

Every Member Ministry



SABBATH—APRIL 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 5:15–20; John 4:35–41; 1 Thessalonians 1:5–8; Acts 14:27.

MEMORY VERSE: “But God chose you to be his people. You are royal priests. You are a holy nation. You are a people who belong to God. All of this is so that you can sing his praises. He brought you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: Too often people think that evangelism¹ and witnessing are the pastor's job alone. This thinking is wrong.

ACCORDING TO PETER, GOD'S PEOPLE are chosen and called to be “royal priests” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). The priests were given a ministry (work done for God). We, too, are called to be “priests.” We also have a ministry. But we also must understand that we are not called just to do work for God. First and foremost, God is calling us into a relationship with Himself. Out of that relationship, we need to share with others the great things that God has done, and is doing, for us. This is the real reason for personal witness.

So, each of us has a personal ministry to do. It involves giving praises to God, who has called us “out of darkness into His marvelous [wonderful] light” (NKJV).

This week we will explore the idea of “every-member ministry.” We will learn how each person's experience contributes to the church's ministry as a whole. The point is that each of us has an important part to do in the work of outreach and evangelism.

1. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

SUNDAY—APRIL 8**EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY
(2 Corinthians 5:15–20)**

Too often we hear Christians complain that they are not gifted enough to do anything important for God. The devil would certainly like us to think this way. But the Bible tells us that all Christians have a God-given ministry. We need to know what it is and then decide by God's grace² how to use it for His glory (praise).

What do Ephesians 4:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:15–20 say about each believer's ministry?

Paul clearly says that the saints are to be gifted for a ministry. Everyone who has been reunited with God through the sacrifice of Jesus is given the ministry of leading sinners back to God. He or she is also an ambassador³ for Christ. An ambassador is one who personally represents a ruler or a president. This idea shows the personal relationship between Christ and all who have been reunited (joined again) with Him as they carry the message of His love and grace into the world.

There is much confusion over the word *ministry*. Today ministry is seen to be something that the pastor does. After all, he or she is a church minister. Some involved in pastoral ministry do have certain special areas of work that they are supposed to do. But the Bible points out that part of the work of the

pastor is to train members for a personal ministry.

The New Testament gives proof that the early believers understood the idea of every member ministry. Wherever they went, they found themselves preaching about the Lord Jesus (see Acts 8:1–4).

There is another way in which Jesus shows that we all have a special ministry to do. He clearly says that He did not come to be served but to serve (see Matthew 20:28; Luke 22:27). He also clearly says that His followers also are to be servants (read Matthew 23:11; Matthew 20:26, 27). If that is not true ministry, then what is?

Jesus is not just ordering us to be servants. He is leading us to understand that a servant ministry is a result of our connection (relationship) with Him. These verses describe the life of the person who has fellowship with the suffering Servant Jesus Christ. They also support the idea that to be in Christ is to continue His ministry.

How willing are you to serve others? Is it your natural desire? Or do you wish to get from others rather than to give? How can you improve your desire to serve?

MONDAY—APRIL 9**THE NEED FOR LABORERS
(WORKERS) (John 4:35–41)**

Sometimes we are sent to reap (harvest) where others have turned the soil,

2. grace—God's gift of mercy that He gives us to take away our sins.

3. ambassador—the highest-ranking person who represents his or her country while living in another country. We are God's ambassadors to the world.

sown (planted) the seed, and watered the crop. Once in a while, there may be a person who digs, sows, waters, and reaps all in one field. But one person usually does not do all the work. In our fast-moving, modern world, people move into and out of our area of influence. For this reason, we must be ready to build upon the evangelistic⁴ work that others have begun.

We often may get excited when a person accepts Christ. But what does John 4:35–41 tell us about sharing the joy with others who, along the way, have helped that person grow in Christ?



Sometimes we are sent to harvest where others have sown the seeds of the gospel.

