

# Personal Evangelism<sup>1</sup> and Witnessing



## SABBATH—MAY 5

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Acts 4:13, 14; John 1:37–42; Psalm 139; 1 Peter 3:1–15; John 4:37, 38.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘You are my witnesses,’ announces the LORD. ‘I have chosen you to be my servants’ ” (Isaiah 43:10, NlrV).

**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** Those who have enjoyed the promise of salvation will want to lead others to experience the same.

**MANY PEOPLE WILL HEAR THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS THROUGH A CHURCH'S WITNESSING AND EVANGELISTIC PROGRAMS.** But, in a way, a single person sometimes makes an important contribution to the success of the church program as a whole. During the last thirty years or so, surveys have shown that friends, relatives, or neighbors (all under the power of the Holy Spirit) were the most influential in leading people to give their hearts to Christ. Research has shown that up to 83 percent of new members said that the influence of their church members, friends, and relatives was important to their accepting Christ. Of those who attended some form of public evangelistic<sup>2</sup> meetings before joining the church, 64 percent attended because they were invited by someone in their close-people network (circle of friends).

This week we will review some Bible examples of networking. We also will study our connection with Jesus and our personal influence on those close to us.

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

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

**SUNDAY—MAY 6****MY GOD AND ME (Acts 4:13, 14)**

Our success in witnessing for Jesus depends on our personal relationship with Him. It is so easy to learn some witnessing and evangelistic plans and then go ahead with our own wisdom and strength. God may still bless our efforts. But we must remind ourselves that it is His work, and we do it through His power. Do we want to just share knowledge? Or do we want to encourage an important spiritual relationship? And how can we share with others what we do not have in and of ourselves?

Of course, there are always examples of people who are used by God to lead others to Jesus, no matter how weak in faith they are. For example, in a large city several years ago, a young lady joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She worked hard to reach her brother. After years, the brother was baptized. One month later, the lady left the faith and, as of now, still does not believe in it. Examples like this happen. But the fact is that the stronger our own connection is with Jesus, the more powerful a witness we will be.

**What does Acts 4:13, 14 show about the relationship that Peter and John had with Jesus? How did this connection help Peter and John to do their work? Think through what the verse means when it says that “they [the rulers of the people] realized that they [Peter and John]**

**had been with Jesus.” What does that mean? What kind of person should the one who has just “been with Jesus” be?**

The lesson in God’s Word (the Bible) is pretty clear. As we think about our personal mission fields, we need to let the Lord lead us into a close and powerful relationship with Him. This relationship will give us power.

**How is your own personal relationship with the Lord? How does your presence, how you talk, how you act, and how you treat people, show your relationship with God? Be as honest with yourself as you can.**

**MONDAY—MAY 7****MY PERSONAL MISSION FIELD  
(John 1:37–42)**

When Jesus looked at the crowds of people, He was filled with compassion (mercy). Read Matthew 9:36. Sometimes we may think that Jesus simply saw the crowd. But He really saw each person that made up the crowd. In the same way, we should “know” the individuals in the crowds through which we walk and in which we live. Our church can know each person in the crowd only as church members join with those who are under their influence.

The people whom we see and talk to every day are really our personal mission field. From our closest family relationships we can move out-

ward to other relatives and friends. Sometimes others may move in and out of our influence and, for a short time, become a part of our personal mission field.



The crowds of people filled Jesus with compassion (mercy).

**Read John 1:37–42. Why do you think Andrew told his brother about finding the Messiah (Chosen One) before he told anyone else?**

Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist. John's work was to prepare the way for Jesus. Some of John's disciples began to follow Jesus after John pointed to Him as the Messiah. Andrew's conversation with Jesus excited him so much that he quickly went looking for the person closest to him. That person was Peter, his brother, with whom Andrew had spent many long nights fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

**What relationships are shown in John 1:43–50? What does Philip**

**say in answer to Nathanael's doubts? What lessons can we learn from this story that can help us to understand how personal witnessing works?**

The early movement to follow Jesus seems to have spread among people in Capernaum and Bethsaida. Notice that Philip does not argue when Nathanael has doubts about the Messiah's coming from a small, unimportant farm village. He just gives a simple invitation, "Come and see."

