

Tools for Evangelism¹ and Witnessing



SABBATH—MAY 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 4:19; Matthew 11:1–11; Matthew 10:1–14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Come. Follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘I will make you fishers of people’ ” (Matthew 4:19, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: We may have the proper training for witnessing. But we must have a strong relationship with Jesus too. Then we can witness well for our faith.

SUPPOSE A PERSON DOES NOT SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT HE OR SHE IS SAVED. Then he or she will probably not be able to lead another person into a close, saving relationship with Jesus. But sometimes it does happen. He or she might be able to influence others to believe some Bible doctrines (beliefs) and some facts, biblical dates, and charts. Such beliefs may even lead people to make important lifestyle changes. Good deeds can be done without giving credit for them to Jesus Christ. But it is very important that any witnessing and evangelistic² training include both doctrine and a strong belief in Christ. To be a true evangelist,³ one must have a strong understanding and experience of “the everlasting gospel.” It is this gospel that makes a person truly believe in Christ. The gospel helps people to confess their sins, make lifestyle changes, and follow Christ all the way.

This week, we will see that the Bible encourages churches to prepare people spiritually and gives them tools for evangelism and witnessing. The churches also need to encourage people to make these things happen in their area.

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.

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

SUNDAY—MAY 20**THE NEED FOR TRAINING
(Matthew 4:19)**

In Matthew 9:37 Jesus tells the disciples that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Today the harvest is much larger, and the workers are still few. There is a great need to send out harvest workers who are well-trained. It is true that the Holy Spirit's influence is very important to the success of witnessing and evangelism. But it is still important for God's people to be trained through studying and working with more experienced lay workers. According to Ephesians 4:11, 12, churches should work hard in training people and providing them with tools for many kinds of ministry (work done for God) and service.

God has promised to bless leaders with certain gifts that will help them to work as leaders and as trainers for ministry. It is important to know that evangelists, pastors, and teachers are not following Bible guidelines if they do all the work themselves and fail to train others for service. Everyone who is training for witnessing and evangelism work must strongly believe that God wants the world to be saved from sin. They must believe that the God-given work of the church is to reach out to a lost world and that He wants His church to grow.

Read Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17 along with Matthew 28:19. How important do you think is

Jesus' command, " 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men' " ? What should those words mean to us today as Seventh-day Adventists? How much fishing for men are we really doing, instead of just taking care of our own "boats" or business?



Jesus says that the harvest is plenty, but the workers are few.

It is important to know that Jesus did not just call the disciples to be fishers of men. He did not say, "Follow Me, and be fishers of men." He said, " 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' " Right at the beginning these men understood that they were to have important training. Jesus called them to be trained for the work for Him. The disciples would learn much through watching and doing. When they had learned what to do and how to do it, then Jesus would send them on a worldwide mission. This means that without the proper training, the work of taking the gospel to our neighbors would not be possible.



Jesus told His disciples that He would make them fishers of men.

MONDAY—MAY 21

LEARNING BY WATCHING (Matthew 14:13–21)

For those who wish to serve the Lord, there are two parts to learning. One leads to the other. First there is learning to know Jesus. Then comes learning how to share Him and what He offers to the sinful world.

Read about the time Jesus fed the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14). List the things that the disciples would have learned that would help to prepare them for their future ministry (work). What things can we safely guess they learned that are not in the Gospel stories? Read also what Ellen G. White adds to this story in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 364–371.

How exciting it would be to both listen to the greatest preacher (Jesus)

and to study His teaching style as He preached about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:11). Jesus knew how His teachings would have created a desire for the kingdom in every heart.

The principle (important rule) of learning through watching is for everyone. Book learning or listening must always be built through watching and taking part in activities. Jesus expected the disciples of John the Baptist to learn from what they had seen.

Examine Matthew 11:1–11. What had the disciples of John the Baptist seen? And what did Jesus expect them to tell John? What lesson was Jesus teaching both John and His own disciples?

