

Going Forth Into Ministry (Work Done for God)



SABBATH—MAY 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 18:13–26; Matthew 7:17, 18; Acts 6:1–8; John 4:36; Acts 15:36–40.

MEMORY VERSE: “And how can anyone preach without being sent? It is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ ” (Romans 10:15, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: Training people for evangelistic¹ and witnessing work is not enough. They must actively work for souls.

MANY CHURCH MEMBERS COMPLAIN THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO ATTEND WITNESSING AND EVANGELISTIC TRAINING SEMINARS. But they are not encouraged to become involved when they return to their home church. As a result, many churches that are not very active in witnessing and evangelistic activities do not know that there are well-trained people in their groups. Sometimes these people will volunteer their services. But many others decide that they are either not needed or wanted. The most successful way to discourage members from any church activity is to deny them the chance to take part in activities that they are well-trained to do. It is the responsibility of every local church to discover qualified people for witnessing and evangelistic work. All who are willing to work have a place. The key is to find that place.

This week we will explore ways of getting well-trained members involved in church work, unity, and growth.

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

SUNDAY—MAY 27**SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
(Exodus 18:13–26)**

Many church leaders have failed to do their duties by not sharing the ministry load with others. This is not a new problem caused by the modern world. Even the great Old Testament leader Moses needed some help in seeing the big picture of shared leadership. We can learn much from Moses' experience and the good advice from his father-in-law, Jethro.

Carefully read Exodus 18:13–26. What do the words “let them” in verse 22 really mean?

How long could Moses have kept up his unrealistic (not possible) work schedule? We can only guess. In the same way, we can only guess how well Moses knew that he had qualified helpers. But this story does show that there were many who were able and willing to help. Moses would have needed to let them become involved by sharing certain duties of leadership with them.

The work that church leaders must willingly share includes witnessing and evangelism. The principles (important rules) of shared responsibility that we learn from Moses' experience are very important to winning souls for the kingdom.

What can we learn from the fact that Moses chose men with special talents (verse 21)? And what can

we learn from the fact that Moses gave them different responsibilities (verse 25)? How would these principles be used in the evangelistic planning of today's churches?

It was probably the sensitive, spiritual nature of speaking for God that made Moses careful about sharing his responsibilities. We, too, feel the awesome responsibility of talking to people about God and speaking for God. Our witnessing and evangelism is serious business. We remember that eternal lives are very important. This should cause us to be careful as to how we do evangelistic work. But we must ever be willing to get everyone involved in outreach and evangelism.

Read again Exodus 18:21, 22. Notice that the newly appointed leaders made their ministry available at all times. So, we should always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us.



We must share the ministry workload with others.

MONDAY—MAY 28**RISKING FOR SUCCESS**
(Matthew 7:17, 18)

Members of Seventh-day Adventist churches have a great ability for winning souls. Many are excited about getting involved in their church's evangelistic work. But those in leadership are sometimes too careful about letting them get involved. They fear that church members may do or say something wrong that may cause people to turn away from Christ and His church. Sadly, this kind of thinking is so strong that even people who have been well-trained think this way. The Holy Spirit and the promises He brings are not just for leaders. They are for all who are willing to surrender in faith to the Lord. They also are for all who are willing to deny self and work for the saving of souls.

What principle taught by Jesus in Matthew 7:17, 18 should remove the fears of concerned leaders? How do we tell the difference between good and bad fruit? How should the church leadership, as a whole, be involved in this kind of work? Also, how do we do this without judging others?

If every healthy tree bears good fruit, church leaders should focus on growing healthy trees. We must first be someone for Jesus before we can successfully do things for Him. We are to give enough attention to the leading of people into a

meaningful and deepening relationship with Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit will ensure that they grow the right fruit. Our part is to lead, teach, and train. God's part is to bless their work. We need to trust them and God. If we give enough attention to spiritual growth and useful skills, we can trust people to develop the right fruit of evangelistic success. Certainly, there may be risk. But we must remember that even the disciples, who had the greatest Teacher, never won every soul to whom they appealed.

