

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

Lesson #8 for August 22, 2020

Scriptures: Matthew 4:23-25; 5:13-14; 9:36; 25:31-46; Philippians 2:15; Mark 12:34; Ephesians 4:15.

1. **Jesus genuinely cared for people. He was more interested in their concerns and needs than in His own. His life was totally centered on other people. His was a ministry of loving compassion. He met the physical, mental, and emotional needs of the people around Him, and thus, their hearts were opened to the spiritual truths He taught. As He healed lepers, opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, delivered demoniacs, fed the hungry, and cared for the needy, hearts were touched and lives changed.**

That's because as people saw His genuine concern, they were open to the spiritual truths that He taught.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, August 15.[†]

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."

There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. [If we all did that, what would happen?] The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by [144] the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 143.3-4.^{†‡}

2. In our day, do people need a demonstration of the gospel as well as its proclamation? What would happen if someone with the care and concern of Jesus were to minister to lives in our day? Jesus was so considerate of others, even the most despised, that the religious leaders of His time accused Him of "receiving sinners and eating with them." (See Luke 15:2.)
3. Their religion consisted largely of avoiding anything they considered to be sinful. By contrast, Jesus remained uncontaminated by sin but associated with the world's sinners.
4. So, what was His advice to us?

Matthew 5:13-14: ¹³ "You are like salt for the whole human race. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it.

¹⁴ "You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 5:13–14). New York: American Bible Society.

5. Salt was considered to be so important and valuable in the ancient world that there was a time when Roman legions used it as currency. While it was used for preserving and flavoring food, it was considered to be a symbol of great wealth.
6. Salt, in order to be of use, must permeate completely the substance to which it is added. In the same way, Christians, according to Jesus, are to be in the world but not of the world.
7. Christians are also supposed to be the “light of the world.” Darkness can never overcome light. Light always pierces darkness. But, remaining pure and righteous in a world that is growing more and more wicked is a challenge. So, Jesus prayed for us:

John 17:15-18: ¹⁵ “I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One. ¹⁶ Just as I do not belong to the world, they do not belong to the world. ¹⁷ Dedicate them to yourself by means of the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ I sent them into the world, just as you sent me into the world.”—*Good News Bible*.*

8. What is implied by those words? One of the things that made Jesus unique was His ability to bring out the best in people. People marveled at His grace and His words. (Luke 4:22)

Matthew 8:5-10: ⁵ When Jesus entered Capernaum, a Roman officer met him and begged for help: ⁶ “Sir, my servant is sick in bed at home, unable to move and suffering terribly.”

⁷ “I will go and make him well,” Jesus said.

⁸ “Oh no, sir,” answered the officer. “I do not deserve to have you come into my house. Just give the order, and my servant will get well. ⁹ I, too, am a man under the authority of superior officers, and I have soldiers under me. I order this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes; and I order that one, ‘Come!’ and he comes; and I order my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was surprised and said to the people following him, “I tell you, I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this.”—*Good News Bible*.* [Was He speaking Latin? Aramaic? Or, Greek?][†]

9. See also *Desire of Ages* 315-317. Despite his powerful position and the backing of Rome, this Roman centurion came humbly to Jesus, asking for a favor. He did not even want to approach Jesus himself but asked that others make the request to Jesus on his behalf. But, wanting to demonstrate such an incredible faith exhibited by the centurion himself, Jesus continued toward his house until the centurion himself approached Jesus. Then came those marvelous words recorded in Matthew 10:10 (*GNB**) as above: “I tell you, I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this.”
10. Read Isaiah 42:3; Colossians 4:5-6; and Ephesians 4:15. Jesus was always extremely gentle and loving in His dealing with even the worst of sinners. He challenges us: (1) To be wise; (2) To make good use of every opportunity, using speech that is pleasant and interesting; and (3) To be ready to give the right answer to anyone who asks us. And all of this is to be done in love.
11. Jesus had the ability to heal people physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. And He did all of that in the most gracious manner. He saw the needs of people. Whether they were based on loneliness, sorrow, heartache, or physical disease, He provided them with healing, joy, and hope. Jesus ministered to people’s **felt needs** because that gave Him an opportunity to deal with their real **deepest needs**.

Matthew 9:1-7: ¹ Jesus got into the boat and went back across the lake to his own town, ²where some people brought to him a paralysed man, lying on a bed. When Jesus saw how much faith they had, he said to the paralysed man, “Courage, my son! Your sins are forgiven.”

³ Then some teachers of the Law said to themselves, “This man is speaking blasphemy!”

⁴ Jesus perceived what they were thinking, so he said, “Why are you thinking such evil things? ⁵Is it easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ⁶I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man [this Human Being] has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralysed man, “Get up, pick up your bed, and go home!”

