

Motivation *and* Preparation for Mission



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Luke 24:1–12; Luke 24:36–49; Acts 1:12–26; Heb. 10:24, 25; Acts 2:1–41; 1 Cor. 11:1.*

Memory Text: “These are the words which I spake to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me’ ” (*Luke 24:44, NKJV*).

Wrote Paul to the Philippians: “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice” (*Phil. 1:15–18, NKJV*).

Powerful words! Whether in “pretense or in truth,” Christ is preached—and that is what mattered to Paul. Ideally, though, our motives for preaching Christ, for mission, for reaching others with the good news, should be out of love, and out of truth—and not from selfish ambition, envy, or strife.

What, then, are some of the motivations for preaching Christ, and what are some of the ways that we can prepare for doing this?

This week we will look at some events in the early church that can give us guidance on these crucial parts of mission.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 11.

To Share the Good News

Read Luke 24:1–12. What was the response of those who heard about the risen Christ?

Early Sunday morning, after Jesus' death, Luke says that a number of women went to the tomb. They had spices with them; so, it is likely they were going to tend to Jesus' body now that the Sabbath was over. Expecting to find a still-sealed tomb, they were shocked to find the tomb empty. Unsure what to do, they were afraid when two men in shining clothing appeared. However, the men had a message for them. Reminding them of Jesus' words, they told the women that Jesus had indeed risen, as He had said He would. Overjoyed with the news, they quickly returned to where the disciples and many of Jesus' other followers were staying and told what they had seen and heard, because their excitement could not be contained. That is, they were sharing with others what they had learned of Christ.

Can you imagine how the women must have felt? They had just had an amazing experience, one that certainly filled them with awe, but the disciples called their experience "idle tales" and would not believe them. Thus, not sure whether to believe the women or not, Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself.

For Peter—and for many of us—there is a hesitancy to accept something simply because someone else said it. Though Peter listened to the women, he could not share in their experience until later. At first, all he experienced was an empty tomb, and that, Luke says, simply left him "marveling to himself" (*Luke 24:12*). His experience at the tomb was not the same as that of the women.

Regardless of Peter's response, as soon as these women heard the news about Jesus, they wanted to share it with others. What greater motivation for mission could there be than to let others know about what Jesus has done for them? What greater motive than to spread the good news of salvation in Jesus, the only hope any of us have?

Of course, we need a personal experience with God ourselves before we can share it with others. Our desire to share with others what we love so much must be a crucial part of our motivation for mission. In the end, we can't share what we ourselves don't have, can we?

What are some of the experiences you have had with the reality of God and His love? Why are these times so precious to you, and how do they motivate you to reach out to others with the good news?

A Prophetic Foundation

Read Luke 24:36–49. What happened here, and why was this such a pivotal experience for the apostles?

It is interesting that at first the disciples did not believe out of fear. Then, after seeing Jesus and being assured that He was indeed alive, they did not believe *for joy* (Luke 24:41). Have you ever felt that something was too good to be true? This was the experience of the disciples and the others in the upper room.

If Jesus had left them only with this experience, however, then when He departed, their faith might not have lasted. Over time the power of the experience could have faded; they would forget, or start, perhaps, even to question it. So, Jesus didn't stop with showing them His scars and eating fish in front of them. Instead, He then took them into the Word and showed them the prophetic foundation for His work and ministry. That is, no matter how great the experience that they had with Him, Jesus still wanted their faith grounded in the Word of God.

“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44, NKJV).

Here, too, we find a powerful motivation for witness, for mission: the Word of God. Jesus knew that to solidify the disciples' experience, they needed to understand why He had to die and what His resurrection signified. They needed their worldview to be shifted from a political and earthly kingdom to the great solution to sin and the victory of Christ over death. The gospel was so much more than achieving political sovereignty for Israel. It revealed Christ's victory over Satan and guaranteed that one day all wickedness in the world would be destroyed, that the earth would be created anew, and that God would be among His people. He “opened their understanding” (Luke 24:45, NKJV) so they could comprehend these truths, which they were to share with the world.

Our experiences with Jesus cannot be sustained without the foundation of His Word, including the prophecies that point to the history and events leading up to, and including, the first and second advents of Christ. With these truths firmly understood, we can be ready and motivated for mission.

How well grounded are you in the prophecies that point to Christ, both His first and second comings? Especially in the last days, why must we be grounded in the Word of God, including the prophecies, and why is understanding them so crucial, especially for mission?

