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Helping God Save People

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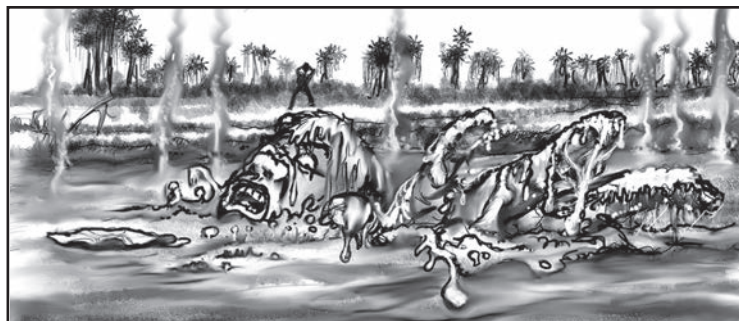
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Introduction



Quit Talking and Do Something!

Years ago, one of our Adventist magazines printed a picture story about a stinky swamp. A walking path went through the middle of the swamp. People who walked on the path complained about the terrible smell. Sometimes the smell was so awful that people on the path fainted and fell in. Villagers who lived near the swamp heard the cries of the people as they fell in and died.

So, the villagers held a meeting to solve the swamp problem. The villagers had many meetings. Experts shared their ideas about the cause of the problem. A few people suggested possible ways to solve the problem. But no one did anything to fix the problem. The people continued to meet and talk. For many years, the talks continued. People wrote important papers about the topic. Guest speakers came to the village and talked about the swamp. The villagers held yard sales to make money to pay for meals for the people who spent so much time sitting in the meetings talking about the swamp. After a while, the villagers collected enough money to build a special room so that the people in the meetings wouldn't be bothered by the cries of the lost and dying when they fell in the swamp. But no one did anything to help the people in trouble. No one did anything to stop more people from getting lost in the swamp. The people only talked.

For sure, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and your Sabbath School class don't want to behave the same as the people in that village. We love our time together to pray, think, share, and talk. At the same time, we want to do more. We want to help the people around us. We want to make our communities better. We want to make life on this earth better for people, too. We want to finish God's work so that Jesus can come back.

This quarter's Bible study guide helps us to get out and do something for the people around us. In our study, we will read about the exciting experiences of people who work for God. We will learn about ideas that can help us to share Bible truth with our neighbors. We will learn how to share Jesus with non-Christian people who may not know anything about Him at all. These ideas will help us do our work for God. Each week, in Thursday's study, we will share with you two tasks. These tasks will help you to get out

in your neighborhood or community and start doing something to win people to Jesus.

We will share Bible truth and give you learning tools and ideas to help you. We also will encourage you to pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you and help you use what you learn. Spend a few minutes each week talking with your class members. Talk about how things went. What worked? What didn't? What did you learn? Remember, this time is not about bragging about all the wonderful work you did. Make this time about sharing. As you share your ideas and experiences with each other, your Sabbath school group will come up with new ideas. Prayer lists will grow (both your personal list and the group's list).

Finally, we hope that you will remember this quarter's study as a time when the Holy Spirit blessed your efforts and worked miracles for the honor of Jesus and His Name.

The General Conference first started Global Mission Centers in 1980 to help share the Good News about Jesus with people everywhere. The Global Mission Centers are under the control of the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission. At this time, there are six centers. Their job is to help the church start new groups of Christians among non-Christian people groups on the earth.

The managers for the six worldwide mission centers wrote this guide. These managers are Petras Bahadur, Richard Elofer, Kleber Gonçalves, Clifmond Shameerudeen, Doug Venn, and Gregg Whitsett. Gary Krause, Homer Trecartin, and Jeff Scoggins also helped write the guide. (Gary is the manager for Adventist Mission. Homer is the retired manager for Global Mission Centers, and Jeff is the planning manager for Global Mission.)

***Let's finish
God's work so
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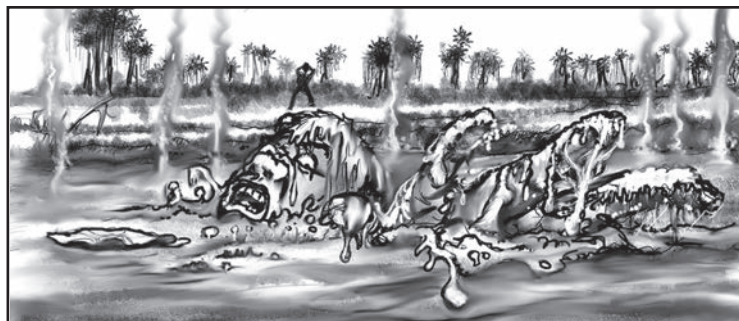
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God, Our Savior



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 3:9–15; Genesis 17:7; Matthew 1:18–23; John 3:16; John 14:1–3.

MEMORY VERSE: “The Lord God called to the man and said, ‘Where are you?’ ” (Genesis 3:9, NIV).

The Bible tells us that God wants to communicate with His children and to be close to them in His heart.

WHEN DID GOD first give His people work to do for Him? Was the first time when God commanded Abram to leave his country (Genesis 12:1–4)? Or was it when Moses led God's people out of Egypt? Or was it when Jesus came to this earth (Matthew 1:18–25)? Or when Paul traveled to preach the Good News about Jesus (Acts 13:4–14:26)? You may be surprised to learn that our work as a church started before any of these things happened. Our work for God started when He made the skies and earth and then made humans (Genesis 1:26, 27). God also is the reason for our work as a church.

The Bible tells us that God wants to communicate with His children and to be close to them in His heart. From the beginning, God started a special friendship with Adam and Eve. After they sinned, God continued His work for the human family. But now, God's plan included saving people from sin and death. In the end, God's saving plan will be a success (Revelation 21, 22). God's future success helps us, as a church, to feel excited about sharing the Good News with everyone on earth (Revelation 14:6, 7).

So, we must be friends **with** God before we work **for** Him. We also must understand the work God wants to do in our lives. But first, we must try to answer the question, Who is this God who wants to save us and be our Friend?

**THE GOD WHO COMES LOOKING FOR US
(Genesis 3:9–15)**

God made humans. He gave us this earth as our home. In the beginning, everything was perfect and beautiful. What was God's plan for us back then? God wanted us to live in perfect peace with Him and with each other. God gave us a very precious gift: His love. But our love for Him needed to be real. So, God also gave us another precious gift: free choice. God made us free to choose good or evil. Of course, God told Adam and Eve about the danger of disobeying Him (Genesis 2:16, 17). Satan tricked Eve into thinking that nothing bad would happen when she ate the forbidden fruit. Satan lied to Eve and told her the fruit would make her as wise and smart as God: "You will learn about good and evil. Then you will be like [the same as] God!" (Genesis 3:5, ICB). Sad to say, Eve chose to eat the forbidden fruit. Worse, she gave the fruit to Adam. Adam made the same poor choice as Eve. Sin ruined God's perfect earth.

Adam and Eve's sin changed God's plan for this planet. Before God made the earth, He made a plan to save humans if they chose to sin. Now, God put His plan into action.

Read Genesis 3:9–15. What were God's first words to Adam after he and Eve sinned? Why are God's words so powerful today? What do they teach us about God?

Of course, God knew where Adam and Eve hid. God asked them where they were for a special reason. Adam and Eve needed to understand why their sin was so bad. God also wanted to end Satan's control over humans. So, God shared with Adam and Eve His plan to save the human family (read Genesis 3:14, 15). What was His plan? God promised to send "Christ [Jesus] to make peace with us and to bring us back to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19, WE).

Do you see that God went looking for Adam and Eve before He judged them and gave them His saving promise? God's question to Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9, ERV), shows us two important ideas. (1) We are sinners, who are lost. (2) We need Someone to save us. God is the One who goes looking for lost sinners. He searches for us because He wants to save us and to be our Friend.

God continues to ask us today, "Where are you?" What does this question mean to you? How have you answered God?



Satan tricked Eve into thinking that nothing bad would happen when she ate the forbidden fruit.

THE GOD WHO WANTS TO BE WITH US (Genesis 17:7)

Read Genesis 17:7; Genesis 26:3; and Genesis 28:15. In these verses, what did God promise Abraham and his future children?



With God's help, Moses leads the Hebrew people out of Egypt to freedom.

In the Old Testament stories, we see God and His saving plan at work: God continues to try to save humans. After the Flood, the people from the city of Babel decide to live in one place. There, they will build a city and a tower up to heaven. God stops their plan. He causes the builders not to understand each other. The builders stop their work and move far away from the tower (Genesis 11:1–9). Later, God chooses Abram (who later became Abraham) to serve Him. God plans to bless everyone on earth because of Abram and his future children (Genesis 12:1–3). God promises Abraham and his future children many things. God promises them: “I will be your God” (Genesis 17:7, 8), and “I will be with you” (Genesis 26:3, ERV; Genesis 28:15).

As history goes on, Joseph ends up in Egypt. God uses Joseph to save His people. The Bible tells us that the Lord was with Joseph during the hard times in his life (Genesis 39:2, 21, 23). Hundreds of years later, God sends Moses to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. God promises Moses, “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:12). Moses trusts in this promise. With God's help, Moses leads the Hebrew people out of Egypt to freedom. Again and again, God shows His people that He wants to be with them.

Read Exodus 29:43, 45. What was one of the reasons that God told Moses to build Him a holy tent in the desert? God wanted to be with His children. God told Moses that He very much wanted to live with the children of Israel. The plan for building the holy tent showed the Israelites the most important part of God's plan to save them: Jesus Christ. “The offerings and the work of the priests or spiritual leaders showed the people the death of Jesus and His work to save them. The work the priests did had no meaning without Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 17, 1872, adapted.

What are ways that God has been part of your life?

THE GOD WHO BECAME ONE WITH US (Matthew 1:18–23)

The Old Testament shows us God’s plan to save sinners. God chose the Israelites to be His people and to teach other people about His plan and His love. Everything God did was part of His plan to save sinners. God told His special messenger Isaiah, “ ‘Remember what happened long ago. Remember, I am God and there is no other God. There is no other like [the same as] me. . . . When I plan something, it happens. I do whatever I want to do’ ” (Isaiah 46:9, 10, ERV). In the New Testament, the plan that was only a promise in Eden (Genesis 3:15) now becomes a Person: Jesus.

In Matthew 1:18–23, the angel of the Lord announces to Joseph in a dream that Mary will have a special Baby. What important things does this story tell us about God?

Immanuel means “God with us.” In the desert, God lived among His people in the Holy Tent. Now God lived with them in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus’ coming to earth showed us that God continued to want to be with us. Jesus, God’s Son, was fully human and fully God. Jesus said, “ ‘I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one can go to the Father except by [because of] Me’ ” (John 14:6, NLV).

Jesus was God. He became a Man and lived among us. What does His being born in a human body teach us about God’s work to save us? Read John 1:14–18 for the answer.

God was in Jesus. In Jesus, God lived in a human body among His children. Jesus was “the only Son of the Father. The Word [Jesus] was full of [filled with] grace [mercy] and truth” (John 1:14, ERV). Jesus kept all the promises that God made in the Old Testament. God promised that Jesus would become one with us. So, that’s what Jesus did. Jesus became one with us. Jesus was God in human flesh. God in Jesus continued to do His work to save us.

Think about God’s love for us. God loves us so much that He was born as a Human Baby. He came as one of us to live with us. How should this love make us feel? How does this love help us understand the work that God gives us to do to help Him save other people?



Jesus’ coming to earth showed us that God continued to want to be with us.

THE GOD WHO CONTINUES TO BE WITH US (John 3:16)

Jesus made peace for us with God when He died for us on the cross.

Jesus' life and work were the best examples of God's saving plan. Jesus' work on earth lasted for 3½ years. During this short time, God showed us more about who He was and His saving plan than He had shown us at any other time in the past. Jesus was the perfect Example of the God that no human could see. All God's mercy and strength lived in Jesus. Jesus made peace for us with God when He died for us on the cross (Colossians 1:15, 19, 20). In Jesus, God showed humans how much He loved them and wanted to save them. Jesus Himself told us about His saving work: " 'The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them' " (Luke 19:10, ERV).

Carefully read John 3:16 and think about Jesus' words. What is the connection in these verses between God's love and His saving plan?

Things happened during the final week of Jesus' life that connected God's promises from the past with our hope for the future. Jesus celebrated the Passover. This holy day helped the Jews remember the time when God led His people out of Egypt. During the Passover, Jesus gave up His life to make us free from sin. Paul wrote, "Christ didn't have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right [accepted] with God because of what Christ has done for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV).

Read the command in Matthew 28:18–20 that Jesus gave to His followers. What promise does Jesus also give them? How does this promise give us hope while we do God's work?

Jesus' death was only part of His plan to bring us back to God, and not the end of His work. Jesus won the war with sin and death. Then God gave Jesus "all power [control] in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18, ERV). Because Jesus controls everything, He commanded His followers to make new followers for Him everywhere on earth. Then Jesus added this powerful promise: " 'You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of time' " (Matthew 28:20, ERV).

Jesus promised to be "with you always." How has Jesus kept His promise to you as you do God's work?

THE GOD WHO WILL COME BACK FOR US (John 14:1–3)

Read John 14:1–3. What is the connection between these verses and the Bible’s end-time message?

During Jesus’ work on earth, He made us a very precious promise. Jesus promised to be with us forever. This promise is named the Blessed Hope. The Blessed Hope shows us how much God loves us and wants to live with us. Jesus said, “ ‘After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back. Then I will take you with me, so that you can be where I am’ ” (John 14:3, ERV).

In Revelation, John tells us that Jesus will keep this promise. “I heard a loud voice from the throne. The voice said, ‘Now God’s home is with men. He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God’ ” (Revelation 21:3, ICB).

“God will finish His work to save humans. God’s mercy is more powerful than sin. Satan says the earth is his. God will take this earth away from Satan. . . . God will make the earth new. Then God will honor this earth in a special way. God will make His home on the earth with the people that He saved. . . . The saved people will live with God forever. God’s light will shine on them. God’s people will praise Him for His wonderful gift: Immanuel, which means ‘God with us.’ [Immanuel is another name for Jesus.]”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 26, adapted.

This quote from Ellen G. White is a beautiful picture of the future life of the saved. God finally will get His wish to be with His children forever. We can be a part of this exciting experience!

This Week’s Tasks: This quarter, we will invite you to do some special tasks. These tasks will give you the chance to better understand God and His work in your life. Also, the tasks will help you to be more involved in God’s work. Take the time to think about each task. Be ready to share what you learned with your class each week.

Task #1: Pray this week for God to open your heart to Him. Ask Him to help you become part of His work.

Task #2: Is there someone you see every day at work or in your neighborhood whose name you don’t know? Learn this person’s name. Begin to pray for this person each day.



Pray this week for God to open your heart to Him.



**Jesus told His followers,
Go to every country and
group of people on earth.
Go to every faraway
country.**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: God did not make His plan to save sinners after Adam sinned. God’s plan “is the secret truth that was hidden for long ages past, but is now made known” (Romans 16:25, [ICB]). God’s plan to save sinners shows the important rules of His government. From the beginning, God and Jesus knew that Satan would sin. God and Jesus knew that Satan would trick humans into sinning, too. God didn’t plan for sin to be a part of life. But God saw that sin would happen. So, God made a plan to solve the sin problem before Adam and Eve sinned. God loved humans so much. Because of His love, God gave His only Son to die for our sins. ‘Everyone who believes in him would not be lost but have eternal [everlasting] life.’ John 3:16 [ERV].”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 22, adapted.

“Jesus didn’t tell His followers that their work would be easy. . . . But Jesus would not leave them to fight alone. Jesus told His followers that He would be with them. If His followers do God’s work with faith, God will protect them. . . . So, God’s followers must obey Him. They must work with Him. Then they will not fail. Jesus told His followers, Go to every country and group of people on earth. Go to every faraway country. I will be with you wherever you go. Work in faith and don’t be afraid. I will never leave you. I will be with you always. I will help you do your work. I will guide you. I will comfort you. I will make you holy. I will support you and give you everything you need. I will give you success when you talk with other people. I will give you the words to say that will help them to think about heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 29, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God’s first words to Adam and Eve after they sinned were, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9, ERV). How does this Bible truth help us to better understand God’s plan for us and for our loved ones?
- ② Jesus became a Man. God the Father lived in Jesus when Jesus came to this earth to save us. How does this miracle make you feel? Jesus’ death on the cross helps us understand God’s plan for us. What does the Cross tell us about God’s love?
- ③ The church’s work belongs to God. So, God will help us do His work. What should you do when you feel afraid or not good enough to do the work?

TWO BOYS, TWO PRAYERS—PART 1

Father was excited when he saw a sign in front of a new school. The sign said Adventist Maranatha School. The school was located in Conakry. Conakry is the capital of Guinea, a country in West Africa. Father decided to visit the school. He wanted his two sons to get a Christian education. Father had no idea this school would change his life.

Father went inside and found a teacher. Father asked the woman, “Is this a Christian school?”

The woman said, “Yes. This is a Seventh-day Adventist school.”

Father told the teacher, “I want my sons to go to a Christian school.”

Soon, the two boys were students at the school. The boys were named Junior and Emile. Junior was 11, and Emile was 8. The boys studied the Bible at their new school and learned Bible verses that Father never heard before. Father was surprised when his boys told him that the teachers worshiped God on Saturdays. The boys asked Father if they could go to Saturday meetings at the church next to the school. Father thought the meetings were afterschool classes, so he agreed.

The boys went to church every Sabbath for two years. Sometimes, schoolteachers visited Father and invited him to come to church. The teachers asked Father, “Will you come to our church on Sabbath?” Father always refused. He said, “No, I’m busy. I must work on Saturday.”

Not long after, the church pastor, Matthew, told his church members, “Today, we will visit the father of Junior and Emile.” A group of 15 church members went with Junior and Emile to their home. Junior and Emile were so happy. The pastor asked Father, “May we pray with you?”

Father agreed. The pastor asked Father if he had any special needs. Father did. He worked for a company that helped make people’s lives better. Months earlier, Father asked the government of Guinea for a gift of money to do special work in the community. Father had not gotten an answer from the government. So, the pastor prayed about the gift of money. Soon after, the government answered the pastor’s prayer. The government agreed to give Father’s company the money. Father went to the school and told the teachers about the answer to prayer. Father thanked God for the gift. But he wasn’t ready to go to church.

Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering three years ago that helped the Adventist Maranatha School in the middle of West Africa. Your 13th Sabbath Offering this quarter will again help church workers in the middle of West Africa share the Good News. Read the rest of Father’s story next week.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The pastor asked Father, “May we pray with you?”



God's Plan to Save Us



SABBATH—OCTOBER 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 20:21, 22; Matthew 28:16–20; Revelation 14:6, 7; Genesis 12:1–3; Revelation 7:9, 10.

MEMORY VERSE: “So go and make followers of all people in the world [on the earth]. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19, ERV).

We also can share with other people our experience with God and His saving love.

GOD works to save us. We see this idea all through the Bible. God's work to save us is the same as a thread that connects the stories of our human history together. Also, God's work to save us helps us to understand another part of His saving plan. God wants to make our lives new (read Colossians 3:9, 10; 1 John 3:2).

God's work to save us also helps us understand God's Word, the Bible. When we read the Bible, we understand that God wants to touch our lives. God wants to be close to us in our hearts. Yes, sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). But God continues to fix the broken relationship with His children. God will keep doing this work until He makes everything new (Revelation 21:5).

Meanwhile, God chose to show Himself to us in a special way to help us understand His love and His plan to save us. God showed us who He is so that we can have a real relationship with Him. Then we can come to know and love Him. We also can share with other people our experience with God and His saving love. In the Bible, God gives us a picture that shows us what His saving plan is all about.

**THE THREE-IN-ONE-GOD WORKS TO SAVE US
(John 20:21, 22)**

The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the most important part of God's plan to save us. Jesus announced: " 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through [because of] me' " (John 14:6, ERV). Jesus, the Son, also helps us understand how much the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together to save us.

Everything Jesus did was for us and came from His Father in heaven (read John 4:34; John 5:30; John 12:45). Remember, Jesus' work to save us didn't start when He came to this earth. God the Father chose Jesus as our Savior before Jesus made the earth (read Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). So, God made a plan to save us before He made this planet. After we sinned, God became part of human history to save us. "When the right time came" (Galatians 4:4, ERV), God showed us His love. He gave us His Son (John 3:16, 17). Jesus died on the cross and woke up from the dead. Then the Father sent the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:26; John 16:7). The Spirit shows us that sin is very terrible (John 16:8–11). Today, the Spirit continues God's saving work on this earth (John 14:26; John 16:13, 14).

Read John 20:21, 22. These verses teach us that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together to save us. They give us our work. Our work belongs to Them because it started with Them. What hope does this Bible truth give us as we share Jesus with other people?

The words "Three-in-One-God" aren't written anywhere in the Bible. But many verses in the Bible teach that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together to save us. After Jesus woke up from the dead, He showed Himself to His followers. Jesus promised them: " 'Remember that I will send you the one [Holy Spirit] my Father promised' " (Luke 24:49, ERV). In this one verse, we see the saving plan of the Three-in-One-God: the Father's promise, the Son's announcement to keep the promise, and the Holy Spirit's coming (compare with Luke 3:16; Acts 1:4, 5, 8).

We learn from this verse that the work of saving humans belongs to the Three-in-One-God. God can't fail. So, His work to save us won't fail.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all part of the work to save humans. Why should this thought give you hope?



Everything Jesus did was for us and came from His Father in heaven.

MAKING FOLLOWERS FOR JESUS (Matthew 28:16–20)

Read Matthew 28:16–20. In these verses, we read about Jesus’ final orders to His followers. Jesus talks to His followers about how to make new followers for Him. What does Jesus tell His followers to do?



How do we make new followers for Jesus? Jesus tells us. He wants us to teach, baptize, and share His teachings with everyone on earth.

Part of Jesus’ final orders to His followers includes His Important Command (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus commands His followers to travel to new places and make new followers for Him. Jesus commands His followers to teach people about their faith and to join with them in Christian fellowship (read also Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:21–23; Acts 1:8).

There are four basic parts to Jesus’ final orders. (1) Jesus commands His followers to go to Galilee to be with Him (Matthew 28:16, 17). (2) Jesus announces that God gave Him control over everything in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). (3) Jesus commands His followers to do a special task: make new followers for Him (Matthew 28:19, 20). Finally, (4) Jesus promises to be with His followers until the end (Matthew 28:20).

