

Our Mission



SABBATH—AUGUST 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 5:14–16; Luke 24:48, 49; John 20:21; Matthew 28:19, 20; Revelation 14:6–12.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘This good news of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world. It will be a witness to all nations. Then the end will come’ ” (Matthew 24:14, NlrV).

EARLY IN JESUS' MINISTRY (WORK DONE FOR GOD), HE CALLED PETER AND ANDREW TO BE HIS DISCIPLES. This meant that they were to lead others to Him: “ ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’ ” (Matthew 4:19, NKJV). Later, the Lord chose twelve disciples “that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14, NKJV). Christ sent out the Twelve Apostles (teachers and leaders) and later 70 disciples to spread the gospel too (Matthew 10:5–15; Luke 10:1–12). During the 40 days after His return to life, Christ appeared several times to His disciples (1 Corinthians 15:3–8). And He gave the responsibility of preaching the gospel to them (Acts 1:2, 3). Again and again He entrusted them with the gospel work. None of the Gospel writers¹ wrote down every word Jesus said. But each one wrote down a few sentences of the Lord's directions. Each Gospel story shows a different part of the gospel (good news) command. So, each gives us important information about the gospel's purpose and methods.

This week we will look at the gospel command as Jesus Himself gave it.

DEFINITIONS

1. Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (Matthew 5:14–16)

Read Matthew 5:14–16. What is Jesus saying here to each of us as persons and as a church group?

Throughout the Bible, light is closely tied to God. “The LORD is my light,” sang David (Psalm 27:1). John said that “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5, NKJV). God is the Giver of light. In fact, the first thing He created was light. This is because light is very valuable for life.

There is a very close connection between light and God. So, the Bible often uses light as a symbol (word-picture) of truth, knowledge, and godliness. To walk in light means to have a character (thoughts, feelings, and actions) like God’s (Ephesians 5:8; 1 John 1:7). Light stands for God, darkness for Satan. That is why Isaiah says, “How terrible for those who say that darkness is light and light is darkness” (Isaiah 5:20, NIV).

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is “ ‘the light of men, . . . the true Light which gives light to every man’ ” (John 1:4, 9, NKJV). He alone is the Light that can brighten the darkness of a world covered by sin. Through Jesus, we may have the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 4:6). That means His character.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, we become “ ‘sons of light’ ” (John 12:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:5, NKJV). But we have no light in ourselves. Like the moon, all we can do is reflect the light that shines upon us. When we let Jesus shine through us, we will not do good works to show off our own virtues but to lead people to give glory (praise and honor) to God.

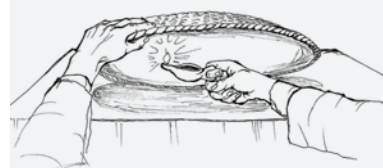
“If Christ is living in the heart, it is impossible to hide the light of His presence. If those who claim to be followers of Christ . . . have no light to give, it is because they have no connection with the Giver of light.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 41.

Would it not be foolish to light a lamp only to put it “ ‘under a basket or under a bed’ ” (Mark 4:21, NKJV)? Then why is it that sometimes we do so with Christ’s light? A “hidden” disciple is no more useful than a lamp under a bowl on a dark night. So, “arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1, NKJV).

Light is invisible. It has to be reflected off something. If not, we cannot see it. What lesson can we learn from this about how, as believers, our light is to be shown?



Like the moon, all we can do is reflect the light that shines upon us.



How foolish to light a lamp only to put it “under a basket.”

TO BE WITNESSES (Luke 24:48)



**Jesus showed them
His hands and feet.**



**As rescued sinners,
we can tell others what
Jesus has done for us.**

Jesus' first meeting with the disciples after His return to life was very important. They were afraid, discouraged, and puzzled. They had locked the doors of the room out of fear. But Jesus came and stood among them. With a clear and warm voice, He said to them, "Peace to you." Surprised and terrified, they could not believe their eyes and ears. Lovingly, the Lord showed them His hands and His feet and explained to them everything the Bible said about Him. That night, Jesus' appearance and words changed them greatly. He removed their anxiety and unbelief and filled them with the peace and joy that come from the proof of His return to life.

Then Christ began to explain their mission. He slowly helped them to understand their important responsibility. The responsibility was to tell people about His death, His return to life, and His power to forgive sins and to change lives (Luke 24:46–48). They had seen Him die. But they had also seen Him alive again. So, they could testify (witness) for Him that He was the Savior of the world.

A witness is someone who has seen an event happen. Anyone can be a witness if he or she has personally watched something. We can testify based only on our own experiences, not someone else's. As rescued sinners, we have the honor of telling others what Jesus has done for us.

What is the relationship between receiving the Holy Spirit and witnessing for Christ? Read Luke 24:48, 49 and Acts 1:8. Read also Isaiah 43:10, 12 and Isaiah 44:8.

The book of Acts shows that the believers' testimony could have power only through the leading of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. After receiving the Spirit, "with great power the apostles continued their teaching. They gave witness that the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead" (Acts 4:33, NIV). That is, the apostles were able to speak, openly and with great power, about what they themselves had witnessed and experienced. In the same way, our witness about Christ must always include our own experiences with Him.

What has been your own personal experience with the Lord? What has God done in your life that you can share with others? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

SO SEND I YOU (John 20:21)

John's Gospel also reports Jesus' first meeting with the disciples in the upper room. But John brings up other parts not included in Luke's Gospel.

According to John, how did Jesus explain the mission of the believers? Read John 20:21.