Waiting and Mission

Luke 24 ends with Jesus' ascension into heaven (*Luke 24:50–53*). But that is not the end of the story. The author, Luke, continues, writing the book of Acts. Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave the disciples a mission, a promise, and immediate instructions to wait in Jerusalem for “power from on high” (*Luke 24:49; see also Acts 1:4–8*).

Jesus instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until He fulfilled His promise to send the Promise of the Father (the Holy Spirit), who would empower them to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

Read Acts 1:12–26. What were the disciples, now numbering around 120 men and women, doing while they were waiting?

Jesus had given the disciples a clear mission: they were to be witnesses for Him to the world. So, while they waited, they prepared for their mission in two ways. First, Luke says they continued in united prayer and supplication. There was no question in any of their minds about what the mission was that Jesus had given them, and they had each accepted that mission. This inspired them to unite in prayer. Luke does not share what they were praying about, but it is most certain they were praying for wisdom, strength, and courage to fulfill the mission together. What an example for us.

The second thing they did while they waited was to prepare logistically for their mission. Judas had handed Jesus over for execution and then taken his own life. This had left a vacancy among the twelve. So, as they waited, the disciples sought God's guidance and selected a replacement. In effect, the disciples were organizing themselves and planning the start of their mission. In the making of these decisions, Peter played a leadership role. No one challenged his move; they all saw God's wisdom in it. There was an understanding and a trust that God was acting and working and moving in their midst. Their time of waiting was not idle but was filled with purpose and mission-driven action.

While we wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to help us complete the great mission of God, we must unite to encourage each other (*Heb. 10:24, 25*), praying for God's Holy Spirit. Also, we should be aligning ourselves and our church with God's priority—the saving of the lost.

How can you learn to wait upon the Lord and not lose faith in the meantime? Meanwhile, while waiting, how can you best use your time, as the disciples did here?

“Whom You Crucified”

Acts 2 records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. As the followers of Jesus were praying, tongues of fire rested upon their heads. They recognized that the promised power of the Holy Spirit had been given.

Read Acts 2:1–41. What happened to the disciples as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

The disciples began to speak in other languages “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (*Acts 2:4*). What’s crucial here is that God empowered each person for the benefit of unbelievers. The blessing wasn’t meant merely for their own good. It wasn’t a blessing to make them fit for heaven or a blessing to make it easier to do business in a foreign language. The blessing was given for fulfilling God’s mission to the lost. Today God calls on each of His followers to use their personal gifts for the good of His mission to unbelievers. We have been given gifts: what greater call to mission than to use what we have been given to reach others?

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulted in many of the people repenting of their rejection of the Messiah, for surely some of them were in Jerusalem when He died. Think of the power here: Peter accused some of them of having crucified the Christ. Obviously, they realized what they had done and, being convicted, cried out: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (*Acts 2:37*).

And yet, even they could receive forgiveness. Said Peter to them: “ ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Acts 2:38, NKJV*).

Working together, in harmony with the Holy Spirit and each other, these followers of Jesus preached repentance and the forgiveness of sins—even for those who could have been directly involved in crucifying Jesus! That’s the power of the gospel. If that message doesn’t motivate us to mission, what will? We are called to spread the gospel to the world, a sinful, fallen, corrupt world with sinful, fallen, and corrupt people. Our job is not to judge; our job is to witness to the saving power of Jesus.

Why should the idea that even some of those who were complicit in Christ’s death were offered salvation (1) encourage us for our own souls and (2) encourage us to witness to others, no matter how bad they may seem to be?

A Picture of the Early Church

Read Acts 2:41–47. What kind of picture of the early church is present here?

Acts 2 ends with a beautiful picture of what the early church was like. Acts 2:41 says that those who were baptized were “added to them” (*NKJV*). We could read this to say that someone did the math and added the number of new believers to the number of existing believers and established a new total membership for the group. But that is a shallow understanding. Hidden in the wording is the idea that these newly baptized believers became part of the group as equals.

Meanwhile, a core function of the early Christian church was discipleship. As new members were added, they were discipled in three ways. First, they continued to be taught by the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship. The words “doctrine” and “fellowship” in this text literally mean “instruction” and “partnership.” The apostles’ preaching confronted incorrect beliefs and offered new explanations for what people were seeing and experiencing. But it didn’t teach them how to live out that new truth in their lives. Rather, the application of truth to one’s life happened in relationship as part of the group. New believers were carefully and intentionally discipled through direct teaching, as well as through participation in the daily lives of the other believers, all under the supervision and leadership of the spiritually mature and grounded apostles.