Making new followers for Jesus is the most important part of His orders. This task is the most important part of our work for God, too. After Jesus announces that God gave Him control of everything in heaven and on earth, Jesus tells His followers, “ ‘So go and make disciples in all countries’ ” (Matthew 28:19, ICB). Do you see the word “So”? That word helps us understand that Jesus commands His followers because He controls everything now (Matthew 28:18). He is all-powerful because He died for our sins and woke up from the dead.

How do we make new followers for Jesus? What does this work include? Jesus tells us. He wants us to teach, baptize, and share His teachings with everyone on earth. Jesus wants us to make more followers. This task is our most important work. Matthew 28:16–20 ends with Jesus’ promise to be with His followers always.

The Important Command is for us, too. Every follower of Jesus today must join Him in His work to make new followers for Him. The Good News about Jesus is for everyone on earth, not only Christians.

What are you doing now to make followers for Jesus? What more can you do?

THE GOOD NEWS (Revelation 14:6, 7)

In Revelation 14:6, 7, we read about the 1st Angel’s Message. The angel announces the “Good News that lasts [continues] forever” (Revelation 14:6, NLV). How does this Good News show us God’s work to save us?

Revelation 14:6, 7 are the only verses in the Bible that join the words “lasts [continues]” and “Good News” together. The Good News is good because God gives us a message about God’s mercy to save us from sin. The Good News gets better: God offers this gift of pardon to everyone because of Jesus. Jesus came to this earth to show us God’s “loving-favor and truth” (John 1:14, NLV). Jesus did not sin. He died on the cross for our sins. He was our Substitute. He accepted our punishment (Isaiah 53:4, 5; 1 Peter 3:18). Jesus woke up from the dead. He went to heaven. The Father honored Him. Today, Jesus goes to the Father to get help for us in our fight against sin (Revelation 1:18; Acts 2:33; Hebrews 7:25). Soon, Jesus will keep His biggest promise: He will come back as the King of kings to this earth. Then, after 1,000 years, Jesus will put God’s kingdom on this earth (John 14:1–4; Acts 1:11; Revelation 21:1–4). All of these promises are parts of the Good News.

There will never be another Good News. False teachings come and go (Ephesians 4:14). But the Good News doesn’t change. God will reward the people who believe this message and obey it (read Deuteronomy 5:33; Romans 2:6).

The same command that Jesus gave to His first followers He gives to us today. We must make followers who are ready to see Jesus. Then these new followers will help other people get ready to see Jesus, too.

In Revelation 14:6, 7, the first angel announces “that God will judge the earth. God’s work as Judge helps us understand that the Second Coming is very near. This announcement is part of the everlasting Good News. So, the message about the Second Coming and that it will happen soon are important parts of the Good News.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 227, 228, adapted.

What is the connection between God’s work as Judge and the Good News that continues forever in the 1st Angel’s Message? Why is the Good News an important part of God’s work as Judge of the whole earth?

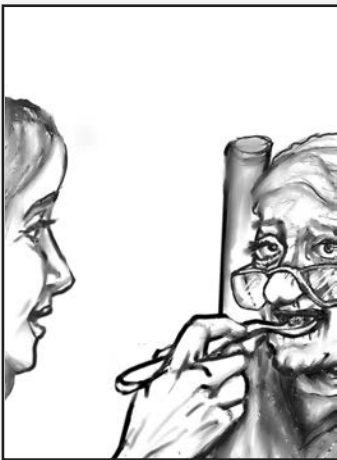


Jesus woke up from the dead. He went to heaven.

GOD'S PEOPLE WORK WITH HIM TO SAVE SINNERS (Genesis 12:1–3)

God always had followers who showed His love to other people. God's people obeyed Him and accepted His plan for their lives. God continues to choose people today. God's chosen people today accept His gift of mercy. All of God's people, in the past and now, help Him save sinners.

What was God's first plan for His people in the Old Testament? Read Genesis 12:1–3 and Deuteronomy 7:6, 11, 12 for the answer.



“The church must show God's love to people and win them to Jesus with love.

God's special agreement with Abraham and his future children was part of God's plan to save sinners. God chose Abraham and his future children, the Israelites, to be His helpers in this important work. God wanted to bless Israel and then bless other people groups because of Israel. So, God chose Israel to be in a special relationship with Him. The relationship between God and Israel was part of God's special agreement. Israel agreed to have faith in God and obey Him (Genesis 22:16–18; Exodus 19:5, 6; Deuteronomy 28:1, 2; and 2 Chronicles 7:14). God also made the Israelites His witnesses. God hoped that other people would want to serve Him, too, when they saw the blessings He gave Israel. This work was all part of God's plan to save humans.

In the New Testament, God's work continues. Jesus adds something new to God's saving plan: the church (read Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). Jesus' followers go to every place on earth. How is this work different from the work that Israel did in the Old Testament? In Old Testament times, God brought people from different countries to Israel to learn about Him. But in New Testament times, God's followers go everywhere on earth to share the Good News. God's work to save sinners didn't start with the church. God started the church because He has work to do on the earth. God uses His church to do this work.

What is the church's work? The same work that Jesus does. Jesus says, “ ‘The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them’ ” (Luke 19:10, ERV). No one in the church can save anyone. But we can, and must, lead other people to the only One who can save. That Person is Jesus.

“What is the church's work? To save sinners. The church must show God's love to people and win them to Jesus with love.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 3, page 381, adapted.

HOW BIG IS GOD'S PLAN TO SAVE US? (Revelation 7:9, 10)

How big is His plan to save us? Read Revelation 7:9, 10 for the answer.

This week, we studied two important sets of verses: Matthew 28:16–20 and Revelation 14:6, 7. These verses help us understand God's plan to save sinners. These verses also teach us two things: (1) Jesus commands us to make new followers for Him, and (2) the Good News is an important part of God's saving plan. These verses teach us **where** God's plan will happen: "Go and make disciples in all countries" (Matthew 28:19, ICB), and share the Good News with "the people who live on the earth. The good news is for every country, tribe [family group], language, and nation [race group]" (Revelation 14:6, NIV).

So, the Good News about Jesus is for all people everywhere. God plans for the Good News to join all people in fellowship. If we accept Jesus' teachings, He will empty our hearts of hate, dislike, pride, jealousy, and all other bad feelings that separate us from each other. Then God's Spirit will join our hearts together in Christian love.

Jesus commanded His followers and us, " 'You will tell about Me' " (Acts 1:8, NLV). Jesus wants us to be His witnesses. But where? Jesus gives us the answer:

Area 1: "in Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8, ERV). At the time, Jesus' followers were near Jerusalem. So, Jesus wanted them to start by sharing their experience with the people near them. God's work to save other people starts in our homes, with our families, neighbors, and friends.

Area 2: "in the rest of Judea, in Samaria" (Acts 1:8, ERV). We must reach out to the people who speak the same language we do, but who don't share our faith. This group of people includes the people in our own cities or country.

Area 3: "in every part of the world [earth]" (Acts 1:8, ERV). God sends us to share the Good News with people from all places, countries, people groups, and languages.

Task #1: Pray every day this week for your community. God placed you there for a reason.

Task #2: Who are the people who live near you? What is their religion? What languages do they speak? Are they young, old, poor, or rich? Ask God to show you how you may show His love to them.



God sends us to share the Good News with people from all places, countries, people groups, and languages.



The sun's rays shine to the farthest parts of the earth. In the same way, God wants His church to share the Good News about Jesus with every person on the earth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Jesus said, ‘You are the light that shines for the world [everyone on earth] to see’ [Matthew 5:14, ERV]. The Savior’s words help us understand that He gave His followers a worldwide job. God wants us to be the same as the sun in our work for Him. The sun’s rays shine to the farthest parts of the earth. In the same way, God wants His church to share the Good News about Jesus with every person on the earth. When the church does this work, then the Good News will shine the same as light on the minds of people who are dead in sin and who believe lies. Church members must pick up their crosses. They must do the work God gave them to do. They must work as Jesus did to save people. Then the Good News will go fast to everyone on the earth. . . .

“God opens areas in countries where we can do His work. Angels work together with God’s people. God joins His strength to our human effort. . . . Some people have answered God’s command to work. Let every holy heart now answer. Let everyone announce the life-giving message. Men and women must empty their hearts of all pride. They must accept with faith the work God gave them to do. Then God will work with these men and women to help many people to accept Bible truth. God will bless their efforts and give them wonderful blessings.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 14, 1912, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Do people in your community trust your church or know about it? Can they depend on you as Christians to show them Jesus and to help them when they are in need? What can you do to build trust for your church in your community?
- ② As Christians, why is the Good News about Jesus the most important part of our message and our work? Can we give hope to anyone, anywhere, without the Good News? Explain your answer.

TWO BOYS, TWO PRAYERS—PART 2

Eight months passed after God gave Father an amazing answer to prayer. Then Seventh-day Adventist church members visited Father a second time on a Sabbath at his home in Conakry, Guinea. Guinea is a country in West Africa. 15 people arrived with Father's sons, Junior and Emile. The boys were students at the Adventist school that was next to the Adventist church.

A church leader said to Father, "We want to pray with you."

Father was thankful, but first he had a question. "All other Christians go to church on Sunday. But you worship on Saturday. Why?"

The church leader invited Father to open his Bible to Exodus 20:8–10. Father read, " 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor [work] and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God' " (NKJV). But father wasn't convinced. He said, "The 7th day is Sunday." Father said this because the calendar in some countries was changed so that Monday is now the 1st day of the week.

The leader asked Father to turn to Matthew 28:1. Father read, " 'The day after the Sabbath day was the first day of the week. That day at dawn Mary Magdalene and the other woman named Mary went to look at the tomb' " (ERV). Father saw the 7th day of the Bible was Saturday. After the church group left, he showed the Sabbath verses to Mother. "I don't care what the Adventists say. I won't leave my church."

Father said that they should pray and fast. When people fast, they don't eat food for a short time. Father said, "We started having questions about the Sabbath after our boys started to go the Adventist school. We sent our kids there to learn. But maybe God sent our kids to that church to lead us there. If this is Jesus' church, let Jesus show us."

The next Sabbath, Mother agreed to go the Adventist church. The church members welcomed Mother and Father with smiles. Father was so happy. He felt God lift a heavy load off his back. Father hadn't prayed a lot in the past. Now he prayed every day.

As Father prayed, God changed his life. God gave Father success in his job. Father started to get along with family. Soon Father and Mother were baptized. Father says, "I have peace." Father's name is Pepe Vactorien Soropogui (see picture). His wife's name is Tido Grace Haba. Father says, "I know Jesus is with this church. I thank God for bringing me here."

Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering three years ago that helped the Adventist Maranatha School in the middle of West Africa. Your 13th Sabbath Offering this quarter will again help workers in the middle of West Africa share the Good News.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Father read, " 'The day after the Sabbath day was the first day of the week.

That day at dawn Mary Magdalene and the other woman named Mary went to look at the tomb' " (Matthew 28:1, ERV).



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).

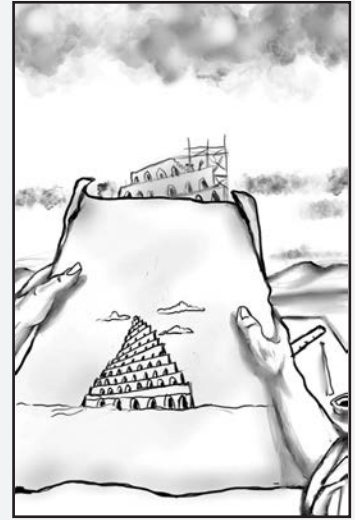
How often today do people try to do the same thing? Maybe they are artists, government leaders, businessmen, or pastors! They all want to be famous. In the end, their wish to be famous is empty and has no meaning. Everything they did to be famous is empty and has no meaning, too. (Read Ecclesiastes 2:1–11.)

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."



Abraham: A Witness for God



SABBATH—OCTOBER 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 18:1–15; Genesis 18:16–33; James 5:16; Genesis 19:1–29.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other’ ” (John 13:34, 35, ICB).

Abraham did three things: he showed his guests hospitality, he showed love for sinners, and he prayed.

FROM THE START, ABRAHAM wanted to work with God to save sinners. We see this Bible truth in Genesis 18. In this chapter, God warns Abraham that Sodom and Gomorrah will be destroyed. Why does God share this information with Abraham? The Bible tells us: “Before the Lord God does anything, he tells his servants the prophets [God’s special messengers]” (Amos 3:7, ICB). In the story about Sodom and Gomorrah, God’s prophet is Abraham.

While Abraham rests during the hot part of day, he sees three travelers. Abraham invites them to be his guests. “Abraham thought his three guests were only tired travelers. Abraham had no idea that among them was Someone he could worship. Abraham’s worship of this Person was not a sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 138, 139, adapted.

Abraham got involved in God’s work. He prayed for the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. He asked God to save them. If saving people isn’t what God’s work is about, what is? In Genesis 18, Abraham did three things: he showed his guests hospitality, he showed love for sinners, and he prayed. We should do these things when we do God’s work, too.

THE GIFT OF HOSPITALITY (Genesis 18:1–15, ERV)

Read the story in Genesis 18:1–15. How does Abraham show hospitality to his guests?

Abraham sat in the doorway of his tent when the day was very hot. Abraham’s behavior is a bit odd. At that time of day in summer, the sun was high in the sky. So, everyone wanted to rest under a shady tree with a fresh breeze. Why, then, was Abraham waiting in the hot sun? Maybe he wanted to be ready to help anyone who passed by.

While Abraham sat in the doorway of his tent, he saw three travelers. Abraham liked to offer hospitality to strangers. So, he ran to them. This part of the story is important: Abraham made the decision to meet the travelers first before they came to him.

Abraham told the strangers, “ ‘I will bring some water to wash your feet. You can rest under the trees. I will get some food for you, and you can eat as much as you want. Then you can continue your journey.’ ”

Abraham knew what he needed to do. The Lord wanted him to share with everyone His knowledge about God. The earth was filled with people who worshiped nature and many gods. As we can see from this story, Abraham did God’s work by offering hospitality to these three strangers.

Many people learned about God from Abraham. Abraham “had many servants. More than 1,000 people served Abraham. They were all part of Abraham’s family. Many of these servants worshiped the Lord. Abraham needed to be firm and wise to manage a family group this big. . . . Abraham’s faith touched the lives of many people beyond his family group. Wherever Abraham camped, he built an altar for God next to his tent. When Abraham moved his tent to another place, he left the altar behind. Many Canaanites who traveled the land stopped at the altar to make an offering to God. These Canaanites learned about God from Abraham and how he lived.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 187, adapted.

From the start, Abraham understood that God chose him to help Him save sinners. Abraham knew that he wasn’t going to the Promised Land for a vacation. He went there to be a blessing to the people around him and to everyone on earth.

Think about Abraham’s example of hospitality. How can you show this same hospitality to the people in your life?



While Abraham sat in the doorway of his tent, he saw three travelers.

ABRAHAM'S LOVE FOR EVERYONE (Genesis 18:16–33)

Read Genesis 18:16–33. How did Abraham show his love for all people from every family group or race group?

Genesis 18 shows us that Abraham loved people. Abraham also loved strangers. Abraham's love is an important lesson for each of us. The people from Sodom and Gomorrah were sinners. They didn't follow God or behave the same as Abraham. Abraham's heart was filled with love for them and for everyone else, anyway. Abraham's love for people didn't depend on who they were, what language they spoke, or their religion.

God tells Abraham about His decision to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Then the Lord said, 'I have heard many times that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are very evil. I will go and see if they are as bad as I have heard. Then I will know for sure'" (Genesis 18:20, 21, ERV).

Abraham's heart is empty of all pride when he answers God. Abraham's words are filled with respect for God. " 'May You never do such a thing as to destroy the good with the bad! May the good never be punished like [the same as] the bad! You would never do such a thing! Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?' " (Genesis 18:25, NLV).

Abraham hoped his love for the people in Sodom and Gomorrah would save everyone in the cities, and not only the good people. For sure, Abraham knew that the people who lived there were very evil. Who knows what stories he heard about their terrible behavior and their sins? From what we know about the people from Genesis 19, we understand that they were very evil people. (Read in Genesis 19:1–11 about Lot's story and the crowd outside his house.)

Abraham knew God's love. So, he asked God to show mercy to the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham knew that people can change. They can come to God and ask for forgiveness. Abraham knew that as long as someone is alive, there is always hope that God can save this person.

Why is praying for other people so important in our spiritual lives? How can praying for people who are in need help our spiritual lives to grow? How can our prayers for people help us understand more about God's love for sinners?



Abraham's love for people didn't depend on who they were, what language they spoke, or their religion.

PRAYING WITH THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM (Genesis 18:23–32)

Read Genesis 18:23–32 and James 5:16. What do these verses teach us about praying for other people? Why is our praying for people a powerful spiritual experience?

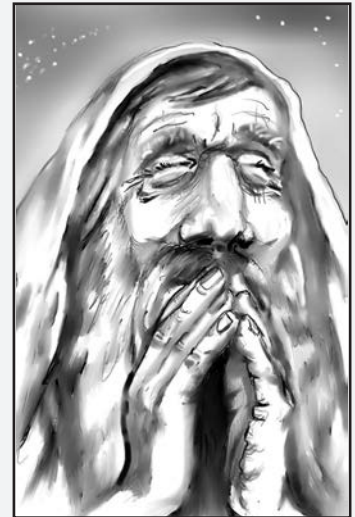
The conversation between God and Abraham is a symbol or a word picture for our prayers for other people. Abraham is a symbol for Jesus. Jesus stands in front of God the Father and asks Him to help us. In the same way, Abraham asks God to save the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. We will have success in our work for God only if we pray for people as Abraham prayed.

Abraham learned to love the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. He also loved the people in the other cities nearby. Because of Abraham's love, his prayer was honest and caring. Abraham already fought against some kings who beat the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah in war. After Abraham won, Bera, the King of Sodom, came to meet Abraham. Bera asked for freedom for his people: "Give me the people. Keep everything else for yourself" (Genesis 14:21, NIV). Bera shows us with these words that he loves his people very much. Abraham loved the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. He prayed for them and their people because his heart was filled with love. "Abraham loved sinners. His love for them caused him to pray for them to be saved."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 140, adapted.

Abraham's heart was empty of all pride. His prayers were without pride, too. Abraham never gave up. He kept trying to save people until the end. First, Abraham asked God to save the city of Sodom as long as 50 holy people lived there. When God agreed to what Abraham asked for, Abraham continued to ask for more.

Our work for God can't succeed without prayer, including prayer for other people. After we meet someone or give a sermon or Bible study, we must pray for them. God will hear our prayers. God will touch the hearts of the people we meet. Our words will not change the hearts of our friends or the people we meet. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. Our job is to pray for each person whose life we touch in the work we do for God.

Read Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25. What do these verses say that Jesus does for us? How can this Bible truth help us better understand why we must pray for people?



Because of Abraham's love, his prayer was honest and caring.

ABRAHAM'S WORK FOR GOD (Genesis 19:1–29)

Read Genesis 19:1–29. What good things happened because of Abraham's hospitality, love, and prayer?

Genesis 19:1–29 gives us an interesting hint about the work that Lot did in the city of Sodom: "Lot was sitting near the city gate" (Genesis 19:1, ICB). In Old Testament times, only leaders, judges, and kings were permitted to sit in the gate of a city (read 2 Samuel 19:8; Jeremiah 38:7; Ruth 4:1). So, this verse shows us that Lot was an important person in the city. At the very least, he was a public leader.

Many things that we saw happen in Genesis 18, in the story about the angels with Abraham, also happen in Genesis 19, with Lot and the visitors. Both Abraham and Lot sat at an entrance or gate (Genesis 18:1; Genesis 19:1). Both Abraham and Lot invited the strangers to come rest (Genesis 18:3; Genesis 19:1). Both Abraham and Lot made food for their visitors (Genesis 18:4–8; Genesis 19:3). Whatever weaknesses and bad habits Lot had, he was friendly and nice to strangers.

"Then the Lord poured fire from the heavens upon Sodom and Gomorrah. He destroyed those cities, and all the valley, and all the people of [in] the cities, and what grew on the ground" (Genesis 19:24, 25, NLV).

We don't know how many people lived in Sodom and Gomorrah at the time that God destroyed those cities. We do know that only four people left Sodom, and only three of them were saved. The same with the Flood in Genesis. We don't know how many people lived before the Flood. But we know that most of them were not saved.

The small number of people from Sodom who were saved is a warning to us in our work for God. Not everyone whose life we touch will be saved. Of course, we want everyone to accept Jesus and be saved. At the same time, we must remember that each person has free choice. Our job is to invite as many people as possible to make the choice for Jesus. God will send His Holy Spirit to help us. But God will never force anyone to accept Him or go against someone's free choice. Free choice means that the people we pray for are saved or lost because of their own choice.

What if we don't see any change in the lives of the people we pray for? How can we learn not to lose hope?



We do know that only four people left Sodom, and only three of them were saved.

SURRENDERING OURSELVES TO GOD’S CONTROL (Genesis 12:1–9)

Read Genesis 12:1–9. What do these verses teach us about surrendering ourselves to God’s control? What if we aren’t sure about what He wants us to do? Or what if the work He gives us is hard?

Abraham teaches us that we must surrender the control of our lives to the Lord. Let’s look at three experiences in Abraham’s life where he surrendered to God’s control.

Work: God gave Abraham (named Abram in this first experience) a hard task: “The LORD said to Abram, ‘Leave your country and your people. Leave your father’s family and go to the country that I will show you’ ” (Genesis 12:1, ERV). When Abraham heard the voice from heaven, did he pay no attention to it? Or did he tell God, “I don’t want to go anywhere. I like where I am living”? No, Abraham obeyed God. Abraham may have thought that “the country that I will show you” was a strange way to talk about a place! But Abraham went anyway. He surrendered himself to God and left his father’s house and his country: “So Abram left as the Lord told him to do” (Genesis 12:4, NLV).

Choice of land: The servants of Lot and Abraham started fighting. Abraham didn’t want fighting. He surrendered himself to God and did what God wanted him to do. God blessed Abraham again. “After Lot left, the Lord said to Abram, ‘Look around you. Look north, south, east, west. All this land that you see I will give to you and your people who live after you. This will be your land forever’ ” (Genesis 13:14, 15, ERV).

Sodom and Gomorrah: After God tells Abraham what will happen to Sodom and Gomorrah, what does Abraham do? Abraham’s heart is filled with love. So, he tries to save the cities. Sad to say, there aren’t 10 holy people in Sodom and Gomorrah. So, God destroys them. Abraham surrenders to God and accepts God’s final decision to destroy these evil cities.

