

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

Sharing the Word

Lesson #7 for August 15, 2020

Scriptures: Psalm 119:105; Jeremiah 23:29; Hebrews 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 4:2; 1 John 1:7-9; Ecclesiastes 3:1; Isaiah 55:11.

1. When we witness, we speak of Jesus. But what would we know about Jesus without the Bible? In fact, how much would we know about the great controversy, the love of God, and the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and return of our Lord if we did not have the Scriptures?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, August 8.
2. We speak of two great books which teach us about God: (1) The book of nature and (2) the Holy Bible. But, it is clear that without the Bible we would know almost nothing about the plan of salvation, the great controversy, the apostles, the patriarchs, the story of Jesus, even creation and the flood.
3. So, what are we trying to accomplish when we share God's Word with a friend? We are not trying to win an argument with them. We are not trying to force them to believe what we believe. **We are trying to share Jesus.** By sharing the loveliness of Jesus, they may be attracted, and the Holy Spirit will work on their hearts.
4. The Bible speaks of a number of different symbols of God's Word.

Psalm 119:105: Your word is a **lamp** to guide me

and a **light** for my path.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Psalm 119:105). New York: American Bible Society.†

Jeremiah 23:29: “My message is like a **fire**, and like a **hammer** that breaks rocks in pieces.”—*Good News Bible.*†*

Luke 8:11: “This is what the parable means: the **seed** is the word of God.”—*Good News Bible.*†*

Matthew 4:4: But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Human beings cannot live on **bread** alone, but need every word that God speaks.’ ”—*Good News Bible.*†*

5. Think of the implications of saying that the Word of God is a lamp or a light. And what do we mean when we say the Word is like a fire? Or, even a hammer? In what sense is the Word like seed? Or, even bread?
6. So few people in our world have any idea of the real teachings of the Bible. Opening to them the Word of God is like turning on the light. There are many ways in which God's Word is like a fire. It may consume the sin from one's life; but, it also burns like a fire in the hearts of those who have accepted the truth, and they cannot keep quiet about it.
7. Seeds hold within themselves the very essence of life. Given the right conditions in the soil, they spring to life and produce plants, food, and many things that we as humans need. Thus, seeds are life-giving.
8. Bread is the very essence of life. A person could survive for a long time on only bread and water. A good loaf of bread meets so many needs. Think of the ways in which bread meets

our physical needs and compares with God's Word as it meets our spiritual needs.

9. Read Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:12; and Psalm 33:6,9. There is no question about the fact that God has creative power. He can speak and hang a world in space. We cannot even imagine that kind of power. But, that power also can reach into human hearts and transform us into children of God. As human beings we can speak about what exists. But, God can speak into existence that which did not exist.
10. Genesis 1&2 are our key passages in dealing with the creation story. In those passages, especially in Genesis 1, it talks about God's creative power. The Hebrew word is *bara*. This word, translated as *create*, is used only to describe God's creative power.
11. God's power is essential in sustaining life every minute and every second. **"Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God."**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* December 2, 1890, par. 15.† God is the source of all life.
12. That same power that was used to create our world and everyone living here sustains us on a day-by-day basis.

The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 126.4.

13. So, why is this incredible power at God's command important to you as an individual? In addition to keeping you alive—on spiritual life support—in our sinful world, it is the power which allows us to understand and incorporate His Word into our lives. But, more than that, it is that power which will be able to create us anew at Christ's second coming, and it will give us a life that will never end. We could not take a breath without God's power.

2 Peter 1:4: In this way he has given us the very great and precious gifts he promised, so that by means of these gifts you may escape from the destructive lust that is in the world, and may come to share the divine nature.—*Good News Bible*.*

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence.... The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 555.1.†

14. What can we expect to happen in our lives as we incorporate God's Word and then share it with others?

2 Timothy 3:14-17: ¹⁴But as for you, continue in the truths that you were taught and firmly believe. You know who your teachers were, ¹⁵and you remember that ever since you were a child, you have known **the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for **teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living,** ¹⁷so that the person who serves God may be **fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.**—*Good News*

Bible.†* [Timothy had been trained to identify the truth in what he read.][†]

John 17:14-17: ¹⁴ “I gave them your message, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One. ¹⁶Just as I do not belong to the world, they do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Dedicate them to yourself by means of the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸I sent them into the world, just as you sent me into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I dedicate myself to you, in order that they, too, may be truly dedicated to you.”—*Good News Bible.*†*

15. So, what does studying God’s Word actually do for us? It reproves our sins, corrects our erroneous thinking, and instructs us in righteousness. That is true education. All of that happens as we behold and consider and study the life and death of Jesus Christ. Imagine what He has done for us! When we consider all those things, we should stand amazed! But, He has promised that by beholding Him we can become more like Him. If we have been blessed by God’s Word, shouldn’t we be excited about sharing it?
16. Someone has taken the time to carefully count the promises in God’s Word. There are more than 3000 of them! Is it possible for us to claim each of those promises for ourselves? Peter tells us that “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.” (2 Peter 1:3, *NKJV**) In the context of the great controversy and remembering how many times Christ literally met Lucifer/Satan on the battle field beginning in heaven (Revelation 12:7-12) and all the way down to the second coming, what has Christ’s death provided that is necessary for us to live godly, spiritual lives?
17. The first thing that God does for us is to forgive our sins. Unfortunately, too many people think that is all that is required for salvation. But, it is the Holy Spirit’s plan not only to deal with our sins but also to transform our lives.

Philippians 4:13,19-20: ¹³I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.... ¹⁹And with all his abundant wealth through Christ Jesus, my God will supply all your needs. ²⁰To our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever! Amen.—*Good News Bible.**

18. Living in a world with more than 7 billion other people, we might think that God is not aware of what happens to us individually. Sometimes, it might seem like He is not listening to our prayers or helping us in the ways we feel we need.

Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, “Follow Me,” and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” **He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth....**

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour’s matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and

subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him....

The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. **The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died.** Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 480.1-5.†

19. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith we cannot please God. Hebrews 11 also goes on to explain that the children of Israel failed to enter the promised land because they lacked faith. That was also true of the fellow citizens of Jesus in the city of Nazareth in His day. (Matthew 13:58) Don't you suspect that Jesus was weeping as He left Nazareth that day?

20. So, do we understand what faith is? And why it is such a key to salvation?

Acts 16:31: They answered, "Believe [have faith] in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your family."—*Good News Bible*.*‡

21. Is faith really the only requirement for salvation?

22. Based on all of Scripture, a biblical definition of *faith* stated so well so many times by one of God's best modern friends, Dr. A. Graham Maxwell, is as follows:

Faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a Person well-known. The better we know Him, the better the relationship may be. [We cannot say, *will be* because we remember the story of Lucifer!]

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God based on the more-than-adequate evidence revealed to be willing to believe what He says as soon as we are sure He is the One saying it, to accept what He offers as soon as we are sure He is the One offering it, and to do what He wishes as soon as we are sure He is the One wishing it, without reservation, for the rest of eternity. Anyone who has such faith would be perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven. [See Acts 16:31.]

Faith also means that, like Abraham, [Genesis 18:22-33] Job, [Job 42:7-8] and Moses, [Exodus 32:5-14; Numbers 14:11-25] God's friends, we know God well enough to reverently ask Him, "Why?" [See John 17:3-4.] [Sentence in brackets was also stated parenthetically many times by Dr. Maxwell. Bible texts in brackets are added.]†

23. Those who truly trust God and have faith/trust/belief in Him will enter into an experience that they are excited to share. Is that your experience?

No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. If we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit, we shall not be able to hold our peace.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 78.2.

24. Paul is an excellent example. See 1 Corinthians 11:1.

Romans 1:14-16: ¹⁴For I have an obligation to all peoples, to the civilized and to the

savage, to the educated and to the ignorant. ¹⁵So then, I am eager to preach the Good News to you also who live in Rome.

¹⁶ I have complete confidence in the gospel; it is God's power to save all who believe, first the Jews and also the Gentiles.—*Good News Bible*.*

25. If we make the Bible our study and seek every day to learn more about God and to approach closer and closer to an understanding of Him/Them, then God will show us what we need to say to those who need to hear it. There are three key principles in all of this. We need to know: (1) What we should say, (2) How we should say it, and (3) When we should say it.

Our bodies are built up from what we eat and drink; and as in the natural economy, so in the spiritual economy: it is what we meditate upon that will give tone and strength to our spiritual nature.

The theme of redemption is one that the angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of [89] eternity. Is it not worthy of careful thought and study now?...

The Bible was not written for the scholar alone; on the contrary, it was designed for the common people. The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday; and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 88.2-89.2.

26. There are many advantages to a careful, thoughtful study of the Bible.

There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times.

But there is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. One may read the whole Bible through and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. [That is especially true if one reads only one version.] **One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained.** Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets you may read a passage and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 90.1-90.2.^{††}

27. Think about the people in the Bible who were brought to the truth by Jesus and by others when they reached out to them. Do you think the Holy Spirit prepared the hearts of those people before He brought them to Jesus or the apostles? Could we trust the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of people with whom we associate on a daily basis so that when the opportune moment comes, we will be able to speak a word on God's behalf?
28. Occasionally, people may come to us depressed or anxious. And if we are willing to listen, they will divulge that they have hidden sins or problems with which they do not know how

to deal. Such people need the Holy Spirit in their lives.

29. But, what role should we play? Sometimes, we feel that it is the work of the pastor through his preaching, particularly on Sabbath mornings, to attract people to the gospel. That is not what we have been told.

Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse. **The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches.**—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers** 193.2.†

30. The Hubble telescope has revealed to us just a small portion of the vastness of God's universe. Try to imagine having a personal relationship with Someone who created all that.
31. The Bible is not just "a book of do's and don'ts," or a book of "deeds to be done and sins to be shunned." It is a way to access the power of God for transforming lives, including ours. Can you think of ways in which the Bible has enlightened your life and protected you from serious problems? How has the truth of God's Word affected your natural tendencies to stubbornness, envy, greed, and selfishness?
32. Many years ago, Matthew Henry wrote a fairly extensive commentary on the whole Bible and made these comments about the Bible as seed:

"It [the seed] will come up though it seem lost and buried under the clods, it will find or make its way through them. The seed cast into the ground will spring [forth]. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul and it will show itself, as the wisdom from above doth in a good conversation."—*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5, p. 383.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 94]. [Note that the brackets and the words in brackets in the first three lines of the quotation above are in the *Bible Study Guide*.]‡

33. You may have felt that you have tried in the past to plant the seed of truth in someone's mind as you have had opportunity. You may have found that they did not seem to respond. But, the seed is still there, and only God knows if, how, and when that seed will sprout.
34. One important principle to understand about sharing the good news about God is that people are much more open to accepting new ideas when they are in a period of transition. Maybe they are facing health challenges, or a job crisis, or a change in a relationship. Those are very good times for us to reach out to them and share the good Word.
35. Sabbath school classes should be training grounds for us to learn how to share the good news with others. They are not to be sermons given by the Sabbath school teacher. They are not just entertainment. They are supposed to be training sessions.
36. Try this challenge: Ask God every morning to bring someone into your life that needs to hear about God. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to be prepared to respond?

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