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## Introduction



## Making Friends for Jesus

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**S**ometimes we understand just one idea, and that changes everything. Many years ago, I sat in a leadership meeting with other church leaders. We talked about sharing our faith with people, witnessing, and preaching the Good News about Jesus. One of my friends said, “The work we do for God is really God’s work, not ours. God uses all of the treasures in heaven to save our planet. Our job is to work together with Him to save lost people.” When I heard that, I felt my heart become light. It was not my job to save this lost planet. It was God’s job. I was responsible for working with Him in what He already was doing.

The Bible shows us this same idea. Solomon says, “He [God] has put thoughts of the forever in man’s mind” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NLV). When we are born, God puts in our hearts a wish for heaven and everlasting life. Augustine said, “Lord, we were made for You. Our hearts will never find rest until they rest in You.”—Adapted. John tells us that Jesus is the true Light that gives light to all people (John 1:9). God puts in each of us a wish for God. He also sends His Holy Spirit to lead us to Himself.

Did you know that every wish to do right comes from the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit also causes us to feel that sin is wrong. The Holy Spirit helps us do good, be kind, and be unselfish too. We may not fully understand how the Holy Spirit works. But we know that He works in our lives to bring us near to Jesus (John 16:7–15). The Holy Spirit’s work in our lives is a wonderful gift. But the best gift of all is Jesus Himself.

When humans fell into sin, they became lost with no hope. The penalty was death. But God loved us so much that He gave His Son to save us. Luke writes, “ ‘The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them’ ” (Luke 19:10, ERV). Paul adds, “But here is how God has shown his love for us. While [when] we were still [continuing to be] sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, NIV). God led the way in saving us. Jesus left the glory and beauty of heaven. He came to this planet full of sin. Jesus came to save

us. Before we turned to Jesus, He made a big jump from heaven to us. Before we gave Him our lives, He died on the cross to save us. We were God's enemies. But He was our Friend. We turned our backs on Jesus. But He turned His face to us. We love Him. But He loves us very deeply. So much more.

In Luke 15, Luke shows us three picture stories about God's love for us. First, Luke shows us Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd never stops looking for His lost sheep. Second, we read about a woman who looks everywhere for her lost silver coin. Third, we read about a father who runs out to meet his lost son who comes home again. Ellen G. White says this about Jesus: "God's saving plan was put in place before God made the earth. Jesus was not the only one who worked so hard to save humans. In meetings in heaven, God the Father and the Son made a promise. If humans sinned, then Jesus agreed to take the punishment for man's sins. Jesus and the Father felt the same about this plan. Jesus agreed to accept our punishment."—*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 15, 1898, adapted.

Now think about this: we have God's wonderful blessing and the big job of working with Jesus to save people. This work will give us joy that will continue forever. That is what these lessons this quarter are all about.

***When someone is born,  
God puts in his  
heart a wish  
for heaven and  
everlasting life.***

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# Why Should We Tell People About Jesus?



## SABBATH—JUNE 27

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Luke 19:10; Zephaniah 3:17; John 7:37, 38; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 18–20.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “This is good and pleases God our Savior. God wants everyone to be saved and to fully understand the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3, 4, ERV).



**More than anything else,  
God wants to save us.**

**WHAT DOES GOD WANT?** He wants all people everywhere to accept His love. He also wants people to be changed by His Holy Spirit. God wants humans to live with Him in His kingdom. More than anything else, God wants to save us. His love has no limits. We cannot measure His love. God's love has no end. His forgiveness never runs out. His power cannot be used up or worn out. God is different from any other god that humans ever worshiped. Humans gave these false gods gifts. But the true God gave His life as a gift for us. Do you want to be saved? God wants to save you even more than you want to be saved! (1 Timothy 2:3, 4, ERV). With all His heart, God wants to save you and me.

What is witnessing all about? Witnessing is telling other people all about Jesus and what He did to save us. It is about how Jesus changes our lives. Witnessing is about wonderful Bible truth. The Bible teaches us about God. The Bible shows us the beauty in God's heart. Why should we witness or tell people about Jesus? Because we understand who God is. We want to share our experience about God's love and His mercy with other people. Why else should we witness? Because we want to work with Jesus. We want to share the joy He feels when He saves people. His love changes lives.

**GOD GIVES US THE CHANCE TO BE SAVED (Luke 19:10)**

God gives people everywhere the chance to know Him every day. God's Holy Spirit touches our hearts. God shows Himself to us in all the beautiful things we see in nature. This earth and the stars in the sky show us God's power and wisdom. God also controls what happens in our lives to bring us near to Him. He leads us so that we will know that He cares about us.

Yes, the Holy Spirit, nature, and God's leading in our lives help us to know God. But what is the best way for us to understand God's love? Jesus shows us God better than anything else. We see God in Jesus' life and His work. So, we should share Jesus with other people. Then we will give them the best chance to be saved.

**Compare Luke 19:10 with James 5:19, 20. What does Luke 19:10 teach us about why Jesus came to this earth? How do we work together with Jesus to save other people?**

The book of James tells us: " 'Anyone who brings a sinner back from the wrong way will save that sinner's soul from death. By doing this, that person will cause many sins to be forgiven' " (James 5:20, ICB). The book of Romans helps us to understand this idea better. In Romans 1 and 2, we read about the Jews and the non-Jews. The non-Jews did not have the Bible to show them about God. But they learned about God from nature. The Jews had the Bible. The Bible showed them who God is. But both groups will be lost if they do not have Jesus Christ. In Romans 3–5, Paul tells us that we are saved only by our faith in God's mercy. In Romans 6–8, Paul tells us that the same power that saves us also makes us holy. In Romans 10, Paul says: " 'anyone who asks the Lord for help will be saved' " (Romans 10:13, ICB). Then Paul tells us, "before people can pray to the Lord for help they must believe in him" (Romans 10:14, ERV). We cannot believe in Him if we do not know Him. We cannot know Him until someone tells us about Him. So, do you see how important we are in God's plan to save other people? God uses us to share the Good News with sinners. We help God save lost humans.

**The reason we tell people about Jesus is not to give people their only chance to be saved. We share Jesus with them to give them their "best" chance. What is our part in God's plan to save humans? How many people know about Jesus because of what you have shared with them?**



**Jesus shows us God better than anything else.**



**LET US MAKE JESUS GLAD! (Zephaniah 3:17)**

**All heaven feels joy and sings when God saves a sinner.**

Has anyone ever asked you, “How is your day going?” Or “Is everything all right with you today?” What if you asked God these same questions? What if you say, “God, how is Your day going?” How do you think God will answer? Maybe He will say, “My day has been very hard. Tears filled My eyes because of all the people and children who lost their homes. These people ran to another country. They are cold and hungry there. I also walked the streets of this earth’s crowded cities. I wept when I saw the homeless and the poor. My heart broke when I saw women who were beaten and children who were sold as sex slaves. I saw how war destroys lives. I saw how floods and earthquakes hurt people. I saw people suffer pain from awful sickness.” Then we can ask, “But God, is there anything that fills Your heart with joy? Is there anything that makes You sing?”

**Read Luke 15:4–32. How do these stories end? What do their endings tell us about God?**

All heaven feels joy when God saves a sinner. Yes, we live on an earth filled with sickness, earthquakes, floods, and death. But we can fill God’s heart with joy when we share with other people the Good News about Jesus. What is one of the best reasons for sharing Jesus’ love with other people? The answer is: when we share God with other people God’s heart fills with joy. Every time we show God’s love to other people, everyone in heaven sings!

**Read Zephaniah 3:17. As we see in this verse, what does the Lord do when we accept His power to save us?**

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Make this picture in your mind: you share Jesus with someone. Then this person accepts Jesus as his or her personal Savior. What happens next? Jesus is filled with joy. Everyone in heaven sings. Our mighty Savior sings with joy too. Yes, we live on an earth that is filled with so much sorrow and pain. But your story about Him fills God’s heart with joy and song. What can be more wonderful than knowing that!

**WHEN WE GIVE, WE GROW (John 7:37, 38)**

The lowest part of planet Earth is the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is 1,412 feet lower than the top of the other seas on earth! Where does the Dead Sea start? It starts with the Jordan River. The Jordan River flows out of the Sea of Galilee. Then the Jordan River flows south into the Jordan Valley until it ends in the Dead Sea.

The air around the Dead Sea is very dry. The sun there is very hot. It makes the air feel the same as a desert. The Dead Sea is 33.7% salt! Few things live in its salt waters. There are no fish or plants. Only some very small things live on the bottom of the Dead Sea. These living things are too small for us to see without a microscope.

The Dead Sea helps us understand our need for grace. Grace is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. We must let God's grace into our lives. Then we must let grace flow from our hearts to other people. Without grace, we will be the same as the Dead Sea. We will not have any spiritual life. That is not the way a Christian should live. We should not be "Dead Sea" Christians.

**Read John 7:37, 38 and Luke 6:38. These verses show us what happens in our lives when Jesus gives us Living Water to drink. What happens when we drink it?**

"Does God need our help to save sinners? No! God wants us to become the same as His Son. So, we must join God in Jesus' saving work. Then we will feel the joy that God feels. That joy comes from our seeing people saved because of Jesus' death."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 142, adapted.

"Do you want to win the war against sin? Then stop acting selfish. Start caring about saving other people. That will help you to stop being selfish."—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 207, adapted.

So, let us share with other people what Jesus has done for us. Then our spiritual lives will grow strong. Think about everything that God gives us in Jesus! Only a selfish heart will keep us from sharing this gift with other people. If we fail to share our faith, what will happen? Our spiritual lives will become the same as the Dead Sea.

**Have you shared Jesus with anyone? How did your experience make your faith grow stronger?**



**Share with people what Jesus does for you. Then your spiritual life will grow strong.**

**OBEYING JESUS' COMMAND (1 Timothy 2:3, 4)**

When we are loyal to Jesus, we will follow His plan. We will obey His commands. What is important to Jesus will be important to us. Is your heart loyal to Jesus? Then you will work with Him to save people who are lost in sin.