The Lord used Abraham because he surrendered his heart and life to God. We must do the same today.

Task #1: What problems do we have when we preach the Good News in cities? Ask God to help us solve these problems.

Task #2: Do you know someone who is having a hard time? Pray for this person. Ask God to show you how you can help.



“The LORD said to Abram, ‘Leave your country and your people. Leave your father’s family and go to the country that I will show you’ ” (Genesis 12:1, ERV).



Jesus paid the price for our sins. He knows how much each one of us is worth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Abraham loved sinners. His love for them caused him to pray for them to be saved. Abraham hated the sins that the people in Sodom did. At the same time, he wanted sinners to be saved. Abraham is our example. He shows us how much we should care about sinners. We must hate sin, but we must love the sinner. People all around us are lost. They have no hope. Their lives are being ruined. What happened to Sodom will happen to them. Every day, someone’s chance for everlasting life comes to an end. God’s saving mercy can no longer touch their hearts. Where are the people who should be warning these lost ones about the danger they are in? Where are the hands that will pull these sinners back from death? Where are those people who have the faith to ask God to save these lost ones?”

“The spirit of Abraham was the spirit of Jesus. The Son of God is our Helper. He goes to God for the sinner. Jesus paid the price for our sins. He knows how much each one of us is worth. Jesus’ heart is clean and holy. He hates sin as no one else can. This same Jesus showed love to us sinners that can come only from the holy heart of God. While Jesus suffered on the cross, He prayed for the people who hated Him and put Him there. Jesus, who accepted the awful weight of all our sins, prayed for the ones who caused His pain: ‘Father, forgive them. They don’t know what they are doing.’ Luke 23:34 [ERV].”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 140, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Can you think of other Bible examples of people who followed God’s plan for their lives? What about John the Baptist? Was John’s work a success?
- 2 Read Genesis 19:30–36. What do these verses tell us about the people who were saved from Sodom?
- 3 What other lessons about working for God can we learn from the example of Abraham?
- 4 Think about this question: Was Abraham’s prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah a success? Or did Abraham fail? Explain your answer.

A LITTLE CHURCH WITH A BIG HEART FOR GOD

Seventh-day Adventist church leaders decided it was time to sell a little church on an island in northern Germany. Only six people worshiped there: all members were older people. The church opened in 1940. In the 1950s, the church had 33 members. The head leader of the Rügen church was named Gunthardt. He told church leaders in Germany, “We don’t want to sell our church.”

After East and West Germany joined as one country in 1990, the little church on Rügen Island lost more members. Some members died. Young ones moved away. Also, the people who lived on the island weren’t very religious. The church’s only visitors were people who came to the island on vacation. Gunthardt and his wife joined with the other four church members. Two of these members included Gunthardt’s parents. Together, they prayed, “Lord, bring us new members.”

Then an Adventist doctor and his family moved to the island. The members kept praying. Then a member who stopped coming to church for a while started to come again, and several new people joined. Soon 16 people started worshiping at the little church on Rügen Island. The church leaders in Germany decided to keep the church open. Soon, the church members needed a new church building. Members prayed and gave 136,000 euros (that’s 136,000 U.S. dollars). They needed 730,000 euros total. The people kept praying for God to help them get the money they needed.

Gunthardt was a builder. He drew a plan for a new church building. Church members all over Germany gave money to help pay for it. Soon after, Gunthardt met a government leader at a meeting and told him about the new church building plan. The leader told Gundthardt to contact a local community leader for help. Before Gundthardt met with this leader, church members prayed. The local leader offered Gundthardt 300,000 euros. The leader said, “I am a Christian. Please use the new church building to help people learn Bible truth.”

Today, 25 members and their children worship every Sabbath at the church on Rügen Island. Gundthardt says, “We have a new church building, and we owe no money. God showed us that He wanted our church to stay open.”

The Rügen church waits for more miracles. Their work for God 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. Gundthardt says, “The people on our island are not religious. We are trying to connect with them.”

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Together, they prayed,
“Lord, bring us new
members.”



Making Excuses



SABBATH—OCTOBER 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Nahum 3:1–4; 2 Kings 17:5, 6; Jonah 2:1–3, 7–10; Jonah 3; Jonah 4; Isaiah 6:1–8.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then I heard the Lord’s voice, saying, ‘Who can I send? Who will go for us?’ So I said, ‘Here I am. Send me!’ ” (Isaiah 6:8, ERV).

Jonah went to Joppa and got on a ship going to Tarshish, located in what is now the south of Spain.

GOD CHOOSES people to serve Him. But not everyone is willing to serve God as Abraham was. Look at Jonah (read Jonah 1–4). God commands Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital city of the Kingdom of Assyria. Nineveh was located in the area that is now modern-day Iraq. The distance between Nineveh and Jerusalem was one month’s journey. Jonah refused to go. Worse, he ran as far away from Nineveh as he could get. Jonah went to Joppa and got on a ship going to Tarshish, located in what is now the south of Spain. The journey from Joppa to Tarshish was 2,000 miles. This trip would take a month, if the weather was good, and more time if it wasn’t. Jonah uses the month that it takes to get to Nineveh to get away from it. Jonah was a man of God. Why would he do that?

The Ninevites were evil people. They attacked Israel in the past. God asks Jonah to go to Nineveh anyway to warn the people there to stop doing evil (Jonah 1:2). The words in Jonah 1:2 are very much the same as the words God uses when he talks to Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20, 21). As we will see, Jonah was no Abraham.

What can we learn from Jonah about the excuses we make to get out of doing the work that God gives us to do?

EXCUSE #1: FEAR (Nahum 3:1–4)

Read Nahum 1:1; Nahum 3:1–4; 2 Kings 17:5, 6; and 2 Kings 19:32–37. What do these verses tell us about Nineveh and the connection between Assyria and Israel? Do you think this connection had anything to do with why Jonah decided to go to Tarshish and not to Nineveh?

One reason Jonah may not have wanted to go to Nineveh was fear. The Assyrians were powerful and frightening.

“Nineveh was one of the most powerful cities in Old Testament times. . . . Nineveh was filled with crime and sin. Nahum, a messenger from God, said Nineveh was ‘a city of murderers [killers]! It [Nineveh] is full of liars! It is filled with stolen goods!’ Nahum compared the Ninevites to a mean and nasty lion who was very hungry. Nahum asked the Ninevites, ‘Is there anyone who has not suffered because of how badly you treated [attacked] them?’ Nahum 3:1, 19 [ERV, Nlrv].”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 265, adapted.

History writers tell us that the Assyrian King Sennacherib built many things in Nineveh. He built a very large palace in the southwest part of the city. The palace was 1,650 feet long and 794 feet wide (503 meters long and 242 meters wide). The palace had at least 80 rooms. Sennacherib also built 18 canals. The canals brought water to Nineveh from as far away as 40 miles (65 kilometers).

The Assyrians made beautiful things. But they also showed no mercy to their enemies. Sennacherib bragged about the nasty things he did to the Babylonians when he fought them. Sennacherib filled the streets of Babylon with the dead bodies of its citizens. He killed young and old people alike. Scientists who dig in the earth to learn about the past have found pictures carved into stone from that time. These stone pictures show Assyrian soldiers pushing sharp pointed weapons through the bodies of their enemies. Assyrians were not people you wanted to make angry. The Assyrians had no problem with hurting people or causing them pain. They used more strength than they needed against people they didn't like. For sure, Jonah shook with fear when he thought about walking among the people of Nineveh.

We may feel dislike for Jonah when we read his story. We may dislike him for letting his fear get in the way of his doing God's work. But we can do the same thing. We can allow fear, and not God, to control us.



History writers tell us that the Assyrian King Sennacherib built many things in Nineveh.

EXCUSE #2: FALSE BELIEFS (Jonah 2:1–3, 7–10)

When the storm came, Jonah blamed himself (Jonah 1:1–12). Jonah’s thinking shows us what many people believed about God or “gods” back then. These people believed that different gods controlled their countries and their lands. The sea was not controlled by the gods. The people believed the sea was the home of demons. Sailors thought that they needed to make offerings to the sea demons so that the demons would not be angry with them. The Hebrew religion did not teach this false view. But these false views may have caused Jonah to believe he made the sea demons angry. So, this false belief may be why Jonah blamed himself for the storm.

Read Jonah 2:1–3, 7–10. What do these verses show us about how Jonah started to understand God’s leading and watch care?

Jonah learned the hard way that God was in control. The wind and waves belonged to God. The fish, too. “The earth and everything on it belong to the Lord” (Psalm 24:1, ERV). Jonah gave his heart to the God of the earth and sea. So, God saved him.

We can misunderstand God and what He expects from us, too, the same as Jonah. Sometimes we think God wants us to remove ourselves from the evil on the earth around us. Yes, the Bible warns us to keep ourselves “clean from the sinful [evil] things” on this earth (James 1:27 NLV). At the same time, we should not hide ourselves away from people. We should do everything we can to bring God’s blessings and hope to people in need.

Also, we may believe that success depends on us. This belief is another false idea that may stop us from doing God’s work. We must remember that we are the same as Jonah: we can’t save anyone. Jonah couldn’t save Nineveh. Sometimes we behave as if we were a “savior.” But God doesn’t ask us to do His work. He asks us to work with Him. Saving people is work that belongs to God. We praise God for changing us, but only God can lead people to Himself. We plant “seeds” of Bible truth in people’s hearts. Only God can make the seeds grow. We often confuse our work with God’s. When we do, we may use that misunderstanding as an excuse not to share the Good News about Jesus with people. Yes, God used Jonah. But God, not Jonah, saved the city.



Sailors thought that they needed to make offerings to the sea demons so that the demons would not be angry with them.

EXCUSE #3: THE WORK IS TOO HARD (Jonah 3)

Jonah's experience in the fish's belly (read Jonah 2) was a powerful show of God's love and mercy. Jonah's prayer shows us that he understood God's message about His love. Sad to say, this miracle didn't mean that some of Jonah's old feelings had changed. Jonah went to Nineveh. But on his journey, he carried bad feelings about the Ninevites in his heart.

What did the Ninevites do when they heard Jonah preach? Read Jonah 3 for the answer. What lessons does this chapter teach us about sharing our faith with other people?

Jonah didn't like the Ninevites much, but he gave them God's message anyway. What happened next was amazing. The Ninevites confessed their sins and stopped sinning. When Jonah finally did what God asked him to do, God was honored among the Ninevite people.

God's work is a success when His workers are willing to give up what they want so that they can work for Him. Maybe they may not want to give up anything, the same as Jonah felt. But they do it anyway. We must give up what we want and put God's work first. Just as Jonah did, we may dislike the people that God asks us to help Him save. Our bad feelings may keep us from serving a person or a group who needs us.

It's not easy to see the hate in your own heart. We must have hearts empty of all pride. God's work takes time and energy. Helping other people and caring for them can make us tired and worn out. Our lives can be filled with stress. The last thing we may want to do is help someone solve their problems when we have so many ourselves.

We also need to change how we feel about our money. Our money is really God's money. He blesses us so we may support His work. Maybe we need to provide care for people. Or buy them Bible books. Maybe we need to pay a babysitter or housekeeper so we can have more time to do God's work. Doing God's work costs money. We may need to stop thinking about ourselves to help God do His work. The good news is that just as God worked with Jonah, He will work with us.

What is God asking you to give up so that people may be saved? Are you ready to trust Him to bless you when you give things up for Him?



Jonah didn't like the Ninevites much, but he gave them God's message anyway.

EXCUSE #4: WORKING WITH STUBBORN PEOPLE (Jonah 4)

“He [Jonah] complained to the Lord and said, ‘Lord, I knew this would happen! I was in my own country, and you told me to come here. At that time I knew that you would forgive the people of this evil city, so I decided to run away to Tarshish. I knew that you are a kind [loving] God. I knew that you show mercy and don’t want to punish people. I knew that you are kind, and if these people stopped sinning, you would change your plans to destroy them’ ” (Jonah 4:2, ERV). Jonah prays a beautiful prayer, doesn’t he? Or is his prayer really beautiful? What’s going on?

What is wrong with Jonah? Read Jonah 4 for the answer.

Jonah hated the Ninevites so much. He felt that dying was better than losing people’s respect when they heard that God didn’t destroy Nineveh. Jonah didn’t want people to think he failed as a prophet. A prophet is a special messenger from God. Jonah wanted Nineveh to be the next Sodom and Gomorrah. He wanted God to destroy the people he hated so much. When God didn’t do that, Jonah felt very embarrassed and angry. He was so ashamed he wanted to die.

For the second time in Jonah’s story, God gives Jonah a learning experience. This experience changes how Jonah views life. Our views about life don’t change because we hear something new or different. We make or change our views about life when we have a powerful experience. How we explain these powerful experiences causes us to change how we think about life.

God gives Jonah a new experience to help him understand that his ideas are mixed up and wrong. God causes a plant to grow large enough in one day to give Jonah shade. The shade protects Jonah from the hot sun. Jonah is thankful for the plant. Jonah is not thankful to God for giving the plant to him. Jonah doesn’t think of the plant as a miracle and as a gift from God. Jonah thinks he earned the blessing with his good works and behavior. When the plant dies, Jonah gets mad. He starts to doubt his worth and wants to die.

God talks to Jonah in a loving way. God tries to help Jonah understand that he is being very silly to care more about a plant than the thousands of men, women, and children in Nineveh and all their animals.



God causes a plant to grow large enough in one day to give Jonah shade.

HERE I AM. SEND ME! (Isaiah 6:1–8)

Jonah's story is more than a little surprising. Jonah refused at times to cooperate with God. But God saved the Ninevites anyway. This story helps us understand our part in God's work. We are only His helpers. Only God can change hearts. Jonah's story also helps us remember that God wants only willing workers with no pride in their hearts. God's workers will obey God and do everything He asks.

Read Isaiah 6:1–8. What important idea do we read about in these verses?

God is looking for willing volunteers. We must answer God with obedience. We must respect His leadership and listen to His voice. Then we must choose to obey whatever He tells us.

The story about Jonah also shows us God's love for people who don't know Him or His love. God had pity on Nineveh, and He has pity on the millions of people living in the crowded cities today. In these noisy cities, buildings stand where trees and flowers used to grow. The buildings and busy lifestyle make it hard for people to remember God. God said about Nineveh, " 'There are more than 120,000 people living there. Those people simply [for sure] do not know right from wrong!' " (Jonah 4:11, ICB). God needs messengers today who are willing to take His message of hope to the people living in the cities.

Isaiah heard Someone ask, "Who will go?" That "Someone" was God. (Isaiah 6:8). What will your answer be?

Task #1: Make a list of ten people who are not members of your church. Pray daily for these people for the rest of the quarter. Also, pray for deeper, loving, and more trusting friendships with the people on your list who you don't know very well. Pay attention to their needs, hurts, and pain. Then pray that God will meet their needs.

Task #2: Choose two cities: one near you and one somewhere faraway. Start praying for the people who live and work in each city. Ask God to send strong Adventist Bible workers to those cities to share Bible truth about the soon coming of Jesus.



God had pity on Nineveh, and He has pity on the millions of people living in the crowded cities today.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Jesus invites us to join Him in His work of saving people. Ellen G. White has a strong warning for people who don't do their part in sharing Bible truth.

"Many people make excuses for not doing God's work. They are responsible for the work, even if they choose not to do it. God keeps a record in heaven. When His people refuse to help the ones that Jesus died to save, then God makes a record of their behavior in heaven. He writes in His books that they are not loyal servants. What if a pastor shuts himself away from the people who need His help? Is this pastor working as Jesus worked? Is he a strength and a blessing to other people? The ones who refuse to care for other people become selfish. What will help them change? They need to spend time with their brothers and sisters so that they can understand their hearts and minds. Then they will know how to take care of God's people. They will give to God's people the things that they need most at the time they most need them. The ones who don't do this work show that they need to change. When they do, they will understand that they have not done their share of God's work."—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 30, 1892.

These words are very strong. At the same time, we must remember that God doesn't leave us without hope, as Jonah's story teaches us. "God gave Jonah important work. The workload was heavy for Jonah to carry. The God who asked Jonah to go was powerful enough to take care of Jonah and give him success. If Jonah had obeyed God without question, Jonah would have avoided many painful experiences. God would have blessed Jonah in many ways, too. But the Lord didn't leave Jonah when he was filled with sadness. God used hard times and strange miracles to give Jonah hope. Then Jonah trusted again in God and in His power to save."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 266, adapted.



"God used hard times and strange miracles to give Jonah hope."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 What is your "Nineveh"? What excuses have you made for not doing the work God has given you to do?
- 2 As a church, we have been given many precious Bible truths. What is stopping you back from sharing these truths with other people?
- 3 What fears do you have about sharing Bible truth? With God's help, how can you let go of these fears?

A HOPE STRONGER THAN FEAR

As a girl, Grete suffered from panic sickness. She often woke up at night and felt afraid. Her heart pumped very fast. Grete's fear was so strong that she wondered if her heart would burst. She didn't know where to go to get help. Life scared her. Going to school and walking on the street scared her, too. She didn't think anyone in Germany, where she lived, could help her.

When she couldn't sleep, Grete often thought about her friend Annika. The two girls grew up together and sang in the children's choir. Then Annika got sick with cancer. Annika was brave. She put her trust in God. She told her parents, "Don't be afraid. I know God loves me. Everything will be fine." Annika died without pain or fear.

Annika's faith surprised Grete. Grete was scared every night. Annika's words were the first time that Grete heard about a loving God and everlasting life. Grete wondered if heaven was a real place. "How can I get there?" Grete thought.

Grete stopped suffering panic at night when she was 14. But she continued to feel afraid and lonely. Then she met her future husband, Nico. Nico didn't go to church every week. But he had strong faith in God. Nico's parents were Seventh-day Adventists. They welcomed Grete to their home for the Christmas holiday. They were the most loving family Grete ever spent time with. During that holiday, Grete's heart was filled with so much surprise and happiness that she ran upstairs to cry.

Grete felt God's love in that home. She knew then that God could help her to stop feeling afraid. Grete saw that God is powerful. He can save anyone. Grete felt safe for the first time. She wanted to feel safe forever.

Grete started Bible studies. Later, she and Nico joined the Seventh-day Adventist church on Germany's Rügen Island. Nico and Grete didn't know it at the time, but the church almost shut down because it didn't have enough members. Nico and Grete were an answer to the prayers of the church members. One of those members was Nico's father, Gunthardt, who was the head church leader. Today, Nico and Grete are happy members of the growing church on Rügen Island. Not long ago, the church built a larger building for all its new members.

Grete says, "The most wonderful thing in my life is that I got to know Jesus. I know that knowing Him is the best thing I ever did in my life. My life is so happy."

Thank you for your Sabbath School offerings that help church workers share the Good News about Jesus with people in Germany and in other countries all over the earth where people aren't very religious.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Grete's heart was filled with so much surprise and happiness that she ran upstairs to cry.



Ready to Work



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 4

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 24:1–12; Luke 24:36–49; Acts 1:12–26; Acts 2:1–41; Acts 2:41–47.

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus said to them, ‘Remember when I was with you before? I said that everything written about me must happen . . . everything written in the Law of Moses, the books of [written by] the prophets [God’s special messengers], and the Psalms’ ” (Luke 24:44, ERV).

We should preach the Good News and do God’s work because we love God and His truth.

PAUL wrote to the Christians in Philippi: “Some [people] preach about Christ [Jesus] because they are jealous and bitter [angry and unhappy]. But others [people] preach about Christ because they want to help. They preach because they have love, and they know that God gave me the work of defending the Good News. But others [people] preach about Christ because they are selfish. Their reason for preaching is wrong. They want to make trouble for me in prison. But I do not care if they make trouble for me. The important thing is that they are preaching about Christ. They should do it for the right reasons. But I am happy even if they do it for wrong reasons. And I will continue to be happy” (Philippians 1:15–18, ICB).

Powerful words! Paul cared only that people preached the Good News. At the same time, our reasons for preaching about Jesus are important. We should preach the Good News and do God’s work because we love God and His truth.

What are some of our reasons for preaching about Jesus? Also, what are some ways that we can get ready to preach the message? To help us answer these questions, we will look at some of the things that happened in the church during New Testament times.

TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS (Luke 24:1–12)

When some people heard that Jesus woke up from the dead, what did they do? Read Luke 24:1–12 for the answer.

Early Sunday morning, some women went to the grave where Jesus was buried after He died. The women had spices with them. The women were on their way to take care of Jesus' body now that the Sabbath was over. The women expected to find Jesus' grave shut. They were surprised to see His grave was empty. The women weren't sure what to do. Then they saw two men in shining clothes and felt afraid. The men had a message for them. The men told the women to remember Jesus' words about waking up from the dead. Jesus woke up as He said He would. The women were filled with joy at the news. They hurried back to the place where Jesus' other followers stayed. The women told Jesus' followers what they saw and heard. The women were so excited. They wanted to share with the men what they learned about Jesus.

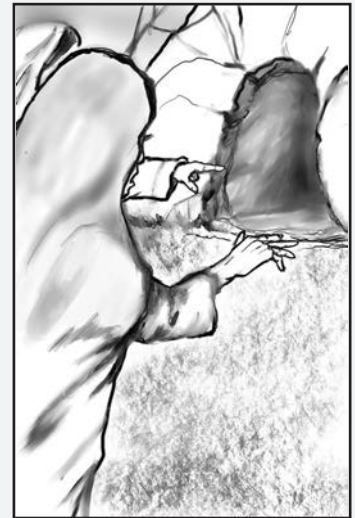
Can you imagine in your mind how the women felt? The women had a wonderful experience. But Jesus' followers said the women were making up stories. The men refused to believe the report. Peter doubted the women's story, too. He ran to Jesus' grave to see for himself what happened.

So many of us are the same as Peter. We have a hard time accepting something someone tells us until we go see for ourselves. Peter heard what the women said. But he couldn't share their joy until later. At first, all Peter saw was an empty grave. "Then he went away, surprised about what had happened" (Luke 24:12, NLV). His experience at the grave was not the same experience that the women had.

As soon as the women heard the news about Jesus, they wanted to share their joy and the wonderful news with other people. We also must let other people know what Jesus has done for us. What better reason do we have for doing God's work?

Of course, we need a personal experience with God before we can share the Good News about Jesus with other people. Our love for Jesus must be an important part of our work for God. In the end we can't share with other people what we don't have, right?

What are some experiences you have had with God and His love? Why are these times so precious to you? How do they help you share the Good News with other people?



