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Pastor Martin is married to Nolly Kalbermatter, who is a teacher by training. They have two children. Christian, their son, is serving as a pastor in Michigan, and their daughter Melissa is studying Education at Southern Adventist University. The Martin family enjoys spending time outdoors and traveling together.

Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion book to the Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.

Witnessing:

Turning the World Upside Down

The book of Acts begins with a short account of Jesus' last days on earth, after which Luke swiftly moves into his stirring portrayals of the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church. He begins these portrayals with a description of Jesus' followers as they are being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), an event that launched them into the world with a power never before seen.

The imagery in Acts 2:3 symbolizes the will of God for all Christians and the goals all Christians should have:

(1) the communication of the gospel (tongues), and

(2) the sanctifying presence of God, which purifies us of sinful characteristics and sets our hearts aflame with the desire and the power to witness (fire).

Just as these tongues of fire "separated and came to rest on each of them" (NIV) in the upper room, so each of us can be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to communicate the gospel with energy and passion. This quarter, travel with your fellow Sabbath School members through the book of Acts to learn not only how the early Christians witnessed but how you can apply their methods to your particular place and time.

As you study, keep in mind those you know who have not committed their lives to Jesus Christ. Ask God what part He would have you play in their conversion. Then as Jesus' followers did, not only in the beginning of Acts but throughout the entire book, pray without ceasing for the Holy Spirit's power. Then the glory and the story of Acts will be not only theirs but yours as well!

This Bible Study Guide does not discuss all the illustrations of witnessing that exist in the book of Acts. "The whole of the book of Acts should receive careful study. It is full of precious instruction; it records experiences in evangelistic work, the teachings of which we need in our work today."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1051. In addition to studying this guide, why not see what other examples of witnessing in the book of Acts you can find?

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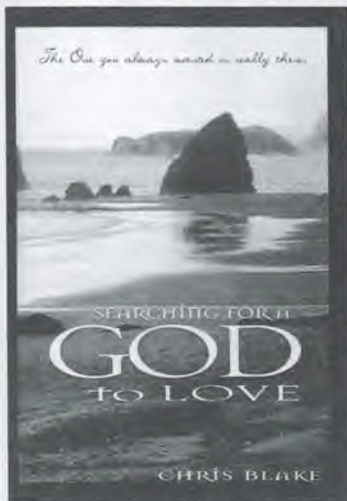
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thing that deals with hurtful issues and irksome questions; something contemporary that addresses where they are now.

Packed with lively stories, intelligent dialogue, and believable hope, *Searching for a God to Love* is a one-of-a-kind sharing book for family members, friends, and acquaintances who have drifted from God or simply have never found a God they could love. Now they will.

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Witnessing: A Christian Fundamental



Sabbath Afternoon

“SDA SHOE MAKER.” So reads the sign by the road in the town of Agusan del Sur, Philippines. At Washington Dulles International Airport, a businesswoman, delayed for more than an hour, shares religious tracts along with her business cards to other waiting passengers. A photographer in Zacateculoca, El Salvador, consistently leads tens, and sometimes more than a hundred people, to Jesus every year. Some of the youth in your church go with their Sabbath School leader to conduct a branch Sabbath School at an orphanage on Sabbath afternoons.

Their circumstances vary greatly. But what one thing do all these people have in common? They love their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and are serving as His witnesses. As you study this week’s lesson, pray that God will help you to be aware of that special witnessing place He has designated just for you!

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. What Is a Witness? (Acts 9:1-22; 22:15, 16, 20).
- II. The Goal of Witnessing (Matt. 28:18-20).
- III. Reasons for Witnessing (Acts 8:26-31; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:14).
- IV. Three Basic Approaches to Witnessing (Daniel 1; Matt. 5-7; Acts 18:4).
- V. Witnessing as a Matter of Obedience (Acts 5:17-42).

MEMORY TEXT: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I [Jesus] have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV).

WHAT IS A WITNESS? (Acts 9:1-22; 22:15, 16, 20).

What charge did Paul receive on the day of his baptism? Acts 22:15, 16. Based on his conversion experience in Acts 9:1-22, list at least three principles of witnessing. What phrases attract your attention?

DEFINITION: *A witness is a person who can give a first-hand account of something. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:3).*

Witnessing is not something we do because it is a "program" of our local church. It is a natural result of our conversion and commitment to Jesus. We witness because we are in love with Him. One reason for a lack of real witnessing among some of us is that we know little of Jesus and His power in our own lives. We cannot witness if we have nothing to share. "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. . . . If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good we shall have something to tell."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 78.

The apostles had seen and heard events about which they were eager to tell others. Death might silence them. But they could not deny their experience. We become powerful witnesses when the joy and the assurance of salvation work wonders in our life.

What word did Paul use to describe Stephen? What is the importance of that word? Acts 22:20.

The Greek word for "witness" is *martus*. *Martus* is also the root for the English term *martyr*. "Now, a martyr is one who is convinced of truth, and manifests it in life and death. The fires of persecution do not make martyrs; they simply reveal them. The man who is not already a martyr never lays down his life for the truth. The martyrs died, not that they might become martyrs, but because they were martyrs."—LeRoy E. Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter*, rev. ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1956), pp. 106, 107.

What would happen if church members sacrificed not only time and money but life itself in order to share Jesus and communicate the gospel? Should we wait until the latter rain falls to develop that attitude? Why, or why not? How can you serve Jesus as a witness now?

THE GOAL OF WITNESSING (Matt. 28:18-20).

According to Matthew 28:18-20, what is the goal of witnessing?

Identify the action words (verbs) of Christ's great commission. Matt. 28:19, 20.

The first verb, "go," could be translated to mean "as you go" or "while going." "Baptizing" and "teaching" also are action verbs. They indicate how we are to make disciples. The one command is "make disciples."

What is a disciple?

DEFINITION: *The word disciple means "followers of a master," "people who follow the discipline taught by a teacher." The term is equal to Christian. In the book of Acts, it refers to those who confess Jesus as the Christ. Discipleship suggests the idea of total attachment to someone. Disciples are people who are committed to making Jesus the Lord of their life.*

Disciples are eager to use their spiritual gifts to advance God's kingdom because Christ's love motivates them to do so. They have been born again by the Holy Spirit. Because they are new creatures in Christ, they will have characteristics that the world will recognize as different from their own. They will not be perfect. But they are part of God's family. For example, Peter was among the disciples. He was not perfect after Pentecost, but he was committed to Jesus, and he was willing to obey Him.

Discipleship also implies a continuing work toward maturity, a growing to new stages where the disciple will bring others to a saving relationship with Jesus.

Is it possible to be a "church member" and not be a "disciple"? Explain. How willing are you to make the goal of the Great Commission one of your personal goals? Examine your life carefully. Do you feel you are committed to making Jesus the Lord of your life? If not, how can you make such a commitment?

REASONS FOR WITNESSING (Acts 8:26-31; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:14).

Read each text in the chart below. Then tell what reason it suggests for witnessing.

TEXT	REASON FOR WITNESSING
Acts 8:26-31	
2 Pet. 3:9	
2 Cor. 5:14	

Read Acts 26:15-18. Provide at least four of Paul's tasks as he witnessed among unbelievers.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Witnessing is necessary from two points of view: the Christian's and the non-Christian's. Christians need to witness, because there is something inside them that wants to tell others about Jesus. Non-Christians need someone to witness to them because only by learning about Jesus and accepting His sacrifice can they know the way of salvation.

Philip's experience with the Ethiopian teaches us that for our witness to be meaningful, we should be aware of the concerns and needs of the people to whom we direct our witness. Ask them questions. Listen to their answers. Let their focus be your starting point in sharing Jesus' love. In so doing, they will learn over time that Jesus is indeed the way, the truth, and the light.

Witnessing also brings spiritual power: "Strength to resist evil is best gained by aggressive service."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 105. List other reasons for witnessing.

THREE BASIC APPROACHES TO WITNESSING (Daniel 1; Matthew 5–7; Acts 18:4).

In what office did Philip serve the church? Acts 21:8.

DEFINITION: *Evangelism is the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. It is the presentation of Jesus—who He is, what He has done and is doing, and what He has taught. Evangelism presents biblical teachings through the power of the Holy Spirit in such a way that people will be persuaded to accept Jesus as their Savior and serve Him in the fellowship of the church. An evangelist is one who announces the Good News.*

The three basic approaches to evangelism are:

1. *Presence evangelism.* This deals with the impact of the Christian lifestyle. We evangelize by living the gospel. This involves a positive testimony. In the mission field, presence evangelism may take the form of medical or agricultural work. By meeting people's needs, the evangelist opens their hearts to the preaching of God's Word.

2. *Proclamation evangelism.* The emphasis of this approach is on the explanation of Scripture. Most Sabbath morning sermons take this approach. Preachers help people to understand the gospel. But they do not know whether anyone in the audience has made a commitment.

3. *Persuasion evangelism.* This method illustrates the traditional understanding of evangelism. The emphasis of this approach is on doctrine. It persuades people to make a decision for Jesus and His truth. A preacher who, during Sabbath morning services, invites the congregation to respond under the power of the Holy Spirit through an appeal or an altar call is utilizing persuasion evangelism.

Which method of evangelism does each text below describe? Why do you think so?

Acts 18:4 _____

Daniel 1 _____

Matthew 5–7 _____

Review the definition of evangelism in the box above. Explain how each of the evangelistic methods described below it fits this definition. Why do we need all three methods? Which method does your local church use the most? Which one are you actively participating in?

WITNESSING AS A MATTER OF OBEDIENCE (Acts 5:17-42).

The Sanhedrin, called “the council” in the book of Acts, exercised its control in civil and political, as well as in religious, affairs. Composed of seventy men, it was the main governing body of the Hebrew people. The high priest presided over the council. When the apostles were brought before the council, the high priest denounced them, declaring, “‘We gave you strict orders not to teach in this [Jesus’] name . . . yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood’ ” (Acts 5:27, 28, NIV).

To what higher command did the apostles refer? Acts 5:29.

In Acts, we find the church heavily involved in witnessing. Another term for what the church did is “evangelizing,” even though this word does not appear in Acts very often. The apostles risked their own lives in order to obey God. They could not deny what had happened in their lives and what they had seen with their own eyes. “In the history of prophets and apostles, are many noble examples of loyalty to God. Christ’s witnesses have endured imprisonment, torture, and death itself, rather than break God’s commands.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 81.

The apostles “never asked, ‘Is this course of action safe?’ They asked, ‘Is this what God wants me to do?’ ”—William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, Penn.: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 48.

How did the apostles react to the instructions of the council? Acts 5:40-42.

In such behavior lies the solution to many problems. People respond differently to opposition. Some, preferring peace, are easily scared into silence. Others will make sure that the world knows how unjustly they have been treated. But few souls do not flinch at suffering for Christ’s sake. Jesus Himself declared such persons “blessed” (Matt. 5:10-12). The ability of the church to withstand opposition excited the people. And “the number of the disciples was multiplied” (Acts 6:1).

If the lawmakers of your country or city were to declare witnessing a crime, would you be found guilty or be ignored for lack of evidence? In what circumstances should Christians risk disobeying civil laws that restrict their obligation to witness?

FURTHER STUDY: What activities in Jesus' ministry may be considered as witnessing, and why? What witnessing events do you recall from the Old Testament? Under what method would you classify Jesus' witnessing activities and those you recall from the Old Testament? (see Wednesday's lesson). What principles about witnessing can we learn from both Jesus' ministry and the witnessing events of the Old Testament?

Read Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, "A Call to the Individual" pp. 9-13. What activities are described as "the highest missionary work" in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 41?

"The church of Christ on earth was organized for missionary purposes, and the Lord desires to see the entire church devising ways and means whereby high and low, rich and poor, may hear the message of truth."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 29.

"Our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly Father. We are to take our Bibles and go forth to warn the world. We are to be God's helping hands in saving souls—channels through which His love is day by day to flow to the perishing."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 150.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the New Testament, evangelism and discipleship are closely linked. But what is the difference between them? How can we combine them?
2. As you review Paul's conversion experience in Acts 9:1-18, pay special attention to Ananias. What does his part in this story teach us about witnessing?
3. Review the definition of a martyr in Sunday's lesson. How are people martyrs in life before they become martyrs in death?

SUMMARIZE in your own words the following concepts from this week's lesson: (1) What is a witness? (Acts 9:1-22; 22:15, 16, 20). (2) What is the goal of witnessing? (Matt. 28:19, 20). (3) What are some reasons for witnessing? (Acts 8:26-31; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:14). (4) List and explain the three basic approaches to witnessing (Daniel 1; Matthew 5-7; Acts 18:4). (5) Why is witnessing a matter of obedience? (Acts 5:17-42).

How has this week's lesson made you feel about witnessing? What will you do differently because of what you have learned?



“It Is Safe Now”

J. H. Zachary

For many months a gang of “rascals,” ruthless criminals, terrorized a section of the Eastern Highlands Mission in Papua New Guinea. Two hundred violent youth robbed and raped travelers between the cities of Goroka and Lae.

Midway between these cities the highway passes between two hills. Gang members would watch for traffic from the north. When a lone vehicle approached, they signaled their companions on the hill overlooking the narrow passage, who alerted a third group of rascals, who stopped the vehicle and carried out their criminal and often violent deeds.

Several Adventist churches serve the communities in this area of Papua New Guinea. Members were deeply concerned over the increasingly violent nature of crimes being committed by these gangs. They took their concern to the Lord in earnest prayer and discussed possible solutions. Finally, the members agreed on a solution to make their community safe once again. Carefully they laid their plans.

Nearly everyone who lives in the region knows which youth are gang members or sympathizers. Pairs of Adventists visited the homes of these people and challenged the gang members to come to a meeting at the church. “Surely you do not want to spend the rest of your life as a rascal. God wants something better for you. He loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. We have prepared a special seminar for all the rascals in this community. Please come.”

And many of the rascals came to the meeting and continued to attend the evangelistic meetings prepared just for them. Before the meetings ended, 107 of the rascals came forward to express their desire to begin a new life with Jesus. In just over a year that number reached 200.

As the pastor in this region and I passed through this once-dangerous spot on the highway between Goroka and Lae, the pastor told me, “It is safe to travel here now.”

Praise God for the transforming power of the gospel that changes lives and gives each person hope for the future and a better life today.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

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The Power and Joy of Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

A LOOSE CONNECTION. Herbert Jackson told a seminary mission class that while he was a missionary, he was given a car that would not start without a push. When he would leave to make his rounds for the day, students from the nearby mission school would cease their studies to give him the push he needed. Then as he visited people throughout his territory, he would either leave the car on a hill or keep it running.

For two years, he fussed this way over his car. When his replacement came, Jackson informed him about the car's temperament. Curious, his replacement looked under the hood. "Dr. Jackson!" he exclaimed. "The only trouble with this car is a loose cable!" After tightening the offending line, Jackson's replacement got into the car and turned the key. The vehicle blasted to life. The power had been there all the time. Only a loose connection prevented Jackson from using it.—Craig Brian Larson, editor, *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching: From Leadership Journal* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1993), p. 182; adapted. So it is with the Holy Spirit. He is the power behind any witnessing we do.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Searching Within (Acts 1:14; 2:1).
- II. Conditions for Enabling Baptism (Acts 1:5, 8, 14).
- III. Filled With the Spirit (Acts 4:23, 31; 6:1-5; 7:54-56; 11:22-24; 13:9).
- IV. The Latter Rain (Acts 2:14-21; Joel 2:23, 28-32).
- V. Fasting (Acts 9:7-9, 18, 19; 13:1-3; 14:21-23).

MEMORY TEXT: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).

SEARCHING WITHIN (Acts 1:14; 2:1).

What were the believers praying for while they were gathered in the upper room?

Acts 1:14 _____

Luke 24:49 _____

Acts 1:4 _____

What does it mean that they “continued with one accord”? (Acts 1:14).

In Acts 1:14 and 2:46, the phrase “with one accord” means “persevered with one mind.” In chapter 2:1, important evidence supports the translation “they were all together” (see *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 10, 127, 134). Contrast the mood now apparent with the one at the Last Supper (Luke 22:24).

As the days passed, how easy it would have been to criticize one another! Some could have pointed to Peter’s oaths and curses, others to Thomas’s doubting nature. More than one could have remembered that the sons of Zebedee had actually asked for the two chief seats in the kingdom, and some could have commented about Mary Magdalene’s past. How could the Lord bless such a group of people?

“Oh, it is so easy to turn the searchlight on others instead of on self. . . . We are prone to blame others for our own lack of power. But Pentecost proves that if our repentance is true and deep, no blessing is withheld because of past sins. Thank God for that! Let us then draw together, and draw near to Him. Then the Spirit will come.”—Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter*, p. 110.

“As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 36. “The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship.”—Page 37.

Would I have been among the ones getting ready to receive the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? How can I make sure I am among the ones today who are searching to connect with Him?

CONDITIONS FOR ENABLING BAPTISM (Acts 1:5, 8, 14).

Even though the disciples had already been baptized with water, what other baptism did the Lord promise them? Acts 1:5, 8, 14 (compare Mark 1:8).

“Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

Based on each of the quotes below, what are these conditions?

1. “There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord’s promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. . . . They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

Condition _____

2. “There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.”—*Christian Service*, p. 254.

Condition _____

3. “The Holy Spirit will come to all who are begging for the bread of life to give to their neighbors.”—*Christian Service*, p. 252.

Condition _____

4. “It is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121.

Condition _____

Summarize a fifth condition for receiving the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:32. How can you make sure that all five conditions are present in your life?

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (Acts 4:23, 31; 6:1-5; 7:54-56; 11:22-24; 13:9).

What were Peter and the disciples able to do when they were filled with the Holy Spirit? Acts 4:23, 31.

No doubt Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he preached as he did on Pentecost. It was a fulfillment of the Lord's promise given in Matthew 10:19, 20: "Do not worry about how or what you should speak. . . . It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (NKJV).

Ephesians 5:18 commands all Christians to "be filled with the Spirit." Being "filled with the Holy Spirit" is a special empowering of the Holy Spirit over and above the ordinary. For lack of this special empowering, one's testimony and spiritual life are weak.

List others whom the book of Acts describes as being filled with the Spirit. As a result, what were they able to do? Acts 6:1-5; 7:54-56; 11:22-24; 13:9.

TEXT	THOSE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT	WHAT THEY WERE ABLE TO DO
Acts 6:1-5		
Acts 7:54-56		
Acts 11:22-24		
Acts 13:9		

Consider the following prayerfully: "Morning by morning, as the heralds of the gospel kneel before the Lord and renew their vows of consecration to Him, He will grant them the presence of His Spirit, with its reviving, sanctifying power. As they go forth to the day's duties, they have the assurance that the unseen agency of the Holy Spirit enables them to be 'laborers together with God.'"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 56.

THE LATTER RAIN (Acts 2:14-21; Joel 2:23, 28-32).

What did God promise to the church, according to Joel 2:23, 28-32? Also read Acts 2:14-21.

To consider Peter's use of Joel's prophecy correctly, we must understand three points about it:

1. The Holy Spirit helps all who receive Him to understand and communicate God's will (Joel 2:28).
2. The Holy Spirit is imparted to all who honestly desire Him regardless of age, gender, or class (vs. 28, 29).
3. Salvation is available by calling "on the name of the Lord" (v. 32).

Find verses in Acts 2 that tell how each of these points was visible at Pentecost and write them on the lines below.

"When the Holy Spirit came upon the church, men's mouths were opened to utter the word of the Lord; and the gift of this prophetic proclamation fell upon persons old and young, upon the rich and the poor, upon men and women. This event accompanied the beginning of the new age, the day of the Messiah's reign, thus bringing to a close the former ages and pointing on to the culmination of God's work in history when Christ should overcome all his enemies."—George Arthur Buttrick, commentary editor, *The Interpreter's Bible*, (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1956) vol. 6, p. 753.

"The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the former rain, but the latter rain will be more abundant. The Spirit awaits our demand and reception. Christ is again to be revealed in His fullness by the Holy Spirit's power."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 121.

The Holy Spirit's power is always manifested in action, and with the power that the Holy Spirit brings, thousands of voices will proclaim the final warning of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-10.

When "we have an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God"; when "the largest portion of the church [become] laborers together with God"; when "we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure."—*Christian Service*, p. 253.

Are you wholeheartedly consecrated "to the service of Christ"? If not, why not? How can you begin to obtain such an experience?

FASTING (Acts 9:7-9, 18, 19; 13:1-3; 14:21-23).

DEFINITION: *Fasting is the intentional act of abstaining from food often for religious purposes. It is usually accompanied with Bible study, prayer, devotion, and meditation. "The principle behind fasting is that when conducted judiciously, it contributes to good health, and hence increases spiritual sensitivity."*—*SDA Encyclopedia, s.v. "Fasting."*

The digestion of food drains energy from the brain to the stomach. Fasting for a short period of time, therefore, can assist the Holy Spirit in helping our minds understand spiritual truths. It can be an important companion to intercessory prayer for the church, for others, and for one's self.

Fasting is not necessary for receiving the power of God, but it is an important spiritual exercise that God honors. Fasting with a pure heart and for the right reasons may open doors that other keys have not been able to open (Matt. 17:21).

"For certain things, fasting and prayer are recommended and appropriate. In the hand of God they are a means of cleansing the heart and promoting a receptive frame of mind. We obtain answers to our prayers because we humble our souls before God."—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188.

Christ both upheld the discipline of fasting and foresaw that His followers would do it (see Matt. 9:15; 17:21). However, fasting is not a commandment.

In what circumstances did the early Christians fast?

TEXT	REASON FOR FASTING
Acts 9:7-9, 18, 19	
Acts 13:1-3	
Acts 14:21-23	

If, because of health reasons, it is unwise for you to fast from food, you might consider "fasting" from something else, such as spending time watching television or surfing the Internet.

What would be important enough in your local church to inspire a time of fasting? Who should take the initiative to proclaim such a time? How will you plan to participate?

FURTHER STUDY: To learn more about the work of the Holy Spirit, read the following verses: Gen. 1:2; Isa. 59:19; John 15:26; 16:13; Rom. 8:26, 27; 1 Cor. 2:13, 14.

Also read any or all of the following: *Christian Service*, "The Holy Spirit" pp. 250-256; *The Acts of the Apostles*, "Pentecost" and "The Gift of the Spirit" pp. 35-56; *Testimonies to Ministers*, "Pray for the Latter Rain" pp. 506-512.

"Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power. Instead of looking forward to some future time when, through a special endowment of spiritual power, they will receive a miraculous fitting up for soul winning, they are yielding themselves daily to God, that He may make them vessels meet for His use. . . . Daily they are witnessing for the Master wherever they may be, whether in some humble sphere of labor in the home, or in a public field of usefulness."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did early Christians see many "signs and wonders"? How is God manifesting His power today?
2. "For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50. What is meant by "the daily baptism of the Spirit"? Is it different from the "former rain"? Explain. What results may we expect from this baptism?
3. How is Peter's life a good example of the Holy Spirit working in a person's life? Consider Peter's life before Pentecost (Matt. 14:22-31; 16:21-23; John 18:1-11, 25-27) and the sermon itself.

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by explaining in your own words the following concepts: (1) being of one accord; (2) the relationship between fasting and the Holy Spirit; (3) conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit; (4) being filled with the Holy Spirit; and (5) the former and the latter rain of the Holy Spirit.



André's Accident

André Makong

How can a 2-year-old child fall nearly 30 feet onto concrete and not be injured? I am convinced that God protected my young grandson, André Nathan, and used the accident to bring others to know God.

I was reading while my grandchildren, André and Jean, played nearby. I did not notice André wander away from his sister. Nobody saw him toddle upstairs or out onto the balcony. No one saw him climb the railing or fall silently onto the pavement 30 feet below. Only when I heard someone shouting outside did I realize that something was wrong. I raced to the door and found a crowd gathered around the boy. How could he have gotten outside? I wondered. Then someone said he had fallen from the balcony above. The boy was not crying and showed no signs of trauma or injury as he looked at all the strange people around him.

I rushed my grandson to the hospital where a doctor confirmed that André had not been injured; he did not even have a scratch on his body! Relieved, I returned home and contacted André's parents, who were traveling, to assure them that the children were fine.

That might have been the end of the ordeal. But word of the child's miraculous escape from injury spread throughout the neighborhood. One neighbor family came to see for themselves this child whom God had protected. They told me, "The God who lives in this house is not the same as the one who lives in our home." Others made similar comments, for in Africa miracle events often generate faith responses.

As a result of hearing about or witnessing André's escape from death, two families are studying the Bible and a third is now attending church. The children of one family join us for family worship when they hear us singing.



As a grandfather I marvel at how God saved my grandson's life, but as a pastor, I marvel even more at how God has used this incident to lead others to Him.

André Makong (left with young André) is coordinator of Global Mission for the Central African Union Mission in Yaounde, Cameroon.

Participants in Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

THE PENTEL PEN, made in Japan, hit the market with only a minimal amount of advertising. Within a year, sales in one country alone soared to over 1.8 million dollars. Why? Word-of-mouth advertising. Business people, office workers, doctors, housewives, and anyone who used it advertised the pen by telling others about it.

So it is with the gospel. Once it has made a difference in our lives, we will always be looking for ways to tell others about it. Regardless of who we are or what we do, if Jesus is our Lord and Savior, we are all, in a sense, ministers. In New Testament times, believers accepted the privileges and responsibilities related to witnessing. But “by the time of the Reformation the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers had been eroded by a hierarchical and priest-centered church. Luther’s reaffirmation of the principle was a protest against clerical power.”—Rex D. Edwards, *Every Believer a Minister* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1979), p. 82. As you study this week’s lesson, ask yourself, Has the gospel prospered because of my desire to share it with others?

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Clergy and Lay People (Acts 26:2-16; 1 Pet. 2:9).
- II. Qualifications for Ministry (Acts 19:1-6; 2 Cor. 5:15-20).
- III. Training for Ministry (Acts 19:8-10; 23-27).
- IV. Working as Members of the Body (Acts 16:6-10; 18:22, 23).
- V. Spiritual Gifts (Acts 5:12; 9:36; 12:5; 13:1-3; 19:11, 12; 20:28; 21:8, 9).

MEMORY TEXT: “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32, NKJV).

CLERGY AND LAY PEOPLE (Acts 26:2-16; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Review Acts 26:2-16 to determine at what point in his life God called Paul to minister for Him.

The Greek word for “ministry” is *diakonia*, giving the concept of “service” (see Acts 20:24; 21:19). Such ministry, or service, is the responsibility of all believers while “pastors and teachers” are “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry [service]” (Eph. 4:11, 12, NKJV).

How does 1 Peter 2:9 describe this concept of service?

The phrase “lay person” comes from the Greek word *laos*, meaning “people.” Unfortunately, the phrase has taken on some negative meanings. It refers to a person who is not skilled in a certain profession. In the church, the implication is that lay persons have secondary status.

But it is not always easy to avoid this term. In many cases, the phrase “church member” or “believer” could replace the phrase “lay person.”

The word “clergy” comes from the Greek *kleros*, meaning “lot,” “part,” or “portion.” Many consider ordained ministers as separate from the “ordinary church members.” They are thought of as that part of the body of Christ ordained to function exclusively as ministers. The term “clergy” suggests that a person belongs to that special category, the *kleros*, to whom alone God has entrusted a special portion of wisdom, power, and work.

But the distinction between “lay people” and “clergy” is not biblical. The Protestant Reformation insisted on the “priesthood of all believers.” However, within this general ministry to which all believers are called, we recognize the particular service of deacons, elders, and pastors, who assume their responsibilities by the laying on of hands.

“Ministers should not do the work which belongs to the church, thus wearying themselves, and preventing others from performing their duty. They should teach the members how to labor in the church and in the community.”—*Christian Service*, p. 69.

What is “the work which belongs to the church”? What is your part in this work? Use the lines below to record your answer.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MINISTRY (Acts 19:1-6; 2 Cor. 5:15-20).

Explain the relationship that exists between the Holy Spirit and our qualifications for service. Acts 19:1-6.

What happened to this group of 12 Ephesians is similar to what happened to the people gathered in the upper room (Acts 2:1-13). Just as the people in Jerusalem were amazed by the power of God's Holy Spirit, so were the people in Ephesus, where the goddess Artemis (Diana) reigned supreme. This event planted some of the seed that would help Ephesus become a center of Christianity for several hundred years.

"All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

According to 2 Corinthians 5:15-20, what ministry is the responsibility of all Christians?

God's purpose for a congregation is not to have only one minister with one hundred members supporting the minister's work. Instead, God calls pastors and teachers "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 13, NIV). In this way, we all become ministers. The entire congregation, with their leader, should be active in worship and ministry.

Church members will not be motivated to share the gospel if they believe this is the responsibility of the "official ministry." God expects everyone to participate in the extension of His kingdom according to the gifts assigned by the Holy Spirit.

Recall the days immediately after you were baptized and "pledged to be a co-worker with Christ." On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest), how would you rate your experience now in comparison to your "first love"? (Rev. 2:4). If you are lower on the scale than you would like to be, what steps can you take to improve?

First-love Experience	Present Experience
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

TRAINING FOR MINISTRY (Acts 19:8-10, 23-27).

Paul offered some form of organized training in the school of Tyrannus, at Ephesus. What was the impact of the training that took place during two years? Acts 19:8-10, 23-27.

In order to equip the believers for ministry, the Lord has appointed local churches to be training centers. "Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and encouraged. Every church should be a training school for Christian workers."—*Christian Service*, p. 59.

"Christian ministers . . . have a broader work than many have recognized. They are not only to minister to the people, but to teach them to minister. They should not only give instruction in right principles, but educate their hearers to impart these principles. . . . Every church member should be engaged in some line of service for the Master."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 148, 149.

God told Paul to begin working for Him right away. Paul told those with whom he worked to do likewise. However, the reality in many of our churches is that "the members of the church, trained to rely upon preaching, do little for Christ. They bear no fruit, but rather increase in selfishness and unfaithfulness. They put their hope in the preacher and depend upon his efforts to keep alive their weak faith."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 434.

"That the burden may be distributed, an education must be given to the church by those who can teach the workers to follow Christ and to work as He worked."—p. 435.

In the right column of the chart below, rearrange the forms of training listed in the left column according to your personal priorities. What steps can you take to begin training in one of the top three you chose?

FORMS OF TRAINING	YOUR PRIORITIES
How to give Bible studies How to prepare sermons How to testify for Christ Lifestyle/friendship evangelism Personal ministries Welfare ministries Other _____	

WORKING AS MEMBERS OF THE BODY (Acts 16:6-10; 18:22, 23).**What motivated Paul to enter a new territory? Acts 16:6-10.**

The Greek word for “help” used in verse 9 means “to run to the cry of those in danger.” How were the people in Macedonia in danger?

“From a more modern viewpoint the appeal may be given an even wider interpretation by realizing that the man stands in Europe, and is calling Paul to enter that great continent with the gospel message. This is one of the crucial moments in history. Much of Europe’s future depends on Paul’s response to the appeal.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 327.

Many people today around the world and across the street are longing to have someone teach them about Christ. They are waiting for help to come. “Instead of keeping the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth, let the members of the churches say to these laborers: ‘Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in Christ, will maintain spiritual life. We will work for souls that are about us.’”—*Christian Service*, p. 171.

“If the proper instruction were given, if the proper methods were followed, every church member would do his work as a member of the body. He would do Christian missionary work. But the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach unto them. . . . They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew.”—*Evangelism*, p. 381.

What did Paul do in Caesarea? In Antioch? In Galatia and Phrygia? Acts 18:22, 23.

In some parts of the world, the average pastor will have ten to fifteen churches. Statistics show that in those areas where the ratio of pastor to member is higher (for example, one pastor for 1,000 members, in contrast to one pastor for 50 members), the church tends to grow faster. This is not to suggest that churches should not have pastors. Neither is it to suggest that the number of pastors in the field should be reduced. It simply indicates that the more members are involved in the work of the church, the more the church grows.

How valid is the following reasoning: “I am giving my money so that the pastor will do the soul-winning and other ‘ministerial duties’”? Rewrite this to reflect the concepts we have been studying this week.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS (Acts 5:12; 9:36; 12:5; 13:1-3; 19:11, 12; 20:28; 21:8, 9).

DEFINITION: *Spiritual gifts are special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to church members to enable them to help the church fulfill its divine mission. We find the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-30; and Ephesians 4:7-12.*

The fact that there are many gifts suggests that each believer has an individual ministry to perform, a specific witness to give. But even though we receive our spiritual gifts on an individual basis, we all should be skilled in witnessing about our faith, sharing our beliefs, and sharing with others what God has done for us.

What two spiritual gifts were especially manifested in Antioch? Acts 13:1-3. Why were these gifts so important at this time in the church's history?

The prophets were preachers who traveled, sharing the gospel wherever they went. The teachers remained in the local churches to instruct converts. The list of men in verses 1-3 symbolizes the universality of the gospel. Paul and Barnabas were Jewish. Lucius came from Cyrene in North Africa. Simeon, also Jewish, was called by a Roman name, thus indicating certain ties with the Romans. And finally there was Manaen, who having been "brought up with Herod the tetrarch" (NIV), had rather noble connections.

What other spiritual gifts do the following passages from the book of Acts suggest?

5:12 _____ 19:11 _____

9:36 _____ 20:28 _____

12:5 _____

What is the most obvious spiritual gift in your life, and how are you using it? Acts 13:2, 3 tells us that Saul and Barnabas were set aside for the work to which God had called them. What has God asked you to set aside for Him?

FURTHER STUDY: How do the following reflect the concept that we are all in a sense ministers of the gospel? 2 Kings 5:1-3; Mark 6:1-15; Luke 7:36-47; 21:1, 2. What other principles about witnessing can you learn from these texts?

Read the chapters in Ellen G. White's, *Christian Service*, "The Church a Training Center" pp. 58-63; and "Co-operation of Ministers and Laymen" pp. 67-71.

"Every soul is to minister. He is to use every physical, moral and mental power, through sanctification of the Spirit, that he may be a laborer together with God. All are bound to devote themselves actively and unreservedly to God's service. They are to cooperate with Jesus Christ in the great work of helping others. Christ died for every man.

"Ministry means not only the study of books and preaching. It means service."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1159.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the following views reflects the common perception of "ministry"? Which is correct, and why?

VIEW A	VIEW B
(1) ministering (the pastor)	(1) sitting (God on His throne)
100 sitting (the congregation)	101 ministering (the congregation together with the pastor)

2. List and discuss ways to involve newly baptized members in the "ministry of all believers."
3. Describe some of the attitudes that keep people from actively participating in ministry. Now think about some of the attitudes that enable people to minister.

SUMMARIZE in your own words the following concepts from this week's lesson: (1) Explain the difference between clergy and lay people (Acts 26:16; 1 Pet. 2:9). (2) When do members become ministers? (Acts 19:1-6). (3) Who should train church members for service? (Acts 19:8-10). (4) How can we best work together as the body of Christ? (Acts 16:6-10, 18-23). (5) Define spiritual gifts. State what their purpose is and list specific ones. Having learned this week that each one of us is a minister, what will you change about your life and your relationships?



Fertile Soil for Church Planting

J. H. Zachary

"Many workers have not received their salary for months," Svetlana Mukrukova reported during a Global Mission pioneer training program in Russia. "Sometimes employers send some wood, a chicken, or a dozen eggs as a token payment," she added. "But God has been so good to us!"

Svetlana's missionary partner, Galena Markova, is a nurse. She testified that until recently she could arrange for a substitute to work her Sabbath shifts. But this changed, and the administration began demanding that she work her assigned shifts. Instead of compromising her beliefs for the sake of a paycheck, she resigned from her job at the hospital. When she learned about the Global Mission pioneer program, she volunteered. Galena had made many friends among the patients while she worked at the hospital. Therefore she and Svetlana will return to this city to raise up a congregation there, starting with Galena's former patients.

Gradislava is a veteran Global Mission volunteer. She reported how she and her husband had planted one church in 1997. "We went from home to home selling books. Even though few have the money to buy, I make friends with the people and tell them the wonderful messages our books contain." On market days she displays her books on a small table. Because of the economy, she does not sell many, but her table attracts browsers who listen as she shares the gospel with them.

Using these simple methods Gradislava has begun studying the Bible with 20 persons and is nurturing friendships with another 30. She reported that within six months she and her husband will see a second church planted in their area.

These volunteers do not enter the Global Mission pioneer program for the pay. Although Global Mission provides a small stipend for its pioneers, it barely covers the barest necessities. In the program in which these women are part, the North Pacific Union Conference and The Quiet Hour send evangelistic teams to conduct harvest meetings and organize the new congregations that the pioneers have planted. Currently more than 200 lay persons are church planting in formerly unentered cities in the countries that make up the Euro-Asia Division.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

The Recipients of Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

WHEN WE GIVE OUR HEARTS TO GOD. Notice our memory text for this week. Those of the Hebrew faith heard the first Christian sermon (Acts 2:5, 14). Why do you think this was so?

Then the gospel expanded to Samaria. As Jesus predicted (Matt. 16:17-19), Peter played a major role in opening the doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles. Following God's directions, he entered a Gentile's house, something unthinkable for a Jewish person (Acts 10:28). From there, the gospel was well on its way to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

In St. Paul's Cathedral, General Gordon's epitaph reads as follows: "He gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, his heart to God." When we give our hearts to God, we, too, will witness to many different types of people. As you study this week's lesson, pray that God will show you to which end of the earth He would like you to go, even if it is just around the corner or down the hall!

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Civil Authorities (Acts 4:1-7; 6:7; 13:6, 7).
- II. Receptive People (Acts 10).
- III. Children (Mark 10:13-16; Prov. 22:6).
- IV. Intellectuals (Acts 17:16-34).
- V. Animists and Non-Christians (Acts 8:9-19; 19:18-20).

MEMORY TEXT: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NKJV).

CIVIL AUTHORITIES (Acts 4:1-7; 6:7; 13:6, 7).

Before whom were Peter and John asked to testify? Acts 4:1-7.

The question, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" (v. 7) gave Peter a chance to testify to this group about the power of Jesus (4:8-12). Surely he remembered that Jesus had said, "You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony" (Luke 21:12, 13).

Read each of the following passages. Why would the main characters in them have been considered among the "hard to reach"?

Acts 6:7 _____

8:26-39 _____

13:6-12 _____

People in "worldly" positions of authority and leadership also need the gospel. "It requires moral courage for them to take their position for Christ. Special efforts should be made for these souls, who are in so great danger, because of their responsibilities and associations." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 139, 140.

"The intelligent, the refined, are altogether too much passed by. The hook is not baited to catch this class, and ways and methods are not prayerfully devised to reach them with truth that is able to make them wise unto salvation. Most generally the fashionable, the wealthy, the proud, understand by experience that happiness is not to be secured by the amount of money that they possess, or by costly edifices, and ornamental furniture and pictures. They want something they have not. . . . They need Jesus, the light of righteousness."—*Evangelism*, p. 556.

Philippians 4:22 suggests that the people in Caesar's household who became Christians remained there to work. What harm might have occurred if they had tried to leave? What might they have been able to accomplish by staying?

In *Evangelism*, page 255, Ellen G. White says that those in the upper socioeconomic classes "are attracted toward each other, and it is hard to find access to them." This being true, list certain methods of witnessing to these classes that would be more appropriate than others. Why would these methods be more effective? How can your church, and you personally, become involved in some of these methods?

RECEPTIVE PEOPLE (Acts 10).**How did Luke characterize Cornelius in Acts 10:1-35?**

The story in Acts 10 is remarkable because it is a story of crumbling cultural barriers that kept the gospel from spreading.

As a centurion in the Roman military, Cornelius would have been in charge of 100 soldiers. Soldiers in the Italian Regiment were famous for their spirit and courage. He was what people called a God-fearer—a Gentile who was strongly attracted to the high moral and ethical standards of the Hebrew faith and its belief in one God. God-fearers worshiped Jehovah God and followed the Jewish law to the best of their abilities but had not taken the more radical step of becoming converts through circumcision. At that time, God-fearers were by far the most receptive Gentiles to the gospel.

According to Acts 10:30, Cornelius was fasting and praying. What do you think Cornelius might have prayed?

In following God's directions, Peter entered a Gentile's house, something unthinkable for a Hebrew (Acts 10:28). "The love of God, sanctifying the soul, breaks down the wall of partition between the customs and practices of different individuals and nations. The great principles of Bible truth bring all into perfect harmony."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, November 3, 1885, p. 559.

"God-fearers" were good prospects. People like Cornelius should be in our prospect files. All churches should have a prospect file. People who have already had some contact with the church are usually "Class A" prospects. "Class B" prospects are those related to members, interests discovered by literature evangelists, people who have already attended church services, evangelistic meetings, etc. "Class C" prospects are people who may respond to your approaches. According to the *Church Manual*, 1995 edition, page 80, each church should have an "Interest Coordinator," who is a member of the church board. (See *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* [Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995]).

Why would God have chosen Cornelius to be among the first notable converts from the Gentiles? What cultural barriers in your part of the world need to come down for the gospel to spread? How is it possible to eliminate these barriers without making enemies and in such a way that people will still be attracted to the gospel? Explain.

CHILDREN (Mark 10:13-16; Prov. 22:6).

What does Jesus' reaction to the disciples in Mark 10:13-16 tell us about the importance of witnessing to children? What was it about Jesus that made parents want to bring their children to Him?

Based on the matters over which He displayed displeasure, we know what mattered to Jesus the most. He never became angry when people were personally abusing Him—not even when He was exposed to the cruelest of capital punishments. But when the flames of injustice licked around the feet of the most vulnerable members of society, He was swift to make His feelings known.

The disciples attempted to keep the children away from Jesus. How do we do so today? We may hinder the children when we fail to take positive action regarding any given situation they are in or by setting a bad example. Children need to feel important and loved. But when other interests concern us more than their welfare, we are keeping them from Jesus. We also hinder them from knowing Jesus when we neglect their religious training.

Why is it important to educate children in the ways of God? Prov. 22:6.

“In the way he should go. Literally . . . ‘according to his [the child’s] way.’ The verse . . . counsels parents to learn the way in which their particular child can be expected to be of most service to himself and others, and in which he will find most happiness.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1020.

The family and the church have a great responsibility toward children. “The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming character than all that it learns in future years.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 193.

Many studies in the field of character and moral development have verified the above quote. Researchers Robert Peck and Robert Havighurst, along with their co-workers, collected data over a period of seven years. Two of their general findings maintain that the home is the most important influence on moral development and that character is largely developed by the age of 10, if not before.

What could be improved in your church regarding the evangelization of children? List at least three children you know personally. How can you help lead them to Christ?

INTELLECTUALS (Acts 17:16-34).

During Paul's time, Athens was a great university town. In addition, it boasted many statues to false gods. While there, Paul, as always, witnessed to the Hebrew people. He also went daily to the marketplace seeking for an opportunity to testify (Acts 17:17). Among those who met and talked with Paul were the Epicureans and the Stoics (v. 18), representatives of two popular philosophies. The Epicureans believed that the highest "pleasure" in life was to obtain freedom from superstition and pain. The Stoics believed that thinking was more important than feeling. A very disciplined group of people, they attempted to restrict, in rather harsh ways, their desires for pleasure.

How did Paul address these intellectuals so they would appreciate and understand his message? What six points did his sermon make? Acts 17:22-31.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Witnessing to these trained thinkers was not easy. A basic assumption of Greek philosophy was that humans could find truth in themselves, so revelation from outside a person was unnecessary. Following a sound principle of witnessing, Paul preached to the Athenians in terms they could understand. That he showed an understanding of Stoic ideas (v. 28) is not to say that he accepted these ideas. He was communicating in a language meaningful in their culture.

What were the results of this sermon? Verses 32-34.

"In their pride of intellect and human wisdom may be found the reason why the gospel message met with comparatively little success among the Athenians. The worldly-wise men who come to Christ as poor lost sinners, will become wise unto salvation; but those who come as distinguished men, extolling their own wisdom, will fail of receiving the light and knowledge that He alone can give."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 240.

How can you personally witness to an educated person you know?

ANIMISTS AND NON-CHRISTIANS (Acts 8:9-19; 19:18-20).

DEFINITION: *Animism is the belief that life is produced by a spiritual force apart from matter. It promotes the role of ghosts, nature gods, and ancestral spirits. Animists do not deny God. But they see God permeating all natural phenomena.*

How did Simon seek to manipulate God's power? Acts 8:9-19.