It is poor preaching that tells people what to do but not how to do it. However, even if one reads how-to books or listens to sermons that explain how to do things, there is no substitute for seeing people doing it and then imitating them. Paul knew this and instructed his followers to imitate him as he had imitated Jesus (*1 Cor. 11:1*). When others can see you and the reality of your experience with Christ, it will impact them, as well.

Challenge: Think of someone in your life who you wish was a believer. Pray every day for him or her to have a personal experience with Jesus.

Challenge Up: Whom are you discipling and leading into a relationship with Jesus? Look for ways to bring him or her into fellowship with other believers.

Further Thought: Our mission work must come from deep love and thankfulness for what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives. Any other motivation is misguided. Keeping immersed in the Word and in tune with the Word is the key to successful outreach and evangelism.

“Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 129, 130.

“There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Savior, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell [others of His self-sacrificing death in their behalf]. . . . As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. . . . Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 67, 68.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How do you understand Paul’s words in *Philippians* about Christ’s being preached out of envy, strife, or selfish ambition? How can we make sure that we ourselves are not guilty of doing just that?
- 2 What has been your own personal experience with the reality of God and God’s love? That is, based on your own experiences, could you preach to others with sincerity and honesty about the goodness and love of God? What would your testimony be?
- 3 What has been your experience in waiting upon the Lord, and what has it taught you about trusting in Him and about faith in general?

“Blessing Is Greater to Us”

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

A woman in the US state of North Carolina invited her two church pastors to her house to talk about something weighing heavily on her heart: the Annual Sacrifice Offering. She described how the Seventh-day Adventist Church had established the offering in a last-ditch effort to avoid calling missionaries home because of a lack of funds in 1922. She spoke about how people gave then and how the offering still supports missionaries today.

The pastors took her appeal to heart. One even preached a nine-part series on sacrifice ahead of the annual offering, which is collected in most parts of the world on the second Sabbath of November. As a result, the Annual Sacrifice Offering at the 700-member Hendersonville Seventh-day Adventist Church soared from \$1,400 the previous year to \$24,119 that year in 2016. The growth was only the beginning. During the COVID-19 pandemic when the world church again faced a budget crunch, members gave an astonishing \$37,545 to the 2021 Annual Sacrifice Offering.

“We were happily surprised,” said pastor David Wright (pictured). “Praise the Lord!”

He credited God’s grace for members’ sacrificial giving. “It is true this will bring much-needed light into dark areas of the 10/40 Window,” he said. “But consider the blessing that is ours as a church family. I have to believe the blessing is greater to us because Jesus Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Adventist Mission director Gary Krause agreed, noting that Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White called such a blessing the “reflex influence.” She said church members’ generosity toward foreign fields promoted success in their home field. For example, when some church leaders questioned the wisdom of sending funds abroad in 1900, White declared, “The prosperity of the home work depends largely . . . upon the reflex influence of the . . . work done in countries afar off” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 27). The Adventist Church’s top statistician, David Trim, has statistically verified White’s assertion.

A sacrificial spirit has permeated the church since its origins, world church leader Ted N. C. Wilson said. “We are told that God’s Advent movement was started in sacrifice and it will end in sacrifice,” he said. “What a privilege for each of us to sacrificially share what God has given to us.”



*Thank you for considering a generous donation to the 2023 Annual Sacrifice Offering. For online information, visit bit.ly/annual-sacrifice-offering. See also *Global Mission* (gm.adventistmission.org); the 1922 Annual Sacrifice Offering (bit.ly/1922-offering); and Ellen White’s “reflex influence” (bit.ly/EGW-reflex).*

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MORE MISSION!



A major challenge in the *Adult Bible Study Guide* for the week of December 23-29, 2023, is to invite someone to church.

That week's mission story in the youth and adult *Mission* quarterly features Susana, a 22-year-old student in Ghana who only gave her heart to Jesus after being invited to church.

Want to get more out of this quarter's *Adult Bible Study Guide* on "God's Mission – My

Mission"? Read it together with the *Mission* quarterly.

The Bible lessons were written by the directors of the Global Mission study centers (globalmissioncenters.org), which are part of Adventist Mission, the same General Conference entity that produces the *Mission* quarterly.

Download the *Mission* quarterly at: bit.ly/adultmission.



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