God wants all people to be saved to fully understand Bible truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

**Read 1 Timothy 2:3, 4 and 2 Peter 3:9. What do these verses tell us about God's heart? What is the most important thing to God?**

God is excited about saving people. His children are very important to Him. God wants all people to be saved and to “fully understand the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, ERV). “But God is being patient with you. He does not want anyone to be lost. He wants everyone to change his heart and life” (2 Peter 3:9, ICB). *The SDA Bible Commentary* tells us that the word “want” in 2 Peter 3:9 comes from the Greek word “**boulomai**.” “**Boulomai** shows us ‘a desire or wish to do something.’” Next, the *SDA Bible Commentary* talks about the word “but.” The Greek word for “but” is “**alla**.” Peter uses this word to “show us two different ideas. The first idea is the false belief that God does not wish to save everyone. But the second idea is the truth that God wants everyone to be saved.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, page 615, adapted. Jesus commands us to work with Him to save people. He wants us to tell people about His love, truth, and grace. Grace, as we saw, is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. When we work to save people, we show them Jesus' wish to save all humans.

**Read Acts 13:47 and compare it with Isaiah 49:6. Who is Paul talking to in Acts 13:47? What is Paul telling us in this verse?**

Sometimes Old Testament messages have more than one meaning. In Acts 13:47, Paul tells the Jews and non-Jews an Old Testament message about Israel and the Savior (read Isaiah 41:8; Isaiah 49:6; and Luke 2:32). Paul shows how this verse is about the New Testament church too. What happens when the church does not pay attention to Jesus' commands? The church will fail to do the work God gave her.

**What is the danger of forgetting why we, as a church, are here on this earth?**



**LOVE LEADS US (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 18–20)**

This week, we have answered the question: “Why should we share Jesus?” We discovered that we feel joy when we share our faith. We also feel joy when we work together with God to save people. Our stories about God’s love show people how they can be saved. They can see more clearly God’s truth and grace. Remember, grace is God’s gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin.

At the same time, God helps us to grow stronger when we share Jesus. So, we must remember to share Jesus with other people. We must tell them everything God does for us. We must help people in need too. If we fail to tell people about Jesus, our spiritual life will fail to grow.

When we tell people about Jesus, we come close to the God who wants to save all humans. We also obey God’s command. In today’s study, we will look at the best reason for why we should tell other people about Jesus.

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 18–20. What helped Paul to stay strong during hard times, tests of faith, difficult problems, and bad experiences? How can Paul’s reason help us to stay strong in our work for Jesus too?**

Paul worked with love in his heart. You will do things for love that you will not do for any other reason. Paul says, “the love of Christ controls us” (2 Corinthians 5:14, ERV). Paul’s words are an everlasting truth. The word “controls” means to “lead, guide, to control, or to cause someone to strongly want to do something.” Jesus’ love controlled everything Paul did. It caused Paul to share God’s saving plan all over the Mediterranean area.

“Love must live in the heart. A loyal Christian has a deep love in his heart for Jesus. That is the reason for everything he does. His deep wish to help other people grows out of his love for Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 425, adapted.

So, we must understand what Jesus did for us on the cross. Then Jesus’ love will fill us. We will want to share with other people everything He does for us.

**The One who made the stars and angels also died for us on the cross. How does this Bible truth help us to share His love with other people?**



**If we fail to tell people about Jesus, our spiritual life will fail to grow.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “God’s Purpose for His Church,” pages 9–16, in *The Acts of the Apostles*, and pages 822–828, in *The Desire of Ages*.

The New Testament church was in danger of not understanding its reason for being on this earth. Ellen G. White talks about this danger: “Non-Christians attack the members of the Jerusalem church for their beliefs. These attacks help the church to grow and to share the Good News about Jesus. Before the attacks start, church members share Jesus in Jerusalem. Many people join the church. But Jesus’ followers are in danger of staying in Jerusalem too long. Jesus tells His followers to share the Good News everywhere. His followers forget that the power to fight against evil comes from working hard to serve God. Church members start to think that the most important work they can do is to protect the Jerusalem church from attacks. So, church members do not teach new believers to carry the Good News to people who do not know about it. The church is in danger of being happy only with what they have already done in the past.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 105, adapted.



**“The power to fight against evil comes from working hard to serve God.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Look carefully at the Ellen G. White quotation above. Pay special attention to the last line. Why do we need to be careful of that same danger today? Why is feeling that way so wrong?
- ② Why do you think the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John end with the same command? Read this command in Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46–49; and John 20:21. What does Jesus’ command in these verses show His followers living in the 1st century? What should it show us today?
- ③ Can witnessing and serving God ever replace true worship of God? If yes, how? What can we do to make sure we do not fall into this trap?
- ④ How does witnessing and serving God help to make your faith grow stronger? What have you learned from your experience that can help other people? What mistakes have you made? How can you help other people not to make these same mistakes?
- ⑤ God loves each one of us as if we were the only person on earth. This fact is wonderful! What does this Bible truth mean to you? It is the most important truth on earth and in heaven. How should you live your life because of it?

**W**e are now living in the time when God judges His people. During His work as our Judge, I think God will ask us a very important question: “Why are you saved?” I was asked this same question when my plane landed at the Portland International Airport in Oregon in the United States of America. I handed my Norwegian passport to the U.S. officer in charge. He checked my passport and then looked at me. “What are your plans?” he asked.

“I am visiting a friend,” I answered.

“What is your friend’s address?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” I said. “But she is going to meet me here at the airport.”

The officer did not look happy when I said that I did not know her address.

“So, where did you meet her?” he asked suspiciously.

“At a college near London.”

“What did you study there?” he wanted to know.

“I studied about God and Bible truth,” I answered.

The officer looked long and hard at me. Then he asked, “Are you a believer in Jesus?”

“Yes,” I said.

He looked down at my passport and then back at me.

“So, why are you saved?” he asked.

“Because Jesus died for me,” I told him.

The officer looked at me. Then he said, “Good answer. You may enter.”

I smiled and entered the United States. Then I went to the luggage area to pick up my suitcase. As I walked there, I thought about my conversation with the passport officer. Will God ask us the same question in His work as our Judge that the officer asked me: “Why are you saved?” 1 John 5:11–13 tells us why we are: “This is the word He spoke: God gave us life that lasts forever, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God. Now you can know you have life that lasts forever” (NLV).

Why are you saved? You can feel sure that God saves you because you can say, “Jesus died for me.”

God will answer, “Good answer. You may enter.”

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INSIDE  
*Story*  
by GLENN ERNFORD LIE

## STOPPED AT THE AIRPORT



**“Good answer. You may enter.”**



# Telling People About Jesus: The Power of Our Personal Stories



## SABBATH—JULY 4

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Mark 5:15–20; Mark 16:1–11; Acts 4:13; 1 John 1:1–3; Galatians 2:20.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘We cannot be quiet. We must tell people about what we have seen and heard’ ” (Acts 4:20, ERV).



Some people may experience a fast change the same as Paul on the Damascus road.

**WHAT MAKES OUR PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT JESUS** so powerful? First, Jesus warms our hearts with His love. Next, Jesus changes our lives. Then we have something important to say about Him. Sure, we can tell people stories about what Jesus did for someone else. But it is more powerful when we share our own stories about the things Jesus does for us.

It is hard to argue with someone's personal experience. People may argue with your beliefs. They may not agree with your explanation of Bible truth. People may laugh at religion or scold you for your faith in God. But who can argue with your experience? You can say, “I had no hope. But now I have hope. I was filled with guilt. But now I have peace. My life had no meaning. But now I have a reason to live!” Even people who doubt can be moved by the Good News when they see how Jesus changes your life.

Some people may experience a fast change in their spiritual lives the same as Paul on the Damascus road. But most people change little by little over time. They start to understand who Jesus is. Then they become grateful for Jesus' wonderful gift of mercy and His wish to save them from sin. Jesus changes our lives fully. He changes us in a way that other people can see. This change is exactly what the people on this earth want and need very much.



## THE MAN THAT NO ONE EXPECTS TO BE A WITNESS (Mark 5:15–20)

**Read Mark 5:15–20. Do you see how Jesus sends the man into Decapolis to witness? Why doesn't Jesus keep the man near Him to help his new faith grow stronger?**

The word “Decapolis” comes from two Greek words: “**deca**,” (“ten”) and “**polis**” (“city”). Decapolis was an area made up of ten cities along the Sea of Galilee in the 1st century. The people there talked in the same language and shared the same way of life. Many people in that land knew about the man filled with thousands of demons. The demon-filled man did strange and awful things that scared the people. No one trusted this man. Jesus saw deep into the demon-filled man's heart. Jesus saw that the man wanted a better life. So, Jesus healed this man.

Then the townspeople heard what Jesus did. They learned that Jesus let the demons move into their pigs. The pigs jumped off a cliff into the sea and drowned. Mark tells us, “Then [the townspeople] came to Jesus. They saw the man who had been controlled by many demons. He was sitting there. He was now dressed and thinking clearly. All this made the people afraid” (Mark 5:15, NIV). The man was healthy again. Jesus changed the man's thoughts, feelings, and spirit. This is what the Good News does. It takes people who are broken by sin and makes them better people.

That is why this man is the best witness to the ten cities. The man's life is fully changed. Now he can share his experience about Jesus with everyone in Decapolis. Ellen G. White writes, “We are witnesses for Jesus. It is our job to tell people what we know about Him. We must share what we see, hear, and feel about Jesus. If we follow Jesus step by step, we will have something to share with people about the way that Jesus leads us. We can tell people how we trust in God's promise and know His promise is true. We can share what we know about God's mercy too. Jesus wants us to tell people about Him. People need to know about Him or they will be lost.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 340, adapted. God often uses people that no one expects Him to use. These people change lives because Jesus first changed them.

