

Corporate (Group) Evangelism¹ and Witnessing



SABBATH—MAY 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; Psalm 37; Philippians 1:5–18; Ephesians 4:15, 16; Colossians 1:28, 29.

MEMORY VERSE: “You have heard me teach in front of many witnesses. Pass on to men you can trust the things you’ve [you have] heard me say. Then they will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: The preaching of the truth of God is not limited to ministers. The truth is to be shared by all who claim to be disciples (followers) of Christ.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL BELIEVERS RECOGNIZE THEIR GOD-GIVEN POTENTIAL.² The Bible gives many examples where believers used their gifts while working with chosen leaders in an evangelistic³-team ministry (work done for God).

In Acts 13:13, when Luke speaks of “Paul and his party”⁴ (NKJV) he suggests that the apostle (teacher and leader) Paul was the recognized leader of a missionary group that included Barnabas (verse 1). Luke tells us that Paul and Barnabas worked together closely (Acts 13:50; Acts 14:1).

Sometimes it is hard for someone to become involved in local church witnessing and evangelism. This is because leaders are not always looking for gifted people to be involved in that work.

Last week we looked at how individual members help with the church’s witnessing and evangelism. This week we will we look at some parts of the church’s group plans and how individuals can become involved.

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

2. potential—the highest level of a person’s ability.

3. evangelistic—having to do with spreading the good news of Jesus to the world.

4. party—a group of people working with a leader.

SUNDAY—MAY 13**LETTING THE LEFT AND RIGHT HAND KNOW (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12)**

Most people in the church are busy. Others, for different reasons, do little. Either way, people often do not know what their church as a group is planning. As a result, they fail to see how their contributions may help the church's goals.

What do Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 tell us about working together? How might these words be helpful to you in other situations?

These verses describe how support and care can help people, no matter where people are. What is true for two or three people is also true for the local church. For people to get the full blessings described in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, each person must know what the others are doing. If one person does not know what the others are doing or planning, how can he or she know what support is needed, and when? If we think about these points for our local church's witnessing and evangelism, we see again that most members may not know what their church is involved in. Then they are not able to give support and help when needed. Sadly, because of a lack of support, those who are not on the front line of witnessing and evangelism may sometimes feel that no one cares about this important ministry. But it may

be because others just do not know what is happening.

Acts 16:14, 15, 33, and 34 show people doing special support jobs. Write down how you think these different jobs will help with the total mission of spreading the gospel.



The left hand (a church ministry) needs to let the right hand (the church) know what it is planning.

At first, some things seem to have nothing to do with the church's witnessing and evangelism plans. But they are important to the whole plan. Those who give food and a room for the night to the visiting evangelist⁵ play as important a part as those who welcome the public to the program. Many church members will volunteer their support when they know what the program is and also know what is needed. They also will volunteer when they know that their help is an important part of the whole church program. So, it is important to let

5. evangelist—a preacher who travels from place to place, preaching the gospel to many people.

the right hand know what the left hand is doing.

Take a few moments to think about your church's evangelism and witnessing work. Do you know the church's goals and plans? Do you know what point the church is at in this year's program? How could you become more involved in your church's work to spread the gospel?

MONDAY—MAY 14

PLANNING TOGETHER (1 Corinthians 14:40)

Often when plans for evangelism are being made, only a very few people are involved. Then, when plans have been decided, those few people start trying to get others involved. It is much better to get a larger group involved from the start.

What do Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14:40 tell us about the need to plan? What does this verse suggest about a lack of planning?

There are many mistakes that churches can make when setting plans for witnessing and evangelism. They can set goals but then fail to make plans necessary for reaching them. They can try to work on some plans without setting any firm goals. Or they can try either of the above without studying the results. Goals and plans go hand in hand. But goals always come first so that plans can be made to reach those goals.

Studying the results of evangelistic work helps the church to follow its plans carefully and measures how well the church is doing in reaching its goals.

Every church should be aware of the need to set goals and follow them. It is important that as many people as possible be involved in all parts of the planning. In this way, they, too, feel they are involved. If this does not happen, then the long-term plans will cause a chosen few to work too hard to fulfill those plans. Because of this, success will not come.



