

God's Mission My Mission

Esther and Mordecai

Lesson #12 for December 23, 2023

Scriptures: Daniel 1:1-12; 6:1-9; Esther 2:1-10,20; 3:1-5; 4:1-14; 9:1-12.

1. The book of Esther is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman. The book of Esther is also quite remarkable in that it does not explicitly mention *prayer* or the name of God. Chapter 1 of Esther tells us that Queen Vashti was banished from the throne because she refused to dance and appear before the king and a group of drunken men. Then, some of those men suggested to the king that he hold a beauty contest and pick the new queen that he liked best. Among those chosen for the contest was Esther, the cousin and adopted daughter of Mordecai.
2. Do you think Esther had any choice in the events of the story so far?
3. None of us have the privilege of living in a country where all the rules are just what we Adventists would like. Wouldn't it be nice if Sabbath observance was the law of the land? Or, would it be?
4. We notice from the Bible that a number of very important characters lived and worked in environments that were not conducive to their religion. So many people have failed to follow faithfully the rules of their religion. However, they claim to believe that Jesus Himself quoted these words from Isaiah 29:13.

Isaiah 29:13: The Lord [*sic*] said, "These people claim to worship me, but their words are meaningless, and their hearts are somewhere else. **Their religion is nothing but human rules and traditions**, which they have simply memorized."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Isaiah 29:13). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

5. Think of the stories of Joseph and Daniel, and in our study for this week, Esther. Daniel and his three friends were members of the royal family in Jerusalem. As far as we know, they were brought up following the guidance of Scripture. As we know from Daniel 1, when they got to Babylon, they specifically requested that they not violate their rules for eating and drinking. What do you think the other young men were eating while Daniel and his three friends ate "vegetables"? Did they eat together? Did Daniel and his friends get teased about their diet? These young men were to represent the Babylonian government.
6. After Daniel and his three friends had done very well in school and had been promoted to high positions in the government, the story of the golden statue took place.

Daniel 3:1-7: ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar had a gold statue made, 27 metres [*sic-Br*] high and nearly three metres [*sic-Br*] wide, and he had it set up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²Then the king gave orders for all his officials to come together—the princes, governors, lieutenant-governors, commissioners, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other officials of the provinces. They were to attend the dedication of the statue which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³When all these officials gathered for the dedication and stood in front of the statue, ⁴a herald announced in a loud

voice, “**People of all nations, races, and languages! ⁵You will hear the sound of the trumpets, followed by the playing of oboes, lyres, zithers, and harps; and then all the other instruments will join in. As soon as the music starts, you are to bow down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶Anyone who does not bow down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”**

⁷And so, as soon as they heard the sound of the instruments, the people of all the nations, races, and languages bowed down and worshipped the gold statue which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

7. Were King Zedekiah and King Jehoachin both at the dedication of that golden statue?

[From the *SDA Bible Dictionary*:] Once he [Zedekiah] sent envoys to Babylonia, presumably with tribute and assurances of his loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, and in his 4th regnal year he went to Babylon himself, probably for the same purpose (chs. [Jeremiah] 29:3; 51:59). It is possible, though purely conjectural, that this visit may have been connected with the dedication of the great image erected in the plain of Dura (Dan 3).—Horn, S. H. (1979). In *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (p. 1206). Review and Herald Publishing Association.‡ [Were other Jews bowing?]*‡

8. As recorded in Daniel 6, Daniel was accused of worshiping his God and not worshiping the king. He was thrown into a den of lions where God protected him from the lions and his enemies. Amazingly, each of the stories recorded in Daniel turned out well. But, even if they had not turned out well, those young men did what was right in the setting.
9. Nebuchadnezzar conquered the country of Judah and surrounded and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. It took three different invasions for that to happen! But, as we know, the capital of Babylon did not survive forever. Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians. Fortunately, King Cyrus had a different attitude toward the Jews; he allowed all those who wanted to return to Jerusalem to go. However, experts estimate that only 1 to 2% of the Jews ever returned to their homeland. Jerusalem was a pile of rubble!
10. This takes us to the setting where the story of Esther took place. While a few of the Jews were returning to their homeland and trying to reestablish a government where God was worshiped properly, Mordecai, probably an employee of the government of Persia, moved east instead of west. He was in the city of Susa or Shushan in Persia. That is where a replacement was sought for Vashti, the deposed queen.