Jesus had already brought up this idea a few days before, when He prayed, " 'As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world' " (John 17:18, NKJV). Sending someone suggests the idea that the one who sends has authority (power) over the one who is sent. It also involves a purpose, because one is given a mission (duty) to do. Jesus was sent by the Father to save the world (John 3:17). And we are sent by Jesus to preach salvation through Him. Clearly, our work continues Christ's work. His work included a complete ministry to all people (Matthew 9:35). He expects us not only to continue what He had started but to go further. Jesus said, " 'Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. In fact, he will do even greater things' " (John 14:12, NIV).

Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to help the disciples carry out their mission. At Creation, God "breathed into" Adam "the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7). Now Jesus "breathed on" the disciples "the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22, NKJV). The breath of life changed lifeless dust into a living person. In the same way, the Holy Spirit changed fearful and discouraged disciples into powerful living witnesses to continue Jesus' work. Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit is very valuable and necessary for us to finish the work entrusted to us.

Jesus has called you to be a witness. What can you witness about? That is, what have you seen or experienced about Jesus that you should share with others?

TO MAKE DISCIPLES (Matthew 28:19)

After His return to life, Jesus met with His disciples and said to them, “ ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’ ” (Matthew 28:18, NKJV). His power and authority are no longer limited as they were during His earthly ministry. Rather, His authority includes the whole universe. Based on His authority, Jesus entrusts a mission to His followers.

According to Matthew’s story, in giving the Great Commission, Jesus used four verbs: *go*, *make disciples*, *baptize*, and *teach*. Sadly, many Bible versions do not show the fact that, in Greek, the only verb that gives a command is *make disciples*. But the other three verbs (*go*, *baptize*, and *teach*) are participles (an adjective form). This shows that the focus of the sentence is on *make disciples*, and the other three activities (actions) are dependent on it.

What importance do going, baptizing, and teaching have in obeying the command to make disciples? Read Matthew 28:19, 20.

Jesus’ command shows three activities involved in making disciples. The three activities do not need to happen in any special order. Instead, they support one another. While going to different places throughout the world, we should be teaching everything Jesus taught and baptizing those who accept Him as Savior and are willing to obey all the things Jesus commanded.

We celebrate when somebody is baptized. But baptism is not the end of the story. It is just part of making someone a disciple. Our work is to invite people to follow Jesus. This means believing in Him, obeying His teachings, accepting His way of life, and inviting others to become His disciples too.

The word *all* is important in this verse. Why? Because Jesus has “all authority,” we have to go to “all the nations,” teaching them to obey “all things” about the gospel, with the promise that Christ is with us “always” (meaning “all the days”) to the end of the world.

Think about your local church. What is your church doing to help new believers to grow into disciples? What more can be done? What talents do you have that you could use in this important part of obeying the gospel command?

TO PREACH THE GOSPEL (Revelation 14:6–12)

In a few clear words, the Gospel of Mark describes the gospel command in two short sentences: “ ‘Go into all the world. Preach the good news to everyone’ ” (Mark 16:15, NIV). As in Matthew, the verb *go* in Greek is a participle that shows not the work but the movement needed to finish the work. The mission itself is shown by the Greek verb *kērusso*. *Kērusso* is a strong word that means “to speak aloud, to announce, to preach.” Mark uses this word 14 times, more than any other Gospel. The church must preach the gospel.

The eleven disciples alone could never announce the gospel to the entire world. They could not preach to every person living in it either. The work is so huge (big) that the entire church is required to become involved. It is entrusted to all the believers in Jesus in all ages. This includes you and me.

Read Revelation 14:6–12. How do these verses include the worldwide mission of the church?

Preaching the gospel to every person does not automatically mean that everyone will accept it. Only “ ‘he who believes and is baptized will be saved’ ” (Mark 16:16, NKJV). We should preach eagerly, with hopes that every hearer will accept the gospel invitation. Yet, we have to understand that many will not accept the Word (Bible). The example of the narrow gate clearly shows this to be true (Matthew 7:13, 14).

What promise do we have that this worldwide mission can and will succeed? Read Matthew 24:14.

There is an encouraging comparison between Mark 16:15 and Matthew 24:14. Both verses speak about the preaching of the gospel to all the world. The first verse shows Jesus’ *command* to preach. But the second gives Jesus’ *promise* that the mission really will be done.

Christ “made full arrangements for the work to go forward. And He accepted the responsibility for its success. So long as they [His disciples] obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 822. The question we each need to ask ourselves is, *How willing are we to be used by Him in this important work?*

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, “Go Teach All Nations,” pages 818–828, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Great Commission,” pages 25–34, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace² of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert. It flows to refresh all, and makes those who are ready to die eager to drink of the water of life.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 195.

“The Savior’s command to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal [deadly] mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the minister. . . . All who receive the life of Christ are ordained [authorized] to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established. And all who accept its holy vows become responsible for being co-workers with Christ.”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, page 822.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Not everyone is able to travel the world preaching the gospel. But what are ways in which each one of us can be involved in the work of spreading the gospel and the three angels’ messages to the world?
- ② In what ways is your local church continuing Jesus’ ministry in your city? How could you help to improve the church’s missionary service?
- ③ Jesus said that the gospel would go to all the world. During most of human history since He spoke those words, methods of communication have not changed. Two hundred years ago, communication was not much faster than it was 2,000 years ago, when Jesus gave us the gospel command. But all of that has changed. In the past 50 years, we have developed methods of communication that are very modern. How can we better learn to use the wonderful technology we have been given to do the work of spreading the gospel?
- ④ Based on the question at the end of Monday’s study, let those in class share their own personal experiences with Jesus. How can we use our own testimonies as a witness to others?

DEFINITIONS

2. grace—God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.