The women expected to find Jesus' grave shut. They were surprised to see His grave was empty.

THE REASONS FOR OUR FAITH AND OUR WORK (Luke 24:36–49)

Read Luke 24:36–49. What happened in these verses? Why is this experience so important for Jesus' followers?

At first, Jesus' followers don't believe He is alive. When they see Jesus, they are filled with fear. They think Jesus is a ghost! Then, Jesus' followers see that He really is alive. Now they can't believe what they see because they're so happy (Luke 24:41)! Have you ever felt that something was too wonderful to be real? This feeling helps us understand what Jesus' followers felt in the upper room.

What if Jesus left His followers with only this experience of seeing Him? What would happen to their faith after He left them? Maybe their faith would die. Over time, experience can grow weak in our minds. Or maybe Jesus' followers would start to forget. Worse, maybe they would start to question what they really saw. So, Jesus did more than show His followers His scars and eat fish in front of them. Jesus gave His followers a Bible study. He showed His followers the Bible proof for His work on earth and for His future work in heaven. For sure, the followers had a powerful experience with Jesus. But Jesus wanted to give them reasons from the Bible for their faith.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Remember when I was with you before? I said that everything written about me must happen . . . everything written in the Law of Moses, the books of [written by] the prophets [God's special messengers], and the Psalms’ ” (Luke 24:44, ERV).

Luke 24:44 gives us a powerful reason for our work: the Bible. Jesus knew He must help His followers trust their experience with Him. His followers needed to understand why He died and what His waking up from the dead really meant. The followers also needed to understand that Jesus' kingdom was spiritual. They needed to understand that Jesus came to solve the sin problem and to die for us. The Good News about Jesus was about so much more than giving the Jews freedom from Roman control. The Good News showed Jesus' win against Satan. The Good News is a promise that all evil on this earth will be destroyed. Then God will make the earth new and will live with His people. Jesus “helped the followers understand” (Luke 24:45, ERV) the promises in the Bible about Him so they could share these Bible truths with other people. We can't have an experience with Jesus without understanding these promises, too.



Jesus did more than show His followers His scars and eat fish in front of them. Jesus gave His followers a Bible study.

WAITING AND WORKING FOR GOD (Acts 1:12–26)

Luke 24 ends with Jesus going up in the sky to heaven (Luke 24:50–53). But the story doesn't end there. Luke continues the story in the book of Acts. Right before Jesus goes to heaven, He gives His followers their work, a promise, and orders. Jesus tells His followers to wait in Jerusalem for God to keep His promise. God promised to pour the Holy Spirit on them (Luke 24:49; also read Acts 1:4–8). The Holy Spirit will help the followers to be powerful witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and other faraway places.

At this time, Jesus' followers included about 120 men and women. What were Jesus' followers doing while they waited? Read Acts 1:12–26 for the answer.

Jesus told His followers what He wanted them to do: they must be His witnesses and share the Good News about Him with everyone on earth. So, while the followers waited for the Holy Spirit, they got ready for their work in two ways. First, Luke says they asked God for help. They all understood the work Jesus gave them. Each one of them accepted the work. So, they joined together to pray. Luke doesn't tell us what they prayed about. We can be sure they prayed for wisdom, strength, and courage to do God's work together. They are a wonderful example for us to follow.

The second thing the followers did while they waited for the Holy Spirit was to get ready to do God's work. The followers didn't sit around doing nothing while they waited. They needed someone to replace Judas. Judas sold Jesus to His enemies, who killed Him. Then Judas killed himself. So, now there were only 11 followers and not 12. As the followers waited for the Holy Spirit, they asked God to help them choose the best person to replace Judas. The followers also planned the best way to start doing their work. Peter acted as their leader. None of the other followers questioned Peter's leadership. Everyone understood that God was leading Peter and them. They trusted God to work among them and help them.

We also wait for God to pour His Holy Spirit on us to finish His work on earth. Let us join together during this time to encourage and help each other (Hebrews 10:24, 25). Let us pray for God to send His Holy Spirit to us. Also, we should be doing everything we can to save lost sinners.



As the followers waited for the Holy Spirit, they asked God to help them choose the best person to replace Judas.

THE MAN YOU NAILED TO THE CROSS! (Acts 2:1–41)

Acts 2 tells us about what happened at Pentecost. Pentecost was the time when God poured His Spirit on His followers after Jesus went back to heaven. While the followers prayed, flames from heaven rested on their heads. Then the followers knew that God gave them the Holy Spirit.

What happened to Jesus' followers after God poured the Holy Spirit on them at Pentecost? Read Acts 2:1–41 for the answer.

Jesus' followers started to speak in other languages.

“The Spirit gave them the ability [skill] to do this [speak languages they didn't know how to speak before]” (Acts 2:4, NIV). God gave each person skill and knowledge to help share the Good News with other people. God didn't give them these blessings to make them fit for heaven or to help them do business in a foreign language. God gave them these gifts to help them do His work. Today, God wants each of His followers to use their personal gifts to help Him do His work, too. The most important thing we can do with these gifts is use them to share Jesus with other people.

When God poured the Holy Spirit on His followers, many people confessed their sins. They said they were sorry for rejecting Jesus. The Jewish leaders were guilty of nailing Jesus to the cross. The people shared in their leaders' guilt because they did nothing to stop Jesus' death. Peter reminds the Jews in Jerusalem that they asked the Romans to nail Jesus to the cross. The people understand their guilt. “What Peter said cut the people's hearts when they heard it. They knew they had done wrong. They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles [leaders and teachers of the New Testament church], ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ ” (Acts 2:37, WE).

“Peter said to them, ‘Change your hearts and lives and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Then God will forgive your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (Acts 2:38, ERV).

Jesus' followers worked with the Holy Spirit and each other. Together, they preached the Good News that Jesus forgives sins and gives us strength to win the war against sinning. Today, God asks us to share this same message with lost sinners. We must not judge them. That's not our job. We must tell them about the saving power of Jesus.



As the followers prayed, flames from heaven rested on their heads. Then the followers knew that God gave them the Holy Spirit.

A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH IN BIBLE TIMES (Acts 2:41–47)

Read Acts 2:41–47. What picture do these verses show us of the New Testament church?

Acts 2 ends with a beautiful picture of life in the New Testament church. Acts 2:41, ICB, says: “Then those people who accepted what Peter said were baptized. About 3,000 people were added to the number of believers [followers] that day.” This verse doesn’t only tell us about the church’s membership and how much it grew. The words of this verse have a deeper and hidden meaning: the new members became full partners with Jesus’ followers.

One of the most important jobs of the church was to make new followers for Jesus. Jesus’ followers taught new members in three ways. First, Jesus’ followers continued to teach them Bible truth and to fellowship with them. The word “fellowship” in Acts 2:42 (ERV) means full partnership. So, Jesus’ followers worked together fully with new church members to serve God. Jesus’ twelve followers helped to correct false beliefs and helped new members understand their experiences. The new members learned how to live Bible truth because they saw how Jesus’ followers lived their lives.

We should not preach to people about what to do if we don’t also tell them how to do it. The best “sermon” is the way we live our lives. When we see how Jesus’ loyal followers live, we learn how to live for Jesus, too. Paul understood this important rule. So, he told his followers to copy him in the same way that he copied Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1). When other people see your real experience in Jesus, their lives will be changed for the better.

Task #1: Think of someone in your life who doesn’t know Jesus or His love. Pray every day for this person to have a personal experience with Jesus.

Task #2: Are you sharing Jesus with someone in your life? Look for ways to invite this person to fellowship with other Christians.



One of the most important jobs of the church was to make new followers for Jesus.



Thank Jesus for all He does for you. Fill your mind with Bible truth and let it change your life.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Our work for God must come from our deep love for Him and for other people. We cannot work for Him for any other reason. Thank Jesus for all He does for you. Fill your mind with Bible truth and let it change your life. Then you will have success when you share your faith.

“Our life must be connected with the life of Jesus. We must get our strength from Him every moment of our lives. Jesus is the Bread that came down from heaven. He is the same as a fresh fountain of water that is always giving us many treasures. We must drink this water. If we keep the Lord in our hearts always, we shall have a new experience in our spiritual life. We must praise Him and give Him thanks. Our prayers will become the same as a conversation with God. We will talk with Him the same as with a Friend. God will tell us His secrets. Often, we will feel that Jesus is with us. Our hearts will feel joy when He comes to talk with us as He did with Enoch. When this experience is ours, we will have no pride in our hearts. Everyone will see that we have been with Jesus and learned from Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 129, 130.

“A selfish heart can’t grow in spiritual strength or wisdom. Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior? Then stop pleasing yourself and live for Jesus. Help other people. Talk about Jesus’ love. Tell other people that He died for them. . . . The Spirit of Jesus is a Spirit of unselfish love. As you work to help other people, you will grow and your heart will fill with Jesus’ love. . . . Your faith will grow strong. So will your beliefs. God will make perfect your love for Him and for other people.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 67, 68, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How do you understand Paul’s words in Philippians 1:15–18? Paul says that some people preach about Jesus with jealous, angry, or selfish feelings in their hearts. How can we make sure we are not guilty of doing the same thing?
- ② What is your personal experience with God and His love? If you had to share your story about God’s love with other people, what would your story be?
- ③ What has been your experience in waiting for the Lord and trusting in His promises? What has your experience taught you about faith?

THE BLESSING THAT IS OURS WHEN WE GIVE

A woman in the U.S. state of North Carolina invited her two church pastors to her house. She wanted to talk to them about a special offering named the Yearly Sacrifice Offering. A sacrifice offering is money you save so that you can give it to God to help support His work. The woman told the pastors that the Seventh-day Adventist Church started the Yearly Sacrifice Offering in 1922 to help support church workers overseas who didn't have enough money to finish their work. The woman said that people gave sacrifice offerings to help the workers at the time. Today, the sacrifice offering continues to support church workers all over the earth.

The pastors decided to start collecting the Yearly Sacrifice Offering. One pastor preached nine sermons on giving gifts of money to support God's work. The pastor preached his nine sermons before the church collected the Yearly Sacrifice Offering. What happened after that? The 700-member church in Hendersonville, North Carolina, collected \$24,119.00 that year for the Yearly Sacrifice Offering, in 2016. (The year before that, in 2015, the church collected only \$1,400.00.) During the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2021, the church gave a surprising \$37,545.00 to the Yearly Sacrifice Offering.

Pastor David Wright (see picture) said, "We were so surprised and happy. Praise the Lord!"

Pastor Wright gave God and His mercy all the glory for what happened. "This offering will help church workers bring Bible truth to areas where people don't know God. We are so blessed as a church family to be part of this work. As Paul wrote, 'We must remember what the Lord Jesus said, "We are more happy when we give than when we receive [get]"' " (Acts 20:35, NLV).

Adventist Mission manager Gary Krause agrees. Krause shares this quote from Ellen G. White, who writes, "The success of the work in our local churches depends a lot on the work we do for God in countries far away."—*Testimonies to the Church*, volume 6, page 27, adapted. David Trim, an expert in research for the church, gives proof that Ellen White's words are correct.

Having a giving spirit is part of who we are as Adventists. Ted N. C. Wilson, the President of the General Conference says, "The people who started our church had giving spirits. They gave things up to help support God's work. We will finish God's work with the same spirit of giving. Each of us has a special part to help support God's work with the money God gives us."

Thank you for giving to the 2023 Yearly Sacrifice Offering. For more online information, visit bit.ly/annual-sacrifice-offering. Also visit gm.adventistmission.org, bit.ly/1922-offering, and bit.ly/EGW-reflex.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Having a giving spirit is part of who we are as Adventists.



Loving My Neighbor



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 10:25; Matthew 26:56; Luke 10:27, 28; Matthew 22:37–40; Luke 10:30–37.

MEMORY VERSE: “The man answered, ‘Love the Lord your God. Love him with all your heart, all your soul [spirit], all your strength, and all your mind.’ Also, “You must love your neighbor as you love yourself’ ” (Luke 10:27, ERV).

Our love for other people shows our love for God in a real and powerful way.

WE ALL KNOW the Bible verse: “Love the Lord your God. Love him with all your heart, all your soul [spirit], all your strength, and all your mind” (Luke 10:27, ERV). Our love for God will grow weak if we say we love Him but do not obey Him. We say we love God, but how do we show this love in our day-to-day lives? We can't love God with only half our heart. We must give Him all our heart, spirit, body, and mind. We must give Him these things every day. Anyone can say, “I love God,” but really loving Him is a choice we make that takes all our strength and effort.

Loving God is important. At the same time, God also wants us to love other people. Our love for other people shows our love for God in a real and powerful way. The Bible says, “If we say we love God but hate any of our brothers or sisters in his family, we are liars. If we don't love someone we have seen, how can we love God? We have never even seen him” (1 John 4:20, ERV). Paul also tells us, “You obey the whole Law when you do this one thing, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself’ ” (Galatians 5:14, NLV).

This week, we will learn how we can follow these important Bible rules in our lives.

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION (Luke 10:25)

Who are we? Why are we here? What happens when we die? These questions are the most important questions we humans can ask. In the book of Luke, someone comes to Jesus with the most important question of all.

What question did the lawyer ask Jesus? Why did he ask it? Read Luke 10:25 for the answers.

The Bible tells us that the lawyer asked his question because he really wanted to give Jesus a test. Many people today are the same as this lawyer. They come to Jesus with doubt. But Jesus can touch their hearts anyway. That's what Jesus did with the lawyer. Jesus knew that the lawyer's question gave Him the perfect chance to encourage this man and the people in the crowd to search their own hearts. Jesus knew why the lawyer asked the question. At the same time, Jesus wasn't going to refuse to answer the man or not be polite to him.

In the end, what question is more important for us than the lawyer's question? " 'Teacher, what must I do to get eternal [everlasting] life?' " (Luke 10:25, ERV). This question is the reason for everything we do. No question has more meaning for us as humans, whose lives are "like [the same as] a fog. You can see it [the fog] for a short time, but then it goes away" (James 4:14, ERV).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:30–32. What is Paul saying in these verses? How does this idea help us understand that everlasting life is very important?

The lawyer may have asked Jesus this question to give Him a test. Jesus wanted to save the lawyer. So, Jesus asked the lawyer a question, too. Do you see how Jesus used these questions to touch the hearts of the people in the crowd who watched and listened to Him?

How can we use every chance that comes our way to share the Good News about Jesus?



Jesus wanted to save the lawyer.

JESUS' ANSWER (Matthew 26:56)

The Bible tells us that the lawyer wanted to give Jesus a test. Jesus knew the real reason that the lawyer asked Him the question. God knows the feelings that are in our hearts more than we do.

Sometimes people from other religions ask us about our faith. Our Muslim friends may say, "Where in the Bible did Jesus say He is God?" Or "Why do you say there is one God and that God is three separate persons?" Often, we may feel that our friends attack our faith when they ask us these questions. We must remember that their questions may hide a deep wish for Jesus to fill their hearts. We don't know their hearts. We don't need to. We must do our best to help them, whatever their reasons for asking us hard questions.

Read Matthew 26:56; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 15:3; and 2 Timothy 3:16. How do these verses help us understand Jesus' answer to the lawyer in Luke 10:26?



We must do more than pay attention to what other people tell us. We need to read the Bible for ourselves.

Sometimes we want Bible answers, but we are too lazy to study the Bible ourselves. Jesus asked the lawyer, "What is written in the law? What do you understand from it?" (Luke 10:26, ERV). Jesus helps us to understand a very important part of learning. We must do more than pay attention to what other people tell us. We need to read the Bible for ourselves. The answers are already there. The Holy Spirit works on our hearts and helps us know our duty.

God gave us His Word, the Bible. From it, we can learn all the Bible truth we need to know about how to live and how we should love other people. The Bible also teaches us about everlasting life. Yes, teachers and preachers are necessary. But in the end, we must go to the Bible for ourselves to learn about the important truths for our lives. "Your word is like [the same as] a lamp that shows me the way. It is like a light that guides me" (Psalm 119:105, NIV). This verse is more than a beautiful word picture from a poem. This verse is holy Bible truth that shows us that the Word of God is important to our lives.

Jesus was the Word of God in a human body. Jesus always told people to read the Bible. What does His advice tell us about why the Bible is so important? Why must we reject any idea that causes us not to trust the Bible?

TO GET EVERLASTING LIFE (Luke 10:27, 28)

**What was the lawyer’s answer to his own question?
Read Luke 10:27, 28?**

The lawyer asked the question and then answered it: “ ‘Love the Lord your God. Love him with all your heart, all your soul [spirit], all your strength, and all your mind.’ Also, ‘You must love your neighbor as you love yourself’ ” (Luke 10:27, ERV).

What did Jesus think about this answer? “Jesus said, ‘Your answer is right [correct]’ ” (Luke 10:28, ERV). Then Jesus told him to do something about it: “ ‘Do this and you will have eternal [everlasting] life’ ” (Luke 10:28, ERV).

For most of us Christians, giving the correct answer about Bible teachings and faith is easy. The hard part is doing what we know is correct and following what we believe. A lot of people know enough to be saved. They will be lost anyway because they didn’t obey what they knew. So, this topic is very important. You know you must love God and your neighbor. That’s wonderful! But knowing is not enough. You must show them how much you love them!

Read James 2:17–22. What Bible truth does James teach us in these verses? How is this idea the same thing that Jesus said to the lawyer?

If we love God, we will read the Bible, His Word. We will pray. We will obey His commandments. We will obey Him with all our heart. What if I say I love people, but I don’t care about my church members? Or what if I pay no attention to other people’s needs? What good is my faith? The Christian faith is more than a set of beliefs. The Christian faith is a new way of life.

“What if a Christian does not have clothes or food? And one of you says to him, ‘Goodbye, keep yourself warm and eat well.’ But if you do not give him what he needs, how does that help him?” (James 2:15, 16, ERV).

How much do you care about the needs of other people? How much do you follow the words of Paul: “Each one of you should not think only about himself, but about other people also” (Philippians 2:4, WE). How can we, with God’s help, show other people that we care about them?



**What if I say I love people,
but I don’t care about
my church members?**

LOVING PEOPLE AS WE LOVE OURSELVES (Matthew 22:37–40)

Compare what Jesus says in Matthew 22:37–40 with His answer to the lawyer in Luke 10:27, 28.



Paul, Micah, and John explain that the things we do and our behavior show the faith in our hearts.

In Matthew 22:37–40, Jesus says that we show our faith when we love God and other people. In Luke 10:27, 28, Jesus says that when people do these two things, they will have everlasting life.

“Love is the most important rule of God’s government in heaven and on earth. Love must be in our hearts and in everything we think, feel, and do. Only love can keep us loyal to God. Only love can give us the strength we need to say no to sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 49, adapted.

Read Galatians 5:14; Micah 6:6–8; and 1 John 4:20, 21. How do these verses teach what Jesus told us?

Paul says, “You obey the whole Law when you do this one thing, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself’ ” (Galatians 5:14, NLV). Paul teaches that folks can see we love God very much when we show our love for the people around us. A life of faith is not something we hide or that no one can see. Paul, Micah, and John explain that the things we do and our behavior show the faith in our hearts.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul explains real love. People may say they have much knowledge. They may do wonderful miracles. They may have a lot of faith or give up their lives for their beliefs. But if these people don’t have love, then, in the end, they “get nothing at all” (1 Corinthians 13:3, NIV).

Look at the Ellen G. White quote above. Do you see how she says that we can say no to sin only if we have God’s love in our hearts? How does this idea teach us that God’s command to love doesn’t mean we are saved because of our good behavior? How does this idea also teach us that love shows us the faith we have in Jesus?

THE GOOD SAMARITAN STORY TODAY (Luke 10:30–37)

After the lawyer gave the correct answer, Jesus said, “ ‘Do this and you will have eternal [everlasting] life’ ” (Luke 10:28, ERV). With these words, Jesus showed us what was in the man’s heart. The lawyer knew how to give all the correct answers. Living them was the problem. If doing the right thing was a problem for this man 2,000 years ago, how hard is it for us today? The lawyer wanted to trap Jesus and show off in front of everyone. The lawyer wanted people to see that he was very smart. So, he asked Jesus another question: “ ‘Who is my neighbor?’ ” (Luke 10:29, NLV).

Read the story in Luke 10:30–37. What lesson does Jesus teach us in these verses?

Are there people around us that have been hurt by other people? Have we done everything we can to help them?

Sometimes pastors, church leaders, and church members don’t help the people who need help the most. Sometimes people from another church or religion are more loving to people in our community than we are. We talk about being loving, but other people may meet the needs of the ones in ways we haven’t. If our faith means anything, we must try to help the ones in need.

Jesus ended the story about the good Samaritan with a question. Who among the three men was the real neighbor to the person who needed help?

“Jesus answers the question, ‘Who is my neighbor?’ Jesus shows us that our neighbor is not only someone in our church or a member of our religion. Our neighbor does not belong only to one race or has only one skin color. Our neighbor doesn’t belong only to one class of people. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every person that Satan has hurt and injured. Our neighbor is everyone who is God’s property.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 503, adapted.

Task #1: Pray every day for someone who is different from you. Or pray for someone who you may not really like.

Task #2: Make a list of three people you know who aren’t Seventh-day Adventists. What are their needs? How can you help meet their needs? What can you do for them in the coming week? Ask God to help you meet their needs.



**If our faith means anything,
we must try to help
the ones in need.**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Good Samaritan,” pages 497–505, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“‘Here are the beliefs and way of life that God our Father accepts as pure [holy] and without fault [sin]. When widows are in trouble, take care of them. Do the same for children who have no parents. And don’t let the world [people who don’t follow God] make you impure [not clean in your heart].’ [James 1:27, NIV]. Jesus wants us to be loving and to help people. Jesus wants us to say loving words to cheer people’s hearts. He wants us to do unselfish acts. He wants us to love the poor and needy. He wants us to help people who are suffering. Our hearts must be filled with pity for people who feel sad and hopeless. Give to the needy. Offer clothes to people who have none. Invite strangers into your house and make them feel welcome. Give them a place in your home and in your heart. When you do these things, angels will come very near, and the angels in heaven will be filled with joy. Every time we are fair to someone or show a person mercy or love, the angels in heaven sing songs. God the Father sits on His throne in heaven. He sees the ones who do these acts of mercy. These people are God’s most precious treasures. ‘The Lord said, “They belong to me. I will be kind [show mercy] to them. Parents are very kind to their children who obey them. In the same way I will be kind to my followers.” ’ [Malachi 3:17, ERV]. In God’s eyes, every act of mercy and love we show to the needy and the suffering, we do to Jesus. Remember this Bible truth when you help the poor. When you show pity to the suffering and help orphans, your relationship with Jesus grows deep and strong.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 25, adapted.



