

Jesus Won Their Confidence (Trust)



SABBATH—AUGUST 27

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 15:6; Numbers 14:11; 1 Corinthians 3:1–9; Daniel 6:1–3; Nehemiah 2:1–9; Deuteronomy 4:1–9; Acts 2:42–47.

MEMORY VERSE: “But the news about Jesus spread even more. So crowds of people came to hear [Him]. They also came to be healed of their sicknesses” (Luke 5:15, NirV).

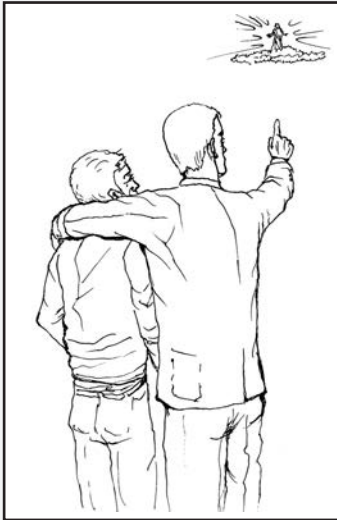
FOR MANY YEARS, a Seventh-day Adventist church has made breakfast five days a week for a local public elementary school. The church is located in a nation that is very worldly. But the government passed a law that gave enough money to each public school to have a chaplain.¹ So the school and community wanted the Seventh-day Adventist church to send a chaplain to the schools in the area. (It is rare to ask only one church to do that.) The chaplain's duty is to care for the physical, emotional,² and spiritual needs of the students and even of the wider school community. The opportunities have been surprising.

“I enjoy the special relationship we have with your church,” the school principal said to the church pastor, who was visiting the school. He added, “I just wish other churches could be involved the way you are.” When the pastor was leaving the grounds, the school's representative to the community thanked him for what the church was doing and asked if she could attend one Sabbath.

This week we will explore the issue of winning the confidence of people whom we hope to serve and win for Christ.

DEFINITIONS

1. chaplain—a pastor or other Christian religious leader who performs religious services for a military group (such as the army) or for a prison, hospital, school, and so on.
2. emotional—having to do with strong feelings.

WINNING CONFIDENCE³ (Genesis 15:6)

When those we serve show confidence in us, we must point them to Jesus and what He has done for them.

DEFINITIONS

3. confidence—a feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something.

Jesus worked for the good of the people. He showed sympathy and ministered to (served) their needs. By doing these things Jesus “won their confidence.” *Confidence* in Latin comes from the words *con*, meaning “with,” and *fides*, meaning “faith.” Throughout the Bible, several words are used to get across the meaning of the word *faith*.

In Hebrew the main root for *faith* is *amn*. From this root we get the word *amen*. It gives the idea of something solid and firm in which a person can trust and believe. It is often translated as “believe,” which means a saving faith in God. It can also mean “truth.” Christ’s example of winning people’s confidence inspired (led others to feel) trust. This trust comes from understanding how steadfast (unchanging) and faithful Jesus’ work was as He mixed with, sympathized with, and served the people.

Read the following verses. Each verse has a word based on the root *amn*: Genesis 15:6; Numbers 14:11; Isaiah 7:9; Habakkuk 2:4. How is the word used in each verse? And how does it suggest the idea of confidence and trust?

In the Greek of the New Testament, the root word that is used to suggest the Hebrew *amn* (faith; belief) is *pistis*. This Greek word for faith suggests full belief and trust. Christ’s example of winning people’s confidence would mean that He had won the people’s complete trust and belief in Him as a result of His unselfish work in mixing with, sympathizing, and serving people.

It is important to understand something. When the Bible speaks about the kind of confidence that humans have, it often may be a negative kind of self-confidence or trust in another person. (Read Micah 7:5 and Psalm 118:9.) But this confidence becomes positive when it is applied to God. This difference suggests an important truth, one that should cause us to be careful. As followers of Jesus, we are called to live out His example of mixing with, sympathizing, and ministering to people’s needs. But when those we serve show confidence in us, we must point them to Jesus and what He has done for them.