**What is your story? How did you learn about Jesus? What can you share about your experience to help someone who does not believe in Jesus?**



**Jesus changes the man's thoughts, feelings, and spirit. The Good News takes people who are broken in sin and changes them in every way.**



**OUR SAVIOR LIVES (Mark 16:1–11)**

**We, too, meet the same Jesus in life that Mary met. When we do, we must run to tell the story to other people.**

It is early Sunday morning. The two Marys hurry to Jesus' grave. They do not go there to ask Him for anything. What can a dead man possibly give them? The last time the two Marys saw Jesus, He was covered in blood and bruises. They never will forget what happened to Jesus on the cross. The women come to wash Jesus' body and get it ready for the grave. Their hearts are very sad. The future does not offer the women much hope.

The women arrive at Jesus' grave. They are surprised to see that it is empty. Matthew tells us what happens next: "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus Who was nailed to the cross. He is not here! He has risen from the dead as He said He would' " (Matthew 28:5, 6, NLV).

The women's hearts fill with joy. They no longer feel sad. Now they are glad. They stop crying. They sing songs of joy at the news that Jesus lives!

**Read about Mary in Mark 16:1–11. What does Mary do when she learns that Jesus wakes up from the dead?**

Mary meets Jesus after He wakes up from the dead. Then she runs to tell the story to Jesus' followers. Mary cannot stay silent. The news is too wonderful to keep to herself. Jesus is alive! His grave is empty! People everywhere must be told about it. We, too, meet the same Jesus in life that Mary met. When we do, we must run to tell the story to other people. Good news must be shared! We must not keep the Good News about Jesus to ourselves.

It is interesting that Jesus' followers refuse to believe Mary's story. Remember, these are the same followers that Jesus Himself chose. Jesus also told them many times about His death and resurrection, or waking up from the dead. "But Mary told them that Jesus was alive. She said that she had seen him, but the followers did not believe her" (Mark 16:11, ICB). There is an important lesson for us here. Jesus' own followers do not believe the truth right away. So, we also should not be surprised if people do not accept our words about Jesus right away.

**When was the last time someone turned away from you when you tried to tell him or her about Jesus? What did you learn from that experience?**

## THE POWER OF A CHANGED LIFE (Acts 4:13)

**“The Jewish leaders saw that Peter and John were not afraid to speak. They understood that these men had no special training or education. So they were amazed [surprised]. Then they realized [understood] that Peter and John had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, ICB).**

The New Testament church grows big very fast. 3,000 people are baptized on one day (Acts 2:41)! Thousands of people are added to the church a few weeks later (Acts 4:4). Soon the leaders of the Jewish church start to understand why the church grows so fast. It is because the New Testament believers have been with Jesus. Jesus’ grace changes the lives of His followers. Grace, as we saw, is God’s gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. These changed men and women cannot stay silent. They must tell everyone the wonderful news about Jesus.

**Read Acts 4:1–20. What happens when the Jewish leaders try to stop Peter and John from telling people about Jesus? What is Peter and John’s answer?**

At one time, Peter was a loud fisherman. God’s grace changed Peter. In the past, John and his brother James had a hard time controlling their tempers. So, Jesus named them the sons of thunder. Then Jesus’ grace changed them too. Thomas was filled with doubt. Jesus’ grace changed Thomas. Each of Jesus’ followers and New Testament church members have their own stories about Jesus. So, they cannot stay silent. Ellen G. White explains why this happens. “As soon as someone comes to Jesus, he wishes to tell other people about Him. Jesus is his precious Friend. Jesus saved him and changed his life. The Christian cannot shut away this truth in his heart.”—*Steps to Christ*, page 78, adapted.

Do you see what the Jewish religious leaders say in Acts 4:16? The healed man stands in front of them. So, the leaders must accept that a miracle happened. But they refuse to change their hearts. Does that stop Peter and John from talking about Jesus? Not at all!

**What connection is there between knowing Jesus and sharing Jesus? Why must we know who Jesus is before we tell other people about Him?**



**The healed man stands in front of the leaders. But the leaders refuse to change their hearts.**

## SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE (1 John 1:1–3)

In Acts 26, we see that Paul stands in chains in front of King Agrippa. Paul tells the king his life story. Paul talks about the time when he attacked Jesus' followers. Then Paul tells the king how Jesus changed his life. Paul also talks about Jesus' promise to wake up the dead and bring them back to life (Acts 26:8).

Paul is changed on the Damascus road. There, the Lord says to Paul, " 'Stand up! I have chosen you to be my servant. You will tell people about me—what you have seen today and what I will show you. This is why I have come to you' " (Acts 26:16, ERV). When we share our faith with people, it is always a powerful experience. What does it mean to share our faith? We tell people the story of everything that Jesus did for us in the past. We share everything that Jesus does in our lives today. We talk about what Jesus will do for us in the future.

Our sharing Jesus is never about us. Our sharing is always about Jesus. Jesus forgives our sins. He heals our sicknesses. He fills us with His love. He gives us good things (Psalm 103:3–5). So, witnessing is our sharing the story of Jesus' wonderful grace. As we know, grace is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. Witnessing is our personal story about meeting the God of grace.



Witnessing is our sharing the story about Jesus' wonderful grace.

**Read 1 John 1:1–3. Then compare these verses with Galatians 2:20. What is the same in both sets of verses? How is John's experience the same as Paul's?**

True, John and Paul have different life experiences. But they both have a personal experience with Jesus. Their experiences are not something that happens only one time and then never again. No, their experience happens daily. Every day they feel joy in Jesus' love. Every day, they follow His truth. His truth is the same as a bright light.

Is a changed life something that happens only one time? Ellen G. White talks about people who have an experience with Jesus only in the past. "They think their past experience is enough. So, they do not think they need to be changed daily. But we all must be changed by Jesus every day."—*Manuscript Releases*, volume 4, page 46, adapted.

**Why must we know Jesus and His love day by day?**

## THE POWER OF OUR PERSONAL STORIES (Acts 26:1–32)

Let us look again at Paul's meeting with King Agrippa. Agrippa is the last of the Jewish kings known as the Macabees. Yes, Agrippa says that he is a Jew. But in his heart he is a Roman. (Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 436.) Paul fought his whole life in the war against evil. Now he is old and worn out. He is tired from his many trips to share the Good News about Jesus. Even so, Paul stands there bravely in front of the mighty king. Paul's heart is filled with God's love and his face shining with God's peace. Yes, many bad things happened to Paul in life. But he can say that God is good!

King Agrippa's heart is filled with doubt. His heart is hard too. He does not care about right or wrong. Paul is so different! Paul is filled with faith. He cares about the truth. He is loyal to God. He defends the truth with his whole heart. During his time in court, Paul asks Agrippa for permission to talk. Agrippa gives Paul permission.

**Read Acts 26:1–32. As these verses show, how does Paul talk to Agrippa? What can we learn from Paul's words?**

When we are kind to people, they open their hearts to us. When we are mean and nasty, people close their hearts to us. Do you see in these verses how much respect Paul shows to Agrippa? Paul says, "I am very happy to talk to you, because you know so much about all the Jewish customs [ways of life] and the things the Jews argue about. Please listen to me patiently [be patient]" (Acts 26:3, ERV). Then Paul tells the king about how Jesus changed his life.

**Read Paul's story in Acts 26:12–18. Then look carefully at how Paul's story causes Agrippa to feel in Acts 26:26–28. How does Paul's story cause the king to feel? Why do you think Agrippa answers the way he does? What does Paul say that touches Agrippa's heart?**

Paul's personal story about Jesus touches the king's heart deeply. Why? Because the most powerful proof about Jesus we can show other people is a changed life. Even kings who do not believe in God are moved when they see lives that are changed by God's mercy. Maybe our stories are not as powerful as Paul's. But we all can tell people about what it means to know Jesus and be saved by His blood.



**Paul's personal story touches the king's heart deeply. Why? Because the most powerful witness we can show other people is a changed life.**



**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “ ‘Almost Thou Persuadest Me,’ ” pages 433–438, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

What is the most important part of the Christian life? It is having Jesus in our hearts. When our experience with Jesus is rich and full, we will share it with other people. Yes, correct teachings are important. But teachings are no substitute for a changed life. Ellen G. White makes this truth plain and clear. “The Savior knows that arguing about the truth will never touch hard hearts. Our words are not enough to cause someone to stop being selfish. Reason and truth alone will not make people turn away from loving the things on this earth. Jesus knows that His followers must accept Heaven’s gift. Heaven’s gift is the Good News. The Good News must be shared by people whose hearts are first made warm from knowing Jesus. Then the Good News will have power. That is because a living knowledge of Jesus will give our words power. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 31, adapted.

In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen G. White adds this powerful thought: “Yes, we must tell people about Bible truth. But the love of Jesus has the power to do what Bible truth alone cannot do. Jesus’ wonderful love will melt and win hearts.”—Page 826, adapted.

Some Christians have the wrong idea about what a personal testimony, or story, is. They think it means trying to make people believe Bible truth. Yes, it is important at the right time to share Bible truth. But our personal story about Jesus is about more than changing people’s minds. It is about changing hearts. Jesus frees us from guilt. He gives us peace, mercy, and forgiveness. He makes us strong. He fills us with hope and joy. He freely offers us His gift of everlasting life. This is what our personal testimony is all about.



“Our words are not enough to cause someone to stop being selfish.”

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why do you think our personal testimonies, or stories, are so powerful? How have people’s testimonies changed you?
- ② Why is a daily experience with Jesus important to our faith?
- ③ Why is it important for us to live a holy life? How does that make our story about Jesus more powerful?
- ④ Share your personal story about Jesus with the class. Remember to share what Jesus did for you in the past and what He does for you today. How has Jesus changed your life?



Vince Waln, age 65, works as a money manager. He helps people save money and plan for their future. Vince also is a member of Hamilton Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is a small church in the U.S. state of Ohio. The church had only 15 members. But after three years, the church grew to about 85 people. What gave new life to this dying church? Vince says the Holy Spirit and a pipe organ!