“Invite strangers into your house and make them feel welcome.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 What are some of the hard feelings we have in our hearts about people who are different from us? How can we learn to let these feelings go?
- 2 What Bible verses can you find to show that we need to show mercy to other people, whoever they are?
- 3 How can we make sure we understand that obeying the command to love God and other people isn’t the same as saving ourselves with our good behavior?

THE ROAD TO SPAIN: PART 1

Luis got sick shortly after he was baptized. At that time, Luis started studying to be a pastor at the Venezuelan Adventist University.

At first, Luis thought he had the flu. But then he got worse. He had trouble breathing. Doctors thought that the pollen, or yellow powder, on the orange blossoms around the university made Luis sick. Luis got many shots to help him breathe more easily. But his lungs continued to give him trouble. Luis's doctors told him to quit his studies and go home to get well. But Luis didn't want to leave school. He continued to get more medical tests to figure out his problem.

Then a medical test showed that Luis had HIV. HIV can cause AIDS, a terrible disease that can cause much suffering and death. At that time, people in Venezuela were very afraid of HIV. Many people thought they could get HIV if they touched someone who had it. Luis was asked to leave school.

Luis had no choice but to go home. At home, he had more medical tests. The tests always showed the same thing: he had HIV. Luis didn't understand why this was happening to him when he was trying so hard to follow God. Wasn't he also studying to become a pastor? He felt very sad.

A church leader saw that Luis looked very sad. The church leader told him, "You should be joyful. If you aren't joyful, then you haven't really met Jesus."

The church leader's words cut Luis deep in his heart. Luis went home and knelt down on his bedroom floor. He prayed, "I don't want You to heal me. I just want to preach for the rest of the days that You give me to live."

In that instant, something strange happened. Luis felt as if fire filled his heart. The heat spread over his whole body. Then Luis fainted.

Later, when Luis got another medical test, the test showed that he no longer had HIV. Luis was surprised. He asked to take another test, and another test after that. Always he was HIV-free. The doctor said, "Why do you keep asking for more tests? You don't need to take any more tests. You're healed."

Luis kept his promise to God. Luis became a preacher and helped many people to accept Jesus. Luis got married and finished his studies at the university in 2006.

Luis says, "I haven't stopped preaching the Good News about Jesus since He healed me."

Today, Luis and his family are workers for God in Spain.

Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offering that helps support church workers worldwide. Read more about Luis next week and learn why he left Venezuela.

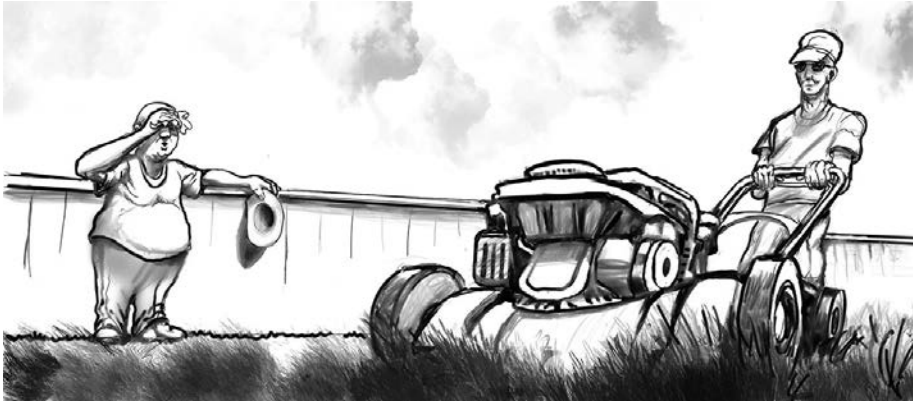
INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Luis felt as if fire filled his heart.



Helping People in Need



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 5:17–26; John 5:1–9; Deuteronomy 10:19; Luke 4:18; John 15:13.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the king will answer, ‘The truth is, anything you did for any of my people here, you also did for me’ ” (Matthew 25:40, ERV).

God asks us to be His helpers. He wants us to help people in need, whoever they are.

LUKE 5:17–26 shows us how God helps people who are in need. Sometimes God uses other people to help us. Or He uses us to help other people. Helping people may be hard work at times. But God rewards us for our efforts. When we help people in need, we show them the work that Jesus did. Sometimes we know who needs our help. Other times, we don't know who to help. God asks us to be His helpers. He wants us to help everyone in need, whoever they are.

The Bible encourages us to be nice to strangers and to make new friends. When people trust us, we can learn better ways of helping them find Jesus.

The topic for this week's lesson is “Helping People in Need.” This topic shows us that God has a plan for people in need. God's plan shows us the many ways we can help people in need. These people may need help with their budget or health. Or maybe they feel lonely or are suffering. Maybe their family or their community no longer accepts them. Whatever their needs, we must be ready to do what we can to help. When we help other people, we show everyone an important part of God's work. We also show them what it means to be a Christian.

THE FAITH OF FRIENDS (Luke 5:17–26)

A powerful Bible story shows what some men did to help a sick friend. These men carried their friend to Jesus to be healed. This story teaches us an important lesson. Sometimes we must work hard to help people in need.

Read the story in Luke 5:17–26 (also read the same story in Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:3–12). What lessons do we learn from the four men in this story about doing God’s work and helping people in need?

The four men brought their friend to Jesus. They were responsible for taking care of their friend. God asks us to be the same as this man’s friends. We must lead people to Jesus. We need faith to do this work. We also need to be patient and willing to do whatever God asks. The men came to Jesus. But they couldn’t bring their helpless friend to Jesus because the crowd blocked the way. The men didn’t give up. They found another way to bring their friend to Jesus. The men broke open the roof and lowered their friend down the hole and into the house! Luke shows us that Jesus didn’t scold them for what they did (read Luke 5:20). Jesus rewarded their faith.

Jesus wants us to bring our helpless friends to Him. The Bible says that Jesus is the Most Powerful Doctor. Dr. Jesus wants to forgive and heal suffering people, whoever they are.

Ellen G. White tells us to help people who are helpless: “Don’t wait for someone to tell you to help people. Open your eyes and look around. Get to know the people around you who are helpless, suffering, and in need. . . . Do any of you show in your life the religion that James talks about? Are you free from selfishness and sin? Who wants to do everything they can to help God save people?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 29, adapted.

Jesus shows us how to help people who are helpless. Jesus wants us to do this same work. First, we must become friends with people in need. Then we learn about their needs. Finally, we lead them to Jesus. Jesus is the only One who can help them. The four men in this story did these things. We need to do these things, too, wherever we are.

Help lead people to the only One who can save them: Jesus.

Who are the people around you that need help? What will you do for them?



The men broke open the roof and lowered their friend down the hole and into the house!

JESUS' PLAN FOR HELPING PEOPLE (John 5:1–9)

What do the stories below teach us about helping people in need?

John 5:1–9 _____

Mark 1:23–28 _____



“Jesus showed people
He understood
their suffering.”

Ellen G. White explains Jesus' plan for how to help people in need. Jesus' plan has five parts: “Only Jesus' plan will give you real success in leading people to Him. The Savior spent time with people. He showed them that He wanted the best for them. Jesus showed people He understood their suffering. Jesus gave them the things they needed. He won their trust. Then Jesus told them, ‘Follow me.’ ”—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 143, adapted.

Let's look at each part of Jesus' plan.

Part 1: Spend time with people who are in need. Get to know them. Learn what their needs are and try to help them. Look at what Jesus did with the man lying by the pool. Jesus was there, ready to help him (John 5:1–9).

Part 2: Show people that you care. Some people may have trouble trusting us, because they were hurt in the past. These people may have a hard time believing we really care about them. God asks us to show them pity and to be understanding. We must show them that we don't expect anything back from them when we are nice to them.

Part 3: Give people what they need. We must do more than say nice words to people in need. We must do something about their needs. We must follow Jesus' example with the man who couldn't move his arms or legs. After the man's four friends lowered Him to Jesus, Jesus asked the sick man what he wanted. Then Jesus healed the man. In the story about the man who is filled with a demon, Jesus takes complete control. Jesus does for the helpless man what the man can't do for himself.

Part 4: Win people's trust. When we help people, they will learn to trust us. Then they will pay attention to what we say about Jesus. Jesus didn't want to heal only people's bodies. He wanted to heal their hearts. He wanted to give them everlasting life in Him (read John 10:10).

Part 5: Lead people to Jesus. Both you and the person you help must have faith in Jesus. Then you can lead people to Him.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND (Deuteronomy 10:19)

Today's news is filled with many reports about strangers and foreigners who left their countries to escape war, natural disasters, or food shortages. Or maybe these people left home because they wanted hope for a better future. Millions of people all over the earth have left their homes to go live in foreign lands. Now they need help to start a new life.

In Matthew 2:13, 14, Jesus was one of these people. His parents, Joseph and Mary, had to leave Bethlehem at night. They ran away because Herod wanted to kill Jesus. The Bible doesn't tell us anything about their experience in Egypt. But we can imagine in our minds that Jesus and His family had some of the same experiences that strangers and foreigners have today when they come to a new land. Jesus' experience helps us to have understanding and pity for the many people today who leave their countries because they were attacked or hurt for their religious beliefs.

Of course, it's easy for us to make friends with people who are the same as us. We may speak the same language or belong to the same race groups. So, we are a lot alike. But we often have a hard time being friends with people who look different from us and don't speak our language. We don't share the same religious beliefs and don't eat the same food. The Good News about Jesus commands us to break the "walls" that separate us from other people. We must get to know people in need, whoever they are, even if they are different than we are.

Read Deuteronomy 10:19; Psalm 146:9; Romans 12:13; and Leviticus 23:22. What important idea do these verses teach us?

How can we help strangers and foreigners? Sometimes this work can be very hard. In some countries you aren't allowed to spend time with foreigners or help them. We must do the best we can anyway. We must help people whenever we can and wherever we can. Remember, some people have suffered terrible things. So, they need our help.

Start with prayer. Then learn about the foreigners and strangers from other countries who have moved to your area. Many places have shelters for them. You can start working for one of these centers. Or maybe your local church Sabbath School can start a special center for these groups.



Jesus' experience helps us to have understanding and pity for the many people today who leave their countries because they were attacked or hurt for their religious beliefs.

TO HELP THE HURTING (Luke 4:18)



People in rich countries spend lots of money on pills to help them not to feel sad or low.

We've all had an experience that has shown how painful life really can be, right? Maybe you live in a land of plenty where people worship money. Or maybe you live in a country where most people are very poor and have very little. Wherever you live, people are suffering. If you've read or watched the news, you know that people in rich countries spend lots of money on pills to help them not to feel sad or low. All those expensive pills show us that money doesn't buy us happiness or peace.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me. He has chosen me to tell good news to the poor. He sent me to tell prisoners that they are free and to tell the blind that they can see again. He sent me to free [make free] those [people] who have been treated [hurt] badly’ ” (Luke 4:18, ERV). What does this verse teach us about the work Jesus did and the work we must do for the people around us?

God wants us to help people all around us. We don't know if or when they will accept Jesus. The most important work we can do is to lead people to Jesus. At the same time, we must help people in need because they need help. We help them because we accept Jesus as our Lord. So, helping other people is part of the work God asks us to do.

We must follow Jesus' example to help people in need. This Bible rule is important. We don't know if everyone we help will accept Jesus. We must help them anyway.

If we really want to help other people, we need to learn what they need. Every people group has its way of showing friendship. In India, you serve food or a drink to your guests. For sure, it's easy to write a check and give an offering to help a stranger we don't know. It's harder to comfort a friend who lost a loved one. Both of these people have needs. What your friend may need may be more than money or nice things. Often the loving support you give to someone in a time of loss can be much more helpful.

Remember this important rule: you are Jesus' helper. Helping our friends starts first with showing unselfish love to them. Try to understand their needs first before trying to offer them help. Give them the help they need, even if you know they aren't ready to follow Jesus.

What's the message for us in Matthew 25:34–40?

THE STRONGEST LOVE (John 15:13)

There will always be many people who need your help: close friends, strangers far away, and foreigners who left their country looking for hope and a new life. We should do what we can do to help them whenever we can. During Jesus' time on this earth, He helped people. Sometimes, Jesus went to the people who needed Him. Other times, people came to Jesus, or their friends brought them to Jesus.

Jesus said, “ ‘The greatest [strongest] love people can show is to die for their friends’ ” (John 15:13, ERV). How can we show this important rule in our work for God?

A family went to the islands of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean Sea. They served God there for six years. For the first three years, the family lived in a mostly Hindu and Muslim community. Many Hindus complained because in the past Christians refused to come to their Thanksgiving celebration each year. Soon, the Christian family became friends with a Hindu. Their new Hindu friend invited them to attend a Thanksgiving celebration. The Christian family followed Jesus' example. Jesus visited His friends when they invited Him to their special celebrations. So, the family accepted the invitation. Did you know that Hindus believe that visitors or friends bring blessings to the home of the person who invited them?

Make a new friend this week. First, think about where you live. Do you know anyone in your area who came to your town from another country? How about the people who live on your street? Do you know all of them? Of course, making friends with a stranger is not an easy task. Ask God for help. He knows everyone and knows the stranger that you can become friends with. Remember, the plan is to be friends with people so that you can lead them to God for help.

Task #1: Learn about foreigners or non-Christians in your area. Visit www.Joshuaproject.net to learn more.

Task #2: Have you met someone new who lives near you? Pray for this person after answering these questions:

- **Am I friends with this person the same way Jesus was friends with people?**
- **Do I know this person's needs?**
- **How can I lead this person to Jesus for healing?**



During Jesus' time on this earth, He helped people. Sometimes, Jesus went to the people who needed Him. Other times, people came to Jesus.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Arthur White, “A Few Days at Long Point,” *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years: 1891–1900*, volume 4, pages 100–104.

Jesus was friendly to foreigners because He wanted to save them (Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20). God also asks us to make friends and help strangers and foreigners. We always must remember this Bible truth: Jesus died for everyone. Jesus “gave his life to pay for our sins. But he not only paid for our sins. He also paid for the sins of the whole world [all people]” (1 John 2:2, NIRV).

“We aren’t doing what God wants us to do when we show love only for our family members. . . .

“When the Lord tells us to help people who aren’t part of our family, He doesn’t want us to stop loving or caring for our family members or the people from our country. Jesus doesn’t want us to love them any less than we do. At the same time, Jesus wants us to love and help other people, too. God has blessed us. He wants us to share His blessings with other people.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 15, 1895, adapted.

God asks us to be a blessing to people who are not part of our family. We may not enjoy his work, or this work may be very hard. We must remember that Jesus commands us to do this work (Acts 1:8; Mark 11:17). So, we must help the helpless people and strangers around us if we want to be Jesus’ followers.



God also asks us to make friends and help strangers and foreigners.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Jesus asks us to help people. What if the things you must do to help them are not always easy? Why must you be willing to help them anyway?
- 2 Some people accused Jesus of evil behavior while He did God’s work: “ ‘He eats too much and drinks too much. He is a friend of tax collectors and “sinners” ’ ” (Matthew 11:19, ICB). Why did people say these things about Jesus? What was Jesus doing? What does this story teach us about our work for God?
- 3 What if someone who isn’t a Christian asks you to join their celebration? Should you go? How can you accept their invitation and, at the same time, follow Bible truth?

THE ROAD TO SPAIN: PART 2

Only five families were in their homes when gunmen robbed the group of nine houses where Seventh-day Adventist pastors and their families lived. The robbers forced the five families into one of the houses. Then the robbers separated the men, women, and children. Police arrived and spread out around the house. At last, the trouble ended 10 hours later at 3 a.m. when one of the gunmen ran into the forest behind the house. The wives and children of the nine pastors moved away after the 2016 robbery. The pastors worked alone for several months while they waited for new jobs. Several pastors moved to other countries to serve as pastors there.

Luis Paiva had worked as a pastor for about ten years. He wasn't sure what to do now. Life was hard in Venezuela. He and his family didn't have much money. Food was hard to get. For three years, Luis tried hard to pay off a loan. But he couldn't pay the interest he owed. Interest is the money you pay the bank each month to borrow money. Now Luis owed the bank \$1,000.

The robbery upset Luis's wife so much. She and their three children weren't at home when the robbers attacked. But she didn't want to live in Venezuela anymore. Luis agreed that the country wasn't safe. But he wanted to pay his loan first before they moved to another country.

Luis asked God for a sign to show him what to do. Luis didn't often ask for signs. He believed God could lead His people without them. But Luis didn't know what else to do. So, he prayed, "Lord, please work a miracle to help me pay this loan. I will know the gift of money is a sign to leave here."

The gunmen stole things from all nine houses, including Luis' house. Luis' home had been robbed many times over the past year. But Luis hadn't reported his losses to the insurance company. That's because the things that the robbers took were not worth very much. But now church leaders offered to pay for everything that was stolen during the past year if Luis got proof from the police that said he was robbed. None of the other nine pastors got the report. But Luis had friends who were policemen. They helped him get the report.

Two months later, the insurance company gave Luis \$1,000 dollars. That was the exact amount Luis needed to pay his loan.

Today, Luis works for God in Spain. He says, "I didn't spend the insurance money on myself or my family. I understood that God sent the money so I could pay off the loan. I knew that God also blessed my plan to leave the country."

Thank you for your Sabbath School offering that helps support workers for God everywhere. Read next week about how Luis flew from Mexico to Spain.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Two months later, the insurance company gave Luis \$1,000.00 dollars.



Sharing Jesus With Rich and Powerful People



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 4; 2 Kings 5:1–19; John 3:1–12; Matthew 19:16–22; Matthew 27:57–60.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘ What good is it [this life] if someone gains [gets] the whole world [fame, riches, everything money can buy] but loses their soul? Or what [thing] can anyone trade for their soul?’ ” (Matthew 16:26, NlrV).

God loves rich and powerful people as much as He loves the poor and weak people who need His help.

THE BIBLE is the Word of God. The Bible shows us God's plan for our lives. An important Bible truth is the teaching that all people are sinners who need God's mercy. Rich and powerful people also belong to this group.

Rich and powerful people in Bible times weren't much different from rich and powerful people in modern times. Both groups wanted fame, riches, and control. Sad to say, they often hurt other people to become rich and powerful (but not always). God loves rich and powerful people as much as He loves the poor and weak people who need His help. We can read stories in the Bible about people who were powerful or rich, or both. The Bible shows us how God uses these rich and powerful men and women to bless other people. Job, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Deborah, Abigail, Solomon, and Esther are a few examples.

This week, we will look at God's work among rich and powerful men: King Nebuchadnezzar, Naaman, Nicodemus, and Zacchaeus, to name a few. We will learn about how God touched the lives of these men in Bible times. Today, God trains Seventh-day Adventist men and women to share with the rich and powerful the Good News about Jesus.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR (Daniel 4)

Some Christians believe that Jesus died for a special group of people. They believe that only this group will be saved. As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that Jesus died for all humans. “God wants all people to be saved. And he wants everyone to know the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, ICB).

“He gave his life to pay for our sins. But he not only paid for our sins. He also paid for the sins of the whole world [all humans]” (1 John 2:2, NlrV). That’s why “God chose us to belong to Christ [Jesus] before the world [earth] was created [made]. He [God] chose us to be holy and without blame in his eyes. He loved us” (Ephesians 1:4, NlrV). Not everyone chooses to accept God’s offering for our sins. But some people do. Many of these people are very powerful. We can read about some of these powerful people in the Bible.

Read about King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. What happened to the king? How did God save him?

At first, King Nebuchadnezzar didn’t believe in God. The Bible shows us how God judged King Nebuchadnezzar in much the same way that He judged and punished some Israelite kings. (You can read more about these kings in 2 Chronicles 32:25, 26; 1 Kings 14:21–31; 1 Samuel 28.) After God judged Nebuchadnezzar, the king behaved the same as an animal. His fingernails, hair, and beard grew long. He ate grass the same as a cow. After seven years, God healed Nebuchadnezzar’s mind. Then the king worshiped God as the One who made everything. Nebuchadnezzar’s amazing story shows us that God wants to save more people than only the ones who are weak and in need. God wants to save rich and powerful people, too. At this time, King Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man on the earth. The king said, “ ‘Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, give praise, honor, and glory to the King of Heaven. Everything he does is right. He is always fair, and he is able to [can] make proud [filled with pride] people humble [empty of all pride]!’ ” (Daniel 4:37, ERV). If only all the powerful and proud people on this earth understood this Bible truth!

What can we learn from this story? First, God uses Daniel to touch the king’s heart. In the same way, God will work with us to touch lives. Second, God can do what we can’t do. God can work a miracle to save someone. As we will see, God has other ways to empty a heart of all pride.



After God judged Nebuchadnezzar, the king behaved the same as an animal.

NAAMAN (2 Kings 5:1–19)

Read Naaman’s story in 2 Kings 5:1–19. What two things does Naaman ask for? What does his story teach us about why we must be patient and understanding with new Christians?



Naaman may have thought that if he brought dirt from Israel to his house, God would be in control of his home.

In 2 Kings 5:1–19, Naaman asks Elisha for two things we may think are a little strange. First, Naaman says, “ ‘Let me have enough dirt from Israel to fill the baskets on two of my mules’ ” (2 Kings 5:17, ERV). Naaman explains to Elisha that he “will not give burnt gifts or kill animals on the altar in worship to other gods any more. I will give only gifts to the Lord’ ” (2 Kings 5:17, NLV). Naaman understood that the Lord was the only God there was. At the same time, Naaman thought God was connected in some special way to the land of Israel and must be worshiped on its ground. So, Naaman wanted to take some dirt from Israel back to Syria. Naaman’s story teaches us an important lesson about leading people to Jesus. New Christians may need time to change some of their old beliefs.

Next, Naaman talks to Elisha about something he must do from time to time: “ ‘And I pray that the LORD will forgive me for this: When my master goes to the temple of Rimmon to worship that false god, he will want to lean on me for support. So I must bow down in the temple of Rimmon. I ask the LORD now to forgive me when that happens’ ” (2 Kings 5:18, ERV). Is Naaman asking for permission to sin in the future? What is going on?

Naaman knew that serving God wasn’t going to be easy in his own country. Part of Naaman’s job included going with his king to Rimmon’s temple. When the king bowed to Rimmon, he needed to lean on Naaman’s arm for support (2 Kings 5:18). Naaman didn’t want anyone to believe he bowed in worship to Rimmon, too. So, before Naaman left Israel, he shared his worry with Elisha. Elisha listened to Naaman and told him, “ ‘go in peace’ ” (2 Kings 5:19, ERV).

