

Christ's Other Sheep



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 10:16; John 13:34, 35; 1 Corinthians 13; 2 Pet. 1:12; Rev. 14:1-12.*

Memory Text: “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (*John 10:16, NIV*).

However committed we should be to our message, we mustn't read more into it than is there, such as the belief that we alone as Seventh-day Adventists are saved. That view has not, nor has ever been, the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: “We recognize those agencies that lift up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world, and we hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ.”—*General Conference Working Policy* (1999–2000), p. 494, Policy O 100, art. 1. The question for us this week is How should we relate to these other Christians, those who, for all we know, have been redeemed by the blood of Christ?

The Week at a Glance: If you don't have to be an Adventist to be saved, why should we seek to reach other Christians with our beliefs? What advantages does our faith give us over those who might be Christians but in another denomination? How should we relate to other Christians?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 21.*

Other Sheep

Read John 10:16. What point was Jesus making here? (Keep in mind to whom He was speaking.) What principle can we, today, pull from His words, especially in the basic context of this week’s lesson?

For any of us to proclaim dogmatically who is or is not saved is to play God. It is to take prerogatives that belong only to Him. The Lord alone knows the heart; the Lord alone can judge motives; the Lord alone knows those who are His. As Seventh-day Adventists, we are called to preach our message to the world; we are not called to pass judgment upon who is or is not saved.

“God has children, many of them, in the Protestant churches, and a large number in the Catholic churches, who are more true to obey the light and to do [to] the very best of their knowledge than a large number among Sabbathkeeping Adventists who do not walk in the light.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 386.

What are the following texts saying that help reinforce the point the Lord made in John 10:16?

Mark 9:38-40

Acts 10:35

2 Tim. 2:19

The fact is that, all over the world, the Lord has His faithful people, those who are living in accordance with all the light they have. Our job, in a sense, is to give them more light, to lead them into light that points more directly to Jesus Christ and the events surrounding His return. All people, no matter of what faith, need to hear what we have to say. How people respond is, basically, between them and God. All we can do is preach, teach, and reveal to people in our lives the love and grace of God.

If you don’t have to be an Adventist to be saved, then what’s the purpose of trying to evangelize? Keep in mind Revelation 14:12 as you answer.

Present Truth

How did you answer the last question in Sunday’s study? If you don’t have to be an Adventist to be saved, then why should we bother even trying to witness to Christians of other denominations? After all, salvation comes only from Jesus Christ and what He did for humanity at the Cross; it doesn’t come from joining any particular religious community, including our own. Thus, why bother witnessing to Christians in churches other than our own?

Read 2 Peter 1:12. What insights does that, though expressed in a context different from ours today, give us regarding our Seventh-day Adventist message and the need for us to spread it around the world?

The fact remains that no one else is preaching what we as Seventh-day Adventists are preaching. And this point becomes important, especially in the context of the last days, when the whole world is to be divided into those who fit the description in Revelation 14:12 and those who don’t.

Read Revelation 14:1-12. What’s at stake here?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been called to preach to everyone the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. Christ’s other sheep need to know the things we know; they need to understand how the deep issues in the great controversy between Christ and Satan are going to be manifested at the close of time. We have been called to point these people not only to the texts that make prominent the “faith of Jesus” but to the “commandments of God,” with the special emphasis on the fourth commandment. Again, because we don’t know the hearts of anyone, we must tell everyone—“faithful Christians” in other denominations—the present-truth message as found in Revelation 14. They need to know what we know, especially as we near the closing crisis.

Read Revelation 18:4. Whom is the Lord calling out of Babylon, and why? How does this text help us better understand how we are to relate to faithful Christians of other denominations?

The Adventist Difference: Part 1

However important the issues surrounding the mark of the beast (as depicted in Revelation 14), our message isn't just limited to warnings about end-time persecution. There's so much we have been given that can be a blessing in a very practical and personal way now. That's why we must share it, even with Christians of other denominations.

