

God's Invitation



SABBATH—OCTOBER 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 11:1–9; Genesis 12:1–3; Genesis 12:10–13:1; Acts 8:1–4; Acts 1:8.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But you will receive [get] power when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. You will tell about Me in the city of Jerusalem and over all the countries of Judea and Samaria and to the ends [every part] of the earth’ ” (Acts 1:8, ERV).

Look at what happened at the Tower of Babel. God caused the builders not to understand each other. Then the people left Babel.

GOD INVITES US to be His witnesses. Sometimes He may ask us to do things we haven't done before. We may feel afraid of change. Did you know that when we allow God to change us, He can use us to save other people? Look at what happened at the Tower of Babel. God caused the builders not to understand each other. Then the people left Babel. “They moved away and filled the earth. Their moving away was God's plan all along. These same men refused to cooperate with God. Now God used the trouble at Babel to make the very thing happen that these men refused to do.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 120, adapted. Look at Abraham, too. Abraham left his home and went to another country (Genesis 12), where he told people about God. What about Jesus' followers? At first, they shared the Good News only with their own people, the Jews. Then Jesus sent them to share the Good News with non-Jews, too (Acts 8:1–4).

We may never leave our country. But God wants us to share the Good News with the people around us. We practice every day when we talk about Jesus with our family, friends, and neighbors.

DOING THINGS WE'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE (Genesis 11:1–9)

God wants us to share the Good News about Jesus with other people. So, sometimes He may ask us to do things we've never done before. These things may make us feel nervous or afraid. We like staying with the people we know. But this habit can cause us to become selfish. We can learn more about this danger from the Tower of Babel story.

Read Genesis 11:1–9. In this story, what did the people want to do? Why did God stop them?

The story about the people at the Tower of Babel shows us how much they wanted to be famous. They planned to make the biggest city and tower on the earth. They said, “Let's build ourselves a city and a tower that will reach to the sky. Then we will be famous’ ” (Genesis 11:4, ERV).

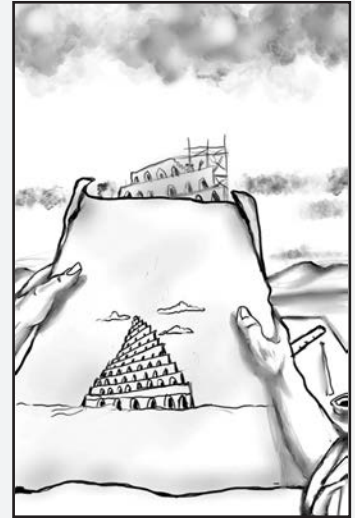
How often today do people try to do the same thing? Maybe they are artists, government leaders, businessmen, or pastors! They all want to be famous. In the end, their wish to be famous is empty and has no meaning. Everything they did to be famous is empty and has no meaning, too. (Read Ecclesiastes 2:1–11.)

In Genesis 11:4, we learn why the people wanted to build the tower. They wanted to avoid being separated from each other and scattered all over the earth. They wanted to stick together for selfish reasons. But God had another plan.

The people joined together to build the tower. But “the LORD said, ‘These people all speak the same language. And I see that they are joined together to do this work. This is only the beginning of what they can do. Soon they will be able to do anything they want’ ” (Genesis 11:6, ERV). The plan of the people to build this tower was evil.

Ellen G. White tells us that the people didn't trust God's promise that He would not destroy the earth with water again (Genesis 9:14, 15). The people wanted to be safe. They didn't believe God. God saw the evil that was in their hearts. Their hearts were filled with selfishness. So, God stopped their plan from happening.

Do you talk only to people who agree with you? Are you part of a group or community that only trusts your own people? How can you make friends with people who are not part of your race group or community?



The story about the people at the Tower of Babel shows us how much they wanted to be famous.

BECOMING A BLESSING TO EVERYONE ON EARTH (Genesis 12:1–3)

What was God’s plan for Abram? How was Abram’s sharing the Good News with other people part of this plan? Read Genesis 12:1–3 for the answer.

God asked Abram to leave his country and his people and go to another land. (Later, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham). God’s asking Abraham to leave was all part of His big plan to save humans. Abraham was an important part of this plan. Abraham went, just as the Lord asked Him to go. God has a plan for you, too. He may ask you to leave your family and your people. He may ask you to go somewhere you never went before. God will open the way for you to serve Him there. God will help and bless you so that you may be a blessing to other people.

Read the Bible verses below. What does each verse tell us about God’s Promise to us?

Genesis 3:15 _____

Genesis 17:19 _____

Numbers 24:17 _____

Isaiah 9:6 _____

Daniel 9:24–27 _____

Matthew 1:21 _____



God asked Abram to leave his country and his people and go to another land.