Esther 2:1-9: ¹ Later, even after the king’s anger had cooled down, he kept thinking about what Vashti had done and about his proclamation against her. ²So some of the king’s advisers who were close to him suggested, “Why don’t you make a search to find some beautiful young virgins? ³You can appoint officials in every province of the empire and order them to bring all these beautiful young women to your harem here in Susa, the capital city. Put them in the care of Hegai, the eunuch who is in charge of your women, and let them be given a beauty treatment. ⁴Then take the young woman you like best and make her queen in Vashti’s place.”

The king thought this was good advice, so he followed it.

⁵ There in Susa lived a Jew named Mordecai son of Jair; he was from the tribe of Benjamin and was a descendant of Kish and Shimei. ⁶When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took King Jehoiachin of Judah into exile from Jerusalem, along with a group of captives, Mordecai was among them. ⁷He had a cousin, **Esther, whose Hebrew name was Hadassah**; she was a **beautiful young woman**, and had a good figure. At the death of her parents, Mordecai had adopted her and brought her up as his own daughter.

⁸ When the king had issued his new proclamation and many young women were being brought to Susa, Esther was among them. She too was put in the royal palace in the care of Hegai, who had charge of the harem. ⁹Hegai liked Esther, and she won his favour [*sic-Br*]. He lost no time in beginning her beauty treatment of massage and special diet. He gave her the best place in the harem and assigned seven young women specially chosen from the royal palace to serve her.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡} [What diet?][‡]

11. Who advised King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) to hold that beauty contest and choose a new queen? Why did they do it?

Esther 1:16-18: ¹⁶ Then Memucan declared to the king and his officials: “Queen Vashti has insulted not only the king but also his officials—in fact, every man in the empire! ¹⁷Every woman in the empire will begin to look down on her husband as soon as she hears what the queen has done. They’ll say, ‘King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to come to him, and she refused.’ ¹⁸When the wives of the royal officials of Persia and Media hear about the queen’s behaviour [*sic-Br*] they will be telling their husbands about it before the day is out. Wives everywhere will have no respect for their husbands, and husbands will be angry with their wives.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

12. What do these words tell us about the attitude toward women in those days?
13. It is apparent from the context that Mordecai and Esther were faithfully practicing their Jewish religion. However, they recognized that they were in a hostile environment.
14. Look at these words of advice from Mordecai to Esther.

Esther 2:10,20: ¹⁰ Now, on the advice of Mordecai, Esther had kept it secret that she was Jewish....

²⁰As for Esther, she had still not let it be known that she was Jewish. Mordecai had told her not to tell anyone, and she obeyed him in this, just as she had obeyed him when she was a little girl under his care.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

15. Are there ever times in our day when it might be wisest to keep quiet about our beliefs?
16. We do not know exactly what position Mordecai held in the government. However, apparently, he worked near the king’s palace.
17. The next main event in the story is found in Esther 3:1-15.

Esther 3:1-15: ¹ Some time later King Xerxes promoted a man named Haman to the position of prime minister. Haman was the son of Hammedatha, a descendant of Agag [king of the Amalekites, Israel’s enemies.] ²The king ordered all the officials in his service to show their respect for Haman by

kneeling and bowing to him. They all did so, except for Mordecai, who refused to do it. ³The other officials in the royal service asked him why he was disobeying the king's command; ⁴day after day they urged him to give in, but he would not listen to them. "I am a Jew," he explained, "and I cannot bow to Haman." So they told Haman about this, wondering if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct. ⁵**Haman was furious when he realized that Mordecai was not going to kneel and bow to him, ⁶and when he learnt that Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to do more than punish Mordecai alone. He made plans to kill every Jew in the whole Persian Empire.**

⁷ In the twelfth year of King Xerxes' rule, in the first month, the month of Nisan, Haman ordered the lots to be cast ("purim", [*sic*] they were called) to find out the right day and month to carry out his plot. The thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, was decided on.