Below are some texts that are tied in with our message. Write down some of the benefits we have, here and now, from understanding these important truths:

Exod. 20:8-11

Eccles. 9:10

Mal. 3:8-10

Rom. 8:34; Heb. 8:1, 2

1 Cor. 6:19

Though, of course, some of these truths are understood, to some degree, by various Christians, we alone have them tied nicely into a complete package. And, indeed, these special *Adventist* truths don't depict mere marginal differences with other Christians. They represent important biblical concepts, and people who do not know about them miss out on something that can make a major difference in their Christian experience. The Adventist message helps us to know where we are in human history. It unveils the great-controversy perspective, which shows us the larger picture of what God is doing for our rebellious planet. It tells us about the ongoing heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ and the hope He presents for us as erring sinners.

The Adventist message also helps us to follow through on our commitment to Christ in very concrete ways: in finding physical and spiritual rest on God's holy day, in living a life of faithful stewardship of all that has been entrusted to us, and in learning how to take care of our bodies while we're still in this mortal clay.

If asked by a Christian of another denomination how the Adventist faith is different from what most other evangelical Christians believe, what would you say?

The Adventist Difference: Part 2

Just because someone is a Christian doesn't mean there's no more truth for him or her to learn. On the contrary. Many of Paul's letters were written to Christians, often on the assumption that these people already knew the Lord and were already in the faith. Indeed, most of the New Testament was written to those already in the faith. Nevertheless, that didn't stop Paul (and the others) from giving the churches more light.

Read Romans 1:1-7, Galatians 1:1-5, Ephesians 1:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. How do these texts help affirm the above paragraph?

As we relate to other Christians, we must remember: The issue isn't that we judge who's saved and who isn't (remember the Ellen White quote in Sunday's section); rather, the issue is, Do we have something to say, not just to the world at large but to other Christians? The answer, of course, is that we most definitely do.

For instance, millions of Christians believe the dead go right to heaven or right to hell immediately at death. Others believe in purgatory, where the dead are purged from worldliness before entering into heaven. Most of these people have no protection, therefore, against spiritualism of any kind, and who knows how many fear that right now some loved ones are suffering the flames of eternal torment?

Others believe final events will unfold with a massive Mideast war, in which some future antichrist power will make a pact with the Jews in Israel, an event that will begin a seven-year tribulation period, before which all true Christians are taken to heaven. Most who believe this way have no concept as to how final events regarding Rome, America, and the issue of the Sabbath will unfold.

All over the world, many Christians have no knowledge of health principles; thus, they eat, drink, and live like so much of the non-Christian world.

Millions of others believe salvation can be found in Jesus only through the mediation of their church body and that they must perform various works in order for the merits of Christ to be applied to them.

Most of the Christian world totally ignore not just the seventh-day Sabbath but the whole concept of a serious rest day. Not only do they miss out on the spiritual blessings of the Sabbath but they also miss out on the physical renewal that Sabbath keeping offers.

What other things do we as Seventh-day Adventists teach that could be a blessing, even now, to other Christians?

Love One Another

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35).

Read the above quote, the words of Jesus. How are all to know who are Christ’s disciples? How well have His disciples followed that command?

There’s no question: Christians are to show their love to one another. Sadly, that has hardly been the case. History is filled with examples not just of hatred between different churches but of violence, as well.

Whatever the immediate context of Christ’s words, we can hardly believe they meant we were to love only those of our own denomination, whatever that denomination or church body happens to be. Love should know no denominational boundaries and certainly not be limited only to those who know the truth. Indeed, there’s no more powerful witness for truth than the love compelled and generated by that truth.

Of course, loving someone isn’t the same as agreeing to his or her beliefs; rather, it’s acknowledging the value of this person in the sight of God and the commonality we have as followers of Jesus, however different our expressions might at the present time be.