The miracles started when Vince started preaching at the Hamilton church. Vince worshiped there when he was a child. "Not a lot of people went there anymore," Vince says. "There was no one to play the piano for my wife, Darla, when she sang special music. She had to sing with a CD."

One evening, Darla came home from a party for a bride at the Hamilton church. Darla told her husband that the church's pastor was leaving his job.

"You can be their new pastor," she told her husband.

For the next two weeks, Vince did not stop thinking about the church. He woke up at night thinking about his wife's words: "You can be their new pastor."

Soon after that, Vince volunteered to help the church for six months. Then the church leaders told Vince that for two weeks they prayed for him to be their pastor. That was during the same time that Vince woke up in the middle of the night. "It was the Holy Spirit working, for sure," Vince said.

As pastor, Vince invited Jerry Taylor to be the new music manager for the church. Jerry was retired. He also was a professional organ player. Shortly after, Jerry told Vince that a retirement community was selling a pipe organ for \$75,000.

"We can't afford that!" Vince said. "We can't even afford \$5,000. It's too much money!"

"Let's go look at it anyway," Jerry said.

The pastor for the retirement community was excited to learn about the Hamilton church. He stepped out of the room and came back a little while later. He said, "I spoke with the manager for our community just now. We have looked for a church to give this pipe organ to."

So, the Hamilton church got the organ for free.

But the miracles didn't stop there. Workers made changes to fit the organ into the church. Christians from other churches joined the church's new choir.

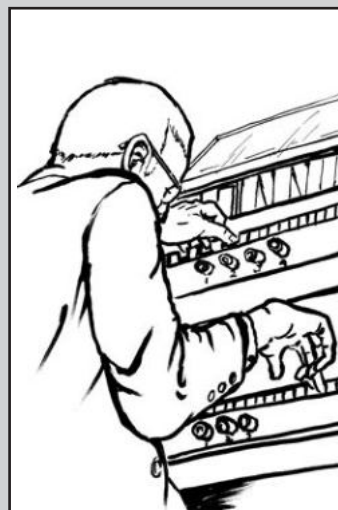
Then two women walked into the church one Sabbath morning. They wanted to keep the seventh-day Sabbath after studying the Bible on their own. Later, one of the women and her husband were baptized.

God used the pipe organ to attract people. "People keep coming to our church," Vince said.

## INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY

### AN OHIO CHURCH GETS NEW LIFE



**The Holy Spirit and a pipe organ gave new life to a dying church.**



# Seeing People the Way That Jesus Sees Them



## SABBATH—JULY 11

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Mark 8:22–26; John 4:3–34; John 1:40, 41; Matthew 4:18, 19; Acts 8:26–38.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Jesus said to them, ‘Come, follow me, and I will make you a different kind [sort; type] of fishermen. You will bring in people, not fish’ ” (Matthew 4:19, ERV).



**Jesus sees all men and women as souls He can win for His kingdom.**

### JESUS IS THE BEST SOUL WINNER WHO EVER LIVED.

Just look in the Bible at the way Jesus works with people. Then you will learn how to lead other people to God to be saved. As we read about Jesus, we see Him walk the crowded streets in Jerusalem. We see Jesus travel the dusty roads in Judea. We watch Him sit on the grassy hillsides in Galilee. As we read about Jesus, we discover how He shows the important rules of His kingdom to people who want to be saved.

Jesus sees all men and women as souls He can win for His kingdom. Jesus looks at each person with the eyes of love. Does Jesus see Peter as a loud fishermen? No, Jesus sees Peter as a mighty preacher of the Good News. Does Jesus see James and John's bad tempers? No, Jesus sees James and John as men who announce His mercy. Jesus sees the deep wish for love in Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, and the woman who bled. Jesus does not see Thomas as a doubter. No, Jesus sees Thomas as someone with honest questions. Jesus sees everyone the same: Jews and non-Jews, men and women, the thief on the cross, the Roman officer, and the man filled with demons. Jesus sees us as more than we are now. Jesus sees us the way God meant us to be. Jesus sees everyone with the loving eyes of a Savior.

**THE SECOND TOUCH (Mark 8:22–26)**

There is only one miracle in the whole Bible that Jesus does in two parts. It is the miracle when Jesus heals the blind man at Bethsaida. This healing miracle has important lessons for our church today. This miracle also shows us that it is God's plan for each believer to bring someone else to Jesus. The Bible says, "Jesus and his followers came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged [asked] him to touch the man" (Mark 8:22, ERV). The two most important words in this verse are "brought" and "begged [asked]." What do these two words tell us? The blind man does not come to Jesus on his own. His friends see his need. They bring him to Jesus. Maybe the blind man does not have much faith. But his friends do. They believe that Jesus will heal their friend.

In the New Testament, we read about 25 of Jesus' healing miracles. In more than half of these miracles, a family member or a friend brings the sick person to Jesus to heal. Many people will never come to Jesus on their own. They need someone who has faith to bring them. Our job as Christians is to introduce, or "bring" people to Jesus.

The second important word in Mark 8:22 is "begged." It can mean "asked." It means to ask for something in a kind and gentle way. The blind man's friends are kind. They gently ask Jesus to help their blind friend. The friends believe that Jesus wants to help their friend. They also believe Jesus has the power to heal him. Maybe the man himself does not have faith that Jesus can heal him. But his friends do. Sometimes our faith must "carry" other people to Jesus until they can learn to have faith too.

**Read Mark 8:22–26. Why do you think that Jesus heals the blind man in two parts? What lessons does this story teach us about how we should share Jesus with other people?**

Is it possible that we also do not see people clearly? Do we sometimes see people " 'like [the same as] trees walking around' " (Mark 8:24, ERV)? That is, do we see them as real people that God wants to save? Or do we see them only as shadows?

**What else can we learn from this story? How does it show us that sinners may need both spiritual and medical help?**



**Many people will never come to Jesus on their own. They need someone who has faith to bring them.**

**A LESSON ABOUT ACCEPTING PEOPLE (John 4:3–34)**

Jesus shows His followers how to look at each person in a new way. Jesus teaches His followers how God looks at people. Jesus does not see people only as they are. He sees what each person can become. Jesus always is kind to people. He shows them respect. Often, Jesus surprises His followers because He is nice and kind to the people that the Jews do not like. We see Jesus behave this way in the story about the Samaritan woman at the well.

*The Archaeological Study Bible* says this about the bad feelings between the Jews and the Samaritans in Jesus' day: "The separation between the Samaritans and the Judeans started a long time ago. In 2 Kings 17, we learn that the Samaritans were the future children of people who lived in Mesopotamia. The king of Assyria forced these people to live in Northern Israel after the Jews were forced to leave Northern Israel, in 722 B.C. The Samaritans who moved there mixed the worship of Yahweh with the worship of false gods." —(Zondervan Publishing, 2005), page 1727, adapted. The Samaritans build their own temple on Mount Gerizim. They also choose their own holy leaders for the temple. So, it is easy to see why Jesus' followers also are surprised when Jesus chooses to enter Samaria on His way to Galilee. Jesus' followers are surprised when Jesus does not argue with the Samaritans about religion. What does Jesus do? He knows that the Samaritan woman wants to be accepted, loved, and forgiven. So, Jesus gives her what she needs.



Jesus knows that the Samaritan woman wants to be accepted, loved, and forgiven. So, Jesus gives her the things she needs.

**Read John 4:3–34. How does Jesus start a conversation with the Samaritan woman? How does she answer Him? How do Jesus' followers act? How does Jesus use this experience to teach His followers about how God sees people?**

Jesus wants to teach His followers an important lesson. They need to learn that "those people who have Jesus' Spirit will look at everyone with eyes of love. This love comes from God."—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, June 20, 1892, adapted.

**Are there people around you that you feel you cannot respect? If so, who are they? Why must you change your feelings about this group or groups? How can you change your feelings for them?**



**START WHERE YOU ARE (John 1:40, 41)**

Someone said, “In life the only place to start from is where you are. There is no other place to start.” Jesus shows us this important rule in Acts 1:8 (ERV), when He says, “ ‘But the Holy Spirit will come on you and give you power. You will be my witnesses. You will tell people everywhere about me—in Jerusalem, in the rest of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world [earth].’ ”

Jesus’ message to His followers is clear: “Start where you are. Tell people where you live about God. Start by doing the work that needs to be done around you!”

You do not need to have a lot of education to start working for God. You also do not need to have more skills than other people. Yes, God-given skills are helpful when we use them in the right way. But in the end, all you need is your own love for God and a love for souls. If you are willing to share Jesus, then God will open the way for you.

**Read John 1:40, 41; John 6:5–11; and John 12:20–26. What do these verses tell you about Andrew’s spiritual eyesight and his way of sharing Jesus?**

Andrew’s experience teaches us many things. He starts with his own family. He first tells his brother, Peter, about Jesus. Andrew also is kind to a little boy who gives Jesus the food He uses for a miracle. Andrew knows just what to do with the Greeks too. Does Andrew argue with them about God and religion? Not at all! Andrew sees that the Greeks need Jesus. So, Andrew takes them to Jesus.

The secret to winning people to Jesus is showing them that you care. You do that by building strong friendships. Think about the people closest to you who may not know Jesus. Do they see you as a caring and loving person? Do they see in you the peace that they want so badly? Does your life make people want to know more about Jesus? When we share Jesus, we make friends for God. In this way, we lead people to become Christians. Then we share with them God’s end-time message about Bible truth. In time, these friends may become Seventh-day Adventist Christians too.

**Why is it often so hard to lead family members to Jesus? What has been your own experience? What important rules about sharing Jesus with family members can you share with the class?**



**The secret to winning people to Jesus is showing them that you care. You do that by building strong friendships.**



## HOW TO GET ALONG WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE (Matthew 4:18, 19)

Jesus is an expert at getting along with people. Jesus meets people who have a hard time getting along with other people. Jesus shows these people that He accepts them. He listens carefully to them. He asks them questions. He shows them God's truth. Jesus sees into people's hearts. He sees that even people with the hardest hearts want a better life. Jesus also sees the good in the worst sinners. In Jesus' eyes, the Good News can save anyone who accepts it. Jesus believes that "no person has fallen so low into sin or is so bad that Jesus cannot save him or her."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 258, adapted. Jesus looks at people in a different way than the rest of us do. Jesus sees in each person what he or she is meant to be. Jesus helps people to see how they can become better. So, many people become better in this life because of Jesus.



