

Witness and Service: The Fruit of Revival¹



SABBATH—JULY 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 28:19, 20; John 20:21; Acts 2; Acts 22:1–14; John 6:1–11; Acts 8:26–38.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem. You will be my witnesses in all Judea and Samaria. And you will be my witnesses from one end of the earth to the other’ ” (Acts 1:8, NlrV).

THE PURPOSE OF REVIVAL IS TO FILL OUR HEARTS WITH SO MUCH LOVE FOR JESUS THAT WE WANT TO SHARE THIS LOVE WITH EVERY PERSON WE CAN. In true revival, our own hearts are awakened to God's goodness, mercy, forgiveness, and power. We are so touched by God's love, and we are so changed by His grace² that we cannot be silent.

If we think that a “revival” focuses on (points our attention to) one's “spiritual experience alone,” we are wrong. If revival causes us to be critical of others' faults, then that revival did not come from heaven. If we think that the purpose of revival is only to change people's actions rather than to change their hearts, then we are wrong.

Changed hearts lead to changed actions. True revival never leads to selfishness or self-glory (pride). Instead, it always leads to unselfishness toward others. When our hearts are renewed by God's grace, we want to bless and serve those who are in need. True revival leads Christians to do more in mission and service.

1. revival—renewed interest in God and the desire to improve one's spiritual life.

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

SUNDAY—JULY 21**CHRIST'S LAST COMMAND AND PROMISE (Matthew 28:19, 20)**

Christ did not start His church just to leave it to take care of itself. Jesus' last words were about the church's mission. Christ's plan is for His church to spread. He started the church to share the light of His love and the message of His salvation with the world.

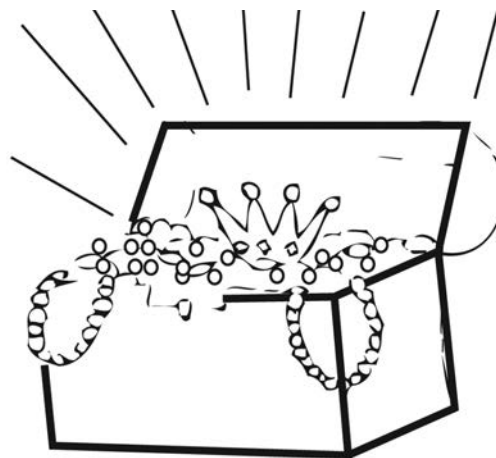
Read Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45–49; and John 20:21. How does each verse show Jesus' heart desire for His church?

After Christ went to heaven, His church was to be a good example of His love and grace to the world. The disciples had a mission. They had a message to share. They had a job to do. They were to carry on the work that Jesus began.

"The church is God's chosen tool for the salvation of men. It was started for service. And its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning, God's plan has been for His church to reflect His love and power to the world. God has called the members of the church out of darkness into His wonderful light. And He wants them to show His glory. The church is the bank of the riches of the grace of Christ. And the church is to show all heaven and earth the full love of God (Ephesians 3:10)." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [Teachers and Leaders]*, page 9.

Jesus' greatest desire is that all humans have salvation. The apostle Paul writes to his young friend Timothy that it is the Savior's desire that "all . . . be saved and . . . come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4, NKJV). The apostle Peter also says that the Lord is "patient with you. He doesn't [does not] want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, he wants all people to turn away from their sins" (2 Peter 3:9, NIV).

What in your life shows that you are interested in outreach to others? Or does anything show it? What does your answer tell you about yourself and how important outreach is to you?



The church holds in it the riches of the grace of Christ.

MONDAY—JULY 22**RECEIVING THE PROMISE (Acts 2)**

The mission of sharing God's love and truth with the entire world must have seemed impossible to this small

group of disciples (as it can to us). The challenge of the work must have seemed too great. After all, the best guess is that the number of people in the Roman Empire in the first century was about 60 to 70 million. The first chapter of Acts tells us that 120 believers met in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost.³ This means that there was about one Christian to every 500,000 to 580,000 people in the empire! It is no wonder that Jesus' command to preach the gospel to the world seemed impossible.

Read Acts 2. What were the results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the mission of the early church?

The results were amazing (wonderful). The Christian church exploded in growth. Tens of thousands were converted.⁴ The message of Jesus' love was carried to the farthest ends of the empire.