The verses above teach us that God will keep the promise He made in the Garden of Eden. God promises that Someone will come and solve the sin problem. That Someone is Jesus. Jesus came from the family line of Abraham and Isaac. Hebrews 11:9 tells us that God gave to Isaac and Jacob the blessing He promised to Abraham.

How much did Abraham know or understand about the Promised Son who would be born from his family line? We don’t know. We do know what Abraham did. “God called Abraham to travel to another place that he promised to give him. Abraham did not know where that other place was. But he obeyed God and started traveling because he had faith” (Hebrews 11:8, ERV). Abraham is an example to us all!

GOD’S COMMAND TO ABRAM (Genesis 12:10–13:1)

God commanded Abram to leave his home and country. So, Abram went to the land God commanded him to enter. Right from the start, things didn’t go so well for Abram. The Canaanites lived in the land at the time (Genesis 12:6). The Canaanites were known for being very mean and nasty people. No wonder that God appeared to Abram right after he got there and promised, “ ‘I will give this land to your children and to your children’s children’ ” (Genesis 12:7, NLV). For sure, Abram needed this encouragement.

But things continued not to go well for Abram, at least at first.

What things happened to Abram next? Read Genesis 12:10–13:1 for the answer. What mistakes did Abram make?

Abram must have felt as if he had no hope. He left a comfortable and happy life in his home country. “He left his home without knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8, NLV). One of the first things that happened when he got there was a food shortage! This food shortage was so bad that Abram had to leave the place where God told him to live and go somewhere else. Then things got worse after that.

“Abraham stayed in Egypt. During this time, he showed the weakness and sin that was in his heart. Abraham did not tell anyone that Sarah was his wife. So often in the past, Abraham showed courage and his faith in God. This time, Abraham’s behavior showed that he didn’t trust God to take care of him. . . . Abraham’s lack of faith put Sarah in terrible danger. The king of Egypt learned that Sarah was very beautiful. He ordered some men to bring her to his palace, so he could make her his wife. But the Lord showed mercy to Sarah and protected her. The Lord sent punishments to the royal family.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 130, adapted.

No one said that our work for God was easy. When Abram lied, he made things worse. God is patient. He didn’t give up on Abram because of his mistake. Sad to say, Abram made other mistakes, too, later on. Abram’s story gives us a lot of hope. We may make mistakes. But we can hold on to the Lord in faith. We can trust Him to forgive our sins and mistakes. The Lord also will continue to use us to do His work.



“Abraham’s lack of faith put Sarah in terrible danger. The king of Egypt learned that Sarah was very beautiful.”

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AND GOD'S WORK (Acts 8:1–4)

In the New Testament church, what caused the Christians to leave Jerusalem and travel to faraway places? Read Acts 8:1–4 for the answer.



Early on, Peter didn't want to be seen with non-Jews (Galatians 2:11, 12). But God changed Peter's heart.

Until this time, the New Testament church was mostly in Jerusalem (or in the Jewish lands and among the Jewish people). Then everything changed. The Jews attacked Jesus' followers in Jerusalem. So, Jesus' followers left Jerusalem and went all over the lands of Judea and Samaria. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said to His followers, " 'You will tell about Me in the city of Jerusalem and over all the countries of Judea and Samaria and to the ends [every part] of the earth' " (Acts 1:8, NLV). Jesus' words happened just as He said, as we see in Acts 8:4: "They were scattered everywhere, and in every place they went, they told people the Good News" (ERV).

After church members started to move away from Jerusalem, they continued to preach to the Jews or in the neighborhoods of cities where Jews lived. Acts 11:19 tells us that church members went as far away as Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) and Cyprus. But they didn't preach the message to anyone else except other Jews.

Peter was one of the leaders of the New Testament church. Peter didn't want to share the Good News with non-Jews, even after Paul started to do so. Peter was known as the preacher to the Jews. Paul was known as the preacher to the non-Jews (Galatians 2:8). Early on, Peter didn't want to be seen with non-Jews (Galatians 2:11, 12). But God changed Peter's heart. Then Peter started to learn what the Good News was really all about. He also started to learn that Jesus didn't die to save only the Jews. Jesus died to save everyone on the earth who believed in Him.

What message is the Lord trying to give to Peter? Read Acts 10:9–15, 28, 29 for the answer. How must we also follow this important rule in the work we do for God today?

STARTING FROM WHERE YOU ARE (Acts 1:8)

What important rule did Jesus share with His followers? Read Acts 1:8 for the answer. Why is it also important for us, as Jesus' witnesses, to follow this rule?

Jesus shared an important rule with His followers before He went back to heaven. This rule shows us how we need to behave as His followers when we share the Good News with other people. Our job is not to convince other people they are wrong. Our job is to share the Bible truth about Jesus that we read about in the Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14:6–12.

Jesus gives us two important rules in Acts 1:8 that can help us do this work.