John the Baptist had pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But now John was imprisoned with no opportunity to preach. And he heard reports of Jesus' ministry. It seems that John's prison experience caused some doubts to come into his mind about Jesus. When doubts arise we should go to Jesus. And this is exactly what John did. Jesus sent John's disciples back to tell him what they had heard and seen. Their reports encouraged John. But we wonder how the experiences of John's disciples influenced their own witnessing and evangelistic ministry.

In most cases we cannot do the kind of miracles that Jesus did. But if we are willing to die to self and live for others, how can we do, in

our own limited way, the kind of work that Jesus did when He was on earth?



When doubts arise, we should go to Jesus.

TUESDAY—MAY 22

LEARNING BY DOING (Matthew 10:1–14)

It does not matter how many books a person reads about his or her favorite sport. It does not matter how many games he or she has watched. If someone wants to be a player, he or she has to put on boots and get out on the field. We call it hands-on experience. This means learning by doing. Without it a person is not qualified for the work. This is especially true of the Christian's witnessing and evangelism. Sometimes we hear people say that they do not want to get involved because they are not completely ready. They must understand that taking an active part is important to becoming ready. Starting small, going step by step, and building up

is the way to go. As the Holy Spirit leads us, our skills, experience, and faith grow.

Matthew 10:1–14 shows Jesus training His disciples and then sending them out. The situation may be different today. How does Jesus' example of sending out the disciples show us that this was part of their training?

Jesus had taught the disciples "in the classroom." He had also taken them out into the field where they learned by watching what He did. Then Jesus gave them the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons (verse 8). Afterward, Jesus sent them out without Him. But notice how much He taught them as He sent them out. Jesus instructed them about what to preach, what miracles to do, what not to take with them, with whom to stay for the night, and when to leave an unfruitful field of labor. We safely can guess that the disciples received other instructions too.

It was only through the experience of mixing and working with people that the disciples learned many important lessons. These verses show on-the-job training. The disciples could not minister (work for God) without first working with people. This is a point we must never forget.

Read Luke 10:1–11. What instructions did Jesus give to the Twelve and to the Seventy? Again, what principles can we learn from Jesus' instructions?

Jesus sent the Seventy into places where He planned to go Himself soon (verse 1). But He knew what the disciples and other missionaries would face as they tried to spread the gospel on their own after Jesus went to heaven. Jesus' instructions given to the Seventy disciples show that He was preparing them for what would happen in their future work.

How many excuses do you manage to find so that you do not witness for your faith when the opportunity arises? What is your usual excuse?

WEDNESDAY—MAY 23

LEARNING THROUGH FAILURE (1 Peter 5:8)

Sometimes we may fail to reach all of the goals for evangelism. Does this mean that we have totally failed? Of course not! No matter how well we plan to win souls, we will have both successes and failures. We may even set our goals too high. For example, if we fail to reach set baptismal goals, we may have set unrealistic goals. Or our work may have been more of a seed-sowing project rather than a reaping program. No matter how much we might think that the harvest is ready for reaping, it might still only be planting time. We are not always in a place to know.

Read 1 Peter 5:8. What power is trying to destroy your work to win people to God's kingdom? How can knowledge of this threat help you to better prepare and make witnessing

and evangelistic plans?

In all of our hard work to win souls, we are up against a powerful enemy (Satan), who is very active in influencing people against the gospel. Sometimes when we let go of the hand of the Lord, the evil one can cause some problems with our work for God. Our own defense is complete surrender to Christ every minute of our lives.

As with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, failure may sometimes cause us to play the blame game. This is one of Satan's most successful tools for bringing disunity (not being joined together as one) among God's people. Rather than looking for people to blame, we would be better off examining ourselves honestly. We need to remember that even Jesus, the greatest Preacher/Evangelist, did not win everyone.