Pliny the Younger was governor of the Roman province of Bithynia on the northern coast of modern Turkey. He wrote to Emperor Trajan around A.D. 110. Pliny described how he was working hard to find and execute (put to death) Christians. "Many of every time period, of every social class, even of both sexes, are being called to trial and will be called. Not cities alone but villages in even farming areas have been invaded and infected by this false belief [Christianity]."

This quote is very interesting. It shows

that in a few generations Christianity had invaded nearly every level of society even in the farthest places.

The author we know as Tertullian was a Roman lawyer who had turned Christian. Around A.D. 200, Tertullian wrote a boastful letter to the Roman governors defending Christianity. He boasted that "nearly all the citizens of all the cities are Christians."

The story of the book of Acts is the story of a revived (renewed) church that was faithful in its duty of witnessing for its Lord. But spiritual revival always leads to strong and emotional witness. Sharing is the natural result of a changed life. After all, Jesus said to His disciples, " 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men' " (Matthew 4:19, NKJV). The closer we follow Jesus, the more we care about what He cares about. If we do not have much interest in sharing His love with others, it may be because we are not close enough to Him, and we need a personal spiritual revival.



Jesus said, " 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' "

3. Pentecost—the time when Jesus' followers received the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit after Jesus rose from the dead and went back to heaven (Acts 2:1–4).

4. converted—changed from nonbelievers to believers.

TUESDAY—JULY 23**THE POWER OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY (WITNESS)
(Acts 22:1–14)**

Cold religious services do not have much power to change lives. They leave people spiritually empty. In the same way, doctrine (Bible teaching) alone will not change hearts. So, the power of New Testament witnessing depended on how lives were truly changed by the gospel. The disciples were not playacting. An experience with the living Christ had changed them. And they could not be silent anymore.

According to Acts 22:1–14; Philippians 3:1–7; and 1 John 1:1–4, what similar experiences of Paul and John made them such powerful witnesses?

At Pentecost the disciples were changed people. Something happened to them so that the Spirit could do something through them. The Holy Spirit had done something for them so that He could do something with them. The Spirit overflowed from their lives to inspire (change) the lives of others.

Jesus put it this way: “ ‘Does anyone believe in me? Then, just as Scripture [the Bible] says, streams of living water will flow from inside him’ ” (John 7:38, NIV). The root word for “believe” in the Greek language is *pistis*. It means much more than just belief in Christ or acceptance of

Christ. It is a rock-solid belief. It is complete trust. It is a powerful, life-changing faith in Christ. So, when we think about the above verse, we must remember that Christ is the One who poured out His life on the cross for the sins of all humans. Jesus’ point is that when His love satisfies our spiritual desire, this love flows from our hearts to the people around us.

“Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen way of showing Christ to the world. We are to make known His grace just as it was made known through the holy men of old. But even better is the testimony [witness] of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we show in ourselves the working power of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 347.

The most powerful witness comes from a Christian who knows Jesus personally. There is no substitute for the testimony that comes naturally from a heart filled with Jesus’ love.

What kind of personal testimony do you have that tells people about what the Lord has done for you? How can you learn to share it better with others?

WEDNESDAY—JULY 24**A WITNESSING FAITH IS A GROWING FAITH (John 6:1–11)**

Keeping active is a law of life. In order to be healthy, our bodies need regular exercise. Every organ, muscle, and tissue becomes stronger and

more healthy through exercise. When we fail to exercise regularly, our bodies become weaker, and we become more likely to get disease.

The same sort of thing happens to us spiritually when we do not exercise (use) our faith through witnessing. The words of Jesus, “ ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’ ” (Acts 20:35, NKJV) work the same way in our own spiritual lives. When we share God’s Word (the Bible) with others, we grow spiritually. The more we love Jesus, the more we will desire to witness about His love. The more we witness about His love, the more we will love Him. Sharing our faith makes our faith stronger.

Read John 6:1–11. What does Jesus’ miracle of the loaves and fish teach us about the sharing of our faith?



“ ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

The more that we give away our faith, the more our faith grows. This law of growth in numbers is God’s principle (important rule) of spiritual life. If you give, you grow. If you withhold, you become weaker. Jesus increases our faith as we share it with others, even if our faith is small. As we share the Bread of Life (Jesus) with people hungry for Jesus, it grows in our hands. And we end up with more than we started.

When Jesus began, He had five loaves and two fish. After five thousand people were satisfied with their meal that day, Jesus had more left over than when He started. There were still 12 baskets remaining.

Jesus’ teachings to His New Testament church are too clear to be misunderstood. He said, “ ‘Freely you have received, freely give’ ” (Matthew 10:8, NKJV). And when we do, we must remember that witnessing is the gentle breeze that spreads the sparks of revival into Pentecostal⁵ flames. When witness and service do not happen with a revival of prayer and Bible study, the flames of revival go out. And the glowing coals soon grow cold.

It is true, is it not? The more that we witness, the more our faith grows. What has been your own experience with this very important spiritual truth?

5. Pentecostal—the time period when 120 disciples experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2.



As we share the Bread of Life (Jesus) with others who are hungry for Him, it grows in our hands.

THURSDAY—JULY 25

REVIVAL, WITNESSING, AND GOD'S LEADING (Acts 8:26–38)

Acts tells the thrilling story of the fast growth of New Testament Christianity. It is the story of an inspired (God-filled) church witnessing of Jesus' love. It is the story of a church that regularly experienced God's leading. Witnessing was a way of life for these early believers.

“Day after day, they kept teaching in the temple courtyards and from house to house. They never stopped telling the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42, NIrV). Attacks against the church made the gospel spread even more. When attacks scattered the members of the church at Jerusalem, they “preached the word everywhere they went” (Acts 8:4, NIrV).

One of the more wonderful examples of God's leading in Acts is the story of Philip and an Ethiopian government official.

Read the story of Philip instructing the Ethiopian and his response in Acts 8:26–38. What can we take from this story about revival and witnessing?

“An angel led Philip to the one who was looking for light. And the seeker⁶ was ready to receive the gospel. Today angels will lead the footsteps of those workers who will let the Holy Spirit make their tongues and hearts pure and noble. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian. But this is not God's way of working. It is God's plan that men are to work for their fellow men.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 109.

There are three important parts of revival. They are (1) prayer, (2) the study of God's Word, and (3) witnessing. Suppose God's people look for Him seriously. Suppose they fill their minds with the truths of His Word. And suppose they eagerly witness of His love and truth to others. Then God surely acts and opens unusual doors for the truth to reach people.

Be honest with yourself: what do you do when witnessing opportunities come? Do you witness? Or do you find some excuse not to? What does your answer tell you about your own need of revival and reformation?

6. seeker—a person who looks for truth.

FRIDAY—JULY 26

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “In His wisdom the Lord brings those who are seeking for truth to meet with others who know the truth. It is the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall share it with those in darkness. Human witnesses receive their help from the wisdom of God. God uses them as tools in spreading the gospel with power to influence and change the minds and hearts of new believers.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 134.

“God could have reached His goal of saving sinners without our help. But if we are to develop a character [holiness] like Christ’s, we must share in His work. Then we can enter into His joy. It is the joy of seeing souls saved by His sacrifice. So we must take part in God’s work in saving humans.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 142.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ What is the main idea of this week’s lesson? Are there changes that God is calling you to make in your life? What actions might God be

calling you to take?

❷ Think more about this wonderful spiritual truth: the more we witness for our faith the more our faith grows. Why do you think this is true? Why does this principle (important truth) make so much sense?

❸ How often do you witness for your Jesus? If not a lot, ask yourself, Why not? Are you afraid that people will not accept you? If so, think about Jesus and how often people refuse to accept Him. If Jesus was not afraid to be rejected, then you should not be. Or do you fail to witness because you are not sure of what to say? If so, what does that tell you about your need for a deeper Bible study and walk with the Lord?

❹ During the week we talked a bit about how religious service alone cannot bring about a change of the heart. That is so true. At the same time, how important are religious services and tradition⁷ in our faith and church? In what ways, if any, can tradition be important in revival and reformation?⁸

❺ Why do we get so much satisfaction from being used by God to reach souls for Him?

7. tradition—human-made customs (or rules).

8. reformation—a change for the better in belief, practices, lifestyle, habits, and actions.