**Ask God for eyes to see  
and a heart that listens.**

**Read Matthew 4:18, 19; Mark 12:28–34; and Luke 23:39–43. What is the same about Jesus' words to Peter and Andrew, a religious leader, and the thief on the cross? Study Jesus' plan for touching each person's heart. What is the most important part of this plan to you?**

Everywhere that Jesus goes He sees the chance for spiritual growth. Jesus sees people that He can save for God's kingdom. Jesus finds these people in strange places. In these places, you may think there is nobody to save. Jesus has what we call "church-growth eyes." That means understanding people as Jesus sees them. Jesus sees everyone as someone to win for His kingdom. Christians with church-growth eyes also need to have "church-growth hearts." Church-growth hearts is a word picture for people who listen with their hearts. They listen to the wish in people's hearts for something they do not have. People who listen carefully to other people can understand what is really in another person's heart, even if he or she does not talk about it.

Ask Jesus to help you to see and understand the Holy Spirit's work in other people's lives. Please pray that God will open your eyes to the chances He brings to you each day to share your faith. Ask God for eyes to see and a heart that listens. Ask God to make you want to share Jesus and His love with people. Then you will feel a joy that is deeper than anything you experienced before.

## WHEN GOD OPENS THE WAY FOR US TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS (Acts 8:26–38)

The book of Acts is filled with stories. The stories show how Jesus' followers share the Good News. Jesus' followers share God's saving message with everyone they can. From beginning to end, Acts shows us stories about how the New Testament church grows. We see how the church grows in good times and in bad.

In 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13, NLV, Paul talks about his experience at Troas: "When I arrived in the city of Troas, the Lord opened the door for me to preach the Good News of Christ. I was worried because I could not find our brother Titus. After saying good-bye, I went on my way to the country of Macedonia." God opens the way for Paul to preach the Good News in Europe. Paul knows that this is a miracle. Paul also knows that the "doors" that God opens today may be shut tomorrow. So, Paul sails to Macedonia right away.

The God of the New Testament is the God of the "open door." That is, God opens the way for us to share our faith. The book of Acts shows us that God is busy opening doors for His people in cities, in countries, and in kingdoms. Most important, God is busy opening doors in people's hearts.

**Read Acts 8:26–38. What do these verses teach us about Philip? In what way is Philip open to God's leading in his life? What does Philip do when God gives him the chance to share his faith?**

"An angel leads Philip to the person who wants to know more about the Bible. This person is ready for the Good News. Today, angels also will lead workers who allow the Holy Spirit to give them holy words and hearts. The angel that led Philip can do the work himself. But God does not work this way. It is God's plan for humans to work with Him to save other humans."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 109, adapted. So, we need to have hearts to listen and spiritual eyes to understand. Then God will send His angels to help us touch people's hearts.

**Do you see how important the Bible is in Philip's story? Also, do you see that it is important for someone who knows Bible truth to share his knowledge with the one who wants to know more? What does that teach us?**



**We need to have spiritual hearts to listen and spiritual eyes to understand. Then God will send His angels to help us touch people's hearts.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Gospel in Samaria,” pages 103–111, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

All around us people are searching for everlasting life and heaven. Jesus says, “ ‘There is such a big harvest [crop] of people to bring in. But there are only a few workers to help harvest [cut the crops; collect] them’ ” (Matthew 9:37, ERV). Is the problem with the harvest? Not at all! The problem is that there are not enough workers. Jesus sees what His followers cannot see. What is Jesus’ answer to the problem? “ ‘God owns the harvest [crops]. Ask him to send more workers to help gather [collect] his harvest’ ” (Matthew 9:38, ERV). The way to solve the problem is to pray that God will send us out to collect His “crops” of people.

Here is a prayer we can pray: “Lord, I want You to use me to build up Your kingdom. Open my eyes. Give me spiritual understanding to see all the doors that You open for me every day. Teach me to care about the needs of the people around me. Help me to say kind words to people to encourage them and give them hope. Help me also to share Your love and truth with the people I meet every day.” Pray this prayer. Then God will do some wonderful and surprising things with your life.



**Pray that God will send us out to collect His “crops” of people.**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Have you worked to bring souls to Jesus? It is not always easy, right? True, only God can change hearts. But He chose us to be part of that work. What does it take to win one soul to Jesus? It takes time, a lot of work, a patient spirit, and a love that comes from above. Your selfish heart must die too. What choices can you make to die to self so that you can win souls to Jesus?
- ② Who are some of the people you meet every day who do not know Jesus? What have you done to share Jesus with them? What more can you do?
- ③ Think about Saul from Tarsus. He is the last person people thought would become a Christian, right? But that is exactly what happened to him. What lesson should this teach us about not judging people by the way they look and act on the outside?
- ④ Think some more about Saul’s story. Now read Matthew 7:6. How do you understand Jesus’ words here?

**A** Christian bookseller walked the hot streets of Butuan City, Philippines. He worked hard all day. But he sold no books. This job was his only income. So, he felt disappointed. He decided to knock on one more door. First, he prayed.

A small woman with smart eyes greeted the tired man. She smiled at him. He told her about the books he had for sale. The woman felt the Holy Spirit had led this man to her.

The woman was a Christian. For many years, she had not shown a deep interest in Jesus. Then her family became poor. At that time, the woman wanted to learn more about Jesus. But she had no money. She already had 10 children. Soon she would have three more. How could she afford this man's book? But she knew she must buy, read, and share this special book. It was named *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White. The book was too expensive. But she bought it anyway.

The woman's name was Epefania Ty. More than 50 years later, the book Epefania bought that day continues to change her family's life. She led every one of her children to Jesus. She believed what Ellen White wrote in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, page 429: "Our work for Jesus must start in our homes. . . . It is the most important place where we can witness for Jesus."—Adapted.

One of Epefania Ty's sons is named Florente. He became a pastor. He is the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Philippine Printing Press in the city of Manila. Some of Epefania's other children became leaders and teachers in Adventist churches and schools. Almost all of Epefania's children graduated from Mountain View College. Each child who graduated helped the next child go to school there.

My name is Steven Dragoo. I knew this woman, Epefania, as "Mom." I married one of Epefania's daughters, Dorcas. Dorcas has taught in Adventist schools her whole life.

Mom had a stroke before I met her. She could not talk, see, or get out of bed. She tried with all her heart to talk to me when we first met. She could not. But she did not need words to move my heart. I am moved each time I think about how she answered the Holy Spirit many years earlier. Mom died in August 2013 at the age of 89.

Dozens of people have accepted Jesus because of a lonely Bible bookseller, a powerful book, and a woman whose heart was open to the Holy Spirit. I look forward to seeing Mom again at the Second Coming.

## INSIDE *Story* by STEVEN DRAGOO

### A FILIPINO FAMILY'S LIFE-CHANGING STORY



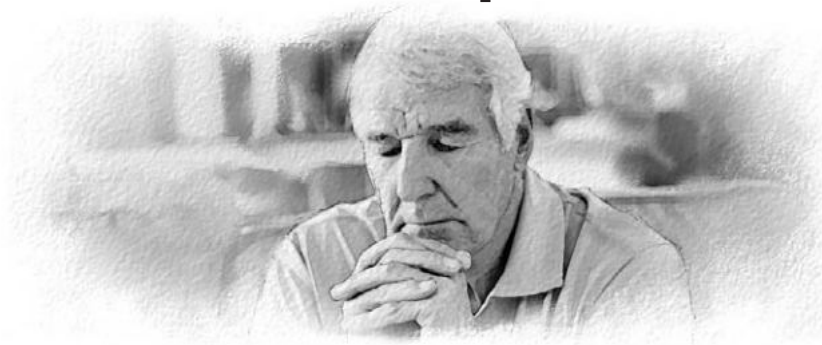
**The book was too expensive for the woman's budget. But she knew she must buy, read, and share this special book.**



**Steven Dragoo, shown with Dorcas, is a Bible worker in Christiansburg, Virginia, where he shares the Good News about Jesus.**



# Prayer Power: Asking God to Help People



## SABBATH—JULY 18

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Revelation 12:7–9; Luke 3:21; Ephesians 1:15–21; Daniel 10:10–14; 1 Samuel 12:22–24.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “So always tell each other the wrong things you have done. Then pray for each other. Do this so that God can heal you. Anyone who lives the way God wants can pray, and great [wonderful] things will happen” (James 5:16, ERV).



**We must ask God to save people.**

**THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH MEMBERS** feel their need for prayer. “After the believers prayed, the place where they were meeting shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to speak God’s message without fear” (Acts 4:31, ERV). Look at what happens. First, Jesus’ followers pray. They are filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they share the Good News about Jesus without any fear.

Here we see a connection between prayer, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and sharing Bible truth. “Jesus’ followers do not ask God to bless them alone. They feel the need to pray for people. Jesus’ followers know that they must share the Good News everywhere on earth. So, they ask God for the power that Jesus promises them.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 37, adapted.

We also must ask God to save people. Then God will work in our hearts. He will bring us close to Him. He will give us wisdom to know how to bring people into His kingdom (James 1:5). God will work in their lives in a powerful way. We may not always see how God works or understand it. But God is working in their lives (1 John 5:14–17).



## THE BIG WAR BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL (Revelation 12:7–9)

**Compare Revelation 12:7–9; Ephesians 6:12; and 2 Corinthians 10:4. These verses show us we are in a war between good and evil. How do you think prayer helps us win this fight against evil?**

The Bible tells us about a war that we cannot always see. It is a worldwide war between good and evil. It is a war between light and darkness, or Jesus and Satan. In this war, God respects our free choice. He never will force anyone to do anything. In this war, God sends His Holy Spirit to help men and women understand Bible truth (John 16:7, 8). Angels from heaven fight in this war between good and evil. They help people choose everlasting life (Hebrews 1:14). God also plans for special things to happen in our lives to lead us to Him.