How would you answer if someone were to ask you, “What does true faith in God look like?” Why? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

A CAREFUL BALANCE (1 Corinthians 3:1–9)

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in an African country is growing very fast. What is the secret? Church leaders have said that there is a strong connection between this growth and the unselfish service of the church members to people throughout the country. The widespread confidence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church caught the attention of the country's president. He came to a large Adventist Community Services rally and thanked Seventh-day Adventist Church members personally for their service.

At the same time, as representatives of Christ we need to be very careful as we serve others to point them to Him. As Jesus did, we need to win the trust and the confidence of the people. But their confidence and trust in us needs to be directed toward Jesus. We are just servants. They may find something of Christ in us. Maybe it is unselfishness, love, caring, or self-denial (personal sacrifice) for the good of others. As a result of experiencing these things, they come to us. But if they study us too carefully, they might not like what they find. That is because we are all sinners. So, we must always point them to Jesus. They put their full confidence in Jesus alone. The rest of us will disappoint them sooner or later.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1–9 and 1 Corinthians 5:1. What is Paul dealing with in the church? What kind of witness would result if these people were inviting others to their church and if the visitors saw what Paul was talking about?

Of course, we do not have to be perfect or have a perfect church before we can minister to the needs of others. At the same time, we must try to be the kind of people who others can learn to depend on and trust. And we can do that if we faithfully and carefully care for people as Jesus did. There is no question that many of the quarrels and struggles within a church would go away quickly if the members dedicated themselves to ministering to the needs of the community and showing community members the love of Christ.

If some visitors started attending your church regularly, what would they find? And what kind of witness would it present to them?



We must be the kind of people that others can learn to depend on and trust.

SOCIAL CAPITAL (INVESTMENT) (Proverbs 22:1)

“You should want a good name more than you want great riches. To be highly respected is better than having silver or gold” (Proverbs 22:1, NIV). How does the idea in this verse help with our community witness and outreach?



Daniel's strength of character made a strong impression on those around him.

What is “social capital”? When you make investments in a bank account, its value grows. Social capital means positive and successful relationships that are just as valuable as money in the bank. For example, first you develop better understanding with community leaders. Next, you ask them, What are the community’s needs? And you ask their advice on meeting these needs. Then you follow up with action. In this way you are building relationships with them. This is social capital. Each positive experience with them is like an investment in your relationship. Your social capital continues to grow, and you increase in value in their eyes.

The Church Manual reminds us that Seventh-day Adventists “should be recognized as outstanding citizens. . . . They should work for the common good.” With our money, as much as possible, and by our service, we “should support what is just and right in our communities.”—Adapted from the chapter “Standards of Christian Living,” *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th edition, pages 137, 138.

In addition to Jesus’ earthly ministry (work done for God), the Bible gives other examples of what can happen when God’s people have received “social capital.” Read Acts 7:9, 10; Genesis 41:38–45; Daniel 2:46–49; and Daniel 6:1–3. Describe the positive relationships these Bible characters experienced with “outsiders” and what happened as a result.

We might not experience the kind of dramatic (powerful) rescues and stories found here. But that is not the important point. These men showed strength of character (thoughts; feelings; actions) that made an impression on those around them. Ellen G. White explains in *Patriarchs [Forefathers and Leaders] and Prophets [Special Messengers]* on pages 217, 218, and 221 and in *Prophets and Kings* on page 628 that the characters and strong stands of these godly men won the confidence of the “heathens [idol worshipers; unbelievers]” around them. They were gentle, faithful, wise, noble, fair, just, loyal to God, and honest.

THE VALUE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL (Nehemiah 2:1–9)

Churches are largely volunteer groups that operate on limited budgets. Social capital helps improve the chance that your church can reach its important goals. The old custom in some countries of farmers helping other farmers bring in their harvest is an example of social capital. But first we need to think about each situation on its own. When the plan is useful and workable, we can cooperate with others in order to reach our goals.

Read Nehemiah 2:1–9. What was the result of the heaven-sent confidence that King Artaxerxes had in Nehemiah?

“The funds and supplies that he [Nehemiah] did not have he received from those who were able to give. And the Lord is still willing to touch the hearts of those who have His goods. He moves their hearts to give these goods for the cause of truth. Those who labor for Him are to make good use of the help that He encourages other men to give. . . . The donors [givers] may have no faith in Christ, no knowledge of His word [the Bible]; but their gifts are not to be refused for these reasons.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 634.