Goals and plans go hand in hand.

Read Psalm 37. What promise and hope can we get from these verses about the success of our witnessing and evangelism work? What principles (important rules) and promises can we learn from these verses?

TUESDAY—MAY 15

WORKING IN TEAMS (Matthew 10:2–4)

It makes sense to think that there

were times when each of the disciples would have shared their faith on a one-to-one basis. But for the most part we see them sharing the work of ministry (work done for God) with fellow disciples. They also are being supported by other believers. This shows that there is something special about working on a whole plan and receiving support and encouragement from others on the team.

The Bible gives us a blueprint for successful witnessing and evangelism. So, it should not surprise us that, even today, when God finds someone for an important work, He inspires⁶ a team to work with that leader.

Read Matthew 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; and Luke 6:12–16. What simple lesson can we learn from these lists?

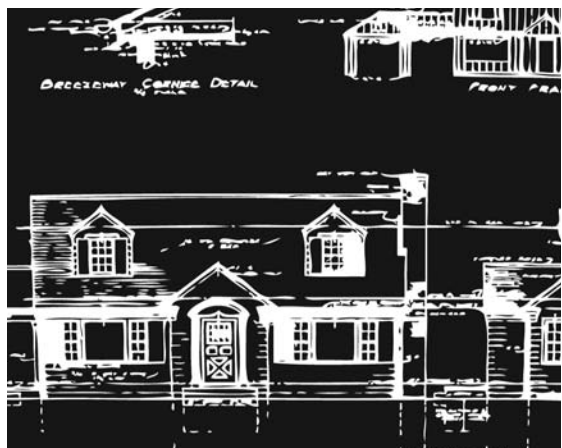
No doubt, the early believers worked together in groups. This makes a lot of sense. Everyone has special gifts and talents. But many people working together is safer. This is because when people work together, they are watching each other. They can help to guide each other. They can help to protect each other from going the wrong way. In other words, a solid team of faithful brothers and sisters is looking out for one another. And the whole group is working together with the common goal of soul-winning. This is the ideal way of doing outreach.

How does Philippians 1:5–18 show that the believers at Philippi

were involved in group witnessing and evangelism?

At the beginning of his letter to the Philippians, Paul speaks of their fellowship (partnership, NIV) in the gospel (verse 5). They had defended and supported the gospel (verse 7) and had spoken the word of God without fear (verse 14). Paul also shares his joy because Christ is continually preached (verses 15–18). Remember, Paul is writing to the church, not to individuals. Of course, it would have been individuals who preached Christ. But the fact that Paul praises the church shows that this evangelistic preaching was a group effort (work).

Because of your eagerness to witness, have you ever found yourself tempted, at first, to do something that the group has protected you from doing? Why is it important to be humble and responsible when you are going to work with others in a group?



The Bible gives us a blueprint for successful witnessing and evangelism.

6. inspires—to cause something to happen; to fill someone with the desire to do something.

WEDNESDAY—MAY 16**EVERY PART DOES ITS SHARE
(Ephesians 4:15, 16)**

When a church is united (joined as one) for any evangelistic work, the Lord will bless its work. A careful study of the Bible will show how much of the New Testament was written to show Christians how to live and work together. “One another” verses are spread thickly throughout its pages. We are encouraged to love one another (John 15:12), forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32), and pray for one another (James 5:16). But along with the “one another” verses, there are many verses that speak about the whole church and its work and growth.

Read Ephesians 4:15, 16. How does working together help the church to grow and build?

Paul tells us that it is God’s will that we grow into Jesus Christ. This shows that we are all on a spiritual journey. In a way, it is our own spiritual journey. But the verses explain that each individual’s growth will help the body grow both in numbers and in spirit.

As believers grow up into Christ, something happens that is wonderful. They are “joined and knit together” (NKJV) through their personal contributions to the church as a whole. Total success of any church is dependent upon each member doing his or her share.