⁷ The man got up and went home. ⁸When the people saw it, they were afraid, and praised God for giving such authority to people.—*Good News Bible*.*[‡]

12. It was the belief of the spiritual leaders in the days of Jesus that physical diseases were a direct result of that person’s sin. On a larger scale, it is true that sin is the cause of disease and sickness; however, it is not true that every disease is a direct result of a specific sin of a specific person even though that is what the people of the time believed. When his friends brought that paralyzed man and lowered him through the roof in front of Jesus, Jesus responded: “Courage, my son! Your sins are forgiven.” (Matthew 9:2, *GNB**)
13. This, of course, led the teachers of the law to accuse Him of blasphemy. So, Jesus, in effect, said: “Okay, since you believe that his sins have led to this disease, if I can heal his disease, it will prove that I can forgive his sins.” So, Jesus did exactly that, telling the man to get up and walk! And the man did.
14. See Mark 5:25-34. This woman with menorrhagia had tried to get help from every possible source without any improvement. Then, she heard about Jesus. Ellen White tells us that she thought she would just come to Jesus, present her case, and He would heal her. She had no idea how many people were trying to crowd around Jesus. When she realized the crowd was there, she thought to herself, “If I could just touch His cloak.” She did, and she was healed. But, Jesus did not allow that opportunity to pass without commending her faith and encouraging her spiritually. (See *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, 319.2-322.2.)
15. We need to remember that everyone that Jesus healed physically, eventually died. But, Jesus’s goal for them was not simply so they could be healthier sinners! He wanted them to accept the gift of eternal life. That was His ultimate goal for every patient.
16. What are we as Christians doing to share eternal life with those around us?

Matthew 4:23-25: ²³ Jesus went all over Galilee, **teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom, and healing people who had all kinds of disease and sickness.** ²⁴The news about him spread through the whole country of Syria, so that people brought to him all those who were sick, suffering from all kinds of diseases and disorders: people with demons, and epileptics, and paralytics—and Jesus healed them all. ²⁵Large crowds followed him from Galilee and the Ten Towns, from Jerusalem, Judea, and the land on the other side of the Jordan.—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

17. Notice that Jesus taught, preached, and healed. That combined, threefold ministry was a most effective way to reach people. Even today, as Ellen White explained, if we can reach people not only spiritually, but also mentally, emotionally, and physically as well, our work

will be more successful.

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 [504] 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.†

18. Are we ministering in all of the three ways that He ministered? Jesus would sometimes spend an entire day healing the sick. I am sure sick people were pushing and shoving, just to get near Him. But, **Jesus knew that His mission on this earth could be destroyed if He allowed Himself to be simply a Healer of physical diseases.**

Mark 1:32-39: ³² After the sun had set and evening had come, people brought to Jesus all the sick and those who had demons. ³³All the people of the town gathered in front of the house. ³⁴Jesus healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases and drove out many demons. He would not let the demons say anything, because they knew who he was. [Why would Mark say that?]

³⁵ **Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where he prayed.** ³⁶But Simon and his companions went out searching for him, ³⁷and when they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.”

³⁸ But Jesus answered, “We must go on to the other villages round here. **I have to preach in them also, because that is why I came.**”

³⁹ So he travelled all over Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and driving out demons.—*Good News Bible*.*† [Demon possession is still present today.]‡

19. It should be clear in this story that every act of healing that Jesus did He considered as an opportunity to reveal God’s character, relieve suffering, and, hopefully, point the sufferer to eternal life.
20. On the last day of His public ministry which was just two days before His crucifixion, the disciples approached Jesus to ask Him about His comment that, one day, the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. After talking about events leading up to the end of our world, Jesus told three parables as recorded in Matthew 25.

These parables outline the character qualities that really matter to Jesus for a people waiting for His second coming. The parable of the ten virgins emphasizes the **importance of a genuine, authentic, Spirit-filled life.** The parable of the ten talents underlines the importance of **faithfully using the gifts that God has given to each one of us.** The parable of the sheep and goats reveals that genuine Christianity truly ministers to the needs of those God brings into our lives each day....

There is a hidden hunger and thirst for Jesus in the souls of human beings that longs to be satisfied (*John 6:35; John 4:13, 14*). We are all strangers longing for home until we discover our true identity in Christ (*Eph. 2:12, 13, 19*). We are naked spiritually until clothed with His righteousness (*Rev. 3:18; Rev. 19:7, 8*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, August 20.^{†§} [We are to shed our sinful ways and become like Jesus.][†]

21. Jesus is the answer. Or, as we sometimes say around Christmastime, “Jesus is the reason for the season.” Jesus is the remedy for every life-threatening disease that might affect us including sin itself.