As Seventh-day Adventists, with the understanding we have been given of God’s love for us, particularly as revealed in the context of present truth, we should be the most loving of all Christians. And that’s because to whom much has been given much is expected, and because we have been given much, we should give much, not just to the world at large but to our brothers and sisters in other churches, as well. And nothing we can give means anything without love.

Examine your own relationship with Christians in other churches. Do you look down on them? Do you see anything in them that you could learn from them? Do you feel a need to tell them what we know? Based on what we’ve studied this week, what changes, if any, in your attitude toward them should you make?

Further Study: Ellen G. White has a lot to say about our attitude to other Christians. See, for instance, *Evangelism*, section 17, “Laboring for Special Classes,” pp. 552–586.

“Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ’s messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock.” —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 78.

“You may have opportunity to speak in other churches. In improving these opportunities, remember the words of the Saviour, ‘Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.’ Do not arouse the malignity of the enemy by making denunciatory speeches. Thus you will close doors against the entrance of truth. Clear-cut messages are to be borne. But guard against arousing antagonism. There are many souls to be saved. Restrain all harsh expressions. In word and deed be wise unto salvation, representing Christ to all with whom you come in contact. Let all see that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace and good will to men. Wonderful are the results we shall see if we enter into the work imbued with the Spirit of Christ. Help will come in our necessity if we carry the work forward in righteousness, mercy, and love. Truth will triumph, and bear away the victory.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pp. 563, 564.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Imagine that you are given the pulpit in another church; it will be your only opportunity to preach there. What would you say, what wouldn’t you say, and why?
- 2 Is it wrong to worship with Christians in their church on Sunday, or not? Justify your answer.

Summary: All our relationships with other Christians should be marked by warm respect for them as brothers and sisters in the Lord. But, at the same time, we must also be sure of our reason for existence as Seventh-day Adventists, and we must be ready, when the right opportunity arises, to tell them the things we believe that they need to know. And, just as important, they need to see in our lives the reality of our experience with Christ, a reality that will be manifested by our unconditional love.

Drug Addict

Finds Jesus *by J. H. ZACHARY*

For ten miserable years Svetlana was a drug addict. She searched for ways to overcome her addictions, but even medical professionals could not help her. Desperate, Svetlana prayed, “God, if You exist, please help me.” God heard her prayers, and she felt the stranglehold of drugs begin to weaken.

Svetlana sought out a church. She hoped to find someone there who would talk with her, pray with her, and help her.

But not even one person talked to her. Disappointed, she left.

Svetlana became discouraged. Even though drugs no longer had a hold on her, she still searched for peace.

Eventually she turned to alcohol, and she quickly sank into another addiction. When she contracted tuberculosis, she gave up hope and prepared to die.

One day some Adventist neighbors visited her and offered to help her. But she had heard that Adventists were a sect, and she refused their help. For three years she refused their offers of help and prayer. Finally, in desperation, she agreed to listen to them and let them pray for her. She went to church with them.

Svetlana was touched when the church members prayed for her by name. After church one woman gave her a Bible and a copy of *Steps to Christ*. As she read them her life began to change.

When Svetlana went to her next doctor’s appointment, the doctor found no trace of tuberculosis. She had been healed.

The emptiness that Svetlana had tried to fill with drugs and alcohol was now filled with the peace of God. Her old life was transformed, and her former friends noticed. “What has happened to you? You are like a different person,” they told her.

Recently Svetlana was baptized. Because the nearest Adventist church is some distance from her home, she has opened her home for a small group of believers to meet on Sabbaths. Half of the people who attend the services are drug addicts. These former friends have seen the change in Svetlana and want to receive God’s help in their lives, as well.

One of her former addict friends has accepted Jesus as Savior and now is drug free. “I thank God for the Adventists who did not give up on me when I refused their help. Now Jesus is giving me the opportunity to help my friends find a new life also,” Svetlana testifies.

J. H. ZACHARY is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.