What God will **not** do is force someone to choose Him. That goes against God's kingdom and His love. Love is the foundation for God's government. That is why prayer is so important. God is doing everything He can to save people before we pray. But when we pray, our prayers cause God to pour out His love and power on other people. God respects our freedom to pray for other people. He can do more to help them than when we do not pray.

Read this carefully: "There are things that God will give us only when we ask Him. He will not give us these things if we do not ask Him. So, we must ask for them in prayer. This is part of God's plan for us."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 525, adapted. Our prayers change lives in the worldwide war between good and evil. So, that is why we must pray for people who do not know Jesus. Our prayers will cause God to bless their lives. Then He will work even harder to save them.

We need to always remember something important about our prayers for people. Yes, we do not fully understand how God works in other people's lives when we pray. But we need to continue praying for them and for ourselves anyway.

**Why do you think God works more for people when we pray for them than when we do not pray? Maybe we do not fully understand how our prayers for other people work. But the Bible tells us to continue to pray for them anyway. Why should we do what the Bible says?**



**"There are things that God will give us only when we ask Him."**

**JESUS PRAYS FOR US (Luke 3:21)**

**Read Luke 3:21; Luke 5:16; and Luke 9:18. What do these verses tell you about the connection between Jesus' prayer life and His success in His work for God?**



**Jesus understands that prayer is a mighty weapon.**

Jesus communicates with His Father in heaven His whole life. Look at Jesus' baptism. At that time, Jesus prays for God's power to help Him do God's work. The Holy Spirit helps Jesus. Jesus understands that prayer is a mighty weapon. Jesus prays when He feeds 5,000 men. Jesus prays when He heals the man with the bad rash on his skin. Jesus prays when He frees the man filled with thousands of demons. Jesus prays because He knows that prayer will help Him win the fight against evil. Prayer is part of God's plan for His power to help us in our weakness. Prayer is God's way of bringing us up to God. God alone can touch the hearts of the people that we pray for.

**Read Luke 22:31–34. What does Jesus say to Peter in Luke 22:31–34 to encourage him? How do these words help Peter when he fails soon after? Now read Hebrews 7:25. How does Jesus encourage us when we fail or want to do what is wrong?**

People who win souls to Jesus are men and women who pray. Jesus prays for Peter by name. Jesus tells Peter that during the hardest time in Peter's life, Jesus will be praying for him. Satan understands very well God's plans for Peter and the good work that Peter can do for God. So, Satan plans to do everything possible to destroy Peter's chance to help the Christian church grow. During this whole time, Jesus prays for Peter. God answers Jesus' prayers. Jesus prays for us too. Isn't that exciting? Jesus invites us to join Him in His work of praying for people. He wants us to pray for them by name in front of His throne.

So, we should never stop praying for people. Then we show that we depend fully on God to save the ones we pray for.

**Are you praying for anyone now? Why is it so important to never give up, even if you feel there is no hope?**

**PAUL'S PRAYERS FOR PEOPLE (Ephesians 1:15–21)**

We pray for people because the Bible tells us to. That is why Paul prays. Paul prays for new believers in the churches that he starts. Paul believes that something powerful happens when he prays. But it will not happen if he does not pray. Paul often is separated from the people he loves. But he knows that he can be with them in his heart if he prays for them.

**Read Ephesians 1:15–21. On the line below, list the different things that Paul asks God to give the Ephesian church members. What does Paul ask God to give to them?**

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Paul asks God to give the Ephesian Christians wisdom and spiritual eyesight. Paul wants God to fill their minds with divine truth. Paul also wants God to fill their hearts with the hope of everlasting life. Paul prays that the Ephesians will see God's mighty power at work in their lives. God is so powerful and mighty that He woke up Jesus from the dead. This act also is known as the Resurrection. The Resurrection is the foundation of our hope for everlasting life in Jesus. Paul ends his prayer by telling the Ephesians about all the riches that they have in Jesus. How do you think Paul's words made the Ephesians feel? They must have felt encouraged. They knew Paul prayed for them. They also knew what he prayed about.

**Read Philippians 1:3–11. Look at the way Paul says things. Let us say you are a Philippian church member. And you get a letter from Paul. In his letter, he tells you that he prays for you. He also tells you what he prays about. How will that make you feel, and why? What Bible promises do you find in Paul's words? What warnings do you also find there?**

Paul's words in Philippians 1:3–11 are some of the most encouraging words in the whole Bible. These verses are filled with promises. They also ask us to let God fill our hearts with His love, knowledge, and spiritual understanding. These things come only from our knowing Jesus. Then we can become everything that God wants us to be.



**Paul asks God to give the Ephesian Christians wisdom and spiritual eyesight.**

## THE POWERS OF GOOD AND EVIL AT WORK (Daniel 10:10–14)

Our prayers for people are a mighty weapon in the world-wide war between good and evil. We call this war the great controversy. Daniel 10 shows us one of the best examples of how this war is fought.

Let's understand this chapter better by looking at Jeremiah's words. Do you remember how Jeremiah says that the Jews will be slaves to the Babylonians for 70 years? At the end of Daniel's life, this time of Jewish slavery is about to end. But Daniel is worried. He sees little proof that Jeremiah's words will happen. The Jews are not free.

Then the Medes and the Persians beat the Babylonians in war. But the Jews continue to be slaves. So, Daniel prays for three weeks. During that time, he eats only plain food. Daniel prays with all his heart for his people. At the end of three weeks, an angel comes to Daniel.

**Read Daniel 10:10–14. As these verses show us, when does God hear Daniel's prayers? What stops God from answering Daniel's prayers right away?**



**Michael is another name the Bible uses to show us Jesus as the leader of all the angels who fight against Satan.**

Daniel 10:10–14 is exciting. Let us try to understand it more fully. We must first know who the people are in these verses. Who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia? It is not Cyrus. Cyrus is the king of Persia. So, "the prince of Persia" (Daniel 10:13, ERV) must be Satan. Jesus names Satan "the prince of this world [earth]" (John 12:31, NIV) or "the leader of this world" (John 14:30, NIV). Paul names Satan "the leader of the power of darkness" (Ephesians 2:2, NIV). So, if the Prince of Persia is Satan, who is Michael? The name "Michael" is written five times in the Bible (Revelation 12:7; Jude 9; Daniel 10:13, 21; and Daniel 12:1). The name Michael means "Who is like God?" The Bible uses the name Michael to show us Jesus. Michael is the leader of all the angels who fight against Satan. Jesus is everlasting. He always has been alive. He has all power. He is God's Son. One of Jesus' jobs as the Leader of all the angels is to beat Satan. Jesus will destroy Satan in the future.

Daniel 10 shows us the war between good and evil. As Daniel prays, Michael comes from heaven. Michael, as we saw, is Jesus. Michael fights back the armies of hell. Maybe we cannot see what Jesus does. But Jesus hears all our prayers. He is hard at work answering our prayers too.



**WHAT SHOULD WE ASK FOR WHEN WE PRAY FOR PEOPLE? (1 Samuel 12:22–24)**

In the Bible, we see that people who pray ask God to help them do certain things. Prayer is not just some deep wish or feeling. No, prayer is asking God for exactly what we need and what other people need. Jesus prays for His followers. Paul prays for the Ephesian, Philippian, and Colossian Christians. Paul also prays for his young helpers, Timothy, Titus, and John Mark.

**Read 1 Samuel 12:22–24 and Job 16:21. What is the same about these verses? What do they tell us about praying for people?**

Both Samuel and Job talk about our need for praying with all our hearts. Samuel's words are strong. He cries out, " 'If I stopped praying for you, I would be sinning against the LORD' " (1 Samuel 12:23, ERV). Job tells us what a friend does: " 'He speaks to God for me, like [the same as] someone presenting [asking] an argument [a favor; blessing] for a friend' " (Job 16:21, ERV).

**Read 1 John 5:14–16. What happens when we pray for people?**

When we pray for people, God pours His blessing on them. He pours water from the river of life on us. This water flows from heaven's throne. It flows from God to us and from us to the people we pray for. This water is a word picture for God's blessings. Satan's whole army is afraid when they hear us pray with our whole hearts for God's blessings. Ellen G. White talks about the power of prayer: "Satan cannot stand it when we pray to his powerful enemy, Jesus. Satan is afraid of Jesus' power. Satan shakes with fear at Jesus' strength and royal glory. When we pray, Satan's whole army shakes with fear."—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 346, adapted.

**Read Matthew 18:18, 19. What do these verses teach us about the power of our words when we pray? How do these verses encourage us to pray with other people for the ones who do not know the Lord?**



**When we pray for people, God pours His blessing on them. He pours water from the river of life on us. This water flows from heaven's throne. This water is a word picture for God's blessings.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Privilege of Prayer,” pages 93–104, in *Steps to Christ*; “Work for Church Members,” pages 19–24, in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 7.

When we pray for people, we show God that we depend on Him. God honors our faith in Him. He uses all the power in heaven to change human lives. When our prayers come to God’s throne, God orders His angels to help us. “Angels wait around God’s throne. They wait to obey Jesus’ commands right away. Jesus sends them in answer to every prayer that we offer to Him in living faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, page 377, adapted.

We are told that not one prayer we pray is lost. God does not forget any of our prayers. God collects all our prayers in heaven. They will be answered at the time and place that God knows best. “The prayer of faith is not ever lost. So, we must not expect God to answer every prayer for what we want in the exact way that we want it answered. That is wrong.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 231, adapted.

These words give us a lot of encouragement as we pray for people who do not know Jesus. These people may include our husbands, wives, sons, daughters, family members, friends, and coworkers. Not one prayer of faith is ever lost. We may not always see answers to our prayers right away. But God moves on their hearts in ways that we will know only when we are in heaven.