⁸ So Haman told the king, "There is a certain race of people scattered all over your empire and found in every province. They observe customs that are not like those of any other people. Moreover, they do not obey the laws of the empire, so it is not in your best interests to tolerate them. ⁹If it please Your Majesty, issue a decree that they are to be put to death. If you do, I guarantee that I will be able to put more than 340 tonnes [*sic-Br*] of silver into the royal treasury for the administration of the empire."

¹⁰ The king took off his ring, which was used to stamp proclamations and make them official, and gave it to the enemy of the Jewish people, Haman son of Hammedatha, the descendant of Agag. ¹¹The king told him, "The people and their money are yours; do as you like with them."

¹² So on the thirteenth day of the first month Haman called the king's secretaries and dictated a proclamation to be translated into every language and system of writing used in the empire and to be sent to all the rulers, governors, and officials. It was issued in the name of King Xerxes and stamped with his ring. ¹³Runners took this proclamation to every province of the empire. It contained the instructions that **on a single day**, the thirteenth day of Adar, **all Jews**—young and old, women and children—**were to be killed**. They were to be slaughtered without mercy and their belongings were to be taken. ¹⁴The contents of the proclamation were to be made public in every province, so that everyone would be prepared when that day came. [Did that include the people in Jerusalem?]

¹⁵ At the king's command the decree was made public in the capital city of Susa, and runners carried the news to the provinces. The king and Haman sat down and had a drink while the city of Susa was being thrown into confusion.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

18. We are not told very specifically why Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. However, we can guess. Haman was a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites. The Amalekites were longtime enemies of the Israelites from the time Israel left Egypt and continuing through their history. Of course, Mordecai may have refused to bow to him just because he served only God.

19. Here is where the story becomes challenging.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] In all ages the people of God have been the light of the world. **Joseph was a light in Egypt.... From Daniel and his companions and Mordecai, a bright light shone amid the moral darkness of the kingly courts of Babylon [and Persia]. In holy vision, God revealed to Daniel light and truth that he had concealed from other men; and through his chosen servant this light has shone down through the ages, and will continue to shine to the end of time.**—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*,* May 13, 1884, par. 2.†‡

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] When Haman wanted to destroy the Jewish people, describing them as “ ‘a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws’ ” (*Esther 3:8, NIV*). A people whose customs are different and who do not obey the king’s laws? **[That is] a perfect recipe for persecution.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, December 19.‡§

20. Do you suppose a time could come not too far in the future when we will be tested like that? The story of what happened next is described in Esther 4:1-14.

Esther 4:1-14: ¹ When Mordecai learnt of all that had been done, he tore his clothes in anguish. Then he dressed in sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and walked through the city, wailing loudly and bitterly, ²until he came to the entrance of the palace. He did not go in because no one wearing sackcloth was allowed inside. ³Throughout all the provinces, wherever the king’s proclamation was made known, there was loud mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept and wailed, and most of them put on sackcloth and lay in ashes. [They had several months to prepare for their doom!]

⁴When Esther’s young women and eunuchs told her what Mordecai was doing, she was deeply disturbed. She sent Mordecai some clothes to put on instead of the sackcloth, but he would not accept them. ⁵Then she called Hathach, one of the palace eunuchs appointed as her servant by the king, and told him to go to Mordecai and find out what was happening and why. ⁶Hathach went to Mordecai in the city square at the entrance of the palace. ⁷Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him and just how much money Haman had promised to put into the royal treasury if all the Jews were killed. ⁸He gave Hathach a copy of the proclamation that had been issued in Susa, ordering the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai asked him to take it to Esther, explain the situation to her, and ask her to go and plead with the king and beg him to have mercy on her people. ⁹Hathach did this, ¹⁰and Esther gave him this message to take back to Mordecai: ¹¹ “If anyone, man or woman, goes to the inner courtyard and sees the king without being summoned, that person must die. That is the law; everyone, from the king’s advisers to the people in the provinces, knows that. There is only one way to get round this law: if the king holds out his gold sceptre [*sic-Br*] to

someone, then that person's life is spared. But it has been a month since the king sent for me."