Usually when we talk about reaping, we are talking about a certain time of year when the crops are ready to be harvested. For most crops there is a specific reaping season (time). But in our work for God, there is

no set time for reaping (harvesting). Jesus makes this point strongly in John 4:35. In farm work, the harvest may well be four months away. But speaking about those who are ready to accept Jesus, some part of the field always is ripe for harvest.

At Jacob's well, Jesus sowed the gospel seed in the heart of the Samaritan woman. In turn, she sowed the seed among the people of Sychar. And then the Samaritans walked toward Jesus past unripe grain fields. As it was with the disciples, the Lord encourages us to be ready to reap from the continually ripening field of the world.

Read 2 Peter 3:9. Why is God so eager for laborers (workers) to go out into the harvest?

It is because of God's great love and mercy for people that He desires laborers to go into the harvest (read Matthew 9:36–38). As we consider the world field today, the harvest still seems great and the laborers few. The disciples were told to pray that reapers would be sent out into the harvest. As we modern-day disciples pray for laborers, the Holy Spirit will open the way for us to do the work that He has called us to do.

Think over the past few days. How many chances did you have to witness for your faith, to plant a few seeds that could one day reap a harvest? How many of those times did you do it? How many opportunities did you miss?

4. evangelistic—having to do with spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.



Jesus asks us to be ready to reap from the continually ripening field of the world.

TUESDAY—APRIL 10

INDIVIDUALS (PERSONS) BUT JOINED TOGETHER (Ephesians 4:16)

The local church is not simply a number of people who sit in the same building for a couple of hours once a week. According to the Bible, the church is a group of people who are closely joined together as the different parts of the human body are to one another. But it is possible that people can meet together regularly without being a part of the body. This unfortunate fact can be true in many areas of church life. But we are focusing on (considering) the need to be united in the areas of evangelism and witnessing.

Think about Ephesians 4:16. What would happen to the growth of a body if it lost its elbow, wrist, or knee joints? And what does Paul's example say about the church as a body (group) of believers who have been given an evangelistic mission?



Church members are closely joined together as the different parts of the body are.

The apostle (teacher and leader) Paul says that a church body grows when all of the members do their share (part). What about churches that are not growing? We might first blame those who we think are not doing their share. They may not be, but think about this: how often do churches fail to give members an opportunity to contribute to the body? If church leaders do not understand the *ministry of all believers* principle (important rule), they will not try to involve all members in church life and ministries.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5–8. What did the Thessalonian church members do with the gospel that they had received from Paul?

The church at Thessalonica is an example of a church that received the gospel and passed it on. It is still God's will that His church works in this way.

There are many blessings for each member when he or she follows the church's plan for evangelism. But we will focus here on the important

areas of encouragement and personal responsibility. Working as a team helps us to think about these areas seriously. A lack of team encouragement has caused the death of many worthwhile projects started by church members. While individuals may have special talents and gifts, working toward common goals through group planning is still the best way. Working together as a group encourages members to be more responsible and better able to evaluate (test) the results of their work.

In what ways could you work more closely with church members in trying to reach out to others? Why is it so easy to get lazy and sleepy?

WEDNESDAY—APRIL 11

WORKING TOGETHER, WITH GOD (1 Corinthians 3:5–9)

Yesterday we learned how important it is for a church to work together in evangelistic work. We must also understand that we are working together to reach one of God's goals. So, when a church makes witnessing and evangelistic plans, members must feel strongly that they are working together with God. He is the One who leads, directs, encourages, and makes churches grow larger and stronger.

Read Acts 2:47 and 1 Corinthians 3:5–9. What is the result of God's

influence upon the church as it shares the gospel?

Read 2 Peter 3:9 and Titus 2:11. What encourages and gives believers the ability to work together with God?

The Bible is filled with proof of God's love for humans. It is not surprising that He has taken the first step in the salvation of humans. The Cross alone gives us all the proof we ever would need about how much God loves us and about how much He wants us to be in His eternal kingdom. The Lord has truly blessed us through His grace.⁵ This amazing grace is shown through the Cross. It makes us eager to share with others all that we have freely received from Jesus (read Matthew 10:8).