A true Christian approaches God in an attitude of submission and worship. Christians demonstrate that a transformation has taken place by accepting the lordship of Jesus Christ, by being willing to obey the creator God, and by developing a personal relationship with Him.

The Bible recognizes the reality and power of Satan and demons (Acts 19:14-16). But those who trust in the Lord should not be afraid of their power (James 4:7; Rom. 8:38, 39; Eph. 6:10-13; 1 John 3:8).

The Bible clearly forbids such related practices as witchcraft, magic, divination, astrology, and communication with spirits (Lev. 19:31; 20:27; Deut. 4:19; 18:10-13; Isa. 8:19, 20; 47:13-15; Jer. 10:2).

Through what public act did the Ephesians demonstrate that they were cutting their ties with the forces of evil? Acts 19:18-20.

Proclaiming the gospel to non-Christians can be difficult, as the apostles discovered (Acts 14:11-18; 19:23-28). But Christians can confront non-Christian beliefs with the truth of the gospel by demonstrating in their own lives the transforming power of the true God.

List at least three people you know who are non-Christians. Then think of how you can witness on an individual basis to each one. Take into account each person's needs, desires, and interests.

PERSON'S NAME	NEED(S)	DESIRE(S)	INTEREST(S)
1.			
2.			
3.			

FURTHER STUDY: Review Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 16:6-10, and Acts 10. Explain how these texts are related.

Read any or all of the following: *The Acts of the Apostles*, "A Seeker for Truth" pp. 131-142; "Berea and Athens" pp. 231-242; "Preaching Among the Heathen" pp. 177-187; *Evangelism*, "Laboring for Special Classes" pp. 552-588; *Child Guidance*, "Arousing the Spiritual Powers" pp. 471-502; "Laboring for Special Classes" pp. 552-554.

"Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs."—*Christian Service*, p. 119.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Bar-Jesus was a sorcerer (Acts 13:6). What modern terms could we use to describe him today? How is such activity expressing itself in your part of the world?
2. Paul and Silas suffered much as a result of the encounter with the spirit in Philippi (Acts 16:16-24). Why? What do you find most notable about Paul and Silas's reaction? How can their reaction encourage you today?
3. Paul generally preached first in the synagogue when he evangelized a new city such as Corinth. Why was this a good strategy?
4. In this week's lesson, we studied five different groups to whom we need to witness. Name other groups that are especially prominent in your part of the world. What are their special characteristics and needs? Based on these, think of ways to witness to them that would be most effective.

SUMMARIZE how you would witness to the following types of people: (1) civil authorities (Acts 4:1-6; 6:7; 13:6, 7); (2) receptive people (Acts 10); (3) children (Mark 10:13-16; Prov. 22:6); (4) intellectuals (Acts 17:16-34); (5) animists and non-Christians (Acts 8:9-11, 18, 19; 19:18-20).

Consider your own range of influence. To which of these groups do you think you could be the most helpful? Why? Plan how you can start actively witnessing to someone.



A Shepherd and a Hymnal

Chen Zhe Shen

The Miao people live as farmers and shepherds in the mountains of southwest China.

Pan often entertained himself by singing as he tended his sheep. One day as he walked the mountain path toward the city, he passed a building and heard singing. He stopped to listen, and someone invited him in. The building was an Adventist church.

Someone gave Pan a hymnal, and that gift changed his life. Pan taught himself to read so he could learn the hymns. When he found a word he didn't know he circled it and later asked someone what the word meant. Pan literally sang himself into the Adventist Church.

One day Pan was so engrossed in a gospel tract that he forgot about the sheep. When he looked up the sheep were gone! Pan began searching for the sheep. The sky grew dark with rain clouds, and still Pan had not found the sheep. *How could I let my sheep wander away?* he chastened himself.

Then Pan remembered that God knows everything. He knelt and prayed, "Lord, have mercy on me. Help me find my sheep." When he opened his eyes the dark clouds had gone and he was surrounded by his flock of sheep. Not one was missing! Pan returned to the village and eagerly told others what had happened.

Pan's faith in God grew, and he was baptized. He loved to share his faith with others, and the Adventist church encouraged him to study theology and become a pastor. But Pan ran into difficulties at the government-operated seminary. Students teased him about worshiping on the Sabbath and refusing to eat pork. Teachers often gave tests on Sabbath, and Pan's Sabbath absences from class eventually led to his dismissal. But God provided a way for him to continue attending classes. He never received a diploma for his work at the seminary, but Pan knew that Jesus' disciples had no diplomas either.

Pan returned to his mountain home and started preaching. He established many house churches among the Miao villages. Hundreds have been baptized because of his witness. Attendance at Adventist churches in his village has grown to more than 1,200. Some believers must leave their homes in neighboring villages at 4:00 a.m. to arrive at church by 8:00.

God has a million ways to reach the hearts of searching souls. For Pan it was a love for music and a church hymnal that led him to Christ.

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The Action Words of Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

TAKE YOUR MARKS! GET SET! GO! We often hear these words at the beginning of a race, just before the runners begin to compete for the medals. The sleek muscles of the athletes seem to vibrate with expectation and action—witnessing as they do to years of training.

As Christians, we, too, run a race, full of action and expectation (1 Cor. 9:24-27). And as we do, we demonstrate our commitment to Jesus within the power of the Holy Spirit.

Action words are verbs that transmit the idea of life, energy, movement, and purpose. Space and time do not permit us to study within the confines of these pages all the action words that pertain to witnessing. The Christian witness should arise, go, move, give, proceed, travel, walk, depart, heal, feed, etc. “The disciples were to work earnestly for souls, giving to all the invitation of mercy. They were not to wait for the people to come to them; they were to go to the people with their message.”—*Christian Service*, p. 23.

Like the runners in a race, we, too, have received our instructions: “Go ye therefore.” What are you waiting for? Take your mark! Get set! Go!

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Testify! (Acts 5:32; 18:5, 9; John 15:26, 27).
- II. Teach! (Acts 8:1-4; 20:20).
- III. Prove! (Acts 17:2, 3).
- IV. Proclaim! (Acts 8:4-8; 5:42; 15:35).
- V. Persuade! (Acts 28:23, 24; 14:20-22).

MEMORY TEXT: “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

TESTIFY! (Acts 5:32; 18:5, 9; John 15:26, 27).

What action words regarding witnessing can you find in the following verses?

John 15:26, 27 _____

Acts 18:5 _____

Acts 18:9 _____

It is natural for a person to talk. But to speak suggests talking to communicate a message. Disciples “cannot but speak the things” which they have seen and heard in such a way that many will believe (Acts 4:20; 14:1). Because we are surrounded by many different people each day, we should learn how to start a conversation. Usually it is easy to smile and say, “Good morning,” adding a few words and giving your name. If you have a newspaper, for instance, you can ask, “Did you read the paper this morning?” A conversation may develop on the signs of the times and the return of Jesus as the solution. You may then have the opportunity to give your testimony about how knowing Jesus has helped you.

The verbs *witness* and *testify* are intimately related. To testify means “to declare emphatically about some truth,” “to make a serious declaration to substantiate a fact.” To witness means “to serve as an evidence of a fact.” The apostles gave “witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33). And Jesus asked His disciples to be His witnesses (1:8).

When Peter told the people to repent (Acts 2:38), he had himself repented of his own lying, denial, and profanity (Matt. 26:69-75). So he witnessed both to the necessity of repentance and to the power of God to transform the repentant one. That is why he could declare, “We are his witnesses of these things” (Acts 5:32). Experience lies at the foundation of all true, effective witnessing.

“No man has any right to recommend to others what he has not himself tasted and tested. Some people need something to tell more than they need power to tell it. Too often we preach of things in which we have no personal experience. I earnestly ask: What have you to tell that makes you so eager for God to give you power to tell it?”—Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter*, pp. 104, 105.

TEACH! (Acts 8:1-4; 20:20).

What did the scattered ones do as they fled from Jerusalem? Acts 8:1-4.

These were “ordinary” Christians—“men and women who had learned to love their Lord, and who had determined to follow His example of unselfish service. To these lowly ones, as well as to the disciples who had been with the Savior during His earthly ministry, had been given a precious trust. They were to carry to the world the glad tidings of salvation through Christ.

“When they were scattered by persecution they went forth with missionary zeal. . . . They knew they held in their hands the bread of life for a famishing world; and they were constrained by the love of Christ to break this bread to all who were in need.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 105, 106.

What two approaches to teaching did Paul use in Ephesus? Acts 20:20.

Thirty times, the gospels refer to Jesus as a teacher. From the early days of Acts (Acts 5:21, 25) to the last verse of the book (28:31), teaching was an essential part of Christian ministry. We are instructed that “there should be less preaching, and more teaching.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 407. One of the modern approaches to witnessing through teaching is a seminar—or specialized class. Many universities and colleges offer seminars as do businesses who want to give their employees further training in a specialized area. In a seminar, there are no preliminaries such as a song service, special music, or the collection of offerings. They are conducted largely by local pastors and church members rather than by professional evangelists. A seminar often offers a great deal of interaction between the teacher and the class. Prophecy, lifestyle, and family life are common seminar topics.

“Every message we teach . . . ends up with the Man of Galilee, the Lamb of God, the resurrected Savior, the infilling Lord. What Christ said, what He did, and what He does are all part of preaching Jesus Christ.”—Lloyd Ogilvie, *Acts: The Communicator's Commentary Series* (Waco, Texas: Word, Inc., 1983), vol. 5, p. 152.

Why do you think teaching often can be more effective than preaching? What are the special needs of your community? How could those needs be addressed in a seminar?

PROVE! (Acts 17:2, 3).

What approach to witnessing did Paul follow? Acts 17:2, 3.

To reason is to think in a logical way, to form judgments, and to draw conclusions from facts. The word used in the original language suggests the method of questions and answers. Dialogue is related to it. According to Acts 17:2, 3, reasoning involves explaining and demonstrating, “‘as if one, having broken the rind, were to disclose and exhibit the kernel.’” —Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (McLean, Va.: MacDonald Publishing Company, 1888), vol. 1, p. 536.

Reasoning also involves answering objections. “Many a laborer fails in his work because he does not come close to those who most need his help. With the Bible in hand, he should seek in a courteous manner to learn the objections which exist in the minds of those who are beginning to enquire, ‘What is truth?’” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 190.

An objection is an honest block to a decision. An excuse is an attempt to avoid making a decision. You can know whether the people with whom you are studying have a sincere objection by asking them whether that objection is the only reason they have for not committing their life to Jesus. Get a decision from the prospects based on the reasoning that if the objection could be removed they would make a commitment immediately. Then answer the objection and ask for a decision.

Which of the following examples from the book of Acts would help to answer the objection “I cannot decide now because everything is happening so fast”? Acts 2:41; 9:36; 16:25-34; 22:16.

Related to the word *reason* is the word *prove*. Read Acts 9:17-22. Because Paul’s proofs were convincing and overwhelming, some of the people attempted to kill him (9:29). That Paul would attempt to prove the gospel to synagogues full of his fellow Hebrews is “an act of the greatest moral courage. It was to these very synagogues that Paul had received his letters of credit as an official agent of the Jewish faith and of the Sanhedrin. It would have been very much easier to begin his Christian witness somewhere where he was not known and where his past did not stand against him. Paul is saying, ‘I am a changed man and I am determined that those who know me best should know it.’ Already he is proclaiming, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.’” —William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 73.

Where is there room for emotions in our witnessing?

PROCLAIM! (Acts 8:4-8; 5:42; 15:35).

The word “announce” means “to call the gospel to people’s attention.” It is close in meaning to the terms “to preach” and “to proclaim,” so it is translated as such in many passages (see Acts 4:2; 13:5; 17:3; 26:23).

What did Philip preach in Samaria? What did his message do for the people who accepted his message? Acts 8:4-8.

The purpose of preaching is not to demonstrate or to prove a truth. “We need far less controversy, and far more presentation of Christ. Our Redeemer is the center of all our faith and hope. Those who can mirror His matchless love, and inspire hearts to give Him their best and holiest affections, are doing work that is great and holy. . . . The many argumentative sermons preached seldom soften and subdue the soul.” —*Evangelism*, p. 172.

The biblical term for preaching means to announce an event, a fact, a truth, and to proclaim it with the authority of a herald.

The early Christians proclaimed that the Messiah had come (Acts 9:20). They announced the good news that in Jesus there was room in God’s kingdom for a repentant heart (13:38). They exhorted people to accept their message (2:40). Even today, “no discourse should ever be preached without presenting Christ and Him crucified as the foundation of the gospel.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 158. This kind of preaching will “touch invisible chords, whose vibrations will ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody through eternal ages.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 823. Sermons promoting specific programs within the church do not convert people. But preaching Christ will always win many to Him.

What two witnessing functions are often found together? Acts 5:42; 15:35 (compare Eph. 4:11, 12).

“Both teaching and preaching had to be done to set forth Jesus as the Saviour, and to instruct in the way of life for God; doubtless this was especially essential for Gentiles, who, it was becoming clear, were now partakers of the new covenant under the gospel.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 315.

Even though “announcing” in the book of Acts usually refers to “preaching,” what other forms of announcing may be used in witnessing?

PERSUADE! (Acts 28:23, 24; 14:20-22).

How did Paul work toward getting people in Rome to make a decision for Jesus? With what results? Acts 28:23, 24.

Persuasion means “to bring another person to a point of view.” According to the divine principles of free will, we cannot coerce people. But we can help them by:

1. providing all necessary information,
2. answering their objections,
3. making their options clear,
4. inviting them to side with biblical truth,
5. affirming them as they make the right decisions, and
6. inviting them to open their lives to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

The specific purposes of evangelism are to persuade people to:

1. accept Jesus and His truth, and
2. serve Him in the fellowship of the church.

These two objectives are intimately related. You cannot have one without the other.

One way of helping people make a positive decision concerning a point of doctrine is by asking three leading questions:

1. “Is this subject clear to you?” (generally they will say “Yes”).
2. “Do you have any question related to this subject?” (Answer their questions. Then ask the first two leading questions again until they have no more questions).
3. Finally ask, “Do you really believe in this subject?” (Will you act upon it? Some useful texts at this point are Acts 22:16; Matt. 9:9; Isa. 1:18).

After accomplishing what two purposes did the apostles leave Derbe? Acts 14:20-22. How important is the second purpose to the health of the individual member and the church at large?

Evangelism should not end with a person’s decision to follow Jesus. Neither is baptism the conclusion of the process. True success in evangelism is related to the involvement of new members in church life and their continued spiritual growth.

How can we help new believers “to continue in the grace of God”? What responsibilities are appropriate to assign to a newly baptized member? Why are they appropriate? Which responsibilities might not be appropriate, and why? Explain how the appropriateness of a specific activity might vary from church to church.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Matthew 25:31-46. List the action words in this parable that relate to witnessing. Then list at least four things this parable teaches you about witnessing. Or look up some of the following action words in a concordance. Which verses do you find with these words in them that relate to witnessing? What do these verses teach you about witnessing? The words are *arise, go, move, heal, feed, confess, praise.*

Read any or all of the following: *Christian Service*, "Witnesses" pp. 15-17; "The Divine Commission" pp. 22-24; and "Profession vs. Expression" pp. 94-98; *The Acts of the Apostles*, "The Great Commission" pp. 25-34; *The Desire of Ages*, "Go Teach All Nations" pp. 818-828.

"God does not generally work miracles to advance His truth. . . . [He] works according to great principles . . . and it is our part to mature wise plans, and set in operation the means whereby God shall bring about certain results."—*Evangelism*, pp. 652, 653.

"As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings. . . . Divinity needed humanity; for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world. . . . Humanity lays hold upon divine power, Christ dwells in the heart by faith; and through co-operation with the divine, the power of man becomes efficient for good."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 296, 297.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What other action words can you add to this study? How do they relate to the Great Commission? Should all ministries in the church relate to the Great Commission? Explain your answer.**
2. **Explain the role we have in the salvation of souls. In what ways are we responsible for the results of our witnessing endeavors? What ways and means might help you the most, and why?**
3. **A church worker receives a salary for the witnessing he or she does. Is this person's work really then considered witnessing? Explain. Is this all the witnessing this person should do? Again, explain your answer.**
4. **Should we witness only to unbelievers? Explain your answer.**

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by listing and explaining the active ways we can witness to unbelievers. How do we continue to witness to those who accept the gospel? What part of this week's lesson was most interesting to you? How will it help you to become a better witness?



Singer's Search for a Saviour

J. H. Zachary

Ulzhan Omarbekova [OOL-zhan oh-MAR-beh-ova] is a famous musician in her native Kazakhstan. But her success as a singer could not fill the emptiness in her life. She recognized that forces of good and evil existed in the world, but she did not know what their existence meant for her. She read books on various religious philosophies, but was disappointed when they did not point her toward Allah, or God. She began studying the Qu'ran and the Bible, but she found the Qur'an too difficult to understand.

Then while browsing a bookstore, she found *The Acts of the Apostles* and *Steps to Christ*. In these books she found answers to her deepest questions. She accepted their teachings and began searching for a church that followed the principles taught in these books. She visited several religious meetings, but was disappointed. Finally she started her own small group.

Then she met Victor, a literature evangelist, who shared his faith with her and made the Bible seem easy to understand. But she politely refused his invitations to attend religious meetings. "I do not trust religious teachers," she answered. "They have disappointed me."

Victor invited her to watch video Bible studies, and Ulzhan agreed. She was delighted with the videos, and after viewing several, she and her friends decided to visit the church with Victor. Ulzhan was so thrilled with the church members' friendliness that she offered to sing for the service. But the cautious pastor told her that she would have to be a member before she could sing. Rather than being put off, Ulzhan and two of her friends joined the baptismal class. She was baptized in 1996.

However, her road to faith was not smooth. When she became a Christian, her husband left her. Nevertheless, she rejoices in the peace and joy she has found in Jesus. "Jesus is everything to me," she says. "I don't know how I existed without Him."

Ulzhan now is the speaker for Adventist World Radio's Kazakh language programs, where her talents in music and drama draw listeners as she explains the Qu'ran in the light of the Bible. Her ministry is touching many lives in the Islamic community.



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Models for Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

MODELS FOR WITNESSING ABOUND EVERYWHERE. A woman in mainland China leads hundreds of house churches. A dentist in the Philippines establishes more than fifty churches. A church in Texas provides services for deaf people. And a family leaves their country to work among a nonentered people group.

The list of modern witnessing “heroes” is endless. But they all have one thing in common. They serve as witnesses according to their own spiritual gifts, natural talents, and opportunities God places before them, all with a good measure of creativity.

Of course, Jesus is the ultimate example of what it is to witness. The commitment to witnessing manifested by early Christians is also an example for those of us living in the time of the end. It is easy to think that a champion like Paul is a model for witnessing. But what about a deacon? Or a refugee couple from Rome? As we study the book of Acts, we find dynamic models for witnessing that we can follow.

The models for witnessing we will consider this week do not exhaust biblical patterns. But they may inspire us to search for new models.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Stephen—Faithful Unto Death (Acts 6:5, 6, 8-15; 7:57-60).
- II. The Scattered Ones—Sharing Wherever They Went (Acts 8:1-5; 11:19-21).
- III. Philip—the Evangelist (Acts 8:5, 26, 40; 21:8, 9).
- IV. Mark—Helpful in Ministry (Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39).
- V. Aquila and Priscilla—Always Hospitable (Acts 18:1-3, 24-26).

MEMORY TEXT: “For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:24, NKJV).

STEPHEN—FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH (Acts 6:5, 6, 8-15; 7:57-60).**What words do Acts 6:5, 8 use to describe Stephen?**

We do not know exactly what Stephen was doing when the church chose him to be one of the seven deacons. But based on the description of him in Acts 6, we may safely assume that, personally, he had been doing what a person needs to do to sustain a healthy relationship with Christ.

Later, a dispute with Stephen led those who “were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke” to lie against him, to cause further tensions, and finally to kill him (Acts 6:9-12; 7:58). Witnessing can be a risky business.

Analyze Stephen’s prayer in Acts 7:59, 60. What major aspect of Christianity did Stephen’s last words reflect? Explain how Stephen’s prayer was perhaps the best witness he ever gave.

“The prayer for himself was not a request for deliverance, but an affirmation of trust. Though it is in the form of a petition, it is not difficult to see that the petition rests upon a profound trust in Jesus. Not ‘Lord, save my life,’ but ‘Lord, receive my spirit.’ It is a prayer that looks forward, not backward. There is no fear in it, only faith. It assumes that whatever happens, Jesus will be there and that he will be adequate to any emergency. . . .

“All he asked was that Jesus should keep his spirit, that through his present trial Jesus should steady him. . . .”—*The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 9, p. 105.

Such prayers do not come easily. They represent a life of sacrifice and service, a life of dedication and commitment. We cannot think to be a martyr for Christ in death if we will not be a martyr for Him in life.

When Luke wrote the book of Acts, the persecution that began with Stephen’s death had ended. The church, however, was soon to be confronted with another period of persecution. Persecution was regarded as a challenge, an opportunity to witness. Tertullian, a Christian living during that later persecution, affirmed that “the blood of Christians is [the] seed” of the church (*Apology*, chap. 50, p. 55).

Review the qualifications required by the apostles for church officers (Acts 6:3). Which of them is more important for witnessing? Why? How can a person fulfill that condition? How can you model certain aspects of Stephen’s witness?

**THE SCATTERED ONES—SHARING WHEREVER THEY WENT
(Acts 8:1-5; 11:19-21).**

After Stephen's murder, persecution broke out, and the Christians were forced to flee Jerusalem. Read Acts 8:1-5 and 11:19-21. If your Bible has a set of good maps, determine how far they fled. Then list three ways in which the witnessing of these people serves as a model for us.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Antioch was the greatest city of Asia, made so in part by its position on the Orontes River approximately 15 miles (24 km) from the Mediterranean Sea. It was the headquarters of the Roman prefect of Syria and a large community of Jewish people for whom Herod the Great constructed a marble colonnade running the length of the city. It also boasted of chariot races and its worship of the goddess Daphne, whose temple reigned in the beautiful laurel groves five miles from town. That a great number of people in Antioch accepted Christ is a testimonial to the witnessing skills of the scattered Christians who settled there.

“When they were scattered by persecution they went forth filled with missionary zeal. They realized the responsibility of their mission. They knew that they held in their hands the bread of life for a famishing world; and they were constrained by the love of Christ to break this bread to all who were in need.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 106.