Read Luke 10:17 and Matthew 17:14–20. What did the disciples do when they faced failure in their ministry?

We are not to become discouraged by our failures. Instead, we should learn from the disciples again. The disciples had been given the power over evil spirits and had indeed been successful in casting them out. But it is clear that sometimes they failed to do what Jesus had asked of them. In such examples, they came to Jesus and asked Him to explain what was happening and why (read Matthew 17:19). Here is a principle (important rule) that we would be

wise to follow. An important part of our search for reasons for failure, and how to do better, is to take our witnessing and evangelistic situations to the Lord.

What have you learned from your failures of witnessing to others that can help you in the future? How often does fear of failure hold you back?

THURSDAY—MAY 24

LEARNING THROUGH SUCCESS (2 Peter 3:9)

There are two areas in which we can learn through success. There is (1) the area that can be called the practical experience part and (2) the area that can be called spiritual cooperation (working together). There is a spiritual part of both areas. But we will deal with them separately in order to better understand what can be learned from success.

The practical experience part is the part in which we learn from what we do. For example, we learn the most acceptable method of presenting Bible studies in our area. We learn which kind of preaching is best, which advertising draws the most people, and other workable choices that best fit our certain location.

Spiritual cooperation points to the fact that God is closely involved in the believer's witnessing and evangelism. This is because it is God's will that everyone be saved.

What important lesson must we learn from 2 Peter 3:9 that we should always keep in mind and claim in all our witnessing activities? Read also 1 Corinthians 3:6.

It is no use planting if no one is going to water the seed. In the same way, it is no use watering if you do not put the water where the seeds are planted. And even if the sower and the one who waters get it all right, there is still no harvest without God's help. As we see the blessing of God bringing success to our humble work, we learn. We learn how much God wants to be involved in our work. We learn to trust Him more. We learn the importance of a close, spiritual cooperation with God as we work to reach all the souls for whom Christ died. This is because *there is not a person you witness to for whom Christ has not died and whom He does not want to see saved*. How important it is that we never forget this important truth.



It is no use planting if no one is going to water the seed.

How do we take the words of Jesus in John 15:5 and make them real in our life and in our work of witnessing and evangelism? How can we as individuals (persons), or as a team ministry, truly experience what Christ tells us in this verse? What things must we change so that we can have this kind of connection (relationship) with Him?

FRIDAY—MAY 25

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Make Evangelistic Plans

As your church tries to do its part in outreach, remember these following points:

- ① Make sure to involve all of the witnessing or evangelistic team in the planning process. The whole church will be involved in the church's setting of goals and direction.
- ② Plan for the next church year. A twelve-month plan is long enough to start with. Later, you can add more plans that will continue on beyond one year.
- ③ Give great attention to helping people who are involved know exactly what is expected of them and at what time. When people are not sure of what to do or when and how to do it, a church's success in reaching its goals may be slowed or stopped.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① "Every church should be a training school for Christian workers."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*,

page 149. How well does your local church do in this area? If not very well, what can be done to bring about the needed changes?

② "Every day Satan has his plans that will slow down the way of those who are witnesses for Jesus Christ. Now, if the human agents for Jesus are not humble and lowly of heart because of Jesus, they will surely fall under temptation. This is because Satan is watching and very sly. And the workers, if not prayerful, will be deceived without knowing it. Satan attacks them as a thief in the night and makes them slaves. Then he works on the minds of individuals to change their ideas and plans. If fellow believers see danger and speak of it, they feel insulted and hurt. They also feel that someone is trying to weaken their influence. Then one goes one way, and another goes in an opposite direction."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, page 101. How can we, while doing the work of witnessing, deal with the danger that Ellen G. White so clearly describes in her warning? What is our only defense?

③ In class, talk about someone, or some church evangelistic project, that has been successful. What can you learn from them? What can you expect from them that could work in your area? We need to remember that every situation is different. What works in one place might not work in another.