Sometimes the disciples tried to work alone (read Matthew 17:14–21). But mostly their experience was one in which the divine (God) and human worked together.

Jesus called the first disciples. He promised to make them fishers of men. He taught and prepared them. And through the disciples' ministry, many others became believers too. But there was still another gift from God that they would need after Jesus had returned to heaven. That was the gift of the Holy Spirit. He would help the early church with its witnessing and evangelistic mission.

Those who become involved in evangelism today are still collaborators

5. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

with God for the salvation of others. We must pray that the Holy Spirit will teach us how to show God's love in ways that will reach the hearts of those who need Jesus. We need to know that we cannot do anything without the Lord. First, we must humbly surrender to Jesus and die to self. Only then will we be able to serve as God's witnesses.



We work hand in hand with Jesus in saving others.

THURSDAY—APRIL 12

REPORTING TO THE CHURCH

This week we have noted some important parts of the work a believer does for God. We now can touch on the topic of "reporting." (We will study this topic in more detail in week 12.) Reporting to the church on witnessing and evangelistic activities is a blessing. Those reporting can receive the encouragement of the church membership. Those hearing the reports are blessed as they realize what good work God is doing through His people.

Read Acts 14:27 and 15:4. Why do you think reports were given to the church?

A reading of the above verses shows that reports were given to the church after long periods of evangelistic preaching. These reports show the church's interest in, and support for, spreading the gospel.

The whole book of Acts is a report of the early church's missionary work. It also is filled with lessons for the modern-day church. So, reporting is important. For example, imagine what would happen to the book of Acts if all reports of evangelistic work were removed!

Read Mark 6:30. Why do you think the disciples reported to Jesus what they had done?

It is true that there is personal witnessing and evangelism that happens without any planning. But it is also true that the church, as a whole, must have a careful, planned evangelistic method. Working with an overall church plan helps us to follow the proper steps to reach our goals. It also brings regular opportunities to review and report. Reporting is not just listing the things we have done. Through reporting, the church and those witnessing can remember again that they are co-workers with the Lord.

Some people do not want to turn in reports because they wonder if doing so is a form of boasting. But by our faithful reporting, we give God glory and make His church stronger in faith. The early Christians glorified (praised) God when they heard the missionary reports of the apostle Paul (read Acts 21:19, 20).

If you were to report to the church your most recent evangelistic work, what would you say? What does your answer say about yourself, and what parts of your answer need some changing?

FRIDAY—APRIL 13

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Choosing a Ministry to Become Involved In

Last week you were encouraged to consider all of the witnessing and evangelistic areas of church life. The challenge this week is for you to decide upon some kind of evangelistic work and to become involved in it. The following are this week's key areas to think about:

- ① Review the list of different evangelistic projects you could become involved in. Shorten your list to two or three evangelistic ministry areas. These areas should be ones in which you feel your talents lie or where you feel God is calling you.
- ② Reduce your list further by asking yourself how much time each week you will be able to devote to a ministry. Also, think about working in a ministry that will continue for twelve months. During that time, you will be able to move through the steps of evangelistic work.
- ③ Choose a ministry and inform your

pastor and personal-ministries leader⁶ of your desire to become involved in your chosen area. Ask for a meeting with them to share your ideas and dreams. Ask about their plans for the church's evangelism and decide how you can get involved or where your chosen ministry can support whatever plans the church already has set up.

④ Humbly ask your pastor and personal ministries leader to discuss how you can do well in the ministry you have chosen. They will want you to be successful in whatever area of witnessing and evangelism you choose. So, their advice will be very important and helpful.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How does the quote below relate to the Bible truth that all believers are royal priests? How does it support the need for every member to work together? "The work of God in this earth can never be finished until all church members are involved in the work, and join with the work of ministers and church officers."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, page 352.
- ② As a class, discuss how your church could help members understand that they are important to the church's witnessing and evangelism. How best can you work with the rest of the members of your church?

6. personal-ministries leader—any kind of service or witness in which a Christian may show God's love for others. Personal ministries are ways to show others how God loves them.