**“Angels wait around God’s throne. They wait to obey Jesus’ commands right away. Jesus sends them in answer to every prayer that we offer to Him in living faith.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read Philippians 1:19; Colossians 4:2, 3; and 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2. While Paul is a prisoner, what hope does he have because of the Philippians’ prayers? What does Paul ask the Colossians and Thessalonians to pray for? What do these prayers show us about winning souls for Jesus?
- ② Think about the great controversy, or the worldwide war between good and evil. It is the story behind all that happens here on earth! How does your knowledge of this war help you understand why prayer is so important?
- ③ What are some of the things that stop God from answering our prayers? What excuses do you make to get out of praying for the people who need your prayers?

**T**he Polish army decided to replace their old jet planes with new ones. This decision made many new jobs for people. So I quit my job as a mechanic for a new job in the army.

I chose to work as an air traffic controller. I took classes for six months. But when I graduated, a doctor said that my eyesight was not good enough.

I was filled with sadness. I prayed, "Why, God?"

I ended up doing different jobs for the army. I had a lot of free time. So, I spent hours reading the Bible. A strong wish to know God grew in my heart.

At home, my wife, Aneta, joined me in reading the Bible. As we read, we saw that many verses did not agree with what we learned in our church. We read that the dead sleep in the ground. They do not go to heaven or hell after they die. We learned that the seventh day is the Sabbath.

One Saturday, Aneta and I visited an Adventist church. We decided to walk out right away if we heard anything that did not agree with the Bible. We stayed and never left.

A pastor gave us Bible studies. I was sure that soon I would need to leave the army because of the Sabbath. I did not think I could keep the Sabbath and serve in the army at the same time. But no Sabbath trouble ever came. It was easy to trade Sabbath work duties with other soldiers.

After many years, I got a chance for a better job in the army. I boldly told my new commander about my faith and how I had always kept the Sabbath.

The commander was surprised. "Why didn't you tell me you were asking your friends to let you have your Sabbaths off?" he asked. "As long as I am in charge, you will be free every Saturday."

Many people in the army heard about my faith. Soldiers came to me with spiritual questions. But I did not really know what a change my faith had made in people's lives until I got ready to retire. I had worked for 29 years in the Polish army.

A commander asked me to come to his office for a private talk. He said, "I've started to read the Bible. I have some questions for you."

Now I understand why God did not let me get the job as an air traffic controller. If I had taken it, I would not have read the Bible. I would not have needed to ask friends to take my duties on Sabbath. I would not have been able to share my faith with so many soldiers.

Not everything happens in life the way we want or plan. But God's plans are best.

## INSIDE *Story*

by SLAWOMIR PACEK

### LOYAL SOLDIER IN POLAND



**A commander asked me to come to his office for a private talk. He said, "I've started to read the Bible. I have some questions for you."**



# The Holy Spirit Helps Us Share the Message About the Cross



## SABBATH—JULY 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** John 15:26, 27; Acts 2:41, 42; Acts 7:55; Acts 4:4, 31; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 16:11–15, 23–34.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They were bold when they spoke God’s word [message]” (Acts 4:31, NlrV).



The Holy Spirit will help Jesus’ followers to share the message about the Cross. Then Jesus’ followers will preach with power. Their message will change lives.

**JESUS TELLS HIS FOLLOWERS** to “ ‘Go everywhere in the world [on the earth]. Tell the Good News to everyone’ ” (Mark 16:15, ERV). Jesus’ followers must think that this job is impossible! How can they do it? They are only a small group. They have very little money. Most of them do not have an education. They are only ordinary people. But they have a God who is more than ordinary. He can give them the power to do the impossible!

Jesus says, “ ‘But you will receive [get] power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will tell people about me in Jerusalem, and 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). The Holy Spirit will help them to share the message about the Cross. Then Jesus’ followers will preach with power. Their message will change lives. Paul tells us that the Good News was “told to everyone on earth” (Colossians 1:23, ERV). In this week’s lesson, we will look at the work that the Holy Spirit does to make us powerful witnesses for Jesus.



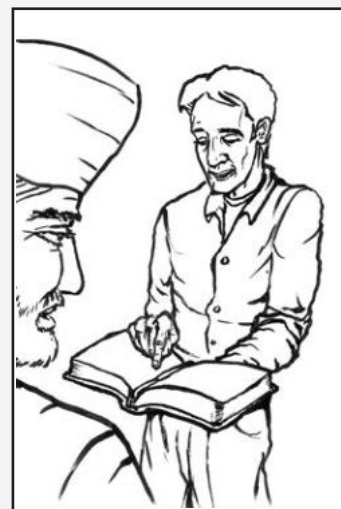
**JESUS' PROMISE: THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 15:26, 27)**

Jesus followers are worried. What will happen to them after Jesus leaves them? How will they do the work He gave them to do? So, Jesus makes His followers a promise. He will send them the Holy Spirit after He goes back to heaven. This promise helps Jesus' followers to stop worrying. Jesus tells them, " 'But I tell you the truth. It is better for you that I go away. When I go away I will send the Helper to you. If I do not go away, then the Helper will not come' " (John 16:7, ICB). The Greek word for "Helper" is "**parakletos**." "**Parakletos**" means "one who comes near to your side" to help you. That is exactly what the Holy Spirit does! One of His most important jobs is to come to our side. He gives us power. He guides us in our work to tell people about Jesus. When we share Jesus with people, we are not alone. The Holy Spirit stays at our side. He leads us to people who are honest in heart. They are looking for the truth. The Holy Spirit makes their hearts ready before we ever meet them. The Holy Spirit helps us say the right words. He brings the truth to people's minds and convinces them that it is right. The Holy Spirit also gives people strength to accept what He tells them.

**Read John 15:26, 27 and John 16:8. What do these verses tell us about the work that the Holy Spirit does to help us share Jesus with people?**

The Holy Spirit tells us about Jesus. His plan is to lead as many people to Jesus as possible. The Holy Spirit's work is to give Jesus glory. The Holy Spirit tells all believers that it is their job to tell people about Jesus. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes. He helps us see all the good in the people around us. The Holy Spirit's work is unseen. He works on people's hearts in ways we cannot see. He helps people to accept the Good News about Jesus.

The book of John makes the Holy Spirit's work clear: The Holy Spirit will show people on earth " 'the truth about sin' " (John 16:8, NLV). The Holy Spirit moves on people's hearts. He shows them how far from God they really are. He tells them to turn away from sin. But the Holy Spirit's job is not just to show us how bad we are. He also shows us how good, kind, and loving Jesus is. Then the Holy Spirit works hard to make us look just the same as Jesus.



**The Holy Spirit leads us to people who are honest in heart. They are looking for the truth. The Holy Spirit makes their hearts ready before we meet them.**

## A CHURCH FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT'S POWER (Acts 2:41, 42)

The book of Acts often is named “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” That is because Acts shows us the stories of believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit. These people give their lives to God. The Spirit helps them change the lives of other people for the better. Acts is an exciting book. It shows us the church sharing the Good News. We also see how fast the church grows. The New Testament church depends fully on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does miracles and wonderful things in the church. The church is an example of what the Holy Spirit can do in the lives of men and women who fully serve Jesus.

**Read Acts 2:41, 42; Acts 4:4, 31; Acts 5:14, 42; Acts 6:7; and Acts 16:5. What is the most powerful part of these verses? Or what touches your heart the most? Luke wrote the books of Acts. In this list of verses, Luke talks about how fast the church grows. Why do you think Luke tells us about that? What message is Luke trying to share with us?**

Why does Luke write the book of Acts? Because Luke wants each reader to know about the work that the Holy Spirit does in the New Testament Church.

Do you also see that Luke tells us how many people are baptized? Luke tells us these numbers because he wants to measure the Holy Spirit's work in the 1st century. In Acts 2:41, Luke tells us that 3,000 people are baptized in one day and in one place. In Acts 4:4, Luke tells us that 5,000 men are baptized. In Acts 5:14, large crowds of people accept the Lord and are baptized.

Luke tells us stories about other men and women who are baptized too. There is Lydia, a business owner. A Philippian prison guard. A girl who was filled with demons. And an Ethiopian man. In each story, Luke shows us how the Holy Spirit touches people's hearts. We also see that the big crowds are made of men and women. Each man or woman is a child of God. Jesus died for each one. Yes, we like big numbers. They make us feel that we are a success. But in the end, sharing the truth is more often about our winning one person to Jesus at a time.

The New Testament believers also started many churches. This helped the church grow fast. The new churches helped the whole New Testament church grow in spiritual strength too. This is an important lesson for us.



**In the book of Acts, Luke tells us the story about how the Holy Spirit touches the heart of a woman named Lydia.**

**THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE MESSAGE  
ABOUT THE CROSS (Acts 7:55)**

We see the work of the Holy Spirit in the whole book of Acts. The Holy Spirit helps believers share Jesus with people in many ways. The Holy Spirit gives them strength. He helps Christians share Jesus in places where people do not accept God. The Holy Spirit leads people to seek Bible truth. The Holy Spirit gets the hearts of people ready to accept Jesus. He helps whole cities get ready to accept the Lord before any Christians ever go to those cities. The Holy Spirit gives Jesus' followers chances to preach that they never thought were possible. The Holy Spirit makes their words and actions strong.

**Read Acts 7:55; Acts 8:29; Acts 11:15; Acts 15:28, 29; and Acts 16:6–10. How does the Holy Spirit help Jesus' followers in each experience shown in these verses? What are some of the things the Holy Spirit does to help Jesus' followers?**

The Holy Spirit's work during the 1st century is very wonderful! The experiences you read about are only a small example of His work. The Spirit gave Stephen spiritual strength to talk about Jesus. That was during a time when a big crowd wanted to kill Stephen with stones. The Spirit led Philip to a powerful Ethiopian who was searching for the truth. That meeting helped open up all of Africa for the Good News! The Holy Spirit gave Peter a sign to help him know that God also gave non-Jews the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit also brought peace to the church during a time when the church almost broke apart. The Holy Spirit also made it possible for Paul and other Christians to preach the Good News in Europe.