Have you ever felt that church leaders did not recognize your gifts and talents? What might be the cause? Look inside yourself. See if, perhaps, the fault might lie there, with you and some of your own feelings (pride, and so on) instead of somewhere else.



Church leaders should focus on growing healthy trees (church members) that bear good fruit.

TUESDAY—MAY 29**MATCHING THE WORKERS WITH THE HARVEST (Acts 6:1–8)**

When people show an interest in learning more about God and His church, we must choose carefully the leaders who will do this witnessing work. We would do well to choose someone of the same nationality and language and someone of the same age group. We also should consider the spiritual maturity, knowledge of the Bible, communication skills, and spiritual experience of the worker. We should take seriously the matching of the worker to the people with whom he or she will work.

When it comes to witnessing and evangelism, there is no such thing as “one size fits all.” Each person’s life and spiritual journey is special. But while each may be special, people’s experiences are almost the same in many ways. So, it makes good sense to match as well as possible the experiences of the believer and the person who looks for truth.

Read Acts 6:1–8. What duties are listed here? What happened when the disciples and believers matched people’s abilities to their special duties?

Notice the order of these events: the disciples realized a great problem. The disciples asked the believers to find seven men to take care of the problem. The believers brought their

choices to the disciples. The disciples appointed them to carry out the laying on of hands. And the number of disciples grew greatly.

Stephen and the other six deacons (church officers) were to “serve tables.” But the qualification for this task does not seem to be that they simply had the ability to organize and give out food. Instead, the believers looked for spirit-filled men because their ministry would also be a witnessing and evangelistic work. We also can see that the newly chosen men were important in freeing up the evangelists² to do more important work (read verse 8). Again we can support the fact that whatever work church members do will support the witnessing and evangelistic work of a church.

Talents, spiritual gifts, and special training are important to a successful church ministry. But the workers’ attitudes (feelings) are, perhaps, even more important. Notice that in Acts 16:1–5 and Acts 4:36, 37 both Timothy and Barnabas had the attitude that it was important to give one’s full support to this gospel ministry. Because of this, Barnabas gave up his personal wealth. And Timothy, part Greek, surrendered to the Jewish custom of circumcision.³ The lessons for us are clear.

WEDNESDAY—MAY 30**SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH CHURCH WORK (John 7:17)**

Spiritual growth comes only as we

2. evangelists—preachers who travel from place to place, preaching the good news about Jesus.

3. circumcision—the Jewish custom of removing foreskin from a male’s penis.

connect (grow a relationship) with Jesus. It cannot be done by simply doing certain duties, even witnessing and evangelistic work. A church cannot “program,” or put spirituality⁴ into, its members. It is a great truth that when believers accept God’s call to be disciples, their personal walk with the Lord becomes deeper and stronger. It is then that witnessing and evangelistic activities bring many spiritual blessings to all who work for the lost.



Spiritual growth comes only as we connect with Jesus.

What does John 7:17 tell us about doing God’s will and growing spiritually?

A good question is, “How can a person looking for truth be sure when he or she has found it?” In verse 17, Jesus presents a truth that will help all who want to follow Him. Those who are willing to do God’s will can know if a doctrine is, or is not, of God. How can this be? Clearly one experiences spiritual growth being connected to God. In other words, Jesus is saying that people who follow Bible truth will

receive greater light.

There is a strong connection (relationship) between hearing and doing (read Revelation 1:3). Those who do God’s will will be blessed with a deepening, Christian relationship. With prayerful Bible study, this relationship will lead to greater truth and exciting spiritual growth.

Read John 4:36. What are the spiritual rewards for being involved in the harvest of souls? What spiritual fellowship is suggested by the planter and harvester celebrating their working together?



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God’s Will

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Greater Spiritual Truth and Growth

Prayerful Bible study and doing God’s will leads to greater truth and spiritual growth.