We must not think these words mean that Elisha gave Naaman permission to worship false gods. When Elisha said, “Go in peace,” he meant that Naaman should go with no doubt in his heart about God’s love. As time passed, and Naaman grew in faith, God would show Naaman the things he needed to change in his life. In the same way, God leads new Christians today. God knows the best time to ask new Christians to change their behavior. We must remember this important rule when we work with God to save people.

SHARING JESUS WITH EDUCATED PEOPLE (John 3:1–12)

Nicodemus had a lot of knowledge. The Bible says that Nicodemus was a Jewish leader (John 3:1). Jesus said that Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel (John 3:10). Nicodemus understood the Bible well. He also wanted to know the Lord. To our eyes, Nicodemus may have looked as if he was God’s follower. Nicodemus kept all the commandments. The Jewish people respected him. Nicodemus was powerful and rich. Many people believed that Nicodemus’s riches and power were signs that God blessed him. But Nicodemus felt that something was missing from his life.

Read Nicodemus’ story in John 3:1–12. What does this story show us about Nicodemus’s spiritual needs? How does Jesus take care of Nicodemus’s needs right away?

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he tried to pretend that everything was fine with his spiritual life and that he didn’t really need anything from Jesus. But Jesus knew Nicodemus’s heart. In the same way, God knows the hearts and needs of rich and powerful people today. Nicodemus came to Jesus because Jesus’ teachings touched his heart. Nicodemus’s pride kept him from announcing in public that he believed Jesus was the Savior. So, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. That night with Jesus changed Nicodemus forever. After that meeting, Nicodemus didn’t make a public announcement that he accepted Jesus as his personal Savior. But Nicodemus became a secret follower of Jesus.

Read John 7:43–52 and John 19:39. What do these verses tell us about Nicodemus and Jesus?

These verses show us that Nicodemus’s life had been changed by Jesus. Nicodemus tried to protect Jesus when He was alive. Then Nicodemus wanted to honor Jesus after He died. For sure, Jesus touched Nicodemus’s heart. This powerful man, with all his knowledge and education, needed the Savior. We all do.

Yes, we have Bible truth. But why must we be careful not to fall into the “trap” of thinking that what we know is enough to save us? Why must we also accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior?



Nicodemus understood the Bible well. He also wanted to know the Lord.

RICH PEOPLE AND GOD'S KINGDOM (Matthew 19:16–22)

The rich need to be saved as much as anyone else.

Read the story about the rich young man in Matthew 19:16–22. Compare the rich young man with Nicodemus. Nicodemus accepts Jesus. The rich young man doesn't. What lessons can we learn from the rich young man's story?

The story about Jesus and the rich young man shows us that riches can be a terrible “trap.” We must avoid falling into it. Look at Jesus' words about the dangers of riches: “ ‘Yes, I tell you, it is easier [not as hard] for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's kingdom’ ” (Matthew 19:24, ERV). Of course, Jesus isn't saying that rich people can't be saved. But they must be careful not to love their riches more than they love God.

In the end, the rich and the poor will die (if Jesus doesn't come first.) So, the rich need to be saved as much as anyone else. Whatever else money can buy, it can't buy us freedom from death. Only Jesus can make us free from death when we have faith in His gift of everlasting life. Jesus said, “ ‘I am the resurrection [waking up from the dead]. I am life. Everyone who believes in me will have life, even if they die’ ” (John 11:25, ERV).

Read about Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10. How is Zacchaeus's story different from the rich young man's story?

Zacchaeus accepted Jesus, and the rich young man turned away from Him. Do you see in Zacchaeus's story that Jesus doesn't tell Zacchaeus to sell everything he owns and give the money to the poor? Jesus knew that the young man loved his riches very much. So, Jesus asked the rich young man to sell his stuff.

We don't know everything that Jesus says to Zacchaeus when He visits him in his house. We do know that Zacchaeus felt that He needed to make some changes in his life after he met Jesus.

“ ‘What good is it if someone gains [gets] the whole world [fame, riches] but loses their soul [everlasting life]? Or what can anyone trade for their soul?’ ” (Matthew 16:26, NlrV). What is Jesus warning us about?

HELPING GOD SAVE POWERFUL PEOPLE (Matthew 27:57–60)

Jesus knew how to make friends with powerful people. Many powerful people liked and respected Jesus. There also were many powerful people who didn't like Jesus. Powerful people in the Bible came to Jesus for help. They felt that He cared for them. Also, many rich and powerful people didn't come to Jesus right away. They waited until they were sure that Jesus was really God's Son. That's what happened with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

Read Matthew 27:57–60 (also read Mark 15:43–47; Luke 23:50–53; and John 19:38–42). What does this story tell us about how the Lord used a rich man whose life Jesus changed?

The Bible doesn't tell us anything about Joseph of Arimathea before this time in Jesus' life. Then Joseph of Arimathea shows up from nowhere and God uses Him to keep Bible promises He made about Jesus during Old Testament times. God will continue to use rich people in His saving plan. So, we must work with God to help Him save them.

How do you make friends with powerful people? The best advice is don't try to take the lead in making friends with them; let them come to you. Jesus followed this plan. Rich and powerful people were witnesses of Jesus' message and His healing power from God. These rich and powerful people believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

Powerful people may want to help you do God's work for many reasons. They may want to be part of something good that changes the lives of people. Our success for God shows them that Jesus can change their lives.

Start doing work for God that rich and powerful people also can join and be a part of. Take time to help the rich and powerful people in your community and make their lives better.

Task #1: Add to your daily prayer list the name of someone who is a powerful person. This person shouldn't be a member of your church. Also, this person should be someone you may get the chance to meet from time to time.

Task #2: Send a letter or an email to a powerful leader. Don't worry if you've never met. Tell this person, "I am praying for you." Then be sure to do it!



Powerful people may want to help you do God's work for many reasons. They may want to be part of something good that changes the lives of people.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Ministry to the Rich,” *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 209–216; “Captive Maid Shows Concern for Naaman,” *Reflecting Christ*, page 337.



Jesus died for princes and also homeless people.

Jesus loves poor people as much as He loves rich and powerful people. Jesus died for princes and also homeless people. Jesus knew the best way to touch human hearts. He warned us, “ ‘Yes, I tell you, it is easier [not as hard] for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom’ ” (Matthew 19:24, ERV). This week, we learned about why we must share the Good News about Jesus with rich and powerful people. Sometimes rich and powerful people may not know they need Jesus. But they need God’s saving mercy as much as anyone else.

“Many people say that we need to help the poor. Shouldn’t we also give help to the rich? Many people think that rich people are bad and that they can’t be saved. . . . Thousands of rich men die without being warned. Rich people may look as if they don’t care about everlasting life. But many of them carry heavy loads in their hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 210, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Jesus broke down the walls that separated the rich and the poor. How do we as Seventh-day Adventists continue to do this same work?
- 2 Jesus said, “ ‘The seed that fell among the thorns is like [the same as] others [people] who hear the message. But then the worries of this life and the false promises of wealth [riches] crowd it out. They [worries and riches] keep the message from producing [growing] fruit’ ” (Matthew 13:22, ERV).
- 3 In class, review the question asked at the end of Tuesday’s study that talks about how knowing Bible truth isn’t the same thing as our being saved by it. Why is this idea so important? If knowing the truth only isn’t what saves us, what does save us?
- 4 What other reasons may explain why the rich young man rejected Jesus while Zacchaeus accepted Him?

THE ROAD TO SPAIN: PART 3

God worked a miracle in Pastor Luis Paiva's life. God gave Luis \$1,000 dollars to pay off a loan. This miracle helped Luis believe that God wanted him and his family to leave Venezuela. But they didn't have any savings.

Luis prayed, "Lord, how do I leave with no savings?"

Luis's wife told him that a pastor in the United States called to talk with him. The pastor needed a volunteer to work for a year in a part of Mexico that didn't have a Seventh-day Adventist church. So, Luis went to Mexico. His wife and children joined him two months later. Over the next eight months, 35 people were baptized because of Luis' hard work. One new member gave the Adventist group a building. The building became the new church for the group.

But the government refused to give Luis a visa to allow him to stay in Mexico. A visa is a special passport. Luis didn't know what to do. He didn't want to move to the United States without a visa or to stay in Mexico without a visa. Luis made friends with someone who worked in the government's visa office. When the government worker heard about Luis's problem, he promised not to send Luis back to Venezuela. Luis believed his friend. At the same time, Luis trusted God more than any human. God said, "Don't depend on your leaders for help. Don't depend on people, because they cannot save you" (Psalm 146:3, ERV).

Worried, Luis prayed. He also made phone calls to churches in the United States and Canada and asked for legal advice about leaving Mexico. Only two churches in Canada answered Luis. Luis continued to stay in Mexico. Then a church member visited Luis's home. He asked Luis, "What is your biggest fear?"

Luis said, "I don't want to live in Mexico without a visa, and I don't want to travel without a visa to the United States. I also don't want to go back to my country."

The man asked, "If you had the money, what would you do right now?"

Luis answered, "I'd buy a plane ticket to fly to Spain." Luis had an aunt who went to Spain 20 years earlier. If he moved there, he'd be near her. Also, Luis visited Spain three years earlier and liked the country very much.

The church member said, "So, let's buy the tickets so you and your family can fly to Spain."

The man bought the plane tickets and told Luis not to worry. He said, "God is leading you."

Today, Luis and his wife work for God in Spain.

Thank you for you Sabbath School offering that helps support church workers worldwide. Read next week about how Luis left a fruit stand to become a worker for Jesus.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The man bought the plane tickets and told Luis not to worry. He said, "God is leading you."



Sharing Jesus With People Who Don't Know Him—Part 1



SABBATH—DECEMBER 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 17:1–16; Acts 17:18–21; Acts 17:22, 23; Acts 17:24–27; Acts 17:24–34.

MEMORY VERSE: “He is the God who made the whole world [the earth] and everything in it. He is the Lord of the land and the sky. He does not live in temples that men build!” (Acts 17:24, ICB).

While Paul was in Athens, he tried to preach about Jesus to the people.

LUKE tells us about Paul's work in Athens, Greece. Luke writes, “So he [Paul] went to the synagogue [Jewish place of worship]. There he talked both with Jews and with Greeks who worshiped God. Each day he spoke with anyone who happened to be in the market place” (Acts 17:17, NIV).

Paul refused to help only his own people, the Jews. God sent Paul to help save other people, too.

Paul also refused to work only with non-Jews who accepted God. They already knew some Bible truth, even if they didn't know Jesus. Their faith and knowledge about God made Paul's work easy.

While Paul was in Athens, he tried to preach about Jesus to the people. Many famous philosophers lived in Athens. Philosophers were people who studied about the meaning of life. Paul wanted to share Jesus with the people in Athens. The beliefs and history of the people in Athens were different from Jewish beliefs and history.

How did Paul try to share Jesus with these people? What can we learn from his story?

A JEW IN ATHENS (Acts 17:1–16)

Read about Paul in Acts 17:1–16. How did Paul end up in Athens? What did he feel about the things he saw there?

Paul “was very upset to see that the city was full of statues of gods” (Acts 17:16, NIV). Paul knew well the history of his people. God warned the Jews many times to stop worshiping statues. Israel’s mistakes upset Paul. So, all the statues Paul saw in Athens made him upset, too. Paul’s heart was filled with love for the people in Athens. Paul wanted to help the Athenians know about Jesus. The people would die in their sins if they did not know Bible truth.

Today, our cities are filled with “statues” of false gods. Maybe these false gods are not the same as the ones Paul saw. We worship gods of entertainment, sports, beauty, money, fashion, and other things. Sad to say, many Christians can walk through a city and not be upset by its false gods. Paul was different. The statues of gods made him upset because He was filled with the Holy Spirit and with love for God. Many Christians in Paul’s day didn’t understand that God wanted His followers to share the Good News with people everywhere. Paul knew that God wanted to save the Athenians along with everyone else. Paul understood that God wanted His followers to share the Good News with people who didn’t know anything about Jesus. These people included the same ones who worshiped statues of gods and the philosophers who filled the streets of Athens. As we saw yesterday, a philosopher is someone who studied about the meaning of life.

Paul went to the marketplace in Athens to meet these statue worshipers and philosophers. Paul knew he couldn’t use the same plan to share Jesus with the non-Jews that he used with the Jews. Jewish beliefs meant nothing to the people that Paul met in the marketplace in Athens. So, Paul needed a brand-new plan.

Today, we often try to share Jesus with people who know nothing about Him, the Bible, or the Christian religion. So, we need a brand-new plan, the same as Paul did. A plan that works fine in Buenos Aires may be useless in Bangkok.

What types of “statues” of false gods are people worshiping in your community? How can you help your community understand that these “gods” are useless?



Paul went to the marketplace in Athens to meet these statue worshipers and philosophers.

PAUL IN THE AREOPAGUS (Acts 17:18–21)

God gave Paul his work. Wherever Paul went, he preached the Good News about Jesus. So, he did the same thing in Athens.

Read Acts 17:18–21. How did the people in the marketplace feel and think about Paul’s preaching and questions?



“The wise men of Athens were amazed as they heard Paul talk.”

Paul told the people in the marketplace about Jesus. The people listened to Paul and became curious about the “strange gods” (Acts 17:18, NLV) that Paul talked about. Then the Athenians took Paul to the Areopagus. The Areopagus was a part of the city where the leaders judged legal problems and religious questions. As far as we know, Paul wasn’t in any trouble. The Athenians wanted Paul to tell them more about this “new idea” that he taught (Acts 17:19, ERV). The Athenian people may have thought Paul’s ideas were very strange. At the same time, they respected Paul’s skills as a thinker and speaker.

Acts 17:21 says that the Athenians spent all their time talking about, and listening to, the latest ideas. Was Luke trying to say that the Athenians were lazy? Of course not! Luke wanted us to understand that the Athenians were excellent thinkers. They loved to argue. Remember, many of the most important and famous thinkers in history were Greek: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Their ideas continue to be studied to this day. For many hundreds of years, Athens was a famous center for thinkers and philosophers. As we saw already, philosophers were people who study the meaning of life. Many of their ideas were very different from Christian teachings. The idea of a Savior who woke up from the dead was very strange to them.

In Athens, Paul expected the Holy Spirit to use his past education to touch the hearts of the Athenian people. Paul learned his knowledge from Gamaliel, a famous Jewish teacher. To Paul’s surprise, the Spirit used the education Paul got on the streets in Athens. What Paul learned about the people and their city helped him more than anything else to share Jesus. “The wise men of Athens were amazed as they heard Paul talk. He showed them that he knew about their works of art, their writings, and their religion.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of Apostles*, page 237, adapted.

PAUL AND THE UNKNOWN GOD (Acts 17:22, 23)

Notice that Paul didn't make the Athenians feel bad about their false religion or their false gods. Paul looked for whatever good he could find in their beliefs. Then he used those things to help the Athenians understand the Good News about Jesus.

Read about Paul's way of sharing the Good News with the Athenian people in Acts 17:22, 23. What things did Paul do to touch their hearts?

"Then Paul stood up in the court and said, 'You men of Athens, I see that you are very religious and worship many gods' " (Acts 17:22, WE). Paul praised the Athenians for being very religious. Yes, they worshiped false gods. But Paul respected and honored their faith because it showed that they cared about spiritual things.

Paul continued, " 'I was going through your city and I saw the things you worship. I found an altar that had these words written on it: "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." You worship a god that you don't know. This [God] is the God I want to tell you about' " (Acts 17:23, ERV). Paul studied the Athenian religion. His words showed that he respected the people. He didn't announce to the Athenian people that he was an expert. (He really was one! He also had the answers for how these people needed to change.) But Paul didn't brag, "Hey, everyone! I'm an expert!" If Paul did that, the Athenians would have paid no attention to him. Paul showed the people that he cared for them and wanted the best for them, too.

Paul explained the "unknown god" (Acts 17:23, ERV) to the Athenians. The Athenians believed in god (in many gods, really). Many people back then didn't believe at all. So, Paul started with that belief and then shared with them more Bible truth. The Athenians built the altar to the unknown god because they wanted to make sure they weren't missing anything in their worship. Paul didn't make fun of the idea of an altar to the unknown god. Paul showed that he respected people who cared enough about spiritual things to go to the effort and expense of worshiping something they didn't know.

How can you, the same as Paul, find ways to share Jesus with people you meet from other religions?



The Athenians built the altar to the unknown god because they wanted to make sure they weren't missing anything in their worship.

INTRODUCING A NEW GOD (Acts 17:24–27)

Paul had the attentions of the thinkers in Athens. So, he told them about the God of heaven.

Read about Paul’s sermon in Acts 17:24–27. What did Paul say to introduce the Athenian people to God?



Paul showed the Athenians that he studied their beliefs.

Paul’s words thrilled the Athenians. The Athenians are the people who lived in Athens. The Athenian people cared enough about spiritual things to build an altar to a god they didn’t know. So, they were excited to learn what Paul had to tell them. Paul’s words were interesting to them. Paul told them about a God who doesn’t live in a temple. This God needs nothing from humans, and He takes care of their needs. The Greeks had many stories about the gods. The Greek gods weren’t very nice to humans. The Athenians couldn’t trust their gods to help them. Their gods were selfish. They often hurt people who worshiped them. So, the Athenians were excited to learn about Paul’s teaching. Paul told them that there was a God who was loving. The Athenians thought this idea was wonderful!

Paul also told the Athenians that the God they didn’t know was Someone that they could know. More than that, God wants people to know who He is!

For sure, Paul’s sermon at the court was much longer than the few words Luke shares in this story. Luke may have wanted to save space in his book. So, he may have told us only the most important parts of Paul’s sermon. When we look at Paul’s sermon and study it more deeply, we can see that his sermon had five parts:

1. Paul first praised the Athenians for their faith and their respect for religion.
2. Next, Paul showed the Athenians that he studied their beliefs. He told them things that he learned and respected about them.
3. Then Paul told the Athenians that he discovered something about their religion that they said that they didn’t understand.
4. After that, Paul told them about God. The Athenians needed to know that God lived and loved them. He is not far away from them.
5. Finally, at the end of his sermon, Paul warns the people not to reject this knowledge about this God they didn’t know.

PAUL'S FINAL WORDS ON MARS' HILL (Acts 17:24–34)

Read Paul's final words to the Athenians in the court on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:24–34). What does Paul say?

Paul uses some famous quotes from Greek writers in his sermon to the Athenian people. These Greek writers say things that agree with Bible truth. Paul uses these quotes to help the Athenian people understand his teachings to them about God. We can learn an important lesson from Paul. When we are trying to teach people about Jesus, we should learn about their beliefs. Then we can find ideas we can both agree about. When we follow this plan, we will learn a powerful way of teaching other people about Jesus.

Do you see that Paul uses ideas that he and the Athenians both agree about so that he can help them understand the Resurrection? The Resurrection is the teaching that Jesus woke up from the dead. Paul wants the Athenians to understand the hope this teaching gives them. What happened when Paul finished teaching about the Resurrection? The Bible tells us that some people made fun of the idea. Some people believed. Other people said they wanted to hear Paul tell them more about the idea. The most important thing for us to learn is that everyone paid attention to Paul's sermon. They wanted to hear what he had to say. That was Paul's hope from the start.

We know that some people will reject the Good News about Jesus. We must do everything possible to help them understand our message. Paul did everything he could to help the Athenians listen to him with hearts open to the God they didn't know. This God loved them and wanted the Athenians to know Him personally. God showed the Athenians mercy for the whole time they knew nothing about Him. But the day was coming when God would judge everyone. The proof for God's future work as Judge was Jesus and His resurrection.

The people heard and understood Paul's message. Now they had to make a choice to reject it or study more about it. Some did study more and followed Jesus (Acts 17:34).

Task #1: Ask God to show you how to share Him with someone you know.

Task #2: How can you share the Good News about Jesus on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and so on)?



What happened when Paul finished teaching about the Resurrection?

The Bible tells us that many people made fun of the idea. But a few people believed.



“Paul’s heart was filled with love for the Athenian people.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Paul’s experience at the court on Mars’ Hill can teach us how to share the Good News about Jesus with people who know nothing about Him. Because of Paul’s success at Mars’ Hill, a small group of people became Christians and started worshiping God in Athens.

“Paul’s words are an example for us who live today. Paul had deep faith in God. He didn’t lose courage when he was lonely and times were hard. In a place where people worshiped false gods and statues, Paul won people to Jesus.

“Paul’s words to the Athenians are the same as a special treasure for the church. The Athenians’ hearts were filled with pride. So, if Paul wasn’t careful, he could have said something to upset the Athenians. What if Paul attacked their gods? Then Paul would have been in danger of dying the same death as Socrates. [Socrates was made to drink poison because of his teachings.] Paul’s heart was filled with love for the Athenian people. Paul carefully showed the Athenians that their gods were false. How did Paul do this? He showed them the God of Heaven. He was the God they didn’t know.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 240, 241, adapted.

Paul got to know the people in Athens. He studied their culture or way of life. He praised their respect for spiritual things. He didn’t upset or insult the people he talked to. Only God could make this miracle happen. This miracle is the “special treasure” Ellen G. White talks about in the quote above. As a church, we need this knowledge. So, we must pay special attention to what Paul did in Athens and learn from him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 What’s the first thing we should do when we start work for God in a city? What did Paul do in Athens?
- 2 What is the best way to make friends with people who don’t know God?
- 3 What are some of the false gods that people worship today? What should you avoid doing when you start working with people who worship these gods?
- 4 Why didn’t Paul stop preaching after he told the Athenian people that God loved them? Paul told the people that Jesus woke up from the dead. Then some of the people thought Paul was crazy. Should Paul have said that? Yes, or no? Explain your answer.

THE ROAD TO SPAIN, PART 4

When Luis Paiva moved to Spain, he needed to earn a living to support his family. So, he decided to sell fruit to make some money. Luis knew in his heart that God wanted him to work for Him elsewhere. Luis also worried that his new business might get in the way of his working fully for God. Two weeks later, Luis's life fell apart. His business started to fail. His partners cheated him. He got sick and couldn't walk. But Luis didn't want to give up. He asked some Seventh-day Adventists for business advice. One of the men knew that Luis trained to be a pastor and scolded him. The man said, "You shouldn't be selling fruit when God chose you to preach the Good News!" These words cut Luis's heart as if God Himself said them. Luis felt so hopeless. How could he serve as a pastor when he didn't have a church? Luis talked about the problem with his wife. In the end, they decided to go back to Venezuela. Maybe Luis could get better there.