**In the circle of people around you, to whom could you be a better witness? How much sacrifice<sup>3</sup> will you make to be a better witness to them?**



Philip invited Nathanael to come and see Jesus.

**TUESDAY—MAY 8**

**MY PERSONAL POTENTIAL<sup>4</sup>  
(Psalm 139)**

When our personal-ministries (work

3. sacrifice—the act of giving up something of value, such as time or money or a life, to save or help someone or something.

4. potential—the highest level of your ability.

done for God) leaders ask for volunteers for witnessing and evangelism, we often think that many people are better and more gifted than we ourselves are. Others seem more confident and better able. But the Bible shows us that God is not looking for those who have the best gifts or talents. Instead, He is looking for those who are willing to be used, whatever their gifts and talents.

A good example of this is the time when God called Moses to save His people from Egyptian slavery. Moses could see many reasons why someone else would be better for the work that God had planned (read Exodus 3:11; Exodus 4:10). In Moses' mind, he had what he thought were good reasons not to do what the Lord asked of Him.

In answer to a call to evangelistic action, many modern-day believers think the same as Moses did. "Who am I to be considered for such a task?" "What if they ask me some hard questions?" "I am not a good enough speaker." We can smile at Moses for thinking that God needed a better person for doing His work. But God knew Moses' potential. Moses might have had personal fears and concerns, but he was the right person for this special work.

God's choice of Moses shows us that God knows us much better than we know ourselves. God is not interested in past actions but in personal potential. Each believer has great potential to contribute to the Lord's work.

But we must guard against running ahead of the Lord. It is true that we should often search our own hearts to judge where we are spiritually. But

we need also to understand that the human heart can be "blind" to one's own weaknesses. So, it is also good to ask God to test us and show us our true condition. This is because our condition often influences our potential.



We must ask God to show us our true condition.

**Read Psalm 139. Why did David ask God to search (test) his heart? What lessons are here for us, not just for witnessing but for our walk with the Lord, in general? What can we learn from this psalm for ourselves right now? What comfort, hope, and encouragement is there for you? At the same time, what does it say to you about the changes that you need to make in how you live?**

**WEDNESDAY—MAY 9**

**THE WITNESS OF A RIGHTEOUS (HOLY) LIFE (1 Peter 3:1–15)**

Do actions really speak louder than words? Yes, very much so. A mes-

sage can be given through actions without words. But an equally strong message can be given through words without actions. There is something very powerful about a message that comes from both actions and words that are in agreement. To announce that we love God and then act as if we do not is hypocrisy.<sup>5</sup> And the worst witness that can be given is the one in which talk and action are not in agreement.

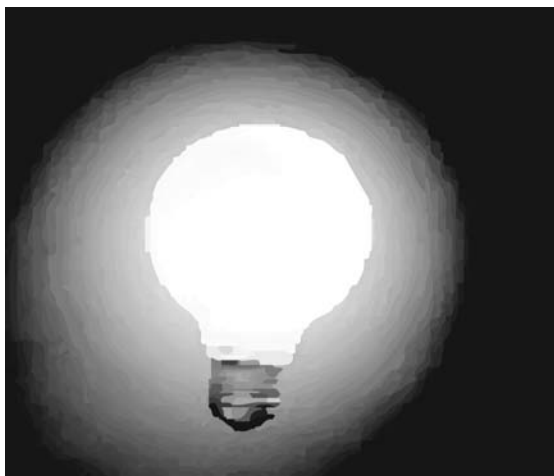
Faithfulness in everything you do speaks loudly. Your family and friends may not seem to be listening to what you say. But they are watching carefully to see if you do what you claim to do or if you live according to your beliefs.

**What does 1 Peter 3:1–15 tell us about the power of a Christian life in winning unbelievers to Christ? Imagine the power that would come with our witness if we were to live as we are told to in these verses. What message does verse 15 give about the importance of our personal witness? Read also Matthew 5:16.**

We can imagine the trouble that could come up when a pagan<sup>6</sup> woman accepted Jesus as her Savior while her husband remained an idol worshiper. Her burden for his salvation could lead her to argue with, and nag, her husband. She might think of him as part of her personal mission field. But, as Peter suggests, she could be

faithful to her God and hope and pray that her godly life would win her unbelieving husband to Jesus. In other words, she could let the actions of her daily life be a powerful witness.