Persecution has always aroused the church for witnessing. Where peace and comfort prevail, it seems that the church easily develops a false sense of security that does not motivate believers to pray and to witness with a sense of urgency.

Why wait for persecution to force you into witnessing? If you are not witnessing now, do you think you will do so when persecution rears its ugly head? If Christians are not now being persecuted in your part of the world, how does the story of the scattered ones inspire you to witness now, during relative peace? If Christians where you live are suffering for their faith, how can this story strengthen you to continue witnessing for Christ?

PHILIP—THE EVANGELIST (Acts 8:5, 26, 40; 21:8, 9).

The deacons were to care for the material needs of the growing church so the apostles could give themselves totally to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). However, Scripture mentions that some of the deacons also were active in gospel ministry. Stephen “did great wonders and miracles among the people” (6:8; 6:10; 7:2-56), and Philip preached, performed miracles, and baptized.

This Philip was not an apostle but one of the seven deacons appointed along with Stephen (8:1, 4, 5). In commenting on his example, let us consider Revelation 22:17: “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” “The charge to give this invitation includes the entire church. Every one who has heard the invitation is to echo the message from hill and valley, saying ‘Come.’ It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of soul-saving depends alone upon the ministry. . . . 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.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 110, 111.

To what three cities did Philip go in his attempts to obey the gospel commission? Acts 8:5, 26, 40. What does his willingness to do so tell us about him?

Israel was composed of three main regions—Galilee to the north, Samaria in the middle, and Judea in the south. Samaria, the city, in the region of Samaria, had been the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. In 722 B.C., Assyria defeated the northern kingdom, killed many of the Jewish people, and carried others off to Assyria. Those who remained married those who helped to repopulate the area. Their children are the Samaritans we read about in the Bible. When the Jews returned to Samaria after the exile ended, a deep prejudice festered between them and these offspring. Yet despite such hatred, Jesus witnessed to them, as did Philip.

How were Philip and his family known in the church? Acts 21:8, 9.

How can deacons, elders, and deaconesses participate in missionary activities? How can professors, carpenters, nurses, students, secretaries, farmers, children, mechanics, etc., participate in the work of saving souls? How can you become involved in a specific evangelistic project in your community?

MARK—HELPFUL IN MINISTRY (Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39).

Acts 11 ends by saying that Barnabas and Saul went from Antioch to Jerusalem, taking relief funds for the church there. Acts 12 is like parentheses. It could have started off, "Meanwhile, in Jerusalem . . ." then proceeded with the story of Peter's deliverance from prison. The end of the chapter closes the parentheses, declaring that "Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry" (12:25). There John Mark joined them to be their helper (Acts 12:25; 13:5). Because Mark's mother frequently opened her home to the apostles, he would already have spent much time with many of the well-known people of the early church.

What happened with John Mark in Perga? Acts 13:13. What did Barnabas propose at a later date? Acts 15:37-39.

"This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry."—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 348.

Scripture offers no concrete explanation concerning why Mark returned to Jerusalem. But Acts 13:14 perhaps gives us a clue. The road to Pisidian Antioch was located on a plateau 3,600 feet (1,080 meters) above sea level. The only road there was a difficult passage through the Taurus mountains. And if that wasn't bad enough, the route was haunted by criminals. Perhaps the knowledge that this would be the next part of their journey convinced John Mark to return home. (Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 169, 170.)

Read what Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon 23, 24 have to say about John Mark. What conclusions about his experience can we draw from this information?

Perhaps John Mark's most important contribution to the church was the writing of the gospel named after him. There may be several John Marks in our churches who could become church leaders if they were given a chance to serve.

Are you ever tempted to quit doing something that you started for the Lord when it gets to be too difficult? Have you ever been afraid of continuing a project that you started for Him? How can John Mark serve as a model for your experience and give you courage to continue?

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA—ALWAYS HOSPITABLE (Acts 18:1-3, 24-26).

What do the facts about Aquila and Priscilla's origin, birthplace, previous residence, and an emperor's decree tell you about this couple? Acts 18:1-3.

Paul went to Athens alone, leaving behind Silas and Timothy. Soon he discovered a couple, Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, with whom he had much in common. They worked at the same trade. They were the same nationality. They were well-born, and they were refugees. Priscilla and Aquila had been driven from Rome; Paul from other cities because of his witnessing.

When Paul returned to Palestine, the couple went with him as far as Ephesus. There they met Apollos.

What do you understand about this couple's gifts, ministry, and commitment to God's work from their relationship with Apollos? Acts 18:24-26. (Also see Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19.)

Acts 18:26 tells us that Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside, most likely meaning that they took him home with them. Can you imagine what they said to him? "They shared from their own experience that the same Jesus whom Apollos had preached was alive. Surely they explained the profound fulfillment of the atonement of Calvary, the victory of resurrection morning, *and* the infilling of the Spirit of the Lord at Pentecost. Jesus Christ was alive! He was not a dead hero or even a resurrected but departed Savior. He was present, and the power of His presence was not around but within the minds and hearts of His people."—Ogilvie, *Acts: The Communicator's Commentary*, p. 271.

Priscilla and Aquila functioned well as a team. Evidently they shared their views of service and supported each other in ministry. In Corinth they used their own home for church meetings (1 Cor. 16:19). The fact that Paul mentions the couple in several letters indicates that he considered them to be valuable lay workers in the churches to which they belonged.

The success of the gospel was due, among others things, to Paul's encouragement of people like Aquila and Priscilla to use their gifts. Notice that Paul "went to see them" (Acts 18:2, NIV).

How can you model Aquila and Priscilla's witnessing example? What does their example teach us about teamwork in witnessing?

FURTHER STUDY: Explain how the people in the following texts are good models for us to imitate in the area of witnessing: Daniel 3:8-18; Mark 12:41-44; John 4:5-29.

Read any or all of the following: *The Acts of the Apostles*, “The First Christian Martyr” pp. 97-102; “The Gospel in Samaria” pp. 103-111; “From Persecutor to Disciple” pp. 112-122.

“Through the ages that have passed since the days of the apostles, the building of God’s temple has never ceased. . . .

“Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. But the structure is not yet complete. We who are living in this age have a work to do, a part to act. . . .

“Christ has given to the church a sacred charge. Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour’s love. All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 598-600.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List, describe, and discuss the spiritual gifts of Philip, Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla. How can these gifts be used today to witness in your part of the world?
2. If Stephen was a deacon, what was Paul’s office? What is the difference between a gift and an office?
3. Is witnessing limited to an office? To a gift? Explain your answer. What present-day roles in the church are related to witnessing?
4. Wherever Priscilla and Aquila went, they opened their home to the church. How can we do the same?

SUMMARIZE this week’s lesson by reviewing the lives of the people we studied this week and stating why they are good models for us to follow in the area of witnessing. Which person’s life inspires you the most to witness, and why? Because of what you learned about witnessing from this person’s life, what will you do differently in your witnessing?



Getting Priorities Straight

Beverly Herbrandson Koester

Being a faithful Seventh-day Adventist in Malawi is not easy. Jobs are hard to find, and most work places remain open on Sabbath. It takes great faith to walk away from a job on Friday afternoon, not knowing if the job will be there on Monday. Youth applying for work often are tempted to hide their religion for fear they will lose the job before they even get a chance to prove themselves.

A strong youth organization in the church is crucial to maintain ties with God during these difficult times. The youth group at one church in Blantyre, Malawi was organized to encourage spiritual growth and outreach. One of its most powerful ministries is its prayer corp. When a member of the group has a Sabbath or other spiritual problem, the entire group comes together in prayer. And knowing that friends understand the difficulties and are praying has helped several young people grow in faith and strength. One of them is Daniel.

Daniel had been a faithful member until he went to work at a new job. Then he began missing church and youth meetings. The prayer corp began praying for him. Friends stopped by with encouragement and literature. Daniel appreciated the visits and prayers. He explained that he was negotiating with his employer to have Sabbaths off and hoped he would soon have a breakthrough. But friends noticed that he came to church less and less.

Then one Sabbath morning Daniel came to church and reported that his sister was sick and he must go home immediately. He asked his friends to pray for her.

The next Sabbath Daniel was back in church. He told his friends that his sister was seriously ill but had been glad to see him. "She asked me to pray for her before I left," he said. He paused a moment, then continued. "I know she is dying, but she will die in Jesus." The peace on his face told of a faith that had grown.

Daniel was not in church the following week. But later he told his friends why. "My sister died Sunday. On Sabbath she told my dad that she was dying. But she promised him she would not die on Sabbath so that he would not need to make funeral arrangements on that day. God let her live until early Sunday. She died peacefully, knowing that God accepted her."

Daniel learned what was really important. Following his sister's death he told his employer that he would no longer work on Sabbaths.

Beverly Herbrandson Koester, a former missionary in Malawi, is a teacher's aide at Atholton Adventist School in Maryland.

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The Tools for Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

DORA IS A SENIOR CITIZEN who prays daily for all the missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and colporteurs. Children take great delight in visiting her because she tells wonderful stories. Often she shares a home-baked loaf of bread with a neighbor. Once, when an entire family was baptized, they said the first person from the church who contacted them was Dora. After reading the following definition, state why you think Dora is a missionary.

DEFINITION: *A missionary is someone who crosses a “barrier” in order to communicate the gospel. This barrier may be a different faith or culture, as well as a physical distance.*

This week we will learn about five tools for witnessing. As you study, decide which tool fits best in your hands and how you will use it to win souls for Christ.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Personal Evangelism (Acts 8:26-38).
- II. Personal Testimony (Acts 21:37-22:21).
- III. Health Evangelism (Acts 9:32-35).
- IV. Lifestyle Evangelism (Acts 2:44-47; 9:36-42).
- V. Public Evangelism (Acts 8:5, 35; 19:8).

MEMORY TEXT: “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42, NKJV).

PERSONAL EVANGELISM (Acts 8:26-38).

DEFINITION: *Personal evangelism is sharing the gospel with an individual or with small groups of people.*

As you review Acts 8:26-38, ask yourself how this incident fits the above definition of personal evangelism. Think of at least three principles of personal evangelism this event illustrates.

“**“Do you understand what you are reading?”**” (NKJV). “What Philip said [to the Ethiopian] was an expression of interest in the man. People usually respond to the compliment of someone’s wanting to know them and what they are doing. Find out what a person’s interests are and you have hold of the protruding thread with which to unravel him or her and to know how to share Christ.”—Ogilvie, *Acts: The Communicator’s Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 162.

Personal Bible studies are important tools of witnessing. Following is one approach to Bible study that has proven effective.

A. Visit informally for three to five minutes.

B. Pray for God’s guidance before beginning the study. Let the students take part by allowing them to respond to your questions, look up and read texts, and ask questions. Usually, seven to ten Bible texts will be enough to teach what Scripture says about a doctrine. Be sure they understand the lesson by asking them such questions as, “Does this seem reasonable to you?”

C. Secure a decision at the end of each Bible study. As stated in lesson 4, a simple way to do so is to ask three questions: (1) “Is this subject clear to you?” (2) “Do you have questions?” (answer them, if any); and (3) “Then, are you willing to believe this doctrine?”

D. Have the students close with a short prayer. Listen carefully. Their prayers may tell you what they are thinking and how they are feeling about what they have learned.

The entire study should not be more than 30-40 minutes, and you should meet at least once a week.

How can you make the following quote a reality in your life? “By personal labor reach those around you. Become acquainted with them. Preaching will not do the work that needs to be done. Angels of God attend you to the dwellings of those you visit. This work cannot be done by proxy. Money lent or given will not accomplish it. Sermons will not do it. By visiting the people, talking, praying, sympathizing with them, you will win hearts.”—*Christian Service*, pp. 117, 118.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY (Acts 21:37–22:21).

DEFINITION: *A personal testimony is an account of how you yourself have experienced Christ's power. "Tell them how you found Jesus, and how blessed you have been since you gained an experience in His service. . . . Tell them of the gladness and joy that there is in the Christian life."* —*Evangelism*, p. 486. *The purpose of such an account is to create a desire in the heart of the listeners for a similar experience of their own.*

The three essential elements of a testimony are:

1. *Your life before you became a Christian.* This part of the testimony seeks to establish a bond with the listener.
2. *How you became a Christian.* Even if you were brought up in a Christian home, there was still some point at which you gave your life to Christ. Your testimony might revolve around an answer to prayer or a particular victory in your life that made Jesus real to you.
3. *What Jesus means to you now.* Tell how your life has changed and something of the joy you now experience.

Paul's account of his life in Acts 22 can be divided into the above three parts of a personal testimony. Find a key phrase for each one of these parts:

My life before I became a Christian (Acts 22:3-5).

How I became a Christian (Acts 22:6-13).

What Jesus means to me now (Acts 22:14-21).

"It is the testimony of personal experience that is the irrefutable argument. It is the power of a life which has been changed that no cynic or unbeliever can withstand. When the world shakes for fear of what may befall it, nothing can steady it so much as the simple, direct statement of a man or a woman who has seen the Lord and whose whole life is illuminated by the light of the vision."—*The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, pp. 291, 292.

What can I share about my experience with God's grace? Write your own testimony using the three essential elements listed above.

HEALTH EVANGELISM (Acts 9:32-35).

Peter's ministry took him to the coastal plain area of Sharon. Lydda, today called Ludd, is a city located about eleven miles from Joppa. Describe Peter's ministry there. Acts 9:32-34.

What is the significance of the word *found* in verse 33? Explain the significance of Peter telling Aeneas, " 'Jesus the Christ heals you' " (v. 34, NKJV).

What do the results of Aeneas's healing tell you about the influence health evangelism can have (v. 35)?

"We are not to wait for souls to come to us; we must seek them out where they are. When the Word has been preached in the pulpit, the work has but just begun. There are multitudes who will never be reached by the gospel unless it is carried to them."—*Christian Service*, p. 121. The time period of the man's illness extended back through the ministry of Jesus. But because Jesus had not healed all the sick, He empowered many of His followers do to so.

As in everything else, Jesus is also our example in the area of health evangelism. He spent more time healing than preaching, knowing as He did so that many who are afflicted with physical ailments long to know that their sins are forgiven. (See *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 77.)

"Gospel workers should be able also to give instruction in the principles of healthful living. There is sickness everywhere, and much of it might be prevented by attention to the laws of health. The people need to see the bearing of health principles upon their well-being, both for this life and for the life to come. They need to be awakened to their responsibility for the human habitation fitted up by their Creator as His dwelling place, and over which He desires them to be faithful stewards. . . . In teaching health principles, keep before the mind the great object of reform,—that its purpose is to secure the highest development of body and mind and soul. Show that the laws of nature, being the laws of God, are designed for our good; that obedience to them promotes happiness in this life, and aids in the preparation for the life to come."—*Evangelism*, pp. 525, 526.

In what ways can your church integrate health ministries with evangelistic efforts? How can you participate in health ministries even though you may not be a health professional? If you are a health professional, think about how you can engage in medical evangelism in your church or town.

LIFESTYLE EVANGELISM (Acts 2:44-47; 9:36-42).

DEFINITION: *Lifestyle evangelism refers to a life that is growing and maturing in Christ, while letting the words and deeds of that life draw others to Christ. It is presenting the gospel by living a good testimony before others. Every Christian is a lifestyle evangelist.*

Explain how Dorcas's ministry fulfills the criteria of the above definition. What do the results of her work tell you about the importance and effectiveness of lifestyle evangelism? Acts 9:36-42.

We are to feel empathy and compassion for both Christians and non-Christians who suffer distressing physical, mental, or emotional problems. This compassion that leads a person to serve others, including society's outcasts, is ours when Christ reigns in the heart.

"First meet the temporal necessities of the needy and relieve their physical wants and sufferings, and you will then find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seeds of virtue and religion."
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 227. Read Matthew 25:31-46.

Dorcas's example has inspired the Seventh-day Adventist Church to establish active Dorcas Societies and Adventist Community Services around the world. Families who lose their homes to natural disasters or fires, people who need a helping hand while between jobs, parents who find the pantry bare between paychecks, and anyone in need can still find a helping hand because of one caring person who lived centuries ago.

Describe the lifestyle of the early Christians. Acts 2:44-47. What was the result? Verse 47.

"Let us remember that a Christlike life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity."—*Christian Service*, p. 26.

Contrast Romans 12:9-21 with the behavior of most of the people you hear or read about in the news. Then analyze why a Christlike life is such a powerful tool in witnessing.

Consider your own life in light of Romans 12:9-21. What kind of impression are you leaving with others?

PUBLIC EVANGELISM (Acts 8:5, 35; 19:8).

DEFINITION: *Public evangelism reaches large groups of people through meetings in which they receive doctrinal instruction that will enable them to make a responsible decision to join the church.*

Provide answers for the following, based on Acts 19:8.

Place of the meetings: _____

Style of the preacher: _____

Period of time the meetings were held: _____

Methods of evangelism: _____

Content of evangelism: _____

Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40) could be classified as public evangelism, especially because of its Christ-centered content and its strong appeal (v. 38). However, evangelistic efforts are not to be limited to a two-day evangelistic event, a week of harvest evangelism, or a one-month series of gospel meetings. Interest should be cultivated before an evangelistic series. Strengthening the spiritual condition of the church, as well as training church members to help with an evangelistic series, is also a necessary activity for success. Nurturing new members and interested people, along with a review of doctrines after the meetings, is just as important as the series itself. (See *Evangelism*, p. 334.)

"In the cities of today, where there is so much to attract and please, the people can be interested by no ordinary efforts. Ministers . . . will find it necessary to put forth extraordinary efforts in order to arrest the attention of the multitudes. And when they succeed in bringing together a large number of people, they must bear messages of a character so out of the usual order that the people will be aroused and warned." —*Evangelism*, p. 122.

How can I use my gifts in a team for public evangelism?

FURTHER STUDY: This week we studied five tools of evangelism. They are: (1) personal evangelism, (2) personal testimony, (3) health evangelism, (4) lifestyle evangelism, and (5) public evangelism. Determine which tool is described in the following passages. Be able to explain why you categorized each passage the way you did: Acts 2:14-40; Luke 1:46-55; 2 Kings 5:1-15; John 4:1-30.

Read from *Christian Service* the chapters entitled "Bible Evangelism" pp. 141-144; and "Ministry of the Printed Page" pp. 145-154. From *Evangelism*, read the section entitled "Personal Work" pp. 429-455.

"As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we have tested His promise, and found the promise true. We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 340.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Pinpoint the differences between the tools Philip used in Acts 8:5, 35. Why is it necessary to have several different types of tools at our disposal when it comes to witnessing? What do you think is the one essential tool for effective witnessing? Why?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by defining in your own words personal evangelism, personal testimony, health evangelism, public evangelism, and lifestyle evangelism. Then do the following activity.

Under Column A, check which form of evangelism you participated in during the previous six months. Under column B, check which form of evangelism you would like to participate in if you had the opportunity and training.

A (I Did)

B (I Could Do)

_____ **Personal Bible studies**
 _____ **Personal testimony**
 _____ **Small-group activities**
 _____ **Health evangelism**
 _____ **Public evangelism**
 _____ **Lifestyle evangelism**
 _____ **Literature evangelism**
 _____ **Community services**
 _____ **Bible seminars**



About Face

J. H. Zachary

Captain Gregorio Montoya, leader of the 207-officer motorcycle unit in Lima, Peru, was concerned. His wife worked in the office of the commander of the Peruvian police force. The man was an Adventist, and now his wife was becoming interested in the Adventist church. In fact, she joined a small group that her boss had started. She talked about the singing, fellowship, Bible reading, and prayer time. One day Montoya told his wife, "This interest in religion must stop. You must choose between that small group and me."

She continued attending the small group meetings in spite of her husband's threats. Soon she began rising early on Sabbath mornings while he was still asleep and quietly slipping out to attend the Adventist worship services as well. But one Sabbath her husband awoke and followed her to church. He was determined to find out what was so compelling about the Adventists. Captain Montoya attended the worship service that day and has not stopped attending since then. He was baptized in 1996.

Recently I visited Captain Montoya at his police station. I watched as a new shift of officers came on duty. Some 24 officers stood at attention as a short devotional was presented. Then they sang an enthusiastic gospel song. After closing prayer they received their orders for the evening.

Later Montoya said, "I want my officers to follow the principles of God's Word. None of us receive high salaries. There is always a temptation to accept bribes. I tell my officers, 'If you take so much as one cent, you will lose your job and your soul. It is not worth it.'"

Six of Captain Montoya's officers have been baptized in the first two years following his own baptism. Sixty officers on the force are studying the Bible. In his off-duty hours Captain Montoya conducts small Bible study groups for his neighbors and friends.

With a sense of pride and determination Captain Montoya said, "With God's help, as our police force discovers and puts into practice the principles of the Bible, Peru will have the best police force in the world."



Gregorio Montoya (left). J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Approaches to Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

A NEWLY BAPTIZED MEMBER was in the habit of bombarding each of his friends all in one session with his new-found beliefs about the Sabbath, unclean meats, and the importance of paying tithe! It wasn't long before most of them began avoiding him as much as they could. It is true that when we have good news we are excited and want to tell everyone everything. But how effective is such an approach when it comes to witnessing for Christ?

Soul winning is a science. And if teachers, plumbers, doctors, mechanics, etc. train for their profession, why shouldn't we, whom God calls to witness for Him?

The objective of a Christian witness is to lead a nonbeliever to accept Jesus and His truth. Effective evangelism, therefore, should include a careful process that will lead the nonbeliever through progressive decisions to the acceptance of the whole truth. This week's lesson presents such a process. As you study, compare or contrast that process to how you presently witness. What are you doing correctly? What things should you change?

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. First Things First (Acts 18:5; 1 Cor. 2:2).
- II. Appeals and Invitations (Acts 2:38; 3:19).
- III. Progressive Decisions (Acts 16:30, 31; 22:16).
- IV. Confessions of Faith (Acts 8:37; Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9).
- V. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15, 16).

MEMORY TEXT: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

FIRST THINGS FIRST (Acts 18:5; 1 Cor. 2:2).

What was the content of Paul's witnessing in Corinth? Acts 18:5; 1 Cor. 2:2.

