached out to that Canaanite woman whose daughter was possessed by the Devil. He sent Philip to reach out to the Ethiopian eunuch. Jesus Himself reached out to the thief on the cross, the Roman centurion, and many other seekers. To whom can we reach out?

44. We recognize the fact that there are a great number of people who have no interest in spiritual things.

45. Couldn’t each one of us do what Andrew did and “take people to Jesus”? How could we do that in the 21st century? What can we do to introduce our family members or friends, even acquaintances, to the Lord Jesus Christ?

© 2020, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. *Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Text in brackets is added. §Italic type is in the source.

Info@theox.org

Last Modified: June 14, 2020

C:\Users\gpel\Desktop\SS-3-Witnessing-2020_07_18-Fin+.wpd