

# How to Relate to Non-Christians



## SABBATH—AUGUST 21

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 1:18-20; Romans 2:14-16; Revelation 14:6, 7; Philippians 2:5-11.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “You can’t [cannot] be saved by believing in anyone else. God has given us no other name under heaven that will save us” (Acts 4:12, NIV).

**MANY PEOPLE TODAY DO NOT WANT TO HEAR THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD.** They think that all the religions, including Christianity, are just different ways to reach God. Many people say that we all worship the same God. We just have different ways of worshiping. They believe that everyone should decide for themselves what is truth. They also believe that no religion should claim that it is better than another religion.

As Christians, we cannot accept these ideas. The Bible teaches that these ideas are wrong. The Bible teaches that the religion of Jesus is very special. For this reason, we must continue to call people everywhere to become His disciples.

This week, we will look at how we should relate to people who are not Christians.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Why must we not accept the idea that all religions are OK? How should we treat non-Christians? What is the best way to share Jesus with non-Christians? Why should we share Jesus with them? To what people do the three angels' messages<sup>1</sup> go?

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 28.

<sup>1</sup>three angels' messages—the Bible message for the world today that God wants Seventh-day Adventists to preach. This message is in Revelation 14:6-12.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 22

**ALWAYS RELIGIOUS  
(Romans 1:18-20).**

All through history, in almost every culture, humans have believed in some kind of god or gods. Through hundreds of years, people have asked: Where does our belief in God or gods come from? Did someone “invent” or “discover” religion? Does our belief in God or gods start with a need we have to believe in something? Have we always been religious? And if so, why?

As Christians, we believe that religion started with God. He has shown Himself to us in different ways. The greatest way He has shown Himself is through Jesus. Jesus showed us that God is loving and unselfish.

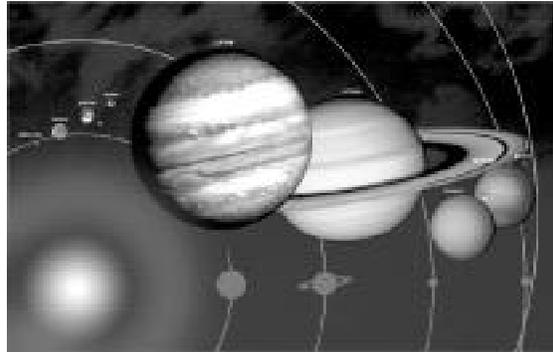
But not everyone has heard or known the good news of Jesus’ love. God has not forgotten these people. At the Cross, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2; John 3:16; Hebrews 2:9). Even people who have never heard or who will never hear of Jesus’ death are not left out. Why would God die for them if they did not have the chance to choose salvation?

**What do Romans 1:18-20 and Romans 2:14-16 tell us about people who have not heard about Jesus?**

People who knowingly reject God, reject Him at their eternal<sup>2</sup> risk. But many

<sup>2</sup>eternal—lasting forever.

people have heard only a little about God. So they could not knowingly reject Him. These people have a little knowledge of God through nature. So they will be responsible for what they do know.



**We see God’s power in the things He has made.**

**English poet Samuel Coleridge said that we should not lock criminals in jail. Instead, we should put criminals in nature. In nature, they would see the world’s “soft influences,” then they would turn from their evil ways. This is a good idea. But what can we not learn about God, truth, and righteousness (holiness) from nature?**

MONDAY—AUGUST 23

**THE SAME TRUTH FOR EVERYONE  
(Hebrews 2:9).**

**What is Jesus saying in John 14:6? Why would many people today find His words hard to accept?**

The Bible does not know about relativism. Relativism is each person trying to give his or her own version (idea) of “truth.” There is only one God, one Creator, one Savior, one Lawgiver, and one way of salvation. As Christians, we believe that all the world is fallen into sin. We also believe that at the Cross, Jesus accepted the sins of *all* people upon Himself so that *all* who accept Him by faith could be saved. So it is hard to see how there can be different truths for different people. The truths of the Bible about creation, salvation, and sin, are the same everywhere and include everyone. Knowing these truths, we do not have a good reason to believe that any other religious idea is good, even if people who believe that idea are sincere and loving.



Jesus died for everyone.

**What do the following verses say about Bible truths being for every-**

<sup>3</sup>compare—show how things are the same.

**one? Genesis 1:1; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12; Hebrews 2:9; Revelation 20:13.**

As Christians, we should share what we believe with non-Christians. Christianity is true. So other religions have to be false. This does not mean that these different religions do not have some good in them. We cannot judge the hearts of other people, no matter what they believe. Instead, we must tell other people the good news of a loving God who sent His own Son as a man to earth. And as a man, He saved the world from sin. The Cross covered everyone. So everyone must be told about the Cross.

**How do you answer someone who says, “Well, your religion is just *your* truth. I have my own truth”?**

**TUESDAY—AUGUST 24**

**JESUS—THE ONLY WAY (Acts 4:12).**

All religions have heroes. Islam’s hero is Muhammad, who taught the worship of one God. The Gautama Buddha of the Far-East taught people to be kind and sensitive to people who suffer. And there is much good in the teachings of Confucius, a Chinese philosopher.

But these people do not compare<sup>3</sup> with Jesus. If you teach that Jesus

and these other people are simply different examples of good men teaching good things, you do not teach what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Either we accept Him fully, or we reject Him fully.

**What truth must we recognize when comparing<sup>4</sup> Christianity with other religions? Acts 4:12; Isaiah 45:5.**

Jesus died for all people. As a result, all people who believe in Jesus will be saved by Him (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12). For this reason alone, we should be inspired to tell other people about Jesus, so that they, by faith, can share in the promises God made to them, too.