Leading people to Jesus Christ should be our first concern. Securing a decision for Jesus will assist the presentation of all other biblical doctrines and will help the person realize that Christ is the center of all of them. "If those who today are teaching the word of God, would uplift the cross of Christ higher and still higher, their ministry would be far more successful. If sinners can be led to give one earnest look at the cross, . . . they will realize the depth of God's compassion and the sinfulness of sin."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 209.

The witness who presents a personal testimony to a nonbeliever should not focus on doctrinal matters such as the Sabbath or stewardship. A personal testimony should transmit the joy found in accepting the salvation offered through Jesus.

Likewise, people who do evangelism should secure a decision to accept Jesus as Savior before teaching doctrines. Once this is done, they can begin to teach the whole truth. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus instructed His followers to make disciples by teaching people "to observe all things" He had commanded them. But even so, such teaching should be done in a logical sequence.

How did Paul express his confidence that he had done what he should? Acts 20:27.

Anyone using any one of the tools of evangelism we studied last week "must not feel that the whole truth is to be spoken to unbelievers on any and every occasion. He should study carefully when to speak, what to say, and what to leave unsaid. This is not practicing deception; it is working as Paul worked. 'Though I be free from all men,' he wrote to the Corinthians, 'yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more [1 Cor. 9:19-22].'"—*Gospel Workers*, p. 117.

"Much careful thought and fervent prayer are required to know how to approach men and women upon the great subject of truth."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 67. Are you acquainted with someone who needs to know Jesus? Pray that God will give you an opportunity to introduce Him to that person this week. Also pray for wisdom (James 1:5), boldness (Acts 4:29), and power (Acts 1:8) when witnessing to her or him.

APPEALS AND INVITATIONS (Acts 2:38; 3:19).

DEFINITION: *Appeals invite listeners to use their will to make a decision based on what they already know about the gospel. The most important decision sinners can make is to accept Jesus as Savior. All other decisions depend on this one.*

Analyze below the appeal Peter made in Acts 2:38. (Compare Acts 3:19.)

What did he ask the people to do? _____

Why were they to do as Peter instructed? _____

What would they receive as a result? _____

Why are these three elements essential in an appeal? _____

We are all “ambassadors for Christ” and, as such, we are to appeal to others for a decision “as though God were pleading” through us (2 Cor. 5:20, NKJV). It is a solemn thing to realize that a person’s answer to an appeal has eternal consequences. How important, then, to make an appeal correctly.

Most evangelists know that very few people will make a decision unless they are asked to do so. This is why “in every discourse fervent appeals should be made to the people to forsake their sins and turn to Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 396.

Is it difficult for you to make appeals? If so, how might the following appeals direct from the Bible, help you? Deut. 30:19; Isa. 1:18; 55:6, 7; Matt. 7:13, 14; 16:24; Acts 16:30, 31; 22:16.

PROGRESSIVE DECISIONS (Acts 16:30, 31; 22:16).

What appeal did Ananias make to Saul? Acts 22:16.

The key to helping people decide for baptism is to help them make progressive decisions. Make an appeal at the end of every Bible study and sermon. If the person or people respond positively every night, then responding for baptism will be easier. If you make no invitations during the series, the appeal for baptism or an altar call at the end will be a surprise, and many will not respond.

The following are some basic guidelines.

1. Lead the people to decide for Christ before presenting doctrines. Soften the person's heart first by presenting the cross. "More people than we think are longing to find the way to Christ. Those who preach the last message of mercy should bear in mind that Christ is to be exalted as the sinner's refuge. . . . [M]any people are sadly ignorant in regard to the plan of salvation; they need more instruction upon this all-important subject than upon any other. . . . Christ and Him crucified" is "the foundation of the gospel."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 158.

2. Do not present doctrines until you are reasonably sure that the person desires to follow Jesus. "When they surrender heart and mind and will to God, they are then prepared candidly to weigh evidence in regard to these solemn, testing truths."—*Evangelism*, p. 485.

3. When the people understand the truth, urge them to decide to obey it with the Lord's help. "Bring the people to the point to decide. Show them the importance of the truth—it is life or death."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 152.

For what decision did Paul and Silas appeal to the Philippian jailer? Acts 16:30, 31.

"As the meeting progresses the appeals should include not only accepting Christ but also following Him in loving obedience. When a person makes a decision of this nature it will generally indicate a willingness to accept all of the truths they have learned in the meeting. Specific calls to keep the Sabbath and to join the true church will not often be necessary. To accept Christ is to accept what Christ taught and what Christ is doing, which is the primary focus of all the prophetic teachings of Scriptures and all the doctrines found in the Bible."—John W. Fowler, *Evangelism 2000: Proclaiming Christ in the 21st Century* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1994), p. 55.

How does Proverbs 4:18 apply to making "progressive decisions"?

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH (Acts 8:37; Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom. 10:9).

DEFINITION: *A confession of faith is a statement of faith in Jesus. Even though an oral confession is not necessary for baptism, a public testimony always affirms a private decision. Therefore, it is also useful in evangelism.*

Use different versions of the Bible to study Acts 8:37. What did the eunuch confess before being baptized?

Not all versions include verse 37, because some manuscripts of the Bible do not have it. It should be noted, however, that the Bible expresses this truth elsewhere. In Matthew 10:32, 33 Jesus says, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (NKJV). Paul added: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9, NKJV).

What reason for witnessing and sharing your testimony does Revelation 12:11 give?

The following is an idea for preachers, Sabbath School teachers, Bible instructors, lay evangelists, pastors, and all others doing evangelism. After presenting salvation and forgiveness, ask for various individuals to express a short confession of faith. Ask them to use the name of Jesus, because "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13) and because "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NKJV).

The following list offers examples of short confessions of faith:

1. "Jesus is my Savior."
2. "I accept Jesus as my personal Savior."
3. "Jesus is the king of my heart."
4. "I want to follow Jesus."
5. "I give my heart to Jesus."
6. "I renew my commitment to Jesus."

Assure your hearers that heaven rejoices when someone confesses Jesus; that those who believe in the name of the Lord have "the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, NKJV); and that those "who believe in the name of the Son of God . . . have eternal life" (1 John 5:13, NKJV).

Write your own confession of faith.

BAPTISM (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15, 16).

Review Acts 8:36-38; 16:29-33; and 22:6-16.

After Philip preached Jesus to the Ehtiopian ruler, the ruler requested baptism. Philip baptized him immediately, thus illustrating that no one who believes in Jesus Christ is to be excluded from the people of God.

Another dramatic baptism is that of the first Christian baptism in Europe. The Philippian jailer must have come from a heathen background. However, he was baptized somewhere between midnight and sunrise, the same night of his conversion. Notice, though, that he was not baptized immediately after accepting the invitation to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31) but after the apostles “spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house” (v. 32).

Ananias asked Saul a question that soul winners know very well: “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16, NKJV). The man who later would be known as “the apostle Paul” did not eat or drink from the time he met Jesus until the time he was baptized (Acts 9:18, 19).

What requirements for baptism does the book of Acts mention? Acts 2:38 (compare Mark 16:16).

To repent means literally “‘to think differently after,’ hence, ‘to change one’s mind,’ ‘to change one’s purpose.’ It includes far more than confession of sin. . . . Theologically the word includes not only a change of mind but a new direction of the will, an altered purpose and attitude.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 295.

Based on the following texts, what does baptism symbolize?

Rom. 6:3-5 _____

Col. 2:11, 12 _____

Titus 3:5-7 _____

Consider this symbolism in relationship to your own life.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Luke 9:18-20; 22:54-62; and John 21:15-17. Compare Peter's first confession of Christ with his second confession. Was Peter serious about his first confession? Explain your answer. Why was his second confession necessary? What does Peter's story tell us about the seriousness of confessing Christ before others?

Read any or all of the following chapters or sections from *Evangelism*: "Christ the Center of the Message" pp. 184-193; "Appeals and Altar Calls" pp. 283-285; "Methods of Clinching Decisions" pp. 295-301; "Establishing and Holding New Converts" pp. 334-383.

"Do not at the outset press before the people the most objectionable features of our faith, lest you close their ears to which these things come as a new revelation."—*Evangelism*, p. 201.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Below are nine pairs of doctrines. Based on the concept of "progressive decisions," underline which doctrine in each pair should be taught first to a nonbeliever:

Stewardship *or* Origin of Sin

Sabbath *or* Law

Salvation by Faith *or* Obedience to God's Law

Hell *or* State of the Dead

Millennium *or* Second Coming

Conversion *or* the Health Message

Victory over Sin *or* God's Forgiveness

Sabbath *or* the Mark of the Beast

Sanctification by Faith *or* Justification by Faith

- Classify the doctrines below into (1) introductory Christian doctrines, (2) fundamental Adventist doctrines, and (3) distinctive Adventist doctrines by writing 1, 2, or 3 in the blank by each doctrine. At what point in a series of Bible studies or evangelistic meetings should a person study each classification?

___ Forgiveness

___ Prayer

___ Stewardship

___ Law of God

___ Health message

___ Origin of sin

___ Salvation

___ Second Coming

___ God

___ Sabbath

___ Sanctuary

SUMMARIZE in your own words the concept of "progressive decisions." Why is this concept so important? Based on what you have learned about this concept, what will you do differently in presenting the gospel to family members and friends who are not Christians?



Samithy's Prayer

Khut Chouen

Samithy needed help—fast. A Global Mission pioneer in Cambodia, he had prepared 42 people for baptism and needed a pastor to come and baptize them. But it was too dangerous for outsiders to travel the roads around Samrong, where Samithy lived. Many unwary travelers had been killed by bandits or renegade soldiers. In addition, it was the height of the rainy season, and the road was often flooded, making travel nearly impossible.

But the urgent plea for help came after Samithy encountered a number of orphans as he visited people. Three young children told him that their father was killed by soldiers and their mother had just died of malaria. They had no one care for them. Samithy located 20 orphans in all who desperately needed care. The children had nothing to eat or to wear. With no other alternative, he took them home until he could find help for them.

Samithy notified the mission of the urgent need, and the mission director arranged to charter a small plane and fly to Samrong with representatives of an international relief group. But the rains intensified, washing out bridges, flooding the dirt airstrip, and leaving doubt whether anyone could get to Samrong. Samithy did the only thing he could do: he prayed, asking God to work it out. Then he notified his baptismal candidates to meet at the river at the specified time.

Two days before the plane was to arrive, the rain stopped, and a strong north wind began to blow, drying out the dirt airstrip. Occasionally, threatening storm clouds gathered, but it did not rain. Samithy notified the pastor that the airstrip was dry enough to land.

The pastor and relief workers endured a 13-hour trip across nearly impassable roads and through rivers to reach the nearest airport some 40 miles away. They boarded the small airplane and flew through blue skies to Samrong. The pilot examined the airstrip to be sure it was dry enough to land, then he set the plane down. Friendly soldiers quickly surrounded the plane to protect it as Samithy greeted his guests. He hurried them to the river for the baptism then took the relief workers to survey the needs of the orphans and arrange for their care.

Their work done, the group boarded the airplane and soon disappeared into the distance. Less than an hour after the plane had taken off, the rain had returned, flooding the dirt airstrip.

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Church Life and Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

WHAT IS "CHURCH"? We use the term to mean a denomination, a building, or the "body of Christ." This week focuses primarily on the local congregation.

DEFINITION: *A church is a local community of Christians that meets to worship God, expresses its love through fellowship, receives sustenance from God's Word, and fulfills the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.*

The climate of a church determines how it feels to be part of a particular congregation. A healthy church creates a climate that stimulates witnessing and nurtures those who accept the gospel.

The apostolic church developed such a climate and attained such a balance of worship, nurture, fellowship, and mission that it grew daily (Acts 2:47). As you study this week's lesson, compare the apostolic church to your local congregation in the area of witnessing.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Characteristics of Christian Groups (Acts 2:42-47).
- II. A Peculiar Lifestyle (Acts 1:14; 2:42, 44; 11:26).
- III. Prayer Meeting (Acts 12:1-19).
- IV. Boldness in Witnessing (Acts 4:23-30; 8:14, 15).
- V. Christ-Centered Preaching (Acts 2:22-24, 32, 33, 36).

MEMORY TEXT: "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9:31, NIV).

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN GROUPS (Acts 2:42-47).

List the characteristics of the early Christians. Acts 2:42-47.

The early Christians had three main purposes. They were also devoted to four functions essential for a vibrant Christian life. These functions are a part of the three purposes. All of our church meetings today should aim to meet these three purposes and fulfill these four functions:

1. *An upward purpose: to glorify God.* The disciples “were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:53). **Worship**, then, is one of the four functions. Praise and prayer characterized the worship of the early church.

2. *An inward purpose: to grow spiritually and to enjoy fellowship with other members.* Another two of the functions, therefore, are **nurture** and **fellowship**. Notice that the early Christians were devoted to the apostles’ doctrine. This devotion nurtured them with the spiritual food they needed for becoming like Christ.

Christian fellowship is not merely a subjective feeling of belonging. It is different from membership in a tennis club or civic group. Christian fellowship is more like the commitment of love and obligation we have toward members of our own family. That is why the early church “had everything in common” and ate together.

3. *An outward purpose: to preach the gospel.* The fourth function of any church should be **mission**. The early church demonstrated a sense of mission like no other church since. A group of individuals sharing together in worship, nurture, and community will not be legitimate if its members remain inward. As a result of outreach, the early disciples received new converts into the church every day.

Had everything in common. “To have things in common was not unusual in Jewish life of the time. Visitors to the yearly feasts often had their needs supplied by their friends in Jerusalem. It is clear, however, that something more than this is implied in Luke’s statement. The Christians were thrown back upon themselves, and a new, a Christian, economy was set up. However, this does not mean the institution of what is called Christian socialism. It was probably a continuation and enlargement of the ‘bag,’ or common purse, of John 12:6; 13:29. The new converts would be the more ready to share their material possessions because of their new-found love for Christ and for one another, and their earnest expectations of the Lord’s soon return.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 149.

How can modern churches meet the above three purposes and fulfill the four functions? How is your church managing this responsibility? How can you help to make improvements?

A PECULIAR LIFESTYLE (Acts 1:14; 2:42, 44; 11:26).

Early followers of Jesus were distinguished by their fellowship. Which expressions in the following verses describe the togetherness of the early Christians?

Acts 1:14 _____

Acts 2:42 _____

Acts 2:44 _____

“The proclamation of the gospel was to be world-wide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of Christian unity, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 90.

Friendship with other members is the first step toward a new member's assimilation into the church. If fellowship is absent, the church will stagnate or decline. If new members cannot name a minimum of seven new friends in the church within their first six months of membership, they will leave. (See Win Arn, *The Church Ratio Book* [Pasadena, Calif.: Church Growth, 1987], p. 23.)

Where were the disciples first called “Christians”? Acts 11:26. Why?

The title of “Christian” may have arisen from local gossip: “Those people are always talking about Christ!” Earlier, they were called those “who were of the Way” (Acts 9:2, NKJV; also see 19:23 and 24:14).

“Living, as they were, in the midst of a people who seemed to care but little for the things of eternal value, they sought to arrest the attention of the honest in heart, and to bear positive testimony concerning Him whom they loved and served. In their humble ministry they learned to depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to make effective the word of life. And so, in the various walks of life, they daily bore testimony of their faith in Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 158.

List the names of some of the new members in your church. How can you make them feel welcome?

PRAYER MEETING (Acts 12:1-19).

It was Passover. To please his opponents, Herod had ordered the arrest of Peter. He had planned to give Peter to the people, much as Pilate had done with Jesus. Despite the imminence of his execution, Peter slept while the church in Jerusalem prayed for him.

How does the Bible translation you are using describe the believers' prayers? Acts 12:5.

The Greek word translated "without ceasing" or "constant" (NKJV) is the same word that describes Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). In 1 Peter 4:8, the word is translated "fervent" and suggests great intensity. We do not know the exact words of their prayers. Were they praying for Peter's release? For the will of the Lord to be done? What does one pray for under such circumstances?

We do know, however, that their prayers were answered even while they prayed. God moves on His own schedule in answering our prayers. Sometimes He waits, and sometimes He does not even wait for the "Amen." The latter happened in this case.

How did the believers react to Peter's deliverance? Imagine what may have happened in that prayer meeting after Peter left. Acts 12:13-17.

In the book *Christian Service*, pages 211-214, we find the following advice regarding prayer in the church as a form of witnessing:

1. Prayer meetings should help and encourage those attending. To do this, we should share our own experiences.
2. Prayer meetings should be interesting. Avoid lengthy speeches and formal prayers.
3. Praise and thanksgiving should also characterize our prayer meetings. These will prevent us from complaining and will dispel the power of Satan.

Can you think of other ways prayer in the church family can serve as a form of witnessing?

What is missing in the prayer meetings of your church? List ways these meetings can be improved. How could you help to revive interest in this church service?

BOLDNESS IN WITNESSING (Acts 4:23-30; 8:14, 15).

After Jesus ascended to heaven and before the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples met for long seasons of prayer in an upper room and went to the temple where they praised and blessed God (Luke 24:50-53). This combination of praise and worship with sincere prayer and supplication is an unailing formula for drawing near to God.

For what did the church in Jerusalem pray after the Sanhedrin released Peter and John? Acts 4:23-30.

What convictions did the believers express in this prayer?

verse 24 _____

verses 27, 28 _____

verses 29, 30 _____

Their prayer itself became a witness as they expressed in it their belief in their Creator and their expectations that He would help them to perform “signs and wonders” (NKJV). Surely their times of prayer together matched the requirements set forth for such meetings in yesterday’s lesson.

According to Acts 8:14, 15, for what specific matter did the apostles pray in Samaria?

“The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God. . . . The presence of the Spirit with God’s workers will give the proclamation of truth a power that not all the honor or glory of the world could give.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 50, 51.

If your local church were facing the same type of persecution the Jerusalem congregation was facing in Acts 4, how would its members respond? Pray that with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you and your fellow church members always will be able to witness boldly.

CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING (Acts 2:22-24, 32, 33, 36).

Summarize in your own words Peter’s sermon at Pentecost. Acts 2:22-24, 32, 33, 36. What were the results? Based on these results, what conclusion can you draw about the content of sermons?

Your Summary	Sermon Results	Conclusions

Peter’s sermon, as do many of the sermons in Acts, consists of five points. These points may not always appear in the same order, and occasionally some of the sermons will omit a point. But generally they are there. These five points answer the following questions:

1. What did Jesus do? (v. 22).
2. What did the nonbelievers do? (v. 23).
3. What did God do? (v. 24).
4. What are we (Jesus’ followers) doing now? (v. 32).
5. What can you do? (v. 38).

Without focusing on Christ in our preaching ministries, “there is little incentive for our members to bring their non-Adventist friends to church. If they bring their neighbors and friends and we preached Christ and made calls to accept and follow Him, it would bring a new dynamic into our churches as it does our public meetings.”—Fowler, *Evangelism 2000*, p. 52.

Evaluate Peter’s presentation of Jesus as Savior in Acts 4:12. Then use your own words to describe his message.

When sinners accept Jesus as Savior and call upon the name of the Lord, His blood cleanses them from all sin. The believers then become new creatures who want to keep the commandments of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Their names are written in the Book of Life (see Acts 16:31; 22:16; Rom. 1:13; 1 John 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 14:15; Gal. 5:16-26; Rev. 21:27).

Review the five questions Peter’s sermon raises in Acts 2 by reading each answer as if you were a part of the audience. Do you have the assurance that Jesus forgives your sins? Do you have eternal life? Tell it to others!

FURTHER STUDY: This week we studied various characteristics of church life that serve as part of the church's witnessing activities. Read the following verses to discover another characteristic of a healthy church that serves as a positive witness: Malachi 3:8-10; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7.

Also read any or all of the following: *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, "The Church of Christ" pp. 15-32; *The Acts of the Apostles*, "A Liberal Church" pp. 335-345.

"God has a church on earth who are lifting up the downtrodden law, and presenting to the world the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. The church is the depository of the wealth of the riches of the grace of Christ, and through the church eventually will be made manifest the final and full display of the love of God to the world that is to be lightened with its glory."—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 50.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How friendly does your church seem to a first-time visitor? What is your church doing correctly in this area? What needs to be improved?
2. Imagine a visitor eating alone during a fellowship dinner. What might this person feel or think? How can we solve this common situation? Are "potlucks" enough of an expression of fellowship? Explain the difference between eating at the church and eating in the intimacy of a home. How can fellowship dinners be given a more homelike atmosphere?
3. Believers were first called Christians in Antioch because their church life showed the city that they followed Christ. What is your congregation's church life showing your community?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by describing in your own words the type of church life that serves as a witness to not only the community but the world.



Buddhist Monk Finds Christ

J. H. Zachary

When Thongsouay Sakdarak was 11 years old, his Laotian parents sent him to a monastery to study to become a Buddhist monk. He remained for 12 years, mastering the writings of Buddha. He left the monastery to teach history. Then in 1983 he and his wife fled Laos for Thailand.

While living in a refugee camp, Sakdarak met a Christian man who talked to him about the Bible. One day his friend read John 1:1 to him. The verse startled Sakdarak. He recalled that Buddha had said that if his followers obeyed the Word, they would be released from sin. Sakdarak recalled other scriptures that told of the Messiah who would come.

His friend gave him a Bible. As he read, he found the crucifixion story. Sakdarak recalled that the Buddhist scriptures had stated that the coming Messiah would have marks or circles in his hands and feet.

After two months of careful study, the former monk was baptized. He began teaching the Bible to fellow refugees. He explained to them that the one message that runs through the teachings of Buddha is that those who find the true Word and obey it will be saved. Sakdarak shared this good news with anyone who would listen.

But when he told his wife, Khanthaly, about his discovery, she did not share his joy. In fact, she took his Bible, threw it on the ground, and jumped on it. Within her culture this was the highest level of insult one could give.

Sakdarak was crushed at his wife's response. For two weeks the couple did not speak or even look at each other. A divorce seemed unavoidable.

Then one day Khanthaly reluctantly went to church with Sakdarak. A Laotian hymn touched her heart, and the Holy Spirit opened her understanding. In spite of strong resistance from her family, Khanthaly took her stand for Christ.

Today the Sakdaraks work among the Laotian refugees in Southern California. Sakdarak has written two books that compare the Bible and Buddha's writings and show that Jesus is the promised Word, the Messiah, the Son of God.