According to Acts 1:12–14, what did the early believers do while they waited in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit? The answer should tell us a lot about what group worship meant. Indeed, the Holy Spirit came upon the early believers to show that they were ready for the gospel work. This group, about a hundred twenty people, were united in prayer and continued in prayer. No doubt it was Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit that united them and brought them together for prayer. This was done while the early believers waited for the power that would help them to do the Lord’s work. We, as a church, should be doing the same.

As you think about your local church, ask yourself this question: how much time and work does your church as a group spend in outreaching, witnessing, and evangelism? How does this compare with the amount of time it spends over church problems, such as worship services and music? Discuss the answer on Sabbath.

THURSDAY—MAY 17**THE NEED FOR GROUP UNITY
(ONENESS) (Colossians 1:28, 29)**

People often say that a Christianity that does not begin with the person does not begin. Instead, a Christianity that ends with the person ends. This saying shows the importance of every new believer becoming a very important part of the group of believers. As

with witnessing and evangelism, it is also true that making new members cannot be left to just a few individuals in the fellowship. Making new members involves the whole church.

Read Colossians 1:28, 29. What special goal did Paul give to his new believers?

The Christian's growth into the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 3:19) is the right goal for the local church group. Working for the growth of new believers is just as important as working to get them to accept Christ and to join His church. In fact, the church's work of getting new members involved will help to make sure that their evangelistic efforts will not become a waste of time. Usually, before any witnessing and evangelistic project starts, there is a time of preparing the church. This is a time when we pay special attention to transportation, child care, greeters, prayer teams, and visitation teams. The apostle (teacher and leader) Paul would have had us work on getting members involved as another important part of getting the church ready for evangelism. Think about the following question:

Which is more important to ask, and why: how can new believers get involved in church life and its programs? How can the church enter the lives of new believers and help them to grow spiritually? Are both these ideas related? If so, how so?

Too often we complain about the fact that new people come in the front door and leave by the back door soon after. This is a sad fact with eternal results.

Often we think that a church member who has led a new believer to Christ should also be responsible for his or her follow-up, growth, and involvement. Look at the apostle Paul. Just imagine how nearly impossible it would have been for him to do all the work of leading new souls to Christ and then following up on their spiritual growth. It is not the Bible way. This would be too much work for one or two leaders. Instead, it should be the work of the whole church.

Think about new members in your local church. How can you—not the pastor, the elder, but you—get involved in helping new members to become strong members in the church group and its teachings?



The Christian's growth into the fullness of Christ is the goal of the church.

FRIDAY—MAY 18

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Setting Realistic Evangelism Goals

Both as a church and as a smaller ministry team, we must make sure that any witnessing and evangelistic goals are reachable goals. The following are some key areas to think about:

Affordable. Budgets play a big part in many church plannings today. Think about the costs of advertising, transportation, materials, postage, refreshments, and so on.

Reachable. Are the set goals reachable? Do we really have the money, time, support, things, and people to reach these planned goals? It is better to start small and build into a larger project as others join the team and key support is given in other important areas.

Supportable. If a witnessing and evangelistic ministry is successful, it is worth doing again. It also may be that your ministry is part of a project that goes on and on. So, you will need to keep looking ahead in order to organize what is needed to support the ministry.

Able to be tested. Be sure that you test all parts of the ministry. For ministries that take place over a long time, you need to look at them from

time to time to see how well they work. Also be sure to examine how these ministries have helped with the church's total plan for evangelism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Go over your answer to Wednesday's question as a class. Why is it that churches that quarrel often fail to do outreach? Instead, how could outreach unite (join as one) a church that is busy quarreling? How can you help your church to move away from quarrels and get busy with the work of outreach? Why is that so important?

❷ Read the following quotation. Think about your local church. How much should the members be involved in witnessing and evangelistic teams? What part can you play in organizing team-training events? What is your personal attitude (feeling) toward working in teams? "In working among those who are already in the faith, the minister should try to train the church members to cooperate first. Then he should try to convert [change] unbelievers."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, page 196. How many members of your church have a good idea about how to win and convert souls? If not many, how can you change that situation?