“How then should we relate to people of other religions? First of all, we must treat them as fellow human beings—with respect and honor. . . . We need to listen to them and to learn from them. Because we are limited, we do not have all we need in our experience. Different points of their religion may help to make our faith stronger. But we should not make “excuses” for believing we have truth in Jesus. We should not fail to share Jesus with them. But our efforts must always be humble. We must not act like we are better than they are.”  
—Adapted from S. Kubo, *The God of Relationships* (Hagerstown, Md.:

Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993), p. 138.

**How can we show respect for people and their beliefs without accepting their beliefs?**

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 25

**ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE  
(Acts 16:1-3).**

The truths we believe are eternal and unchanging. But the way we share those truths is always changing. We would not approach an Indian shaman<sup>5</sup> in the same way we would approach a New Age German banker. How we share Jesus with an Inuit (Native American Indian) living in the Yukon, Canada, would not be the same as how we would share Jesus with a business leader from Singapore. The message we share is always the same. But the ways of sharing that message are often different.

**What did Paul say about different ways of sharing Jesus? Acts 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. How did Paul explain his actions in Jerusalem? Acts 21:17-26. What good advice do we see in Paul’s words and actions? (Remember that Paul is the same man who wrote Galatians 1:8, 9.)**

“More than 2 billion of the world’s people will hear the gospel only if mis-

<sup>4</sup>comparing—showing how things are the same.

<sup>5</sup>shaman—a man or woman who uses magic to heal sick people and to control what happens.

sionaries will make themselves servants. From tribes in Africa to heavy-metal musicians in New York City . . . from the experienced professional to the troubled teenager next door . . . people need to hear the gospel in ways they can understand. Who will humble themselves and work as slaves for these people? Who will go through the hard, dangerous business of making the gospel clearly understood by other people?”—Adapted from Jon Dybdahl, “Cross-Cultural Adaptation:<sup>6</sup> How to Contextualize<sup>7</sup> the Gospel,” *Ministry*,<sup>8</sup> November 1992, p. 17.



**Who will tell this person about Jesus, and how?**

**How did God present the gospel**

**in a way that all humans could understand? Philippians 2:5-11.**

Jesus came to meet us where we are. He became one of us. He made Himself understood in human language. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the church truly wants to reach the modern world with the message of Jesus. Then the church must meet people where they are and speak the language.

**THURSDAY—AUGUST 26**

**JESUS' METHOD ALONE  
(Revelation 14:6, 7).**

This week, we have discussed the fact that there is only one true religion. We cannot be true to this religion without believing that this religion that offers us so much hope, offers the same hope to every person. This religion cries out for us to share Jesus with other people. Sharing Jesus with other people is a very important part of who we are as Seventh-day Adventists. Sharing Jesus is why there are Seventh-day Adventists in almost every country of the world.

**What does Revelation 14:6, 7 tell us about the people we share Jesus with?**

<sup>6</sup>cross-cultural adaptation—presenting a subject to a group of people in ways that fit their culture, so they will better understand the subject.

<sup>7</sup>contextualize—to present a subject to a group of people in ways that fit their culture, so they will better understand the subject.

<sup>8</sup>ministry—the work of ministers.

Every nation, kindred (race, group), tongue (language), and people includes people from every religion. We must share Jesus with everyone. But we must remember that no matter where people live, no matter what people believe, they are the same as we are. We all are created in God's image. We are all sinners. We all have basic needs. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we believe God has given us knowledge that can help meet those needs better than anything else. We show people God's love and character when we meet their needs. Then showing God's love and character by meeting people's needs will help them to accept Jesus.

**“Jesus’ method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior joined with people as one who wanted to do good by helping them. He was kind to them. He helped to meet their needs. He won their friendship. Then He commanded them, ‘Follow Me [Jesus].’”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry (Work) of Healing*, p. 143. Why does Jesus’ method work well for any group of people we are trying to reach?**

The basic problem is that we live in a world filled with hurting, suffering people. The good news is that we worship and know the Lord. He cares about people and their suffering. As Adventists, we can help them, even from our own personal sufferings. Then we can point them to something better in this life and to the only One

(Jesus) who can give them eternal life. This is our duty. If we do not point them to Jesus, we would be unfaithful to that duty.

**Talk to people in your church about how to reach out to non-Christians in your community. What useful things could you do to make a positive influence for the Lord?**

#### FRIDAY—AUGUST 27

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Even among nonbelievers there are kind people. Before these nonbelievers even heard the gospel, they were friends to the missionaries. The nonbelievers even helped the missionaries when helping the missionaries meant the nonbelievers might die. Among the nonbelievers are people who worship God without knowing why. They have never heard the truth from Bible workers. But they will be saved. They do not know the written law of God. But they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature. They have done the things God's law requires. Their works are proof that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts. And they are recognized as God's children.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

“Bible workers need to work more closely with the people. If less time were used in preaching, and more time were spent in working with the people, more people would accept Jesus. Poor people need help. Sick people need care. Sad people need comfort. People who do not have schools need teachers. Inex-

perienced people need advice. We are to weep with people who weep, and rejoice with people who rejoice. When we add the power of study, the power of prayer, and the power of God's love to the work we do for people, people will



**We need to spend more time working with people who need help so they will accept Jesus.**

gladly accept Jesus.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 458.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Read again the quote from *Counsels on Diet and Foods*. How can your church work more closely with people in your community who need help?
2. How much are we responsible for the eternal future of nonbelievers? Why did God choose to involve us in His plan of salvation?

**SUMMARY:** We do not believe that our faith is just one way of many ways that lead to God. The Bible is clear that there is only one way to God. The way to God is through Jesus. Then it becomes very important that we share Jesus with people from all religions. The best way to share Jesus with unbelievers is through kind, loving, unselfish service.