¹² When Mordecai received Esther's message, ¹³he sent her this warning: "Don't imagine that you are safer than any other Jew just because you are in the royal palace. **¹⁴If you keep quiet at a time like this, help will come from heaven to the Jews**, and they will be saved, but you will die and your father's family will come to an end. **Yet who knows—maybe it was for a time like this that you were made queen!**"—*Good News Bible*.*††

21. Given all that you know about the story, if she had kept quiet, do you think Esther could have survived without revealing that she was Jewish? Doubtful!
22. She probably knew that once she got involved, she was putting her life on the line.
23. However, following three days of fasting (and prayer), she approached the king.

Esther 5:1-2: ¹ On the third day of her fast Esther put on her royal robes and went and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, facing the throne room. The king was inside, seated on the royal throne, facing the entrance. ²When the king saw Queen Esther standing outside, she won his favour, [*sic-Br*] and he held out to her the gold sceptre. [*sic-Br*] She then came up and touched the tip of it.—*Good News Bible*.*†

24. Read Esther 9:1-12 to see the results of what happened.

Esther 9:1-12: ¹ The thirteenth day of Adar came, the day on which the royal proclamation was to take effect, the day when the enemies of the Jews were hoping to get them in their power. But instead, the Jews triumphed over them. ²In the Jewish quarter of every city in the empire the Jews organized themselves to attack anyone who tried to harm them. People everywhere were afraid of them, and no one could stand against them. ³In fact, all the provincial officials—governors, administrators, and royal representatives—**helped the Jews because they were all afraid of Mordecai**. ⁴It was well known throughout the empire that Mordecai was now a powerful man in the palace and was growing more powerful. **⁵So the Jews could do what they wanted with their enemies. They attacked them with swords and slaughtered them.** [Why were they afraid of Mordecai?]

⁶ In Susa, the capital city itself, the Jews killed 500 people. ⁷⁻¹⁰Among them were the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews: Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. **However, there was no looting.**

¹¹ That same day the number of people killed in Susa was reported to the king. ¹²He then said to Queen Esther, "In Susa alone the Jews have killed 500 people, including Haman's ten sons. What must they have done out in the provinces! What do you want now? You shall have it. Tell me what else you want, and you shall have it."—*Good News Bible*.*††

25. We are introduced at this point to the idea that it was a miracle of God to protect the Jewish people. Do you think that what happened was a miracle of God, rescuing the Jewish nation? Or, was this just a natural occurrence? Was Satan behind that edict?

26. There was something very interesting that happened as a result of all of that.

Esther 8:17: In every city and province, wherever the king's proclamation was read, the Jews held a joyful holiday with feasting and happiness. In fact, **many other people became Jews, because they were afraid of them now.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

27. Is that a good way to recruit new members?

28. Jews still celebrate the story of Esther by reading the book of Esther every year during Purim festivities.

[BSG:] Challenge: Pray that God will give you the courage to share something He has done for you with one of the people on your prayer list this week.