Thongsouay Sakdarak (left). J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Structures for Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

ORGANIZATION EQUALS SURVIVAL. A honeybee colony requires an organized structure for survival. The queen lays the eggs that hatch into worker bees. The worker bees do all the chores, including gathering nectar and pollen, cleaning empty cells, and fanning fresh air into and stale air out of the hive. The drones mate with the queen.

“System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God’s people on the earth.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 26.

Members of a local church may organize structures for witnessing in several different ways, including: (1) assigning territory, (2) organizing small groups, (3) creating teams, and (4) sending their own “missionaries” to “nonentered areas.” This week we will take a closer look at each of these four structures to see how they enable us to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ. As you study, think about which structure best suits your gifts and talents and how you can begin to work within that structure.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Territorial Assignments (Acts 1:8; 22:21).
- II. Witnessing Teams (Acts 13:13; 20:4).
- III. House Churches (Acts 2:46, 47; 5:42; 12:12).
- IV. Church Planting (Acts 9:31; 14:21-23).
- V. Missionary Families (Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-26).

MEMORY TEXT: “For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’” (Acts 13:47, NKJV).

TERRITORIAL ASSIGNMENTS (Acts 1:8; 22:21).

Where did God first ask the apostles to serve as witnesses? Acts 1:8.

Acts 1:8 “gives the outline for the book of Acts: The proclamation of the gospel to (1) Jerusalem and Judea (chs. 1 to 7), (2) Samaria (chs. 8 through 10), (3) and the uttermost part of the earth (chs. 11 to 28).” —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 124. Jesus instructed His followers to expand their witnessing activities in broadening circles so that eventually they would cover the whole earth with the knowledge of the gospel.

To what specific territories did God call Paul and Peter?

Acts 22:21 _____

Gal. 2:7, 8 _____

In Old Testament times, each tribe of Israel received a specific territory as they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 13–23). Even though we do not see such a precise arrangement in the New Testament, it is clear where God wanted these two apostles to serve.

The basic territory assigned to the member of a church is that member’s own family and neighborhood. The *Church Manual* is clear in this respect: “Since evangelism is the primary work of the church, the first item on the agenda of each church board meeting is to relate directly to the evangelization of the missionary territory of the church. . . . As far as possible, each family and member should be encouraged to accept an assignment of territory. Every home in the church territory will thus be assigned to a church member. The member will be encouraged to [make] . . . missionary contacts in every home of one section of that territory.”—1995 ed., pp. 80, 81. Acts 1:8 assures us that we will be given the power to do so. But it is no ordinary power. The word “dynamite” comes from the Greek word *dunamis*, which in this verse is translated “power.” Such power “gives (1) power within, (2) power to proclaim the gospel, (3) power to lead others to God.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 124.

Name at least three persons within your area of influence. Pray for these people and ask God to give you the opportunities and the power to serve as a witness before them.

WITNESSING TEAMS (Acts 13:13; 20:4).

What do Acts 13:13 and 20:4 suggest about Paul's strategies for mission?

According to Luke's records, very soon after Barnabas and Saul began their first missionary trip, there were two major changes in the affairs of their mission:

1. After referring to the encounter with Bar-Jesus the sorcerer, Luke starts using the Roman name Paul (Acts 13:9).
2. Luke abandons the expression "Barnabas and Saul" (12:25; 13:2,7) and for the first time speaks of "Paul and his company" (13:13).

Because Paul took Barnabas and John Mark with him on his first missionary journey, he believed in teamwork. Later he chose Silas (15:40). And in Lystra, he asked Timothy to accompany him (Acts 16:1-3). Acts and the Epistles mention the names of many people who worked side by side with Paul. He felt better when he was with his fellow workers (see Acts 17:15; 1 Thess. 3:1; 2 Cor. 2:12, 13). But his preference for them was not dictated only by his desire for companionship. It was related to effectiveness in ministry (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1).

Keep holding hands. A group of children were hiking in the woods along an abandoned railroad track. All of the children tried walking along the narrow rails but would fall off soon after they started. The last two children to try jumped on opposite rails, reached out to hold hands, and walked the section without losing their balance.

Working together as a team can solve many problems and create a strength no one person could ever have alone.

"Why do not believers feel a deeper, more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another? In our churches let companies be formed for service. Let different ones unite in labor as fishers of men. Let them seek to gather souls from the corruption of the world into the saving purity of Christ's love. . . . Let them reveal Christlike forbearance and patience, speaking no hasty words, using the talent of speech to build one another up on the most holy faith. Let them labor in Christlike love for those outside the fold, forgetting self in their endeavor to help others. As they work and pray in Christ's name, their numbers will increase."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 21, 22.

Consider your friends in the church and the talents they have. How could you join together with them to form an effective witnessing team?

HOUSE CHURCHES (Acts 2:46, 47; 5:42; 12:12).

The early Christian church did not own buildings but used private houses as its primary place of worship. From the beginning, homes appear to have been the place for the most important aspects of early church life. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit manifested His presence and power “as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2).

Acts records the many church activities that took place in believers’ homes:

1. prayer meetings (12:12),
2. fellowship (21:7),
3. “breaking bread” (2:46),
4. worship and instruction (20:7, 11; 5:42),
5. impromptu evangelistic gatherings (16:32), and
6. planned meetings in order to proclaim the gospel (10:22).

Paul also worked out of various homes. In Thessalonica, he used Jason’s house as his base of operation (17:5-7); while in Corinth he “entered in the house of a certain man named Justus” (18:7, 8, NKJV).

Early Adventists followed a similar pattern. At first they “assembled for worship, and presented the truth to those who would come to hear, in private houses, in large kitchens, in barns, in groves, and in school-houses.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 26.

Provide the names of families who offered their homes as “house churches.” Rom. 16:3-5; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1, 2.

Rom. 16:5 _____

Col. 4:15 _____

Philem. 1, 2 _____

Give three reasons why a home is an ideal setting for witnessing activities. Does a home need to be elaborate for people to meet there? What is the most important thing a home should have for witnessing activities to be successful? List three ways you can use your home to provide witnessing opportunities.

CHURCH PLANTING (Acts 9:31; 14:21-23).

Paul and Barnabas preached in the region of Lycaonia (Acts 14:6, 7) and planted churches there. What did they do in order to secure these churches? Acts 14:21-23.

DEFINITION: *Church planting means proclaiming the gospel in a certain area and then gathering into fellowship groups those in that area who believe so they can worship, receive nurture, and work for others in the extension of the kingdom of God.*

In New Testament times, because many believers were Hebrews, they continued worshipping God in the synagogues. When they gathered with other believers who were not Hebrews for such activities as fellowship, prayer, worship, or the Lord's Supper, they met in homes. *Ekklesia*, the Greek word for church, simply means "assembly," "gathering," or "congregation." It did not refer to a church building as we know it today. Does your area need more and varied churches?

Witnessing should not be limited to listening to our neighbors when they have a problem, giving our testimony to a nonbeliever, or even sharing the gospel through a Bible study. As the number of individuals who are evangelized increases, so also must the number and variety of churches. "Those who are the chosen of God are required to multiply churches wherever they may be successful in bringing souls to the knowledge of the truth."—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 199.

What happens when Christians walk "in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit"? Acts 9:31.

Experience demonstrates that "the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches."—C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1990), p. 11.

It is a proven fact that new churches usually grow faster than established congregations. Why do you think this is so? Which nearby cities, villages, or neighborhoods in your area do not have an Adventist presence? What is the possibility of planting a church in one of those places?

MISSIONARY FAMILIES (Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-26).

Answer the following questions by reading Acts 18:1-3:

What was Aquila and Priscilla's occupation? _____

Why did they go to Corinth? _____

How did Paul establish contact with them? Acts 18:1-3.

Why did Paul engage in "secular" labors? 1 Thess. 2:9; Acts 20:32-35. _____

DEFINITION: *"Tentmakers" are missionaries who earn a living by engaging in secular employment while also doing missionary work in the country or city where they work.*

While in Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla helped Paul establish a church by offering their house to be used for church activities (1 Cor. 16:19). They accompanied Paul (Acts 18:18, 19) to Ephesus (modern Turkey), where again they were instrumental in planting a church (Acts 18:18-26). Later they returned to Rome (Rom. 16:3, 4).

The traditional model of church planting requires families and individuals to start worshiping together on Sabbath morning in a non-entered location, yet usually within the area of influence of an already established church.

The "colonization model" of church planting requires that a nucleus of members, sent by the parent church, moves to a different geographical area. Those members must sell their homes, find new jobs, and send their children to new schools. "Missionary families are needed to settle in the waste places. Let farmers, financiers, builders, and those who are skilled in various arts and crafts, go to neglected fields, to improve the land, to establish industries, to prepare humble homes for themselves, and to help their neighbors."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 194.

Do you think it takes more commitment and self-sacrifice to witness as a "tentmaker" than it does to witness any other way? Explain your answer. In what way are all forms of witnessing equal in God's sight?

FURTHER STUDY: This week we discussed organizing structures for witnessing that included: (1) assigning territory, (2) organizing small groups, (3) creating teams, and (4) sending “missionaries” to “unentered areas.” Read the following passages and decide which of these structures each passage describes: Luke 10:1; Mark 5:18-20; Genesis 12:1-3.

Also read any or all of the following: *Christian Service*, “The Church Expansion Movement” pp. 178-185; “The Home a Missionary Training Center” pp. 206-210; “Organizing Christian Forces” pp. 72-76; *The Acts of the Apostles*, “Heralds of the Gospel” pp. 166-176.

“The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also.”—*Evangelism*, p. 115.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. This week we discussed certain organized structures that the church uses for witnessing. How important is church organization to witnessing? Can organization ever get in the way of witnessing? Explain your answer.
2. How do our educational and health systems serve as witnesses? The publishing work?

SUMMARIZE in your own words the following concepts from this week’s lesson: (1) Why is organization important to certain forms of witnessing? (2) How do the following organized structures help us to witness more effectively: the assignment of territories; the organization of small groups; the creation of teams; arranging for “tentmakers” to live in “unentered” territories?

How has this week’s lesson changed your mind about witnessing? What will you do differently because of this change?



Because of Dogs

Omar Paño

It was Holy Week, the week during which much of the world focuses on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In Bolivia the Adventist Church chooses this week to draw people to Christ through evangelistic meetings.

Following the counsel in the Spirit of Prophecy, the church has organized itself into small groups that form hundreds of ministry centers throughout the country that are effective tools to draw people into Bible studies. During Holy Week the churches hold special programs to reach these people for Christ. The Hamacas Church is located in a neighborhood that has been difficult to reach in the past. But lay members continue to pray and work for souls, and during the 1998 Holy Week meetings, God used dogs to bring one young woman to a knowledge of truth.

Eighteen-year-old Ellie Arcaya was returning home from school. She worked all day and attended school at night, leaving little time to attend religious meetings. Suddenly two street dogs ran out from behind some trees, barking fiercely. The young woman knew these dogs were unpredictable and could bite her. With nothing to defend herself against the dogs, she ran toward a nearby open gate and slipped through a door to escape the dogs. She found herself inside a church.

Fearful to leave the church lest the dogs were waiting for her outside, she sat down in the last row to catch her breath. Since she was inside the church, she felt it would be rude not to listen to the sermon. She had never heard the Bible explained so clearly before, and she decided to return the following night.

Ellie continued to attend the meetings and requested the Bible course that was offered. By the time she had completed the studies, she had given her life to Jesus and requested baptism. At her baptism she told how God had used two ferocious dogs to grab her attention and lead her to Jesus. Ellie's family expelled her from their home when she joined the Adventist Church, but she remains determined to remain safely in the hands of Christ.

Just as Ellie had fled the fierce dogs, many people are fleeing the enemy of souls. Will they find a safe refuge in your church? Will they find protection and salvation there?

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Places and Occasions for Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

“EVANGELISM IS FOR NONBELIEVERS. And it should be done under a tent! Not here!” someone whispered to his wife while the pastor extended an altar call at the end of the sermon.

But a careful look in the book of Acts reveals a surprising variety of places where early Christians shared the gospel with others. The first, immediately after Pentecost, was “in the temple” (Acts 2:46) and then “in many villages” (8:25), in a chariot (8:28-31), “in the synagogues” (13:5), “by a river side” (16:13), in a prison (16:23-25), “in the market” (17:17), “in the midst of Mars’ hill” (17:22), in a school (19:9), on a ship (27:21-25), and in Paul’s lodging (28:23).

When did the early Christians witness? They did so “at the hour of prayer” (3:1), “early in the morning” (5:21), “at midnight” (16:25), “daily” (17:17; 19:9), and “from morning till evening” (28:23). Of course, they also witnessed on the Sabbath day (13:42, 44; 16:13; 17:2).

This week we will examine in depth the “when” and the “where” of witnessing. As you study, consider your own life. When and where do you witness? Is it a natural part of your life that you have cultivated with the assistance of the Holy Spirit?

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Friendship Evangelism (Acts 10:1, 2, 21, 22, 24).
- II. House Evangelism (Acts 5:42; 20:20; 28:17-31).
- III. Sabbath School Evangelism (Acts 16:13-15; 18:1-4).
- IV. Worship Evangelism (Acts 13:42-44).
- V. Urban Evangelism (Acts 17:16; 18:1, 9, 10).

MEMORY TEXT: “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4, NKJV).

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM (Acts 10:1, 2, 21, 22, 24).

DEFINITION: *A “network” refers to “a group of people who relate informally through voluntary associations, professional contacts, family or racial ties, or other connections.”—Ray Bakke and Jim Hart, The Urban Christian (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987), p. 14.*

There are many biblical examples that show how, once the gospel has been introduced by an outsider, church growth takes place through new converts or through a network of personal relationships.

What can you learn about “network evangelism” from the following examples? Acts 10:1, 2, 21, 22, 24; Mark 5:18-20.

Two facts underline the importance of “network evangelism.” The first fact is related to the question, “How did you join the church?” Between 60 and 90 percent of church members answer that their first contact with the faith was through Adventist relatives, friends, and neighbors. The second fact is related to the knowledge that the closer the relationship a church member has with nonbelievers, the less costly and more effective it is to bring the unbeliever into the church.

Most relatives and friends of a newly baptized person are not church members. After a time, however, the new member’s circle of friends includes mostly members of the church. Before this happens, newly baptized persons should be encouraged to witness to their network of relatives, workmates and classmates, neighbors, friends, and even those with whom they used to worship.

The chart below is divided into three categories: immediate family members, relatives, and friends. Record the names of at least three persons under each column with whom you wish to share Jesus. Pray for them often, mentioning them by name. Pray also that God will give you opportunities to witness to them.

Immediate family	Relatives	Friends

HOUSE EVANGELISM (Acts 5:42; 20:20; 28:17-31).

The early Christians felt overwhelmed by the size of the task Jesus left for them. They did not begin by making plans to cover the whole world. They began in one house. Then they visited people “in every house” (5:42) in Jerusalem, then in all Judea and Samaria (1:8). The work that began thus will be finished the same way. “How can the great work of the third angel’s message be accomplished? It must be largely accomplished by persevering, individual effort, by visiting the people in their homes.”—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 97.

What can we learn about house evangelism from the texts in the chart below?

Acts 5:42	Acts 20:20	Acts 28:17-31

The book of Acts begins with Christ’s followers’ praying and waiting for the Holy Spirit in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem. From this humble beginning, believers received strength and courage to spread the gospel in Antioch, Ephesus, and Rome, the most influential cities of the world at that time. But the book of Acts ends where it began. While under arrest, Paul witnesses from a house where he lived with the guards who were most likely chained directly to him. From such a humble position, it is believed that Paul wrote his letters to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and to Philemon.

“The lay members of our churches can accomplish a work which, as yet, they have scarcely begun. . . . They can distribute our publications, hold meetings in their homes, become acquainted with their neighbors, and invite them to come to these meetings.”—*Christian Service*, pp. 178, 179.

What does Paul’s experience of being under house arrest in Rome teach us about witnessing?

What approach should I follow in inviting my friends, relatives, and neighbors to my house? How can I approach them with an invitation to participate in a Bible-study group?

SABBATH SCHOOL EVANGELISM (Acts 16:13-15; 18:1-4).

Where did Paul meet with others to study the Word of God and pray?

Acts 16:13-15 _____

18:1-4 _____

Even though the Sabbath School concept is relatively new, it is possible to use these texts to support the idea of using Sabbath Schools to win souls. The Sabbath School not only provides many opportunities for nurturing existing members, but it is a useful tool for attracting visitors, nurturing and preparing nonmembers for baptism, and providing care and follow-up for newly baptized members.

Most people will have their first contact with the church through a Sabbath School. As visitors come to church for the first time, the warmth and quality of the Sabbath School program most likely will play an important part in helping them to decide whether they will return.

What approach to Bible study did Paul follow in Corinth? Acts 18:4. What does this tell us about how to conduct Sabbath Schools?

The following suggestions relate to the way we deal with visitors attending our Sabbath School services.

1. Visitors might get more from our meetings if they attended a separate Sabbath School Action Unit. "Many who listen frequently to sermons, even though the truth be presented in clear lines, learn but little. Often it would be more profitable if the Sabbath meetings were of the nature of a Bible class study."—*Evangelism*, p. 348.

2. Instead of studying the regular Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, visitors might benefit more from a study on Bible doctrines. The teacher of such an Action Unit should possess the gifts of teaching and evangelism.

3. Members, especially those who have been newly baptized, might profit from attending such a visitors' class. But it might be advisable not to have visitors in a regular Sabbath School Action Unit because of some of the subjects that might come under discussion based on the topic of any one current Bible Study Guide.

"The Sabbath school should be one of the greatest instrumentalities, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ."—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 10. How can this be a reality in my own church?

WORSHIP EVANGELISM (Acts 13:42-44).

What groups listened to Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch? Acts 13:42-44.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In Pisidian Antioch, located in the province of Galatia, Paul and Barnabas attended synagogue services, as was their habit. They used these opportunities to preach the gospel. Their sermons helped many people of the Hebrew faith, including those who had converted to Judaism, to accept Jesus as the Christ. But their sermons also assisted Gentiles, who were visiting, in understanding the gospel. Evidently the two apostles had learned how to combine worship with evangelism.

What did Paul do at Corinth on Sabbath days? Acts 18:4, 5. What two principles in particular do these verses give us regarding worship evangelism?

1. _____
2. _____

DEFINITION: *Worship evangelism makes worship services an evangelistic tool by presenting doctrinal subjects during the sermon and by offering invitations in each sermon for those present to accept Jesus as their Savior. Worship evangelism may be offered throughout the year, on a permanent basis, in the regular worship of a church.*

Every sermon should move the audience closer to Jesus; “the science of salvation” should “be the burden of every sermon.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 160. If we would follow these guidelines, we would see conversions and renewals of commitments to Jesus in our church services.

How can the worship services in your church be used as a means of evangelism? What can you do personally to help it be so?

URBAN EVANGELISM (Acts 17:16; 18:1, 9, 10).

What did Paul experience as he visited the city of Athens? Acts 17:16.

Acts 15–19 describes Paul working in five urban centers:

- (1) chapter 15—Jerusalem;
- (2) chapter 16—Philippi;
- (3) chapter 17—Athens;
- (4) chapter 18—Corinth;
- (5) chapter 19—Ephesus.

Why did the Lord encourage Paul to stay in Corinth after he finished his initial evangelistic effort? Acts 18:9, 10.

There are many reasons why we should have a strong missionary presence in cities: (1) industry, government, and education generally concentrate in cities; (2) masses of the population emigrate daily from the countryside to urban centers; (3) urban poor, living in slum areas, comprise between a fourth to a half of the population of many of the largest cities (for many reasons, these people are more responsive to the gospel than any other group); and (4) more than half the world's population live in urban areas.

Because cities are centers “where the enemy is served in every way, and where God is so often forgotten” (*Life Sketches*, p. 410), believers, and families especially, are encouraged to live in more rural areas (for example, see Ellen G. White's *Country Living*, p. 24 and *The Adventist Home*, p. 139).

What is the best way, then, to evangelize cities? “Repeatedly the Lord has instructed us that we are to work the cities from outpost centers. In these cities we are to have houses of worship, as memorials for God, but institutions for the publication of our literature, for the healing of the sick, and for the training of workers are to be established outside the cities.”—*Country Living*, p. 31.

“Lot could have preserved his family from many evils, had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city [Sodom]. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city.”—*Evangelism*, p. 79.

List the three largest social groups in the city in which, or near which, you live. Which ministries would be relevant in reaching them with the gospel? How can you involve yourself in one or more of these ministries?

FURTHER STUDY: Decide which of the following texts are an example of friendship evangelism, house evangelism, worship evangelism, and urban evangelism: 1 Kings 17; Jonah 1:1, 2; John 1:43-46; Daniel 3.

Also read any or all of the following: *Christian Service*, "Christian Help Work" pp. 186-193; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 21, 22; *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, "The Importance and Purpose of Sabbath School Work" pp. 9-14; *Gospel Workers*, "Preaching Christ" pp. 156-160; *Evangelism*, "The Metropolitan Masses" pp. 25-44.

"Visit your neighbors in a friendly way, and become acquainted with them."—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 78.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can you demonstrate practical Christianity to your neighbors? Think of at least two areas where your help or presence would be welcome. Then go and do!
2. What discussion topics in a small group might attract the interest of "unchurched" people? What topics may not attract them? Explain your answers. How can you incorporate your answers into a ministry?
3. Should announcements be part of the worship service? Is promotion appropriate as part of the sermon? Is it appropriate to use the worship service for evangelistic purposes? Explain your answers.
4. List at least three differences between evangelism in urban areas and evangelism in rural areas. What approaches may be used in urban areas to "penetrate" apartment buildings?

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by answering the following questions in your own words: (1) When and where did the early Christians witness? (2) What does the answer to the first question teach us about the "when" and "where" of witnessing? (3) List and describe the times and places of witnessing that this week's lesson discussed in detail. (4) What will you do differently regarding witnessing as a result of what you have learned this week?



Gems in the Mud

J. H. Zachary

Jason was nearing graduation from a university in Papua New Guinea. He was confident that he would find a good job. Then two things happened that changed his life.

Jason attended some evangelistic meetings and became convinced of God's claim upon his life. He surrendered his life to the Lord.

Following graduation Jason began searching for work. But with only 30 percent of the population in Papua New Guinea employed, few employers were willing to honor his request for Sabbaths off.