A short time later, Luis got a phone call from a man named Gabriel Diaz. Gabriel was a leader of the Adventist Church in Spain. The church needed a worker to go to Lugo, a city in the northwest part of Spain. Luis was excited about working as a pastor again. At the same time, he told Gabriel that he had terrible health problems. He said, "I can't walk."

Gabriel didn't lose hope. The two men prayed together. Two weeks later, Luis started to walk again. Then he went to Lugo and started a house church. The first Sabbath, only two people showed up. In less than four months, 22 people started coming to the house church every Sabbath. Three of these people were new members who had been baptized. Other people started studying to get ready for baptism. Also, Luis started a Bible study school and another school to teach members how to lead other people to Jesus. Luis also wants to move his church members from the house church to their own church building.

Luis says, "We must win more hearts for Jesus so that we can open our own church. I trust God. I believe He will make this plan happen because we are following His example."

Ellen White wrote, "Only Jesus' plan will give you real success in leading people to Him. The Savior spent time with people. He showed them that He wanted the best for them. Jesus showed people He understood their suffering. Jesus gave them the things they needed. He won their trust. Then He told them, 'Follow Me.'"—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 143, adapted.

Luis never expected to serve God in Spain. Now he is so happy. He says, "I'm here because of God's mercy."

Thanks for your Sabbath School offering that helps support church workers worldwide.

INSIDE
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“‘Follow Me.’”—*Ministry of Healing*, page 143, adapted.



Sharing Jesus With People Who Don't Know Him—Part 2



SABBATH—DECEMBER 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Judges 3:1–6; Matthew 9:35–38; Matthew 15:22–28; Acts 10:9–16, 28, 34, 35; Matthew 8:10, 13.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Jesus answered, ‘Woman, you have great [much] faith! I will do what you asked me to do.’ And at that moment the woman’s daughter was healed” (Matthew 15:28, ICB).

In 2018, a report from the United Nations said that 55% of people on this earth live in cities.

FROM THE START, a loving God went looking for His lost children (Genesis 3:9). Today, this same loving God continues to save lost people (read Revelation 14:6–12), including the lost who live in cities. In 2018, a report from the United Nations said that 55% of people on this earth live in cities. This number will grow to 68% (if Jesus doesn't come) by 2050. We have no choice: we must share the Good News about Jesus with people in the cities.

Many of God's people act the same as Jonah when God asks them to do His work in a city. They run away from the task. “Everything written in the past was written to teach us. The Scriptures [the Old and New Testaments] give us strength to go on. They encourage us and give us hope” (Romans 15:4, NlrV). We must learn from Jonah's story, so we don't make his same mistakes.

When Jesus lived on this earth, He helped people in the cities of Israel and also in foreign lands.

This week, we will study the story about Jesus' work for the people in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. What can we learn from Jesus' work that can help us in our work today?

WORKING FOR GOD IN FARAWAY PLACES (Judges 3:1–6)

We read that “Jesus left Galilee and went to the area of Tyre and Sidon” (Matthew 15:21, NIV). Why did Jesus take His followers from Galilee to these lands where people worshiped false gods? Jesus had important lessons He wanted to teach His followers. But He couldn’t teach His followers these lessons in Galilee. So, Jesus took His followers on a field trip to foreign lands where they could learn. Jesus wanted to teach His followers how to help Him save people in cities and faraway lands.

Read Judges 3:1–6; 1 Kings 5:1–12; and 1 Kings 11:1–6. How do these verses help us understand a bit about the history of Tyre and Sidon?

From Judges 3:1–6, we see that God gave His people experiences with Tyre and Sidon. For Israel, these experiences were the same as taking a test of faith. God’s people failed the test: “The Israelites began to marry the daughters of those people. And the Israelites allowed their daughters to marry the sons of those people. Israel served the gods of those people” (Judges 3:6, ICB). So, right from the start, the people from the lands around Israel caused Israel to sin.

In 1 Kings 5:1–11, we see that the Sidonians and the Hebrews were trading partners. For sure, this partnership was good business for both countries. At the same time, the partnership weakened Israel’s relationship with God.

1 Kings 11:1–6 shows us that Israel’s business partnership with Sidon caused much evil: Solomon married a Sidonian princess, who led him away from God. “Solomon worshiped Ashtoreth. Ashtoreth was the female god of the Sidonians. He also worshiped Molek. Molek was the god of the Ammonites. The Lord hated that god” (1 Kings 11:5, NIV).

Now that we know a bit more about Israel’s history with Sidon and Tyre, we may be surprised that Jesus brought His followers to these lands. Jesus wanted His followers to work to save the people in foreign cities. But first, the followers needed to understand that their dislike for these people was wrong.

What can you do to support Adventists who work for God in the cities?



Jesus wanted His followers to work to save the people in foreign cities. But first, the followers needed to understand that their dislike for these people was wrong.

LOOKING FOR THE LOST IN THE CITIES (Matthew 9:35–38)

Read Matthew 9:35–38. What do these verses teach us about the work we must do for God in cities and other places where lots of people live?

Wherever Jesus went, He felt love and pity for the crowds He met. Many of these people lived in big villages, towns, or cities. Luke 19:41 tells us that Jesus cried for Jerusalem. We may not understand how much Jesus loves His children in the cities. That’s why He asks us to pray for them. When we do, He will fill our hearts with love for them.

When Jesus started His work for God on earth, people came to Him from different places. Where did they come from? Read the list in Matthew 4:23–25 for the answer.



We may not understand how much Jesus loves His children in the cities.

In Matthew 4:25, the people came from Galilee to follow Jesus. They also came from the city-states of the Decapolis to the east. They also came from Judea to the south. Notice they didn’t come from Samaria. What other area is missing from the list in Matthew 4:23–25? The answer is: the area of Tyre and Sidon, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This area was to the north and west of Galilee. Now we see why Jesus took His followers to this area! He wanted to teach His followers to go help the people in foreign lands who hadn’t come to Him.

“After Jesus’ experience with the spiritual leaders, He left Capernaum. Then He crossed Galilee and went to the hill country on the borders of Phoenicia. When Jesus looked to the west, He saw the old cities of Tyre and Sidon on the plain below Him. These cities were filled with temples to false gods. The cities also had beautiful palaces and markets filled with goods. Ships filled their harbors.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 399, adapted.

How can we help people in the cities understand that their “beautiful palaces and markets filled with goods” are empty without Jesus in their lives?

IN TYRE AND SIDON (MATTHEW 15:22–28)

Bible thinkers believe that Matthew wrote his book about Jesus for a Jewish audience. Bible thinkers also believe that Mark wrote his book about Jesus mostly for non-Jewish readers. This information helps us when we read the Gospels. The Gospels are the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Read Matthew 15:22–28 and Mark 7:24–30. Compare the two stories in Matthew and Mark about the woman. What is different about her in each story?

Do you see how Matthew says the mother is a Canaanite? Mark uses other words to tell us about this woman. She is a Greek or a non-Jew. Then Mark gives us more information. The woman was born in the area of Syro-Phoenicia, which means she is a Syrian from the land of Phoenicia.

Think about how Matthew’s audience felt when they read the story in Matthew 15. Matthew’s audience was mostly Jewish. So, they thought Syro-Phoenicians were evil people who worshiped false gods. In the past, these people caused Israel to sin. So, the Jews in Jesus’ day didn’t like the Syro-Phoenicians very much. Jesus’ followers didn’t think that the woman had faith or was part of God’s kingdom!

Mark’s non-Jewish readers would have different feelings about the Syro-Phoenician woman when they read her story in Mark 7. The non-Jews didn’t have the same bad experience as the Jews did with the Syro-Phoenicians. So, Mark’s audience would feel excited when they read the story because Jesus healed someone who was one of them! To the non-Jews, the Syro-Phoenician woman was a beloved mother who cared about her daughter. The mother wanted Jesus to heal her child.

“Jesus didn’t answer the woman right away. He behaved the same as the Jews behaved around people they didn’t like. Jesus behaved this way because He wanted to teach His followers that they shouldn’t be cold and hard in their hearts to this woman. Then Jesus gave the woman what she asked for. Jesus showed mercy to her to teach His followers to help people who are suffering.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 400, adapted.

Read 1 John 2:2. What does this verse tell us about how we are all the same in God’s eyes?



“Jesus didn’t answer the woman right away. He behaved the same as the Jews behaved around people they didn’t like.”

“SEND HER AWAY!” (Acts 10:9–16, 28, 34, 35)

In the neighborhoods of the cities, many people long for hope. In Jesus’ day, what stopped God’s people from sharing His hope with the people in foreign cities? Pride and hatred for non-Jews made the Jews blind. They couldn’t see how much the people near to them needed the hope of Jesus’ first coming. Today, Jesus wants His people to share the hope of the Second Coming with many groups in the cities (Titus 2:13). Jesus didn’t worry about where people were born or where they lived. We should feel the same way as Jesus.



Peter saw a tablecloth filled with animals and birds that weren’t clean.

Read Acts 10:9–16, 28, 34, 35. What lesson does the Holy Spirit teach us in these verses?

While Peter waited for lunch, God gave him a vision or dream. Peter saw a tablecloth filled with animals and birds that weren’t clean. Three times in the vision God told Peter to get up and eat the animals. God used these dreams to show Peter that his heart was filled with religious pride and dislike for non-Jews. Peter learned an important Bible truth. He said, “ ‘I really understand now that to God every person is the same. God accepts anyone who worships him and does what is right. It is not important what country a person comes from’ ” (Acts 10:34, 35, ICB).

Now let’s go back to our story about Tyre and Sidon. What lessons can Peter’s words in Acts 10:34, 35 teach us about the story in Matthew 15:22–28 and Mark 7:24–30? Look again at Jesus and His conversation with the mother. What lessons did the followers learn from this field trip that Peter learned from his vision on the rooftop? How can these lessons help us as we work for Jesus in the cities? What dislikes fill our hearts that stop us from seeing the needs of people in the cities? What work has God given us to do in the cities around us? How can doing this work help us to empty our hearts of hate and spiritual pride?

Jesus was patient with His followers. They didn’t understand that God’s plan was for all humans everywhere. The Holy Spirit can help us empty our hearts of our dislike for other people. Then we can finish our work for God in the cities.

How can we empty our hearts of hate and pride? Read Galatians 2:11–13 for the answer.

FAITH ON EARTH? (Matthew 8:10, 13)

Jesus asks a question at the end of one of His picture stories: “ ‘But when the Son of Man comes, will he find people on earth who have faith?’ ” (Luke 18:8, Nlrv). What is Jesus looking for? The picture story in Luke 18 teaches us that Jesus wants people who believe in Him when times are hard and everything looks hopeless.

Read Matthew 8:10, 13; Matthew 9:2; Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 2:5; Mark 10:46–52; and Luke 18:35–43. In these verses, who does Jesus say has faith?

Jesus’ list includes people who had faith in cities. Their faith shined the same as a bright light during dark times. In Capernaum, Jesus talks about several people with faith. In Matthew 8:10, 13, we see a Roman soldier who has faith. We already studied about four faith-filled friends who rip open a roof to lower their sick friend to Jesus (Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5). In Mark 10, we meet the blind man, Bartimaeus. After Jesus heals Bartimaeus, his faith shines the same as a bright light in the city of Jericho.

We expect much faith among God’s own people. Sad to say, the Bible says there was little faith and much doubt in places in Jesus’ day. People who lived in Nazareth, the town where Jesus grew up, didn’t have much faith. When we doubt God, we limit God’s blessings in our lives. Many times Jesus says to the Jews, “ ‘Your faith is so small!’ ” (Matthew 6:30, Nlrv; Matthew 8:26; Matthew 14:31; Matthew 16:8). In Matthew 17:17, Jesus says, “ ‘You people today have no faith’ ” (ERV).

One lesson we can learn today is that we can find faith in places we don’t expect to find it: in the hearts of foreigners who live in cities, in people who worship false gods, and in people from different religions. We need to enter the cities as Jesus did. We must look for the lost who will accept Jesus with saving faith. These people are waiting for our help.

Task #1: Pray for more faith to share your love for Jesus with people near and far away.

Task #2: How did you come to know Jesus and His Three Angels’ Messages? Make a list of three spiritual blessings that Jesus gave you in your personal life. Share your list with your class on Sabbath.



After Jesus heals Bartimaeus, his faith shines the same as a bright light in the city of Jericho.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Many non-Jews had a better understanding of the Bible promises about the coming Savior than the Jewish teachers. Some of these non-Jews hoped for His coming to save them from sin. These thinkers wanted to learn more about the offerings the Jews made that showed Jesus’ saving work. But the Jews prevented these non-Jews from learning about this Bible truth.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 33, adapted.

“The Lord Jesus is our Mighty Savior. He died for men and women everywhere. Jesus can wake them up from spiritual sleep. He can fill their hearts with mercy and love. Jesus can soften their hearts. He can show them Bible truth. God is the Master Worker, and not man. At the same time, God chooses men to be His helpers. God wants workers who will share Bible truth with people who don’t know it. God has people who are loyal to Him in all the churches. These people are the same as jewels. So, we must not say terrible things about people from other religions. With love in our hearts, we must share the Bible truth about Jesus. Let other people see our love for God. Let them see that we are God’s children. Then they will want to learn more about Bible truth. . . . Show people Jesus in your life. He is the Savior of the human family.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 17, 1893, adapted.



“God wants workers who will share Bible truth with people who don’t know it.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What are some of the needs of people in the area where you live? How can you and your church meet these needs? How can you help meet the needs of people who don’t know the Bible truths that we know?
- ② Look at the Ellen G. White quote above about people from other faiths: “God has people who are loyal to Him in all the churches. These people are the same as jewels. So, we must not say terrible things about people from other religions.” How can we teach people that their beliefs and behaviors are not correct without putting these people down?
- ③ Jesus asked, “‘When the Son of Man comes, will he find people on earth who have faith?’ ” (Luke 18:8, NIV). What is Jesus really asking with this question? How are faith and belief different? What if people have correct beliefs but don’t have any faith? How can that happen?

DREAMING DREAMS—PART 1

16-year-old Joseph Delamou was worried. He worried that he didn't belong to Jesus' true church. Joseph lived in Conakry, the capital city of the country of Guinea in West Africa. He prayed, "Show me the way, Lord. I'll go wherever You lead."

That night, Joseph had a dream. He dreamed that he and 70 members of his church were at a meeting. Joseph and his church members talked about ways to add more members to their church. Outside the building where they met, Joseph saw a castle that belonged to a mighty king. This king bragged that he controlled the whole earth. All of a sudden, a group of soldiers burst into the meeting. One of the soldiers told Joseph, "You need to leave and come with us. We want you to join our army."

Joseph didn't want to leave, but the soldier said he must. The soldier told Joseph, "Leave. You can't stay here. Go anywhere you want. Just don't stay here. After three days, you can come back and see what has happened to the people here."

Joseph left. Three days later, he came back. The building was empty. Joseph wondered where everyone was. Then he saw a boy hiding behind the wall of the king's castle. The boy bled. When Joseph tried to talk to him, the boy put a finger to his lips to tell him to be quiet. The boy whispered, "Come here."

Joseph came near. The boy said, "Your God is powerful!"

Joseph said, "What?" The boy answered, "I said, 'Your God is powerful!' How come you are the only person who left us three days ago? Many of us were shot and killed. You are the only one who escaped. How?"

The boy led Joseph to a pile of dirt. The boy said the dirt was the grave of more than 40 people. He told Joseph, "The soldiers didn't train anyone. They shot and killed people. Then they put the ones who didn't die in cages and took them away."

Joseph saw a snake lying still on the ground. The boy said the snake was the king who used to live in the castle. The boy said, "Come see the prince who is now in control."

Joseph couldn't take his eyes off the dead snake. "How did a snake make itself king of the whole earth? I don't understand how people accepted a snake as their king."

The boy said, "I can't explain this to you right now."

Then, Joseph woke up. He didn't understand everything in his dream. He knew the dream was a sign that God wanted him to leave his father's church. Where should he go?

Your 13th Sabbath Offering on December 30 will help church workers share the Good News about Jesus in West Africa, which includes Guinea. Thank you for planning to give a big offering. Read more about Joseph next week.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Joseph couldn't take his eyes off the dead snake. "How did a snake make itself king of the whole earth? I don't understand how people accepted a snake as their king."



Esther and Mordecai



SABBATH—DECEMBER 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 1:1–12; Esther 2:1–9; Esther 3:1–15; Esther 4:1–14; Esther 9:1–12.

MEMORY VERSE: “Here is what the Lord says to me. ‘It is not enough for you as my servant to bring the tribes [family groups] of Jacob back to their land. It is not enough for you to bring back the people of Israel I have kept alive. I will also make you [the same as] a light for the Gentiles. Then you will make it possible for the whole world [the people on earth] to be saved’ ” (Isaiah 49:6, NlrV).

As Queen of Persia, Esther had an important part in Bible history.

ESTHER AND HER UNCLE MORDECAI were Jews who lived in Susa. Susa was the capital city of the Kingdom of Persia. Many Jews had gone back to live in the land of Judah. But Esther and her uncle, along with other Jews, stayed in Persia.

Then Esther became queen of all Persia. “The king loved Esther more than any of the other young women, and she became his favorite. He approved of [liked] her more than any of the others [young women]. So King Xerxes put a crown on Esther’s head and made her the new queen in place of Vashti” (Esther 2:17, ERV).

As Queen of Persia, Esther had an important part in Bible history. Her story shows how God’s people can share His truth in foreign lands.

Take time to read the book of Esther for this week’s study.

A PRISONER OF WAR IN A FOREIGN LAND (Daniel 1:1–12)

Esther was a prisoner of war. Living in a foreign country isn't easy. We may have a hard time understanding the experience of Esther and other Jews living in a foreign land, first under the Babylonians and then under the Persians.

None of us lives in an Adventist country where our religious beliefs are the same as the laws of our land. Before the Jewish people were taken to Babylon, they lived in their own country. So, their religious beliefs and the laws of the land were the same. Keeping the Sabbath was part of their religious law and part of the laws of their land. So, living in Israel should have made it easy for Jews to honor God, right?

The Bible shows us that laws are not enough to make people holy. Our faith and loyalty to God come from our heart. Laws can't force our obedience. We must want to obey God. If we don't want to, sin will control our lives.

“ ‘These people worship me only with their words. They honor me by [with] what they say. But their hearts are far away from me. Their worship doesn't mean anything to me. They teach nothing but human rules that they have been taught’ ” (Isaiah 29:13, NIV).

Isaiah 29:13 shows a picture of false worship. Compare this picture with Bible stories of people who obeyed God with their whole hearts. Many of these men and women showed faith in God during hard times, when having faith was hard. Their stories show us that God's loyal followers will obey Him in the worst of times.

God's people often can have a hard time living in foreign lands. Read the stories in Daniel 1:1–12; Daniel 3:1–12; and Daniel 6:1–9. What are some of the hard times that God's people have in these stories?

We all live in places where the laws of the land or the lifestyle around us can make it hard, at times, to share Jesus. The stories in Daniel show us that God's people can stay loyal to Him when times are hard. The stories in Daniel have a happy ending. Not all stories end in a happy way. But we must obey God anyway.

What are some of the things that make it hard for you to share your faith? How do you solve these problems?



The stories in Daniel show us that God's people can stay loyal to Him when times are hard.

IN A FOREIGN PALACE (Esther 2:1–9)



The king commanded his leaders to send the most beautiful young women in Persia to Susa so that one of them could become his new queen.

After the Kingdom of Babylon ended and the Kingdom of Media-Persia started, many Jews went back to their country. But not everyone went home. Some Jews stayed in Persia.

This bit of history helps us understand the story of Esther better. The Bible tells us the time and place where Esther's story happens. "In those days King Ahasuerus sat on the king's throne in the city of Susa" (Esther 1:2, NLV). So, we understand from this verse that Esther's story happens during the Persian Empire under King Ahasuerus. (Another name for Ahasuerus is Xerxes.)

In chapter 1, Queen Vashti loses the king's favor. So, the king removes Vashti from being queen. Then the king looks for another queen to replace Vashti. That's when Esther and her uncle, Mordecai, come into the story.

Read Esther 2:1–9. What do these verses teach us about Mordecai and Esther?

As far as we can tell, Mordecai works for the king. As part of his job, Mordecai sits at the gate of the king's palace. So, he lived in the city of Shushan (also named Susa) with his adopted daughter, Esther. Esther was really Mordecai's cousin. (But Mordecai adopted Esther as his daughter.) So, Mordecai and Esther were part of Persian culture or the way of life around them. Soon, the king commanded his leaders to send the most beautiful young women in Persia to Susa so that one of them could become his new queen (Esther 2:2–4). Then the Bible tells us, "When the king's command had been heard [announced], many young women were brought to the capital city of Susa. They [the young women] were put under the care of Hegai. Esther was one of these women. She [Esther] was taken to the king's palace and put into Hegai's care. Hegai was in charge of the king's women" (Esther 2:8, ERV).

Read Esther 2:10, 20. What happens in these verses? Why does Mordecai give Esther this command?

The verse doesn't say why, but the answer isn't hard to guess. Esther and Mordecai were foreigners in a land that often didn't like strangers. As we will see, Esther and Mordecai were wise to keep silent about their family and people.

MORDECAI: A LOYAL WITNESS FOR GOD (Esther 3:1–15)

Mordecai and Esther lived in a foreign land. As Jews, their ways and beliefs were different from the Persians. Sooner or later, Mordecai and Esther were going to have trouble in Persia if they wanted to stay loyal to God.

Read Esther 3:1–15. What happened in these verses? Why did it happen?

In Esther 3, we learn that King Xerxes honored Haman. Everyone was told they must bow down to Haman. The Bible tells us: “But Mordecai did not bow down or give him honor” (Esther 3:2, NLV). The Bible doesn’t give the reason that Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. But we know why. Mordecai is loyal to God. Also, Mordecai, as a Jew, is not willing to bow down to an Amalekite. The Amalekites were the children of Agag and the enemies of God’s people since the time that God led His people out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 25:19). How can a loyal Jew bow down to an Amalekite? How can a loyal Jew worship anyone except God?