Challenge Up: Begin a diary or journal of special little things (or big things) that God does for you. Review it and pray that God will bring these things to your mind at just the right time so you can share them with someone.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Thursday, December 21.[‡]

29. So, what should we as 21st century Christians do with this story?

[EGW:] To every household and every school, to every parent, teacher, and child upon whom has shone the light of the gospel, comes at this crisis the question put to Esther the queen at that momentous crisis in Israel's history, "Who knoweth whether *thou* art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14.—Ellen G. White, *Education*^{*} 262.2-263.0.^{‡§}

[EGW:] Esther was a beautiful Jewish girl, cousin of Mordecai, who took her into his home after her parents died, and loved her as his own daughter. **God used her to save the Jewish people in the land of Persia.**

In ancient times the Lord worked in a wonderful way through consecrated women who united in His work with men whom He had chosen to stand as His representatives. He used women to gain great and decisive victories. More than once, in times of emergency, He brought them to the front and worked through them for the salvation of many lives. Through Esther the queen, the Lord accomplished a mighty deliverance for His people. At a time when it seemed that no power could save them, Esther and the women associated with her, **by fasting and prayer and prompt action, met the issue, and brought salvation to their people....** [Satan was trying to wipe out all the Jewish people in his attempts to prevent the arrival of Jesus.]

A study of women's work in connection with the cause of God in the Old Testament times will teach us lessons that will enable us to meet emergencies in the work today. We may not be brought into such a critical and prominent place as were the people of God in the time of Esther; but often converted women can act an important part in more humble positions. This many have been doing and are still ready to do.—Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God*^{*} 45.2-46.0.^{†‡}

30. This lesson raises some very challenging questions.

[BSG:] 1. The book of Esther does leave us with some unanswered questions, particularly concerning Esther's role in the court of the king, even though she was elevated to the role of queen. How do we reconcile these things with her faith, or can we? [Should faithful Jewish girls get married to pagan kings? If Esther had been in the place of Vashti, would she have done the same thing?]

2. The famous words of Esther, " 'and if I perish, I perish!' " (*Esther 4:16, NKJV*), have echoed down through the millennia as an example of faithfulness even in the face of death. How do her words reflect what God's people will face in the last days, when the issues in Revelation 13 become a reality?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, December 22.^{‡§} [Someday, will you worship the Devil?][‡]

[BSG:] The book of Esther is unique for several reasons. One of those reasons is the lack of an explicit reference to God. Nowhere is God mentioned in the entire narrative's sequence—not by the Jewish characters, the story's heroes, nor by the non-Jewish characters. And yet, despite this oddity, the book contains valuable wisdom for those who follow Jesus and desire to share their experience with God in a world where many are not open to explicit expressions of faith. [What should we learn from this?]

Often when people in the church think about or discuss mission, they focus on explicit faith-oriented actions, such as evangelistic meetings, distribution of faith-based literature, Bible studies, or other forms of outreach. These things require a certain level of freedom and connection to a community to foster any meaningful transformation. But what about places where government doesn't allow faith-based activities? What about areas where people are entirely uninterested in such activities? Often the church ignores such settings. But places that fit this description make up a substantial portion of the world's population. This week, through the lens of Esther and Mordecai, we will see that God desires us to be creative in our witness, even in places and spaces that are not open to overt mission work.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 158.[‡]

[BSG:] They took this stand in a context in which they were part of a minority group, underappreciated in the empire. Yet, through God's influence and the willingness of Esther and Mordecai to make wise decisions in connection with God's overall plan for humanity, the queen and her adoptive father were able to be a blessing to people and to be part of a moment in history that was passed down via the pages of the Bible and the practice of the festival of Purim (*Esther 9:18–32*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 159.^{‡§}

Esther 9:18-32: ¹⁸The Jews of Susa, however, made the fifteenth a holiday, since they had slaughtered their enemies on the thirteenth and fourteenth and then stopped on the fifteenth. ¹⁹This is why Jews who live in small towns observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a joyous holiday, a time for feasting and giving gifts of food to one another.

[The Festival of Purim]

²⁰ Mordecai had these events written down and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, throughout the Persian Empire, ²¹telling them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar as holidays every year. ²²These were the days on which the Jews had rid themselves of their enemies; this was a month that had been turned from a time of grief and despair into a time of joy and happiness. They were told to observe these days with feasts and parties, giving gifts of food to one another and to the poor. ²³So the Jews followed Mordecai's instructions, and the celebration became an annual custom.