Many Bible writers suggest that the disciples were harvesting where John the Baptist and Jesus had planted. The Samaritan woman herself had clearly planted some gospel seed among the people of her town. How the disciples must have rejoiced together as the ripened, spiritual harvest was

4. spirituality—the quality of a believer’s spiritual life.

gathered into the kingdom. Success through working together in witnessing and evangelism creates a bond (unity; oneness) between God and us and between us as fellow believers. As we accept God's call to be involved in soul winning, this bond grows as a natural result of being on God's team.

How has your own faith been made stronger from your own personal witness through success and failures? How does witnessing influence your relationship with the Lord?

THURSDAY—MAY 31

BRINGING UNITY (ONENESS) THROUGH WORKING TOGETHER

There is a miracle that is sometimes hard to explain. But it can best be described as "circular influence."⁵ Circular influence goes like this: by getting people involved, you encourage unity. In turn, this encourages people to become involved. This also encourages unity. In this way you can see the circular-influence principle at work. An example can be shown in people who pull the oars of a boat. They do not have time to rock the boat, do they?

There were some key decisions made in the growth of the early church. These decisions could have caused a big disagreement. But the believers chose to dedicate (commit) themselves to the work that their Lord had given them.

Consider the important voting

method in Acts 1:15–26. We do not cast lots today. But what key points were the believers looking for here? And what principles can we learn from this example for the work of ministry today?

Of course, whenever humans are working together, disagreement is possible. We would be right in thinking that Satan is working to destroy the unity of believers. It is only fair that we study a real disagreement in the evangelistic ministry of the early church.

Examine Acts 15:36–40. What caused Paul and Barnabas to disagree? What was the result of their disagreement? And what can we learn from it?

On an earlier missionary trip, John Mark left Paul and his fellow workers and returned to Jerusalem. It seems that this event (read Acts 13:13) made Paul unwilling to take John Mark along on this current trip. But Barnabas saw that it would help both John Mark and the work to take John Mark along. So, Paul chose Silas to go with him. And Barnabas traveled with John Mark.

There was no argument about what missionary work should be done. And Paul and Barnabas did not let personal differences spoil the evangelistic work. Instead, they sent out two witnessing groups. Later, Paul and John Mark did work well together again (read 2 Timothy 4:11). But Paul and Barnabas did not let their disagreement spoil their mission.

5. "circular influence"—influences from working with people around you.

Think of someone in the church who you might be struggling with now. How much forgiveness would you be willing to give to another person to solve a disagreement or make peace?

FRIDAY—JUNE 1

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Setting a Realistic Ministry Schedule

Last Friday's study shows that twelve months is a good length of time to plan ahead. It may depend on what witnessing and evangelistic program you are planning. Time periods will depend on different goals and plans. But there are some general points to think about.

1. Make a list of goals you hope to reach throughout these next twelve months. Show expectations of what needs to be done throughout the series, not just the completion of programs.

2. Write out a time line. This can be as detailed as you like but make sure that it is not too short. It should include important training periods, program start and finish dates, and set review times.

3. As you make important periods of the program, make sure that you also show which teams are responsible at those times.

4. Show how your program plans work with the witnessing and evangelistic program of the church. Show where and how the church's plans will support yours and how yours will make those of the church stronger. This will help you to remember both the fact that

you are a part of a larger team and the need to work together.

5. Will your program continue the next church year? The answer will help you to decide what training, planning, and people will be needed. If your program is a growing ministry, each part of the program will need to be reviewed for future evangelism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① This week's lesson shows that God has expectations of every believer and that He has chosen a work for each one. What do you think God expects of His church about the equipment of, and the organization for, witnessing and soul winning? What can a church do to help members to understand the expectations of God? As you think about the Ellen G. White quotes that follow, ask yourself, How can I make use of them personally?

"God expects personal service from everyone whom God calls to have a knowledge of the truth for this time. Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands. But all can be home missionaries in their families and neighborhoods."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 30.

"To everyone who becomes a partner of His grace,⁶ the Lord chooses a work for others. Each one of us is to say, 'Here am I; send me.'"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets [Special Messengers] and Kings*, page 222.

6. grace—God's gift of mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.