“Then the king’s leaders at the gate asked Mordecai, ‘Why don’t you obey the king’s command to bow down to Haman?’ ” (Esther 3:3, ERV). We learn the answer to this question in the next verse: “Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew” (Esther 3:4, ERV). For sure, Mordecai explained to the king’s leaders that he was a worshiper of the God who made the skies and earth. So, Mordecai couldn’t worship a fallen human. No doubt Mordecai shared his faith with these men. Sad to say, Mordecai’s faith put him in danger.

“Daniel, his three friends, and Mordecai were the same as bright lights. They shined God’s truth in the palaces of Babylon.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 13, 1884, adapted.

Haman became angry when Mordecai refused to honor him. “Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus [Xerxes], ‘There is a certain [special group of] people spread out [who live] among the people in all the parts of your nation [kingdom] whose laws are different from those [laws] of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws. So it is not good for the king to let them stay’ ” (Esther 3:8, NLV).

Has God given you a test of faith the same as He gave Mordecai? How do we “pass” these tests of faith?



Mordecai, as a Jew, is not willing to bow down to an Amalekite.

FOR A TIME THE SAME AS THIS TIME (Esther 4:1–14)

Read Esther 4:1–14. Why was it important at this time for Esther to remember that she was Jewish?

Mordecai contacted Esther for help. Esther had been married to Ahasuerus for several years. But a Persian law said that no one may come to the king's throne without an invitation from the king. The king could kill anyone who refused to obey this rule. Esther knew the risk of going to the throne room without an invitation. She went anyway.

Mordecai wanted to fill Esther's heart with faith and courage to help her people. Mordecai said to Esther, "You live in the king's palace. But don't think that just because you are there you will be the only Jew who will escape. What if you don't say anything at this time? Then help for the Jews will come from another place. But you and your family will die. Who knows? It's possible that you became queen for a time just like [the same as] this [time]" (Esther 4:13, 14, NIV).

Mordecai asks Esther to remember her love for her people. No one knew Esther was Jewish except Mordecai. When Esther made the decision to help her people, she put her whole heart into helping them. She was not afraid to die for her people if she needed to.

Esther's faith in God was strong. She knew that without God's help she would fail. "Then Esther sent this answer to Mordecai: 'Mordecai, go and get all the Jews in Susa together, and fast [don't eat any food or drink any water] for me. Don't eat or drink for three days and nights. I and my women servants will fast too. After we fast, I will go to the king. I know it is against the law to go to the king if he didn't call [invite] me, but I will do it anyway. If I die, I die'" (Esther 4:15, 16, ERV). Mordecai sent this information to the whole Jewish community in Shushan (Susa). The people fasted and prayed. "On the third day, Esther put on her special robes. Then she stood in the inside area of the king's palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his throne in the hall, facing the place where people enter the throne room. When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court [hall], he was very pleased. He held out to her the gold scepter [stick] that was in his hand. So Esther went into the room and went near the king. Then she touched the end of the king's gold scepter" (Esther 5:1, 2, ERV).



Esther knew the risk of going to the throne room without an invitation. She went anyway.

GOD SAVES HIS PEOPLE (Esther 9:1–12)

God's name is not written in the book of Esther. Esther is the only book in the Bible where God's name isn't included. God's name may not be used in the book, but the Jews in Esther's time saw that God saved them. This idea may explain why God chose to include the story of Esther in the Bible.

Can we see God working behind the scenes in our daily lives? God can work in many ways in our lives. He can work in nature and in the things that happen every day. So, we must pay careful attention so that we don't miss His working in our lives!

Read Esther 9:1–12. What did Esther do? What happened because of Esther's actions?

God works a miracle to save His people in an interesting way. The law to destroy the Jews isn't changed. But the king writes a new law that permits the Jews to protect their own lives.

Also, look at what happened in Esther 9 and how God used these things to save His people. The Persians saw that God worked to save the Jews, too.

So, what happened in the story of Esther when God helped His people?

"Many people from other nations [people groups] announced that they had become Jews" (Esther 8:17, NIV). This story shows us how the Lord used the things that happened to teach non-Jews about Himself.

The Jewish leaders saw how God worked a miracle to help His people. The Jews announced a special holiday named Purim to celebrate how God saved them from being destroyed. Today, Jews still celebrate Purim as a time of thanksgiving to God for saving them.

Task #1: Pray that God will give you the courage to share something God did for you with someone on your prayer list.

Task #2: Make a daily record of special little things or big things God does for you. Read your record and pray that God will help you remember these things at the right time so you can share them with someone.



God can work in many ways in our lives. He can work in nature and in the things that happen every day.



“In Bible times, the Lord worked in a wonderful way in the lives of holy women. These women worked with men that God chose to do His work.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “When trouble comes, every family, school, parent, teacher, and child who knows the Good News about Jesus will need to answer the question that Mordecai asked Esther: ‘Who knows? It’s possible that you became queen for a time just like [the same as] this [time].’ Esther 4:13, 14, [NirV].”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 263, adapted.

“In Bible times, the Lord worked in a wonderful way in the lives of holy women. These women worked with men that God chose to do His work. Together, these men and women honored God. God used women to win many important fights. God used women to save the lives of many people during hard times. God used Queen Esther to save His people from death. At a time when the Jews thought no one could save them, Esther and her women servants prayed. They ate no food and drank no water during this time. Their efforts helped save the Jewish people. . . .

“Study God’s work in the lives of women in the Old Testament. This study will teach you lessons that will help you solve the problems in your work for God today. We may not stand in front of kings as Esther did. But God can use women who give their lives fully to Him. These women have an important part in God’s work. Many women have been doing this work and are ready to do it now.”—Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God*, pages 45, 46, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Read Esther’s famous words to Mordecai: “ ‘If I die, I die’ ” (Esther 4:16, ERV). These words have filled people’s hearts with courage and hope during hard times. Read Revelation 13, with Esther’s words in mind. How do Esther’s words show us the suffering of and courage of God’s people during the end times?
- 2 Mordecai told Esther not to let anyone know she was a Jew when she became the queen. Can you think of times when it may be a good idea not to let anyone know you are a Christian? Or should we not do that? If no, why do you feel that way? Explain.
- 3 The Jews prayed and fasted for Esther’s success. As we saw already, “to fast” means to eat no food and drink no water for a short time. What lessons can we learn from Esther’s story about how important prayer and fasting is to our own success in God’s work?

DREAMING DREAMS: PART 2

Joseph Delamou went to church every day since he was a small boy. Joseph knelt in worship in front of statues because that's what his father did. Then Joseph had a strange dream after he asked God if he was going to the correct church. Joseph believed the dream was an answer to his prayer. God was asking him to leave his father's church. So, 16-year-old Joseph joined another church in Conakry. Conakry is the capital city of the country of Guinea in West Africa. People speak the French language in Guinea. Soon, Joseph became the youth leader at his new church. He helped the young people share Jesus with folks in the community. Several years passed. Joseph's father grew upset with his son for going to a new church. Father said, "Joseph, I want you to learn English. You need to stop working for your church and start studying English."

Joseph wanted to keep going to church. But to make Father happy, Joseph quit his church work. Then he started studying English. He was 23 years old. The English teacher was named Fortunate Kaloubilori. Fortunate started each class with prayer. Joseph was surprised. He thought he was giving up God to learn English. But his teacher prayed to God before he taught every lesson. Three weeks later, the teacher asked Joseph for help. Fortunate said, "I have many papers to grade. Please, can you stay and help me?"

When Fortunate and Joseph finished grading papers, Fortunate invited Joseph to study the Bible with him. Joseph was pleased. He thought, "God follows me everywhere!"

Joseph learned new Bible teachings that showed him that both his new church and his father's church weren't following Bible truth. The new Bible teachings showed Joseph that Fortunate's church followed the Bible. Fortunate was a Seventh-day Adventist. The Bible study left Joseph confused about what he should do. Joseph blamed his father and said to himself, "I only have these problems because my father sent me to learn English."

Joseph continued Bible studies for two months. Then he went to his pastor for advice. Joseph wanted to know which church was the correct church. The pastor said the Adventists were wrong. "Don't pay attention to them."

Joseph decided to pray for three days about what to do. Then he had another dream.

Your 13th Sabbath Offering on December 30 will help church workers share the Good News about Jesus in West Africa, which includes Guinea. Thank you for planning to give a big offering. Read more about Joseph and Fortunate next week.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



His teacher prayed to God before he taught every lesson.



The End of God's Saving Work



SABBATH—DECEMBER 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 1:1–7; Revelation 14:6–12; 1 John 4:8; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 21:1–4.

MEMORY VERSE: “Since [because] all these things are to be destroyed in this way, you should think about the kind [type] of life you are living. It [your life] should be holy and God-like [serving and respecting God]. You should look for the day of God to come. You should do what you can to make it come soon. At that time the heavens [skies] will be destroyed by fire. And the sun and moon and stars will melt away with much heat” (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NLV).

The book of Revelation is about a God who wants us to help Him save people.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION shows us what will happen in the end times. This book tells us about the worldwide war between God and Satan. Satan lost his legal control over the earth. Now he attacks the people who are loyal to God. The book of Revelation also shows us Jesus' second coming. At that time, Jesus will save His people, both the living and all the people who lived and died after Adam and Eve sinned. The book of Revelation shows us, too, that God will destroy Satan, his evil angels, and evil people with fire. Then Jesus will start His everlasting kingdom on the new earth.

In this final lesson, we will see that Revelation is more than a book about what will happen in the end times. The book of Revelation is about a God who wants us to help Him save people. God commands His church to announce the Three Angels' Messages to everyone on earth. These messages are present truth. Present truth is the truth we need most for our time.

GOD'S END-TIME WORK IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION (Revelation 1:1–7)

The opening verses of the book of Revelation show the reader that this book is about God's end-time work.

Read Revelation 1:1–7. What proof do you see in these verses that Revelation is about God's work to save people during the end times?

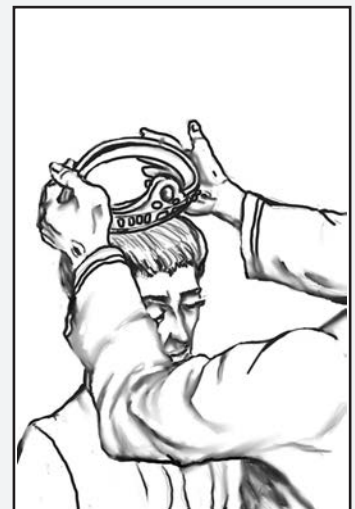
The first verses of the book of Revelation show us that Jesus is the reason for God's saving mercy. In Revelation 1:4, 5, we read about all three Members in the Godhead: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Together, They work to save humans. The Father is the everlasting One "who is, who always was, and who is coming" (Revelation 1:4, ERV). Next, the Holy Spirit is named. Then John tells us about Jesus. "Jesus is the faithful [dependable; the One we can trust] witness. He is first among all who will be raised [wake up] from death" (Revelation 1:5, ERV). John now tells us that Jesus is the legal owner of planet Earth. Satan tried to set up his kingdom on this earth. His plan failed. John also tells us that Jesus' blood makes us clean from guilt and shame.

Read Revelation 1:6 and 1 Peter 2:9. In these verses, what do the names for the saved mean?

God's saving plan includes more than forgiveness and saving us from sin. God wants to make us new people, with new hearts and lives. God wants to live in our hearts. Then we will be holy as He is holy. God's saved people will become kings. Jesus spilled His blood for us. His blood makes us part of God's family. Because we are part of God's family, we are now the children of the King who controls everything in heaven and on earth. As royal family members, we join the Royal Family in heaven in Their work to save people on this planet.

In Revelation 1:7, we learn Jesus will come soon. The people on earth will cry when they learn, too late, that they are lost. God wants to save them before it's too late. So, the book of Revelation opens with God's saving plan.

God made us and saved us. Why does this Bible truth give you hope?



God's saved people will become kings.

THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES (Revelation 14:6–12)

The book of Revelation shows us the worldwide war between God and Satan. Revelation 12:12 shows us this Bible truth in a powerful way. John hears a loud voice announce from heaven: “ ‘So be happy, you heavens [the place where God lives] and all who live there! But it will be terrible for the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you! He is filled with anger. He knows that he does not have much time’ ” (Revelation 12:12, ICB).

Read Revelation 14:6–12. What part do these verses have in our work as a church? How are they connected with the Good News about Jesus?

The most important part of God's work is the Good News about Jesus. The message **is** the work. Everyone on earth needs to hear this message. They need to be warned about what is going to happen. Every person on earth who hears these messages will need to make a final choice: a choice for life or for death.

Jesus said, “ ‘If anyone is not with me, he is against me. He who does not work with me is working against me’ ” (Luke 11:23, ICB). What does Jesus mean? What is the connection between this Bible truth and our church's work?

God gave the Seventh-day Adventist Church important work. We must announce the Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14 to everyone on earth. We must invite people to accept the Good News about Jesus (Revelation 14:6) and to worship God because He made us. Everyone will see that God's end-time people do both things: they live the Good News and they worship God. God's end-time people will be very patient. They will obey all of His commandments. They will have “the faith of [that comes from] Jesus” (Revelation 14:12, KJV). In all the work we do for God, we always must remember that we must warn the people on this earth about end-time happenings. We must give them the Three Angels' Messages. We must announce the hope that is in the Good News that continues forever.

“ ‘If anyone is not with me, he is against me’ ” (Luke 11:23, ICB). Read Jesus' words and look into your heart. Ask yourself, where am I with God? Am I with Him?



God gave the Seventh-day Adventist Church important work. We must announce the Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14 to everyone on earth. That is our job.

THE FINAL TEST (1 John 4:8)

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He gave His followers His Important Command: “ ‘So go and make followers of all people in the world [on the earth]. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you to do. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of time’ ” (Matthew 28:19, 20, ERV). Today, the Three Angels’ Messages also must be preached to all the people on the earth. These messages are present truth. Present truth is the Bible truth that we need most for our time.

Why does God care about everyone? Read 1 John 4:8; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; and Genesis 12:3 for the answer.

Jesus loves everyone. Some Bible thinkers teach that Jesus died only for a special few. The Bible tells us that Jesus died for all people. If you are a human, Jesus died for you. The only question is, Do you accept, or reject, what Jesus did for you?

When Jesus comes back, only two groups of people will be alive on the earth: (1) people who honor Satan and the religious powers and governments he controls (Revelation 13 and 17), and (2) people who honor Jesus and keep His commandments (Revelation 14:12).

Since the beginning of human history, God has shown humans who He is. God gave people proof of His love (Romans 1:18–21). So, God will judge everyone from the past on how they worked with God and lived their lives. God will not judge them for what they didn’t understand or know about Him (Romans 2:11–16).

In these end times, people are dividing more and more into the two groups we talked about. Soon, people will not respect the freedom of other people to believe what they want to believe. People will be pressured to join Satan’s party. So, we need to share the Good News about Jesus so that everyone will know about Satan’s evil plans and about God’s mercy. That’s what the Three Angels’ Messages are all about.

Jesus died for you. Is there anything you’ve done that He can’t forgive? Explain why His death is enough to pay for your sins.



The Bible tells us that Jesus died for all people. If you are a human, Jesus died for you.

SUCCESS IN GOD'S WORK (2 Corinthians 11:2)

How do we have success in our work for God? Some people say that success is the number of people you baptize. Other people may say that success is building big churches or a church that grows fast and has lots of members. Or maybe we think that success means sharing the Good News with people everywhere on earth. All of these ideas are good. At the same time, we must remember what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "I planted the seed and Apollos watered it. But God is the one who made the seed grow" (1 Corinthians 3:6, ERV). Our job is to do the work. God will bless our efforts. He is the One in charge.

We already saw that God wants to save lost people in every group on earth. God wants to make them loyal followers of Jesus who will work together with Him in His work to save more people.



We must remember what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "I planted the seed and Apollos watered it. But God is the one who made the seed grow" (1 Corinthians 3:6, ERV).

Read the following verses. What do they tell us about the people who became followers of Jesus?

2 Corinthians 11:2 _____

Isaiah 30:21; John 10:27; John 16:12, 13 _____

2 Thessalonians 2:9–11; Hebrews 3:12, 13; 1 John 1:8 _____

1 John 1:9; Revelation 7:14; Revelation 19:8 _____

Jesus' followers are loyal. They follow Jesus and His Holy Spirit in their lives. The Spirit teaches Christians to work with God to save people. We can trust Jesus' followers. They don't lie or pretend to be holy. They are holy. They are not fake Christians. Jesus' followers don't doubt the Bible or accept false teachings. They don't break His law. They don't behave as if they are better than other people. Yes, they understand they aren't perfect. They know they need God's mercy and forgiveness. So, they let God or other Christians correct them when they are wrong. When we behave this way, we will have success in God's work.

WHEN OUR WORK IS DONE (Revelation 21:1–4)

Read Revelation 21:1–4 and Revelation 21:22–22:5. What picture of the future life do these verses show us?

The new earth will be perfect and beautiful! Death and sin will be gone. Satan and sin will be destroyed. We will meet our loving Savior and see our loved ones again. The new earth will be filled with people from every different family group and people group who lived on the earth.

The General Conference has a special way of figuring out if a people group knows about the Good News. A people group that knows about Jesus has enough churches, Bibles, and other religious books in their own language. So, this group doesn't need any outside help. This group also has religious church leaders who can share Jesus with people in their own language. So, they don't need someone to translate their sermons for them.

A group that doesn't know Jesus is one that doesn't have enough Seventh-day Adventists in the area to share Bible truth. This group also doesn't have enough Bibles or other religious materials. So, they need outside help.

Each local church must decide who the people groups are in their community. Then they need to ask, "Do these people know about Jesus?" We must use the time and money that we have now to share Bible truth with people. We can do our part to help Jesus come back soon. Then we can live forever in the new heaven and the new earth with the people we helped Jesus save.

Task #1: What are you doing to help Jesus come back soon? Are you filling the hearts of people with hope? Are you sharing with them the Good News? Are you helping new Christians to learn what it means to live obedient and loyal lives for Jesus? Pray that Jesus will help you share the promise of the new earth with people on your daily prayer list.

Task #2: Some of your "followers" may be ready to accept Jesus. Maybe they're ready to come to church for the first time. What experience will they have in your church? How ready is your church to welcome new people? Make a plan for welcoming visitors and share it with your church leaders. Work with your leaders to put the plan into action.

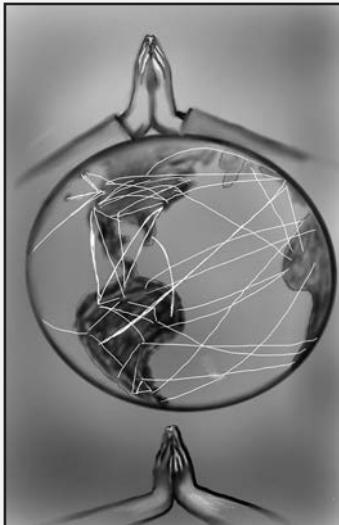


A people group that knows about Jesus has enough churches, Bibles, and other religious books in their own language.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “God’s saving plan allows Him to accept humans and give them His favor. We will get everything back that we lost because of sin. Humans are saved, and the earth is made new. Then the people that God saved will live on the earth forever. That is their reward because they were obedient to God. For 6,000 years, Satan has fought for control of this earth. Now God’s first reason for making this earth will finally happen: ‘God’s holy people will receive [get] the kingdom, and they will have the kingdom forever and ever’ [Daniel 7:18, ERV].”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 342, adapted.

Before Jesus can give us the kingdom, we need to work with God to save people. We need to warn everyone on earth so that each person will have a chance to accept God’s promise of a new life and a new earth to come.

“I want to see more workers helping God to save people who don’t know Bible truth for this time. Many people have learned about the Three Angels’ Messages and accepted them. Now, they should announce these messages to people everywhere on earth. I want to do my part and help other Christians share this Bible truth with people. May the Lord help us to put on His battle suit [Ephesians 6:10–18]. Christians must join together as one to give God’s final warning to everyone on earth.”—Ellen G. White, Letter 390, 1907 (not published), adapted.



“Christians must join together as one to give God’s final warning to everyone on earth.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What is the Good News that continues forever? Why is this news everlasting? Why must this Good News be part of everything we as a church teach and share?
- ② Why does our church believe that the Three Angels’ Messages are so important? What if someone said to you, “We need to talk only about Jesus and not about the warnings in the Three Angels’ Messages. These warnings are ‘too strong.’ People may feel bad and reject Jesus because of these messages”? How would you answer this person?
- ③ How has this quarter’s Bible study guide helped you better understand more about God’s work? How important is His work to save people? How has our study helped you better understand the part you and your church have in this plan?

DREAMING DREAMS—PART 3

Joseph Delamou didn't know which church he should go to in Conakry where he lived. Conakry is the capital city of the country of Guinea in West Africa. After Joseph studied the Bible with his English teacher, he learned things that showed him his church wasn't following the Bible. So, Joseph asked God to show Him the Lord's church.

Then Joseph had a dream. In this dream, Joseph was locked in a prison. One of his family members was a prison guard. Joseph asked him for freedom. The family member said, "Yes, we come from the same family. But I can't free you."

Joseph tried to escape. But his family member caught him.

The family member scolded Joseph, "If you try that again, I will punish you in a way you will always remember!"

Joseph heard someone in the prison announce the punishment he would suffer if he tried to run away again: "Someone will bring straw into the prison. They will put the straw under you and set the straw on fire."

Joseph understood that the punishment was a word picture for hell after Jesus' Second Coming. Joseph prayed, "Lord, I'm not better than the other people in this jail. Please don't let me die here. I want to do something wonderful for You with my life before I die."

After Joseph prayed, some guard took him to meet with three soldiers. One soldier said, "Joseph, you must pay the price for your freedom."

Joseph answered, "God made me free, not you. Jesus paid the price for my sins on the cross. I owe you nothing."

The soldier frowned. "If you don't pay, we will put you back in prison."

Joseph said, "My freedom didn't come from you. You can't go against God, who made me free. My life depends on God. If you hurt me, you hurt God."

The soldiers left the room. Joseph turned around and saw his English teacher, Fortunate. Fortunate said, "Your freedom is from God."

Then Joseph woke up, sweating. It was 3 a.m. The dream felt so real. He prayed, "Thank you, God. Every time I ask for help, You answer me. I thank You for your answers and Your love."

Today, Joseph is 24 and a loyal Seventh-day Adventist.

Joseph says, "When I was a child, I asked God to lead me. God answered this prayer when He led me to the Adventist Church. I'm ready to serve God."

Your 13th Sabbath Offering this Sabbath will help church workers share the Good News about Jesus in West Africa, which includes Guinea. Thank you for your offering.

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"Jesus paid the price for my sins on the cross."