Jason asked God what he should do, and God answered. Jason was convinced that God was calling him to share his faith among the islands that dot the southern coastline of Papua New Guinea, a challenging and largely unentered area. Small villages dot tiny islands that barely stand above the mud and water. The people suffer health problems from their environment, and most cannot read or write. The majority have never heard the good news about Jesus.

With only his Bible and the clothes he wore, Jason journeyed to his island mission field. In the first village he made the people an offer. "If you will provide me with food and shelter and transportation costs, I will teach you how to read." The villagers agreed.

Using his Bible as a reading textbook, Jason set up class. Villagers flocked to learn how to read. And as the light of literacy dawned on them, the light of Bible truths dispelled their spiritual darkness.

Soon Jason began Bible studies, and a number of villagers made decisions to follow Christ. When a small group of believers was firmly established in this village, Jason moved on to the next island village, where he repeated his offer with equal success.

A mission worker learned of the work Jason was doing and asked him, "What supplies do you have for your work?"

Jason answered, "I have my Bible."

"What else?" the man wanted to know.

"I have Jesus."

The pastor emptied his case of all the books and gave them to Jason to enrich his teaching. Jason now receives a small stipend for his work. He is preparing some 500 people for baptism in the island villages of southern Papua New Guinea. Pray for him and for the people he ministers to in this land of spiritual hunger.

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Errors and Setbacks in Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

A MAJOR ERROR IN WITNESSING. In contrasting Paul's experience in Corinth with that in Athens (Acts 17; 1 Cor. 2:2), Ellen G. White wrote, "Instead of indulging in poetic descriptions and fanciful representations, which might please the senses and feed the imagination, but which would not touch the daily experience, Paul sought by the use of simple language to bring home to the heart the truths that are of vital importance. . . . The immediate needs, the present trials, of struggling souls—these must be met with sound, practical instruction in the fundamental principles of Christianity."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 252.

A major setback in apostolic days was persecution, generally founded on false charges (see Acts 5:28; 14:4; 16:20, 21; 17:6; 17:18; 18:13; 19:26, 27). However, persecution often has motivated Christians to be more committed to the Lord.

God helped the early Christians to overcome errors, setbacks, obstacles, fears, and opposition. As you study this week's lesson, always remember that He gives us the same help.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Ethnic Divisions (Acts 6:1-7).
- II. Dissension Among Witnesses (Acts 13:13; 15:37-40).
- III. Lack of Contextualization (Acts 15; 16:1-3).
- IV. Fear of Criticism (Acts 21:17-25).
- V. Language Barriers (Acts 2:4-11; 14:8-18).

MEMORY TEXT: "They returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:21, 22, NKJV).

ETHNIC DIVISIONS (Acts 6:1-7).

Read Acts 6:1-7 to help you fill in the chart below. What conclusions can you draw from this example about how to deal with ethnic divisions?

The Problem	The Solution	The Result	Conclusions

The early Christian church was bicultural. The Hellenists, or Grecian Jews, were non-native-born Jews whose first language was Greek rather than Hebrew. However, native-born Jews comprised the top leadership of the church.

Luke described the complaint as a class discrimination offense. Neither he nor the apostles offered a defense for it. Instead, they immediately set out to find a solution. The fact that they called a congregational meeting shows that they realized the problem was serious.

Moses' appointment of the seventy (Num. 11:10-16) to better care for the Israelites may have offered the apostles an example. They advised expanding the leadership by involving other church members. Interestingly, all seven people elected to office bear Greek names. These appointments suggest the church's progress toward resolving tensions caused by culture and race.

"The influence of the gospel is to unite God's people in one great brotherhood. . . . Worldly maxims and differences of nationalities are lost sight of in him. The love of God, sanctifying the soul, breaks down the wall of partition between the customs and practices of different individuals and nations. The great principles of Bible truth bring all into perfect harmony."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, November 3, 1885, p. 559.

What is my local congregation doing to express to the community that we belong to one great family? How can we improve upon what we are doing? What can I do to help any improvement to occur?

DISSENSION AMONG WITNESSES (Acts 13:13; 15:37-40).

What problem led to a clash among the apostles?

Acts 13:13 _____

15:37-40 _____

John Mark, "overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord's work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and perils that so often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. He had yet to learn to face danger and persecution and adversity with a brave heart. As the apostles advanced, and still greater difficulties were apprehended, Mark was intimidated and, losing all courage, refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 169, 170.

As a result of a sharp disagreement with Barnabas over John Mark, Paul chose Silas to accompany him instead and began a mission through Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:40, 41). The result was that there were now two missions, not just one. The church still understood that they were doing God's work and commended them "unto the grace of God" (v. 40). Thus we learn that we can have unity of purpose even when there is diversity of opinions and strategies.

Mark had the blessing of being close to Barnabas, who worked patiently on his behalf. Eventually Mark developed into a valuable worker.

What principles may have led Paul to reconsider his attitude toward Mark?

Phil. 2:1, 2 _____

Phil. 4:2 _____

Is there dissension among members in your church? How can these principles and what happened to Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark assist in helping to alleviate the situation? If you are involved in any way in the dissension, how can you apply these principles to your life?

LACK OF CONTEXTUALIZATION (Acts 15; 16:1-3).

DEFINITION: *Contextualization is the process of making the gospel meaningful and applicable to a given society. From an Adventist perspective, contextualization is not related to the content of the gospel but to the forms in which it is presented. Any contextualization must preserve intact the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs of the denomination.*

“When, as you labor in a place, you see that the scales are beginning to fall from men’s eyes . . . be very careful not to present the truth in such a way as to arouse prejudice and close the door of the heart to further light. Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them as far as possible.”—Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, June 13, 1912, p. 255.

A good example of contextualization is found in Acts 15. What was the problem? Why did it exist? How did the church members deal with it? This incident is known as the Jerusalem Council and presents an example for the church today. What conclusions about contextualization can we draw from this example?

Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? Acts 16:1-3.

At Pentecost, when the gospel was presented in cultural forms appropriate to each group present, God showed that He respects our variety of cultures and languages. Paul, too, was willing to be flexible on issues that would not affect the truths of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

Cultural practices vary from country to country. In some parts of the world, it is unthinkable to attend church without wearing shoes. In other parts of the world, church members remove their shoes before entering the sanctuary. Other practices include what color churches are painted, the wearing of ties, sitting on the floor, and which musical instruments may be used. We may vary in such practices, but we must agree on the essential elements of Christ’s gospel.

What cultural practices regarding worship exist in your part of the world? Should you or should you not observe the cultural practices in a part of the world you are visiting? Explain your answer. Who should make decisions regarding the cultural practices manifested in a local church, and why?

FEAR OF CRITICISM (Acts 21:17-25).

Once again Paul found himself in Jerusalem where the elders of the church received him warmly. How pleased he must have been to inform them of how readily many Gentiles had accepted the gospel as a result of his ministry to them. Yet this news proved to be at the center of a major problem, because “many thousands of Jews” also believed, “and all of them are zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20, NIV). These Jewish converts had heard rumors that Paul had advised Christian Jews who lived with Christian Gentiles to forsake certain traditions of their ancestral faith.

What did the church leaders in Jerusalem ask Paul to do in order to quiet the rumors and the fears of the Hebrew converts? What was wrong with their request, and how did it go against what the Jerusalem Council had decided? (see Acts 15:1, 2, 6-11, 19-21, 28). See also Acts 21:20-25.

“Paul thought that he was doing a wise thing in being a Jew among Jews (1 Cor. 9:19-23). But actually he was inconsistent here, for he participated, not to reveal his own belief, but to satisfy others who were ‘zealous of the law.’”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 405.

What happened as a result of Paul’s participation? Acts 21:26-39.

“The Jerusalem leaders believed that the advice they were giving was for the best. There was no intent to involve Paul in trouble, but rather to counteract the prejudice against him, for which they seemed to think he was in some way to blame. . . . They should rather have recognized that God had worked mightily through Paul, and endeavored, themselves, to counteract the opposition to him.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 404.

Administrators, teachers, elders, evangelists, pastors, and church leaders in general are subject to criticism and gossip. Attempts to change traditions, try new methods, or alter the establishment may produce bitter reactions. Criticism and false accusations feed on each other and can often create a fire storm that, once started, is difficult to extinguish. Such heat can cause people to draw rash conclusions and make unwise decisions.

What fire storms fueled by criticism exist in your part of the world church? How can you help to put them out? List at least three ways we can prevent such storms.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS (Acts 2:4-11; 14:8-18).

What did the people of Lystra do when Paul and Barnabas did not understand what they were saying? Acts 14:11.

Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra to flee from an attempted stoning in Iconium (Acts 14:1-7). In Lystra, they found a lame man whose faith was strong enough to respond to God's healing grace and who in turn was healed (vs. 9, 10). As a result, the people shouted praise in their native Lycaonian tongue (v. 11). Paul and Barnabas did not at first understand them (see *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 297). Now, as then, language can be a barrier.

It was logical for the Lycaonians to have reacted in their native tongue, because most people who speak more than one language consider their native tongue to be the "language of the heart." They pray and make decisions for eternity in that language. If we witness to others who speak more than one language, we should share the gospel with them in their "language of the heart."

What was God's first solution to language barriers? Acts 2:4-11.

Some Christians feel that congregations with different language groups are evidence of division. However, on the day of Pentecost, God Himself enabled the Christian community to preach in different languages and still be of "one accord" (Acts 2:1, 44). Paul was able to cross language and cultural boundaries without making reference to either language as a dividing factor. Paul stressed unity, but unity does not mean uniformity.

Many towns and cities of our world are fast becoming centers where people from different countries, cultures, and languages meet and live. What languages do people speak in your area? How is your church planning to reach them with the gospel? Which of the following approaches could help them to understand the gospel in their language?

- A Sabbath School class and Bible Study Guide in their language
- Other literature in their language
- A small group in their neighborhood
- Translation of church services
- A church whose services are held in their language
- Other _____

FURTHER STUDY: In Wednesday's lesson, we learned how criticism and gossip can cause setbacks in witnessing. What else does Scripture say about criticism and gossip? Exod. 20:16; Lev. 19:16; Ps. 15:1-3; James 1:26.

Also read *Christian Service*, "Assurance of Success" pp. 257-265; *Evangelism*, "Meeting Prejudice and Opposition" pp. 301-306; *Gospel Workers*, "In Relation with One Another" pp. 473-504.

"Often, as you seek to present the truth, opposition will be aroused; but if you seek to meet the opposition with argument you will only multiply it, and that you cannot afford to do. Hold to the affirmative. Angels of God are watching you, and they understand how to impress those whose opposition you refuse to meet with argument. Dwell not on the negative points of questions that arise, but gather to your minds affirmative truths, and fasten them there by much study and earnest prayer and heart consecration. . . .

"If Christ had not held to the affirmative in the wilderness of temptation, He would have lost all that He desired to gain. Christ's way is the best way to meet our opponents. We strengthen their arguments when we repeat what they say. Keep always to the affirmative. It may be that the very man who is opposing you will carry your words home and be converted to the sensible truth that has reached his understanding."
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 147, 148.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. In the early days of Christianity many believed that Gentiles should become Jews in order to be saved. Should Jews today be required to become Gentiles in order to be accepted in the Christian church? Or could they still celebrate the ancestral festivals? Explain your answer. (See Acts 18:18; 20:16).**
- 2. List other errors and setbacks that hinder our witnessing. How might we avoid these errors and setbacks?**

SUMMARIZE this week's lesson by listing the errors and setbacks of witnessing that it discussed. How can we resist these obstacles?

How has this week's lesson strengthened your desire to improve upon the witnessing opportunities God gives you?

As you witness to others during the coming days and weeks, remember that the early Christians were not exempt from making mistakes. They learned by trial and error. God, however, gave them wisdom and power to overcome obstacles. In the midst of persecution, they prayed for boldness, and despite their great diversity, they preserved unity.



The Dream That Would Not Die

Danilo Bada

I was born into a Manobo family in the southern Philippines. We lived in treehouses for protection against enemies.

When a logging company came to harvest timber, it established a school for the loggers' children. I learned of the school and begged my parents to let me enroll so I could learn to read. My parents permitted me to study at the school until it closed two years later.

There was no other school in the region, but I had tasted the sweetness of knowledge, and I wanted to learn more. So when I was 9 years old I set out to find a school without telling my parents. I walked through the mountain forests, staying away from the trails where I might meet someone from an enemy tribe. At night I slept in trees. Finally I arrived in Butuan City. I found a school and asked a teacher if I could study there. When the teacher realized that I was a Manobo and how determined I was to attend school, she let me stay in her home and work to pay my tuition.

During high school I met a colporteur who introduced me to Jesus Christ. I began selling literature to pay my school fees. I eventually completed a master's degree in public health. As the only Manobo in the Philippines with an MPH, I could have any job I wanted, but I was determined to return to the mountains and teach my own people.

I arrived home and found my tribal land unoccupied. I knew that if I did not claim the land, it would go to someone else. I built a simple school, and soon some 60 students enrolled. I needed help; I wrote to Mountain View College and asked for a student missionary to come and teach.

Jessica Hermoso volunteered. She made her way alone into the mountains and found the little mission school. She is a natural teacher, and the children love her. But then rebel soldiers invaded the area, and it became too dangerous for Jessica or the students to remain. She returned to her home, and I remained to farm my family's land.

In 1997 I met Jessica again, and eventually we were married. When it was safe to return, we reopened the school. We have added a second school in a nearby village, and we are erecting more permanent buildings as funds become available. Other villages have asked us to teach their children, but we have no money to hire teachers. My dream for an education refused to die. In fact, it has grown far beyond what I ever could have imagined.

Danilo and Jessica Bada work with the Manobo people in the southern Philippines.

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Postwitnessing Activities



Sabbath Afternoon

“CLOSE THE BACK DOOR!” Baptism opens the front door to membership in the church. Witnessing aims to “make disciples.” If this goal is not met, many new members will sooner or later leave through the back door.

What happens after baptism is crucial to “making disciples” and usually is more relevant to retaining newly baptized persons than what happened before. It is important, therefore, to identify how we can close the back door.

1. Establish a concrete discipleship program. Proper follow-up will help new members to mature in the faith and become actively involved in church life.

2. Help new members establish and maintain personal relationships with mature members. The more new members develop a sense of belonging, the less likely they will leave.

Whether you are newly baptized or a mature member, ask yourself the following questions as you study this week’s lesson: How can I help my church develop an effective follow-up program, and what can I do to help establish a sense of belonging for everyone in the church?

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Follow-up (Acts 14:21-23; 15:36; 18:23).
- II. Establishing New Members (Acts 13:43; 18:8-11).
- III. Discipleship (Acts 11:25, 26, 29, 30).
- IV. Leadership Training (Acts 20:13-36; 14:23).
- V. Nurturing Churches (Acts 15:40, 41; 16:4, 5).

MEMORY TEXT: “And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples” (Acts 18:23).

FOLLOW-UP (Acts 14:21-23; 15:36; 18:23).

In Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas visited several urban centers: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Antiochians "expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50). In Iconium, both Jews and Gentiles tried to "abuse and stone them," so they fled from there (14:5, 6, NKJV). Paul was actually stoned at Lystra, under the instigation of Jews from Antioch and Iconium (14:19). From there he went to Derbe (14:20).

Where did he and Barnabas go after preaching at Derbe? What did they emphasize during the rest of their missionary journey? Acts 14:21-23. What does Paul and Barnabas's willingness to return to areas that had so recently proven dangerous to their well-being teach us about the importance of their emphasis?

If Paul and Barnabas had pushed forward, instead of retracing their steps, in a week or so they could have arrived in Tarsus, Paul's hometown. Why, then, would they do such a thing as return to enemy territory? Returning so soon to these hotbeds of enemy opposition must have taken a great deal of courage.

In Antioch, almost the whole city had attended Sabbath services (Acts 13:44). In Iconium, "a great multitude both of Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (14:1). In Derbe they had "made many disciples" (14:21, NKJV). The apostle knew the importance of what we call "follow-up."

"After the first efforts have been made in a place by giving a course of lectures, there is really greater necessity for a second course than for the first."—*Evangelism*, p. 334. This is exactly what Paul and Barnabas had in mind when they decided to risk retracing their steps.

What was one of the reasons for Paul's second missionary journey? Acts 15:36.

What was the purpose of the third missionary journey? Acts 18:23.

What do you think your part might be in assisting new members? Based on Paul's experience, we must remember that doing so can be difficult at times. Jesus' life and death, however, teach us that we must always be ready to guide recent converts through what to them is still uncharted water. How might you help them "navigate" their way through the first year beyond baptism?

ESTABLISHING NEW MEMBERS (Acts 13:43; 18:8-11).

According to the mission model of Romans 10:13-15, Paul was sent and then he preached. Then many heard, believed, and were baptized. But he did not stop there.

What did Paul do for the newly baptized according to Acts 13:43 and 18:11 (compare Matt. 28:19, 20).

The following are suggestions for establishing new members:

1. *Friendship with other members is the first step toward a new member's assimilation into the church.* Many newly baptized persons do not feel a sense of belonging to the congregation of which they are members. Remember that, according to experts, each new member should have a minimum of seven new friends in the church within the first six months; otherwise they will be on their way out the back door. (See Win Arn, *The Church Ratio Book*, p. 23.)

2. *Assign them responsibilities.* "Everyone who is added to the ranks by conversion is to be assigned his post of duty."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 30.

3. *Invite new members to participate on the platform.* They can easily announce an opening song, perform a musical selection, have Scripture reading and prayer, etc. "The elders and those who have leading places in the church . . . should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act."—*Christian Service*, p. 62.

4. *Ask a new member to share the privilege with a mature member of giving Bible studies to a new interest.* "The more he seeks to impart light, the more light he will receive. The more one tries to explain the word of God to others, with a love for souls, the plainer it becomes to himself. The more we use our knowledge and exercise our powers, the more knowledge and power we shall have."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 354.

5. *Invite new members to accompany experienced members during visitation.* "Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and encouraged. Every church should be a training school for Christian workers."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 149.

6. *Encourage them to bring others to church.* "The spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. The very first impulse of the renewed heart is to bring others also to the Saviour."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 70.

What basic devotional habits should newly baptized members learn? Who other than the pastor should teach them? When?

DISCIPLESHIP (Acts 11:25, 26, 29, 30).

According to the first recorded attempt to reach Gentiles, “a great number [of Greek-speaking residents of Antioch] believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21). Antioch was then known as one of the “eyes” of Asia in the Roman Empire, and a Roman prefect was garrisoned there to secure Roman power in the area. “The city was ranked third in prominence to Rome and Alexandria. . . . Ritual prostitution in the temple of Daphne characterized the sensual orientation of the morals of the city.”—Ogilvie, *Acts: The Communicator’s Commentary*, p. 194.

What specific form of ministry did Paul and Barnabas develop for a whole year in Antioch? Acts 11:25, 26.

The NRSV reads, “So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people.” When we consider the nature of Antioch, we realize even more the need for such training. As a result of these training sessions, the members of this newly established church became so actively identified with Christ that soon they were known as “Christians.” “The name was given because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, their teaching, and their conversation.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 157.

The Antioch experience in developing a proper follow-up program for newly baptized members sets a pattern for a comprehensive approach to evangelism. “Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings [or Bible studies], how to conduct and teach Sabbath-school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking classes, and classes in various lines of Christian help work.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 149.

Who received the offerings sent by the members in Antioch? Acts 11:29, 30.

Apparently, the apostles had trained elders to take over the leadership of the local congregations in Judea. The apostles had previously requested assistance in order to have more time for other ministries (Acts 6:3, 4).

Based on the nature of the area where you live, what types of discipleship training are most needed? How can you be a part of some of these programs?

LEADERSHIP TRAINING (Acts 20:13-36; 14:23).

For what purpose did Paul call a meeting in Miletus? Whom did he invite? Acts 20:13-36. If you had been one of the elders in attendance, how might Paul's words have encouraged you?

Organization of church life in Ephesus appears to have been relatively simple. When Paul departed after the riot described in the previous chapter, he exhorted the "disciples" (Acts 20:1). From Miletus, he sent for the Ephesian elders (20:17). Probably each of them would have been in charge of a congregation meeting in someone's home. In Acts, there are many speeches directed to evangelize nonbelievers, but this is the only example in Acts of Paul teaching the church leaders. His charge to the elders identified them as "overseers" (v. 28) or "bishops" or "guardians."

In his speech, Paul reminded the elders of the following: "(i) He reminded them of *their duty*. They were overseers of the flock of God. That was not a duty they had chosen but a duty for which they had been chosen. The servants of the Good Shepherd must also be shepherds of the sheep. (ii) He reminded them of *their danger*. The infection of the world is never far away. Where truth is, falsehood ever attacks. There was a constant warfare ahead to keep the faith intact and the Church pure.

"Through all this scene runs the dominant feeling of an affection as deep as the heart itself. That feeling should be in every church; for when love dies in any church the work of Christ cannot do other than wither."—Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 152.

With what action did Paul finish his ministry in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch? Acts 14:23.

The most concrete, lasting form of ministry in Acts is church planting. Planting churches is more than establishing a meeting place or baptizing a group of believers. Only when leaders are properly functioning can members take the time to participate actively in outreach. Then the church will grow, and as it grows, it will truly become planted. This requires leadership training.

What can members do when no pastor is present in a worship service? What can pastors do to train members to administer proper church leadership in their absence? What are some advantages and disadvantages of pastors having a multichurch district?

NURTURING CHURCHES (Acts 15:40, 41; 16:4, 5).

What did Paul do at the start of his second missionary tour? Acts 15:40, 41.

Paul started his second missionary tour in the area close to Antioch and then proceeded to the Galatian region, where he had established churches during his first missionary journey (Acts 13–14). This short record suggests that Paul had no intention of making a career of nurturing those new churches, even though they would have liked him to stay. However, Paul and Silas kept their visits brief and moved on to the frontiers as quickly as possible.

There is no question that new churches need to be nurtured, but we should remember that “the greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers.”—*Christian Service*, p. 58.

It is true that from time to time we all will need help and encouragement from a fellow Christian. Paul counsels us in Galatians 6:2 to “carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (NIV). At the same time, however, we also must remember that ultimately our strength depends solely on Jesus Christ and the connection we have with Him. Human strength by its very nature is subject to human frailties and will at times fail. The final conclusion then is this: While at times we will need encouragement from others, and while we all should learn how to be an encouragement to others, our greatest need is to learn how to depend on Christ alone and how to direct others to depend on Him.