How fascinating that in this case God moved upon the hearts of pagans⁴ to help with the progress of His own work. This should teach us an important lesson. We should be willing to work with others—even those not of our faith, or even of any faith—if it will help the cause of Christ to move forward and to succeed. Of course, we always have to be careful about any kind of connection we make with others. But we can work carefully and prayerfully with others whose aid can help us to succeed greatly at what we want to do for the good of the community as a whole. Often, governments or even private businesses or people will offer their support. This support should not be automatically accepted or automatically refused. Instead, it should be thought about prayerfully with careful study before a decision is made.

How can you build some “social capital” in your community that could later lead to positive results and benefits for other people?



Just as Nehemiah’s story shows, we should be willing to work with others, even those not of our faith, or even of any faith, if we are to help the cause of Christ to succeed.

DEFINITIONS

4. pagans—people who worship many gods or goddesses or the earth or nature.

FAVOR WITH ALL PEOPLE (Deuteronomy 4:1–9)

There is no question that we, as a people, have been blessed with much light from the Lord. This light is not just the knowledge of God, which includes understanding the Cross, the sanctuary, the state of the dead, the Sabbath, and the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan). These truths are great blessings to us. When we think about the light given to us about health and healing, we surely have much to offer people around us.

In fact, the health message can be a powerful tool in helping us to reach out to our communities. After all, even those who might not at first have any interest in our beliefs care about having good health. What an opportunity for us to share what we have been given. As we have already learned, Jesus said: “‘Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. Even more will be asked of the person who is supposed to take care of much’ ” (Luke 12:48, NIV). And there is no question: to us much has been given.

Read Deuteronomy 4:1–9. What was the Lord saying to His people at that time? How does the principle (important rule) shown here apply to us? The Lord tells the people that they must be sure to obey all that He has commanded them. What meaning does that command have for us today?

A few years ago a Seventh-day Adventist church group thought about this question: Would our community miss us if somehow our church group disappeared overnight? The answer was simple. No, they would not be missed. Their community had no confidence in them.

The church group did not like the answer. So, they decided to move from building walls to building bridges. Careful not to sacrifice what they knew to be truth, they worked in partnership with organizations that were already doing the work of God. They became involved with those organizations continuously. They decided not to do just one-time projects, but instead they stayed with the continuing program that greatly helped their communities.

Read Acts 2:42–47. What connection was there in the early church between “enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:47, NIV) and church growth? Compare⁵ the values mentioned in these verses with your church’s values.

DEFINITIONS

5. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Mark 5:18–20; Luke 8:38, 39; and Acts 5:12–16. Read Ellen G. White, “Our Example,” pages 17–28, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “The Grace [Goodness and Mercy] of Courtesy,” pages 236–240, in *Selected Messages*, book 3 (especially pages 238, 239); “Blessing the Children,” pages 511–517, in *The Desire of Ages*; “Relieve the Oppressed,”⁶ page 242, in *My Life Today*.

There are many ways in which you and your church can cooperate with other churches and organizations for the good of the community. It is important for your local church to know the needs of the community. Then you are to work closely with others to meet those needs. What better way to build confidence among the community and even with other churches? When shared confidence and trust are established between your church and its community, groundwork is laid for them to move toward following Jesus, for “this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 144. God alone knows how many people have been, or will be, won through the simple act of reaching out to do good to others who are in need.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① We are to build good ties with and get a good name in the community. At the same time, Jesus warns in Matthew 10:22: “‘Everyone will hate you because of me. But anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved’ ” (NIRV). How do we work through what appears to be a strong difference between these two ideas?
- ② In class, discuss your answer to the question: What does true faith look like? If we truly have a saving faith in Jesus, what will be different about us from those who do not have this faith?
- ③ The question of gifts from others not of our faith is one that we need to think about carefully. As we learned in Wednesday’s study, Ellen G. White talked favorably about receiving gifts from those who were not even believers in Jesus. In *The Ministry of Healing* (page 340), however, she spoke very sharply against churches that took money from those in the liquor business (even its own members “in good and regular standing”). She said that money from these people “is stained with blood. A curse is on it.” How can we know right from wrong when we accept “questionable” gifts, even for a good cause or reason?

DEFINITIONS

6. oppressed—persons treated in an unfair or cruel way.