22. The parable of the sheep and goats recorded in Matthew 25:31-46 is a challenging one. How can we reach out to meet the needs of so many people around us?

Many have no faith in God and have lost confidence in man. But they appreciate acts of sympathy and helpfulness. As they see one with no inducement of earthly praise or compensation come into their homes, ministering to the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sad, and tenderly pointing all to Him of whose love and pity the human worker is but the messenger—as they see this, their hearts are touched. Gratitude springs up. Faith is kindled. They see that God cares for them, and they are prepared to listen as His word is opened.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 145.1.

23. So, we have the exceedingly challenging task of mixing with the world without being contaminated by its sin. Can we do that? If we were really as selfless, caring, gracious, kind, and loving as Jesus was, the Devil would do everything he possibly could to destroy us and our ministry. Let us be clear about that. The Devil hates Christlikeness!

24. Are there other kinds of ministries that we as individual churches and individual church members could be involved in that would better represent Jesus?

Millennia ago, in the vast heavenly realms of space, Lucifer rebelled against God. He claimed that God was unfair, unjust, and unloving. Jesus’ life testifies to His Father’s immense love. Every miracle of healing reveals the Father’s love. Every time a demon-possessed individual is delivered, it speaks of the Father’s love. Every time Jesus feeds the hungry, comforts the sorrowing, forgives the guilty, strengthens the weak, severs the chains of sin, or raises the dead, He reveals the Father’s love.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 106.

25. Have we even tried to be salt and light to the world around us? Think of the implications of that. Are our lives like lights in the darkness?

26. Some ancient Christians thought they could solve the problem of being contaminated by the world by making themselves completely and totally separate. A famous example was Simeon Stylites. He moved outside of a small town near Aleppo, Syria, built a tower 10 feet tall, and lived on top of it. He eventually extended that tower to nearly 60 feet. In the small space available to him at the top of the tower, he exercised, prayed, counseled people who sought him out, and, finally, died. There were times when he fasted for long periods of time. People thought he was crazy. But, his situation was so remarkable that people sought him, assuming he must be a saint. To feed himself, he had small boys from the nearby village who would climb up the pillar and pass parcels of flatbread and goats milk to him. Sometimes, he would pull up larger quantities of food in a bucket using a pulley system.

Earlier in his life, he fasted in a hut for so long that he could hardly stand.

—https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_Stylites#/

27. See the PowerPoint on him at <https://www.theox.org/index.cfm/PageID/1048/index.html>
28. By contrast to this experience of Simeon Stylites, Jesus prayed in that very famous prayer recorded in John 17: “I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One.” (John 17:15, *GNB**)
29. Someone has suggested: “Christians are like a boat in the water. It is all right for the boat to be in the water if there is no water in the boat.”
30. Think of the scathing rebukes Jesus could have given to people like the woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan woman at the well, or even Peter after his denial. But, His words were always kind and gentle and full of forgiveness.

Jesus’ method of evangelism was to find a need and meet it. His comprehensive, threefold ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing transformed lives. The Gospels reveal Jesus meeting the “felt” needs of people so that He could touch them at the point of their deepest spiritual needs. **Consider the Gospel of John. In John 2, at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee, Jesus meets a social need by saving the host from embarrassment. In John 3, Jesus meets Nicodemus’s deepest heart hunger for an authentic faith. In John 4, Jesus treats the Samaritan woman with dignity and respect, meeting her emotional need for a sense of self-worth. In John 5, Jesus meets physical needs in the miraculous healing of a desperately ill man who hopelessly lies by a pool of purportedly therapeutic waters for 38 years. In John 6, when Jesus breaks the bread and feeds 5,000 hungry people, the crowd wants to make Him king (*John 6:14, 15*).**

What made Jesus’ popularity so high at this point in His ministry? The world had never seen anyone with so much unselfish love who could meet their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. It was here in John 6 that Jesus preached that powerful sermon on the bread of life. For the first time, many of His hearers understood that He was calling for a deep spiritual commitment—a commitment that many of them were unwilling to make; so, they walked away (*John 6:66*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 108-109.^{†§}

31. Saving sinners was Jesus’s most important mission. And everything He did, whether it was healing or teaching or simply talking to people, was for the purpose of leading to their salvation. He wanted to deliver people from the bondage of sin.
32. So, who around you needs your kind, loving attention and help? Could it be a single mom who needs a break? An elderly, retired man who has lost his wife? A young couple that has just moved into the neighborhood? Or, perhaps someone who needs to quit smoking, adopt a healthier lifestyle, lose weight, reduce stress, or exercise more? Could we reach out to such people and make a difference in their lives on our way to introducing them to the Jesus Christ that we know and love? That is what Jesus did every day.

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