²⁴ Haman son of Hammedatha—the descendant of Agag and the enemy of the Jewish people—had cast lots (or “purim”, [sic] as they were called) to determine the day for destroying the Jews; he had planned to wipe them out. ²⁵But Esther went to the king, and the king issued written orders with the result that Haman suffered the fate he had planned for the Jews—he and his sons were hanged from the gallows. ²⁶That is why the holidays are called Purim. Because of Mordecai's letter and because of all that had happened to them, ²⁷the Jews made it a rule for themselves, their descendants, and anyone who might become a Jew, that at the proper time each year these two days would be regularly observed according to Mordecai's instructions. ²⁸It was resolved that every Jewish family of every future generation in every province and every city should remember and observe the days of Purim for all time to come.

²⁹ Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai, also wrote a letter, putting her full authority behind the letter about Purim, which Mordecai had written earlier. ³⁰The letter was addressed to all the Jews, and copies were sent to all the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire. It wished the Jews peace and security ³¹and directed them and their descendants to observe the days of Purim at the proper time, just as they had adopted rules for the observance of fasts and times of mourning. This was commanded by both Mordecai and Queen Esther. ³²Esther's command, confirming the rules for Purim, was written down on a scroll.—*Good News Bible*.*†

31. ***Where do you think the Christians are more committed to the truth: People who live where it is easy to speak to others about God? Or, people who live in places where they take their lives in their hands to witness for God? Where do you think the gospel is spreading the fastest?***

32. ***Would it have been better if Mordecai had just stayed away from Haman? Or, is this a case illustrating the truth found in Romans 8:28?***

Romans 8:28: We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose.—*Good News Bible*.*†

33. The Bible study guide does not mention the fact that Mordecai saved the king's life by reporting on two of the king's courtiers who were seeking to kill them. It also clearly suggested Queen Esther was very cordial when welcoming the king to eat with her along with Haman.

Esther 7:3: Queen Esther answered, “If it please Your Majesty to grant my humble request, my wish is that I may live and that my people may live. ⁴My people and I have been sold for slaughter. If it were nothing more serious than being sold into slavery, I would have kept quiet and not bothered you about it; but we are about to be destroyed—exterminated!”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

[BSG:] Herein lies the lesson for us today. Most followers of Jesus are not official employees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Even fewer occupy such positions as a pastor, teacher, or chaplain. Yet, according to the story of Esther and Mordecai, it is often not the official workers who have the most significant amount of influence in a community. Usually, the average church member, who may work in secular businesses or for a civil service entity, has the greatest missional potential. We must never underestimate the role our relationships with people may have in the long run.... While most followers of Jesus may not be in such high-profile positions as Esther and Mordecai were, they are still in places and spaces to which pastors and other people employed by the church have no access.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} 159-160.[‡]

34. How many of the people that we know about in the Bible were ordinary people living more or less ordinary lives? How many were kings? Or, princes? Or, famous people?

[BSG:] If a person were to tally up all the stories in the Bible about faithful followers of God, they would be surprised at how many of the stories are about everyday people living out their faith in everyday settings. The Bible demonstrates that God’s mission is for all people and that any person can be a participant in that mission. It does not necessarily require that a person leave behind his or her career in a field other than church work. In fact, in most cases, what is needed is for more people to see their existing places of work as their mission field. This understanding does not always require that they explicitly evangelize their coworkers. It often means that they work with honesty and integrity, allowing the relationships that come from such an approach to blossom naturally. There is a high chance that the people who implement such an approach will periodically find themselves in situations that require courage and decisions that have an impact far beyond themselves. Living in a relationship with God will prepare them for such situations.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} 160.[‡]

35. So, what can we do about promoting the work of God in places where it is not easy? Would it be appropriate to set aside a certain fixed time every month, even every week, to pray intentionally for people in those places? Is that something that the General Conference should be promoting? There are many countries to which we cannot send open missionaries. How will the gospel be finished in those places?

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