What results did Paul and Silas receive for their efforts? Acts 16:4, 5.

The overall impression in reading the book of Acts is that the apostles stayed a relatively short time with most churches. After training leadership, they continued with their work of evangelization. “The ministers who are hovering over the churches, preaching to those who know the truth, would better go into places still in darkness. Unless they do this, they themselves and their congregations will become dwarfed.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, February 9, 1905.

Might I be demanding too much pastoral attention? How can I become stronger in the Lord so that I will require less pastoral attention? How can I balance worship, nurture, and outreach in my life?

FURTHER STUDY: In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul writes, “Encourage one another and build each other up” (NIV). Then in verses 12-22, he lists 15 ways in which we should do so. What are these 15 ways? Think of specific ways you can fulfill each one.

Read any or all of the following: *Evangelism*, “Establishing and Holding New Converts” pp. 334-383; *Gospel Workers*, “Thoroughness” pp. 367-372; *The Acts of the Apostles*, “Exalting the Cross” pp. 205-207.

“After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after. The zeal of many ministers seems to fail as soon as a measure of success attends their efforts. They do not realize that these newly converted ones need nursing—watchful attention, help, and encouragement. . . . Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God’s Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 68, 69.

“The elders and those who have leading places in the church should give more thought to their plans for conducting the work. They should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act, that none may lead an aimless life, but that all may accomplish what they can according to their several ability.”—*Christian Service*, p. 62.

“Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver.”—*Christian Service*, p. 9.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does this week’s lesson show the importance of a local church working together not only to attract new members but to keep new members?
2. After studying this week’s lesson, what specific elements do you think a good discipleship program should have?
3. After studying this week’s lesson, think of specific ways you and your local church can help new members develop a sense of belonging.
4. How can you and your local church reclaim inactive members?

SUMMARIZE what the work of Paul teaches us about nurturing new members. List ways we can establish new members in our churches. Explain why it is essential for ministers to train church members to be good leaders. How has this week’s lesson helped you better to understand the concept of nurture and the need for it?



The Lame Man Walks

J. H. Zachary

Babu Rao was a faithful and devoted young Hindu. He performed the ceremonies of his religion and refused to have anything to do with Christianity. Often he made unkind remarks to Christians when they tried to speak to him of their faith.

Then Rao became ill with a mysterious affliction that paralyzed him from the waist down. Even specialists in a large hospital could not help the paralyzed man. His family took him to sacred Hindu sites hoping that Rao would regain his health, but nothing happened. Family members offered sacrifices of pigs, goats, and black chickens at another sacred temple, but still Rao felt no relief.

Unable to walk, Babu Rao had time to think about his future. A Christian friend stopped by to encourage him and to tell Rao that he and his family were praying for him. Touched, Rao asked him, "Can the Christian's God help me?"

"Jehovah God is able to do things that other gods and even doctors cannot do," his friend answered. Rao thanked his friend and invited him to come back to visit and pray for him again.

The Christian friend told his congregation about Rao and urged them to pray for him. For two months the believers held special services for Rao, during which the pastor and members fasted and prayed for this Hindu man.

Rao began to regain feeling in his right leg. Soon he could place his weight on that leg. As feeling returned to his left leg, Babu Rao began to walk with the aid of crutches. As soon as possible, he attended services at the Adventist church. During a prayer meeting Rao stood and told the members, "I regret the way I spoke to you in the past. Please forgive me. I have learned that Jesus is the true God."

Babu Rao, the man who stubbornly opposed Christians, accepted salvation through Christ and was baptized. He now walks with no need of canes or crutches, a testimony to God's mighty healing power. He has shared his testimony with family and friends, and many of them have begun attending church with him.

Babu Rao is not unique. As Hindus in India experience difficulties in their lives that their traditional deities cannot solve, they often are willing to listen to Christians. This opens the way for millions to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

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The Results of Witnessing



Sabbath Afternoon

WHAT A REWARD! “The redeemed will meet and recognize those whose attention they have directed to the uplifted Saviour. What blessed converse they will have with these souls! ‘I was a sinner,’ it will be said, ‘without God and without hope in the world; and you came to me, and drew my attention to the precious Saviour as my only hope. . . .’

“Others will say: ‘I was a heathen in heathen lands. You left your friends and comfortable home, and came to teach me how to find Jesus, and believe in Him as the only true God. I demolished my idols, and worshiped God, and now I see Him face to face. . . .’

“Others will express their gratitude to those who fed the hungry and clothed the naked. ‘When despair bound my soul in unbelief, the Lord sent you to me,’ they say, ‘to speak words of hope and comfort. You brought me food for my physical necessities, and you opened to me the word of God, awakening me to my spiritual needs. . . . My heart was softened, subdued, broken, as I contemplated the sacrifice which Christ had made for me.’”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 518, 519.

As we study this week’s lesson, let us keep before us the rewards of witnessing for our Savior, rewards that we can enjoy both now and for eternity.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

- I. Failure? (Acts 17:32-34).
- II. Objections and Excuses (Acts 22:12-16; 24:25; 26:27, 28).
- III. Acceptance or Rejection (Acts 28:23, 24).
- IV. Witnessing and Finishing the Work (Acts 17:5-7; Rev. 14:6-10).
- V. Eternal Results (Acts 28:11-16, 30, 31).

MEMORY TEXT: “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21, NKJV).

FAILURE? (Acts 17:32-34).

Describe the results of Paul's mission in Athens. Acts 17:32-34.

People rejected Paul's message on many occasions. In some instances, as in Athens, he did not see large groups becoming Christians. His work there is used many times as an example of faulty evangelistic strategies, but the record indicates that some people did believe.

One of the people who did accept Christ at Athens was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus. The Areopagus was an honored court of justice that held jurisdiction over certain crimes, religious offenses among them. The Areopagus also licensed teachers and controlled education.

Another person mentioned as having accepted Christ at Athens was a woman named Damaris. Because women in Athens were restricted, no respectable woman would have been in the marketplace listening to Paul. It is likely, therefore, that upon hearing him, she turned from a life of ill repute to one of righteousness. Imagine for a moment the number of people whom just these two converts probably influenced for eternity!

What do the following verses teach us about failure versus success in witnessing? Luke 15:3-24; John 4:7-26, 28-30, 39-41.

Despite what we view as a setback, we must remember that soul-winning work is God's work. Feelings of personal failure or success have no place in it. Failure is doing nothing; but "when we give ourselves wholly to God, and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure."—*Christian Service*, pp. 261, 262.

"Workers for Christ are never to think, much less speak, of failure in their work."—Page 261.

We will, however, care about the results, because "the results do not end with this life, but reach over into eternity."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 411. We always will do our best in order to maximize the results, remembering that even though in soul winning there is a combination of human and divine efforts, conversion is always a miracle from God.

Think of some people who have accepted the gospel as a result of your witnessing. Remember some who rejected the gospel. Can you think of some who have not accepted it yet? Pray for all of them now!

OBJECTIONS AND EXCUSES (Acts 22:12-16; 24:25; 26:27, 28).

How did Ananias encourage Saul to make an immediate decision to accept Christ? Acts 22:16.

Paul's conversion involved a twofold commitment.

1. He committed himself to Jesus on the Damascus road, immediately referring to Jesus as "Lord."

2. He committed himself to the body of Christ through baptism in the city of Damascus.

Before making either of these two commitments, people often present objections and excuses. The devil uses objections and excuses as "iron bands" to hinder people from making their decision for what is true. "Many are convinced that we have the truth, and yet they are held as with iron bands; they dare not risk the consequences of taking their position on the side of truth. . . . Just at this critical period Satan throws the strongest bands around these souls."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 646.

What excuse did Felix give to Paul when confronted with the issue of eternal consequences? Acts 24:25. King Agrippa? 26:27, 28. What can we learn about witnessing from Paul's response to Agrippa? Verse 29.

Felix's wife Drusilla had been married to Azizus, King of Emesa. But Felix had charmed her away from her first husband. It is no surprise then, that when Paul began to speak about "righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come" (24:25, NIV), Felix dismissed him. One way of knowing we have succeeded in making the gospel personal is when someone makes an excuse, and then an exit.

As stated earlier in this Bible Study Guide, an objection is an honest block to a strong decision. The soul winner cannot secure a decision until the block is removed. An excuse is an attempt to avoid making a decision. A good way to learn a person's objection is by asking the prospect to read Acts 22:16 and then ask the person, "Is there any reason why you would not make a decision to follow Jesus right now?" Then wait in prayerful silence. If the prospect answers No, both the witness and the prospect may join in a prayer of thanksgiving. But if the prospect offers some objections, the witness may ask, "Is that the only reason?" Usually the last objection is the most important.

"I am too busy." "I am not ready." "I will do it later." What are my excuses for not serving as a witness today?

ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION (Acts 28:23, 24).

Review and describe the attitudes of Felix and Agrippa to Paul's appeals.

Acts 24:25 _____

26:27, 28 _____

"When persons who are under conviction are not brought to make a decision at the earliest period possible, there is danger that the conviction will gradually wear away."—*Evangelism*, p. 229.

How did some of the people respond to Paul's evidence of the gospel? Acts 28:23, 24.

From the first proclamation of the gospel found in the book of Acts (Acts 2) to the last (Acts 28), we find that when the gospel was preached to unbelievers, some accepted it, while others did not.

When the Christian witness notices that the student does not accept a doctrine just studied, one option is to move to another subject. Many issues will find spontaneous answers while other doctrines are being studied. Of course, the witness must pray harder, asking the Holy Spirit to bring conviction. "The arguments of the apostles alone, though clear and convincing, would not have removed the prejudice that had withstood so much evidence. But the Holy Spirit sent the arguments home to hearts with divine power."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 45.

What did the apostles do when people rejected their message? Acts 13:48-52; 14:4-7. What can their attitude teach us about our attitude regarding the success or supposed failure of our witnessing attempts?

The acceptance or the rejection of the gospel carries eternal consequences. The Bible often describes these consequences in terms of contrasting options: life and death, good and evil (Deut. 30:15); blessings and curses (30:19); and a narrow path and broad way (Matt. 7:13,14). For others, read Matthew 7:24-27; 25:2, 33, 46; and Revelation 20:15 and 21:1. Christian witnesses are ambassadors for Christ who invite sinners to repentance, conversion, baptism, and perseverance (see 2 Cor. 5:20; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16; 14:22).

If your eternal destiny would be decided today, would you be saved? How do you know?

WITNESSING AND FINISHING THE WORK (Acts 17:5-7; Rev. 14:6-10).

What were Christian witnesses accused of in Thessalonica? Acts 17:5-7.

Explain the relationship between sharing the three angels' messages with the world and finishing the work. Rev. 14:6-10.

The book of Acts records many deeds of the early Christians that, according to their enemies, "turned the world upside down." The Bible describes in the book of Revelation how the messages of the three angels are taken to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6); this means the whole world. The people who share these messages are not waiting for something extraordinary to take place some day in the future under the influence of the "latter rain." Many are already participating in the finishing of God's work by knocking on doors and giving Bible studies to their friends, neighbors, and relatives. Others are leaving their families to spend the rest of their lives witnessing to thousands of people groups.

How will God finish His work? Through committed members, willing to sacrifice the conveniences of time, home, town, family, church, country, and even life itself, to go "to places where the very name of Christ has not [even] been heard" (Rom. 15:20, NEB). "Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

"Evangelistic work, opening the Scriptures to others, warning men and women of what is coming upon the world, is to occupy more and still more of the time of God's servants."—*Evangelism*, p. 17. Does your witnessing today include "opening the Scriptures to others"? In addition to giving Bible studies and helping with evangelistic meetings, think of other ways you can open Scripture to those in need. Is it possible to open the Scripture to others without opening it to yourself? Explain.

ETERNAL RESULTS (Acts 28:11-16, 30, 31).

Under what circumstances did Paul go to Rome? Acts 28:11-16, 30, 31.

“For years Paul had longed to visit Rome and preach the gospel there (Rom. 1:11-13). He must have reflected on the sharp contrast between that eager expectation and the realities of his arrival. But out of the shocking contrast Paul found reason to take courage, and fresh assurance of God’s leading. Paul was skilled at finding reasons for great hope in what appeared to be the most discouraging circumstances. . . . He was a confirmed and incurable Christian optimist.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 461.

Many times doors to witnessing opportunities seem to close in front of us. Retirement, serious illness, even the solitude of a prison cell at first might seem to deny us the chance to witness. However, Paul’s experience teaches us just the opposite.

How does the book of Acts end? What two words describe the way Paul witnessed while remaining under house arrest? Acts 28:31.

In one sense, the book concludes with an enthusiastic spirit of freedom. To be sure, Paul was a prisoner; but his bonds did not prevent him from proclaiming the gospel. It is easy for the reader to forget Paul’s chains and to celebrate with him the freedom of the good news.

In another real sense, the book of Acts does not conclude at all, for the work goes on through the witnessing of many even today. All of us involved in whatever facet of witnessing are carrying on the great legacy handed down to us through the ages by our sisters and brothers in the early church. Let us all work together, so the mission can be all that God intends.

The same Jesus is still standing at the right hand of God, absent from believers in the flesh yet present with them in the Spirit. This same Spirit, who moved upon the church at Pentecost, is moving upon the church today. The acts of the apostles will not conclude until Christ’s followers have fulfilled their great commission and they, along with those they helped to save, will be swept into the heavens at the Second Coming.

The rewards of witnessing are both present and future. What a joy it will be to see and to greet in heaven those whom we have brought to Jesus and His salvation! What a joy it will be to hear the Lord say, “Well done!”

FURTHER STUDY: Regarding the rewards of witnessing, read Paul's testimony in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Also read 1 John 3:1-3.

Read any or all of the following: *Christian Service*, "Reward of Service" pp. 267-275; *Gospel Workers*, "The Reward of Service" pp. 512-519; *Evangelism*, "The Message Triumphant" pp. 692-707.

"The great purpose that constrained Paul to press forward in the face of hardship and difficulty should lead every Christian worker to consecrate himself wholly to God's service. Worldly attractions will be presented to draw his attention from the Saviour, but he is to press on toward the goal, showing to the world, to angels, and to men that the hope of seeing the face of God is worth all the effort and sacrifice that the attainment of this hope demands.

"Though he was a prisoner, Paul was not discouraged. Instead, a note of triumph rings through the letters that he wrote from Rome to the churches. 'Rejoice in the Lord always,' he wrote to the Philippians, 'and again I say, Rejoice. . . .

"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' [Phil. 4:19, 23]."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 484.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What attitudes should Christians avoid when someone with whom they have been studying rejects the gospel? What can Christians do to continue a relationship with that person?
2. What aspects of witnessing are necessary in order to "finish the work" in the area where you live? List three groups of people among whom you could be an effective witness according to your spiritual gifts.
3. How have this quarter's studies helped your spiritual life? What more do you need to know about soul winning? How can you and other interested persons in the church receive additional training?

SUMMARIZE in your own words the rewards of witnessing. What concept of success or failure should we have when we witness, and why? Explain the relationship that exists between witnessing and finishing the work.

After studying the lessons this quarter, would you like to make a commitment to serve God as a witness to His love? If you answer Yes, pray to God now that He will help you to do so. Ask Him to give you an opportunity to implement what you have learned throughout these 14 weeks.



Show Us God's Power

Denis Patindé

Mali is virtually an unentered country, with fewer than 500 Adventists in a population of 10 million. Mali is a large, landlocked country located in the bulge of Africa. Most of the people are Muslim or animist, but in spite of this, people are willing to listen to the gospel, and many are accepting Christianity.

We planned an evangelistic series in one town where the people are strongly influenced by animism and fetish worship. Through their traditional chief the people asked us if our God could protect them from sorcerers, evil forces, and the curse of Allah if they decided to become Christians. They asked us to show them the power of God. We told them to look to the heavens, see the sun and moon and stars that God had hung in the sky. But they wanted tangible evidence.

That night as we presented our discussion, it began to rain hard. This is rare in the desert of Mali, and the people became frightened and fled to their homes. Had God already begun to show His power?

That night I woke up feeling something cold on my thigh. I touched it and immediately realized that it was a snake! If it was poisonous and it bit me, I could die. I cried out to God to deliver me from this snake, then slowly I began to move, careful to not trap the snake in my trousers.

The snake slithered down my trouser leg and onto the floor. I found a flashlight and aimed it at the snake. It lay on the floor unmoving, as if it was paralyzed. I recognized it as a *worofi*, one of the deadliest snakes in Africa. One strike would have killed me. I reached for the box in which I store my picture roll and struck the snake, killing it.

Word spread through the town that the Adventist pastor had awakened to find a *worofi* in his trousers and survived. Villagers came to the house to see for themselves the snake that could not kill me. "Pastor," they said, "the *worofi* did not kill you. What a powerful God you have that can protect you from the *worofi*. Surely He can protect us against evil powers if we become Christians."

By that evening the story had spread to every home in the region. The meeting place was packed with people. I told them the story of how Paul was saved from the bite of a serpent while on the island of Malta.

As a result of my encounter with the deadly *worofi*, seven people gave their lives to God and were baptized. Many others are preparing for baptism. Even the traditional chief, a strong Muslim, accepted a Bible and is studying the Voice of Hope Bible course.

Pray for the people of Mali. It is not easy to become a Christian here.

Denis Patindé is a pastor-evangelist interning in Mali.

Produced by the General Conference Office of Mission Awareness

E-mail: gomission@gc.adventist.org

Bible Study Guide for Fourth Quarter, 2000

Proverbs: Wisdom to Live By, written by Virginia Everett Davidson and co-authored by Ernest Steed, was originally published for study in the fourth quarter of 1991. As the name indeed suggests, it is a practical study of the book of Proverbs and how its wisdom can be applied in everyday life.

Lesson 1: What Are Your Priorities?

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: What Is Wisdom? (Prov. 1:1-7; 2:10, 11).

Monday: The Value of Wisdom (Prov. 4:5-7).

Tuesday: How Do We Get Wisdom? (Prov. 2:1-6; James 1:5).

Wednesday: What Is Righteousness? (Prov. 2:7-10; 21:3).

Thursday: Righteousness and Wisdom (Prov. 2:1-6, 9).

MEMORY TEXT: Proverbs 9:10.

SABBATH GEM: God is the Source of all wisdom and knowledge. He invites us to seek true understanding and His righteousness.

Lesson 2: A Star to Guide the Humble

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: What Trust Is Versus What Trust Is Not (Prov. 22:17-19).

Monday: Is Our Trust Misplaced?—Part 1 (Prov. 28:26).

Tuesday: Is Our Trust Misplaced?—Part 2 (Prov. 11:4).

Wednesday: A Star to Guide the Humble—Part 1 (Prov. 3:5, 6).

Thursday: A Star to Guide the Humble—Part 2 (Phil. 4:19; Prov. 16:9).

MEMORY TEXT: Proverbs 3:5, 6.

SABBATH GEM: Trust involves a williness to commit oneself to the care of the one being trusted. Jesus is the only One whom we can fully trust.

Lessons in Braille

The regular Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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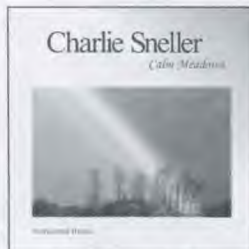
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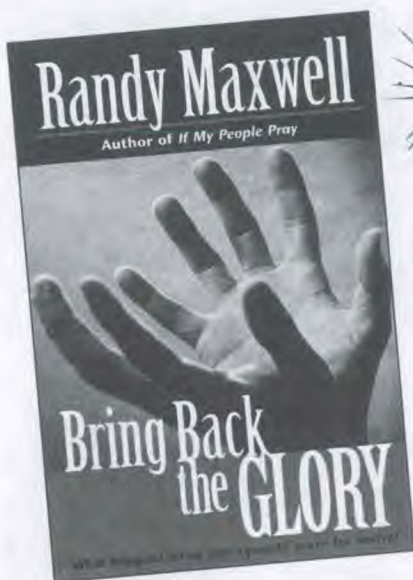
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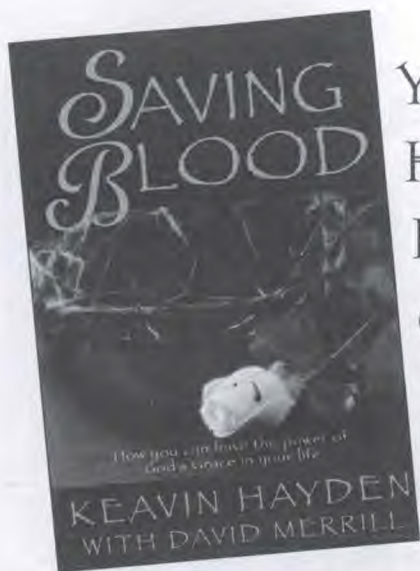
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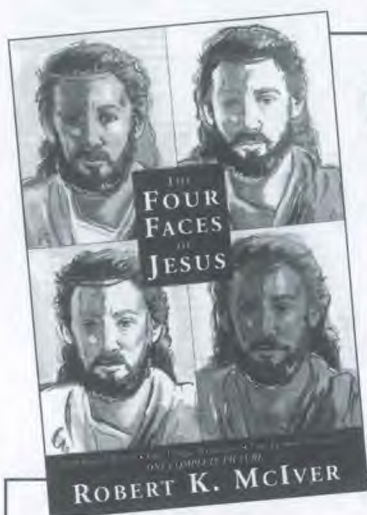
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Unions	Churches	Companies	Membership	Population
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Austrian	47	9	3,576	8,087,000
Bulgarian	94	20	7,134	8,188,000
Czecho-Slovakian	185	34	10,000	15,685,000
Franco-Belgian	139	—	11,260	69,757,000
Italian	94	—	5,832	58,124,000
Mozambique	823	—	148,790	19,124,000
North German	366	—	20,848	49,170,000
Portuguese	83	15	7,929	9,992,000
Romanian	1,055	174	73,130	22,460,000
South German	208	12	14,651	32,780,000
Spanish	68	—	7,112	39,509,000
Swiss	57	4	4,054	7,151,000
Trans-Mediterranean Ter.	3	3	102	231,653,000
Totals	3,929	891	509,032	584,314,000



Mission Projects:

1. Spain—Evangelistic Center for Romanian immigrants in Madrid, Spain
2. Mozambique—Evangelistic Center, Maputo