Letting our light shine is an important part of influencing lost men and women for the kingdom. Those around us must not only hear our good words, but they must also see our good works. When they do so, they will see the power of God working through us. And the Spirit will challenge them to recognize the blessing of God's presence in human lives. People must believe that Christianity is not just a title that we claim to have. It is also an empowering relationship that we enjoy. Using examples is an important method of teaching. And Christians are examples whether they know it or not. We witness by what we do and who we are even more than by what we say. If that is a scary thought, it should be.



**Letting our light shine means sharing kind words and doing good works.**

5. hypocrisy—saying one thing and doing another; two-facedness.

6. pagan—having to do with the worship of many gods or goddesses or the worship of the earth or nature instead of God.



**THURSDAY—MAY 10****MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE WHOLE CHURCH (John 4:37, 38)**

This week we have been considering our personal mission field and our witnessing and evangelistic potential. It is also important for us to understand the truth that the church is a group of many members. Each person's work contributes to the church's whole program of evangelism. Do you know what plans your church has to lead people to Jesus? You may be able to invite people from your personal mission field to attend church programs. But do your church's evangelism leaders know what you are doing in your personal mission field? If so, they may be able to support you through prayer and with materials.

**Read John 4:37, 38, NIV. What encouragement can we get from Jesus' words, " ' "One plants and another gathers" ' " ? What is Jesus really saying there? How have you seen that truth work in your own life?**

It is very possible that, in this case, Jesus was talking about the gospel seed sown by Himself, John the Baptist, and the Samaritan woman. The disciples were harvesting where others had sown. And the time had really arrived when planters and harvesters were rejoicing together.

When Jesus said " ' "One plants and another gathers," ' " He was not saying that as individuals we are either

planters or harvesters. Our churches have probably put more attention on the harvesters. But it is true that if there were no planters, there would be nothing to harvest. We are all called to plant and to harvest. And in any local church there are many examples of activities for planting and harvesting. It may be that what you have planted in your personal mission field will be harvested in church evangelistic programs. It may also be that the seeds that others have planted will be harvested as people come into your personal mission field.

We think about how each person contributes to the whole (read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27). But the farming method also reminds us that even before the seed is planted someone else has cleared the ground and plowed the soil.

Clearly the planting and harvesting are part of a method that continues after a person has joined the church. The harvest must not be left in the fields but gathered into the barn.

How can you be more involved in the planting and harvesting work in your church? In what ways have you discovered that your own faith is made stronger when you work for the salvation of others? Why do you think that is so?

**FRIDAY—MAY 11**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Spiritual Preparation for a Personal Ministry

We would not deny the fact that

Bible knowledge is important for witnessing and evangelism. But we must be careful not to neglect preparing ourselves spiritually first. The important part of personal spiritual growth is the Holy Spirit. To experience the Holy Spirit's power for evangelism, we must open ourselves and our lives to His leading.

As we begin to serve our God, we recognize personal spiritual needs. We request and receive the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit gives us power to continue our work for the Lord.

The key is a daily surrender of our will to God. We also need to be willing to die to self and receive the grace<sup>7</sup> of Christ daily. And we need to remember daily what Christ has given to us and what He asks us to do in return for that gift.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① When discussing winning souls, Ellen G. White wrote this challenge: "Your success will not depend so much on what we know and have done. Instead, it depends on your ability to find your way to the heart."—Adapted

from *Gospel Workers*, page 193. What important point is she making here? How often do we see people turn away from the powerful proof of our message? Often doctrine (Bible beliefs), no matter how much it comes from the Bible, will not influence a person with a closed heart. How do we reach the heart? How much more important is it for us to live out what we claim rather than just "preach" it?

② Think about the following advice: "The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is an example of Jesus' character [who Jesus is] of love. The children of God are to show His glory [praise and beauty]. In their own life and character [who we are] they are to show what the grace of God has done for them."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 415, 416. The question is, How do we daily "manifest [show] His glory"? How often in the past 24 hours have you shown God's glory in your life? What kind of witness for your faith does your lifestyle show? How can your local church as a whole "show His glory"?

7. grace—God's gift or mercy that He gives us to take away our sin.