First, we must remember that Jesus told His followers, “ ‘You will tell people about me in Jerusalem’ ” (Acts 1:8, NlrV). We are His witnesses. We must share the Good News about Jesus in the place where we live. This place may include our home, our church, our neighborhood, and our community. We need to be Jesus' witnesses first where we are. We must be His witnesses to the people who are nearest to us. These people may include family members, church people, coworkers, neighbors, and people in the community.

Sometimes people only want to visit another country to share the Good News there. But these same people do not share Jesus with people at home. We should start sharing the Good News where we are and move on from there as the Lord leads us.

Next, Jesus said His followers will tell people about Him “ ‘in all Judea and Samaria. And you will even tell other people about me from one end [part] of the earth to the other [part]’ ” (Acts 1:8, NlrV). Again, Jesus announces that He wants His followers to share the Good News with people from other race groups. Jesus may ask us to move to other areas so that we can share the Good News with different race groups and religious groups and communities.

Task #1: Make a list of people groups in your community. What special needs do these groups have? Is your church doing anything to help them? If yes, how is your church meeting their needs? If no, how can your church help them?

Task #2: Pray for a chance in the future to help people, near and far away, who have special needs.



We need to be Jesus' witnesses first where we are. We must be His witnesses to the people who are nearest to us.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Great Commission,” page 25–34, and “A Seeker for Truth,” pages 131–142, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“Before Jesus went back to heaven, He gave His followers their work. Jesus gave them many precious Bible truths to share with people everywhere on earth. These precious truths were the same as treasure and included the teaching about everlasting life. Jesus told His followers, ‘You have been witnesses of My life. You have seen what I have given to the human family to save them. You have seen My work for Israel. My people refused to come to Me so that they may have everlasting life. The spiritual leaders did what they wanted to Me. Then they rejected Me. But I will give them another chance to accept Me, the Son of God. You saw that I accepted all the people who came to Me and confessed their sins. I give My message of mercy to you, My followers. You must give this message to both Jews and non-Jews. You must share it with Israel first. Then you must share this message with all people groups everywhere. You must help Me bring all My followers into one church.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 27, 28, adapted.

Jesus’ Important Command says: “ ‘Go and make followers of all the nations [people groups]’ ” (Matthew 28:19, NLV). So, this work is about going to other people in different countries all over the earth.

“Jesus’ followers must not wait for the people to come to them. They must go to the people with their message of mercy from Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 28, adapted.

“Many people are near to God, more than we think they are. This earth is dark and filled with sin. But God has many people who are the same to Him as precious jewels. God will lead His messengers to these precious people. Everywhere, people will take their stand for Jesus. Many will prize the wisdom of God above anything this life offers them. They will become God’s loyal servants.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 140, 141, adapted.



“This earth is dark and filled with sin. But God has many people who are the same to Him as precious jewels.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 In your own words, explain what God’s saving work means to you. What is your part in this work?
- 2 How can you win more people to Jesus in your day-to-day work?

A SPECIAL STORY

Gina Wahlen was excited to visit a house church. The church was in a country where Christians were often hurt or punished for their faith in God. Gina went to the house church to collect stories for the Mission quarterly.

The house church was in an apartment building. One of the apartments on the ground floor had been turned into a church. Gina started to talk to people from the church. Gina didn't know the language of the people, so someone translated Gina's words to the people in their own language.

The people were very nice. But they didn't have any special stories. As time passed, Gina grew worried. This church was the only place in this country where Gina planned to go to collect stories. She prayed, "Dear Lord, please help me find someone who has a wonderful story about You. I don't know how to find anyone because I don't speak the language. So, Lord, will you please send me someone with a special story?"

Soon after, a woman in her 30s came into the room. The woman sang in the church choir and was putting away her choir clothes. Gina asked the person who helped her to translate a question to the woman: "Have you been coming to this church for long?"

No, the woman had been coming only a few months.

Gina asked how the woman learned about Seventh-day Adventists.

The woman said that she walked to the market with her two young children on a Saturday. Two men walked up to her. One of the men said, "The 7th day is the Sabbath." Then the other man told her, "You can learn more about the Sabbath on the Internet." Then the men kept walking.

The woman went home and searched online. She found sermons from an Adventist pastor that were translated into her language. She watched many of the programs and felt blessed.

Then she found the house church. She came to church, ready to be baptized. She was baptized shortly before Gina came. Gina was so excited. "I was amazed when I heard this woman's story. I was so happy that God answered my prayer in this beautiful way."

Gina Wahlen served as Mission quarterly editor at Adventist Mission for three years. Now she works as editor and special planning manager for the Office of the General Conference President. This story shows us Church Growth Task #2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" plan. Church Growth Task #2 is: "We will help the Adventist church grow strong in new ways in large cities. We will share Jesus with people who do not know Him." Read more: IWillGo2020.org.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



One of the men said, "The 7th day is the Sabbath."