The Holy Spirit was active in the New Testament church and is active in the life of the church today. He wants to make us strong too. He also wants to teach us, guide us, make us one, and send us out to do the most important work on earth. That is, leading men and women to Jesus and His truth. So, remember, the Holy Spirit continues to work today, just as He worked during New Testament times.

**What can we do, day by day, to make ourselves more open to the Holy Spirit's power? Also, what choices can we make that will let the Holy Spirit work in us to help other people?**



**The Spirit led Philip to a powerful Ethiopian who was searching for the truth.**

## THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE BIBLE, AND THE MESSAGE ABOUT JESUS (Acts 4:4, 31)

The New Testament church tells people about Jesus. God's Word, the Bible, is the support for all its preaching. In Acts 4, Peter witnesses to the Jews by preaching. Most of Peter's sermon comes from Old Testament verses. These verses show that Jesus is the Savior. Later on, Peter says, " 'God has sent his message to the people of Israel' " (Acts 10:36, ICB). Then Peter shares with Cornelius the story about Jesus waking up from the dead. Stephen does the same thing as Peter. Before Stephen is killed, he preaches about Israel's history in the Old Testament. Paul talks about Old Testament promises about the Savior. Philip also uses the Old Testament to help an Ethiopian understand the promise about the Savior in Isaiah 53. In each story, Jesus' followers announce God's truth. The Bible is the support for all their preaching.

**Read Acts 4:4, 31; Acts 8:4; Acts 13:48, 49; Acts 17:2; Acts 18:24, 25. What do these verses teach us about the connection between the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the message shared by the New Testament church?**



**The Bible has the power to change lives because the Spirit changes us as we read the Bible.**

The same Holy Spirit who led men to write the Bible also uses the Bible to change lives. There is life-giving power in the Bible. Why? Because the Spirit gives the Bible power. The Bible is Jesus' Living Word.

**Read 2 Peter 1:21 and Hebrews 4:12. Why is the Bible powerful enough to change lives?**

"The same power that made the earth is in the Bible. This Word gives us power; it starts life. Every Bible command is a promise. When we accept God's promise, we must take it into our hearts. Each promise brings God's life into our hearts. The promise changes us. It makes us new."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 126, adapted.

The Bible has the power to change lives because the Spirit changes us as we read the Bible. This is the same Spirit who helped men write the Bible. The Spirit also works in people's lives when we share the truth with them. God promises to bless His Word, not our words. The power is in the Bible, not in human ideas.



## THE HOLY SPIRIT'S LIFE-CHANGING POWER (Acts 16:11–15, 23–34)

The book of Acts shows that God works miracles in human lives with His Spirit. Acts shows how the Good News wins against wrong ways of thinking. The Good News also changes lifelong habits. The Good News teaches all humans about God's mercy, forgiveness, and truth. The Holy Spirit meets people where they are. But He does not leave them there. By the Spirit's power, we are changed.

**Read Acts 16:11–15, 23–34; Acts 17:33, 34; and Acts 18:8. These are only a few of the Bible stories about changed lives. What do these stories teach us about God's power to change the lives of different people?**

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These verses show us people who are very different from each other. Lydia was a business owner. The Philippian prison guard was a middle-class Roman citizen. The Holy Spirit can touch the hearts of people from all social levels. The Spirit's power changes both men and women, rich and poor, educated and not educated.

The last two people on our list are surprising and wonderful. Acts 17:34 tells us about Dionysius the Areopagite. The Areopagites of the city of Athens were part of the legal team of judges who judged court cases. These judges were important members of their city.

The Holy Spirit works in Paul to touch the hearts of very important people. One of them is Crispus (Acts 18:8). Crispus is the leader of the Jewish church. Crispus follows the Old Jewish ways. But the Holy Spirit changes his life and thoughts. These stories show us that the Holy Spirit will do wonderful things in other people's lives when we share with them Jesus and Bible truth. We cannot and must not make guesses about who we think can, or cannot, be saved. Our work is to share Jesus with anyone and everyone that God brings into our lives. The Lord will do the rest.

**Jesus' death is for everyone. What does this important truth teach us about why we should not judge if somebody cannot be saved?**



**The Holy Spirit will do wonderful things in other people's lives when we share with them Jesus and Bible truth.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Gift of the Spirit,” pages 47–56, in *The Acts of the Apostles*; “‘Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,’ ” pages 667–672, in *The Desire of Ages*.

The Holy Spirit works with God the Father and Jesus the Son to save us. When we tell people about Jesus, we join the Spirit in His work of saving lives. He touches people’s hearts. He gives us chances to share Jesus with people. His Word, the Bible, shows people the truth about Jesus. The Spirit stops us from being slaves to evil thoughts. He helps us win the war against wrong ways of thinking. He makes us free from the evil habits that put us in chains.

When we share Jesus with people, we are working with the Holy Spirit. He is there before us. He makes people’s hearts ready for the Good News. The Spirit is there with us, helping us choose the right thoughts and words. He helps us to do kind acts to help people. He helps us when we share our stories about how Jesus has changed our lives. The Spirit is with us when we give a Bible study too. He is with us when we give someone a book about Bible truth. He is with us when we share Bible truth with people everywhere on earth. The Spirit will continue working on a person’s heart long after we leave him or her. He will do whatever it takes to save this person.



**The Holy Spirit makes us free from the evil habits that put us in chains.**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Talk about a time when you felt the Holy Spirit working in a powerful way in your life as you shared Jesus with someone.
- ② Have you ever felt afraid of sharing your faith? How does knowing about the Holy Spirit’s work stop that fear? How does the Spirit’s work encourage you as you share Jesus with people?
- ③ This week we talked about the “work” that the Holy Spirit does to help us share God’s message. What are some of the different ways that the Spirit works with us to tell people about Jesus? How does the Holy Spirit help us to share Jesus and work in the lives of people?
- ④ Why is the Bible so important to our faith and our personal story about what Jesus does for us?

## FOUR DREAMS

**A**braham Keita had the first dream after he prayed on his prayer mat in Bufa at 3:00 A.M. Bufa is a village in Guinea in West Africa.

Abraham prayed, "I am more than 40 years old. I do not have a wife, children, work, or money. Please help me. I want You to turn me into a special messenger. Then I can give other people special messages from You."

As Abraham prayed, a wind started to blow. He fell asleep on the mat. Then someone touched him and said, "My son, go inside and sleep in your bed."

Soon he was asleep on his bed and had his first dream. In the dream, someone with eyes the same as fire came to him. Abraham was afraid that this person would hurt him. He asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Jesus Christ," the Man announced.

In the morning, Abraham wondered what would happen next.

The next night Abraham had another dream. He saw the Man Jesus again. He walked with Him on a mountain trail.

On the third night, Abraham dreamed that he was looking for work. He saw Jesus sitting at a table. Jesus hired workers. He wrote in a book the names of people who wanted to work for Him.

On the fourth night, Abraham saw Jesus again in a dream. Jesus stood chest-deep in the Atlantic Ocean. Jesus looked at Abraham. Abraham looked back at Jesus.

Then three years pass. Abraham moved to Conakry, Guinea's capital city. There Abraham got a job as a builder. On his way home from work, Abraham met a Global Mission worker on the road. This worker was named Tranquille Fassinadouno. "How are you?" Tranquille asked. "I'm a Christian. Do you want to come to my church?"

"How can I?" Abraham said. "I belong to a different religion. I don't even understand what you are talking about!"

At home, Abraham couldn't stop thinking about his dreams. Then he decided to go to Tranquille's church. The people at the church welcomed Abraham warmly. He liked what he learned there. He came back every Sabbath after that. Soon Abraham gave his heart to Jesus.



**"My dreams led me to Jesus," Abraham says. "I walk with Him now, just as I did in one of my dreams."**

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*Today, ABRAHAM KEITA works for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guinea. Part of the money that you give for the 13th Sabbath Offering will help an Adventist school in Conakry.*

*"My dreams led me to Jesus," Abraham says. "I walk with Him now, just as I did in one of my dreams. I am on a journey with Jesus."*



# No Limits to What We Can Do for God



## SABBATH—AUGUST 1

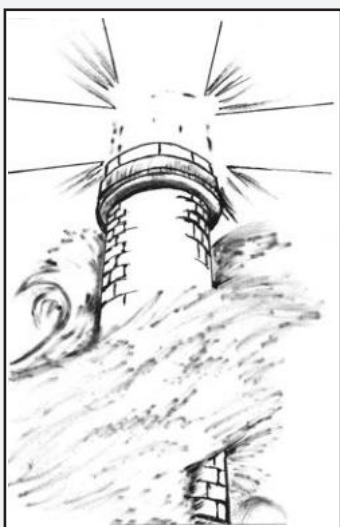
**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 18–22; Mark 13:34; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 1:4–9.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “All the gifts are produced by one and the same Spirit. He gives gifts to each person, just as he decides” (1 Corinthians 12:11, NIV).

**GOD COMMANDS US** to tell people about Him (Acts 1:8; Isaiah 43:10). Sharing Jesus is not a special spiritual gift that only a few people have. God asks all Christians to share the message about the Cross.

The Bible uses different word pictures to talk about our work as witnesses for God. Jesus says we must be the same as “the light that shines for the world [all the people on the earth] to see” (Matthew 5:14, ERV). Paul tells us that “we have been sent to speak for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20, ERV). Peter says we “are a chosen group of people. You are the King’s [Jesus] religious leaders” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). This same God who commands us to tell people about Him also helps us to do it. God gives spiritual gifts to each believer. God does not choose people with a lot of education. He educates the ones He calls to serve Him. God freely gives salvation to all people who believe. In the same way, God gives His spiritual gifts freely to everyone.

So, we must give ourselves fully to God. Then there will not be any limit to what we can do for God. “There is no limit to what a person can do when he puts self away. But first he must allow the Spirit to work on his heart. And he or she must live fully for God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 159, adapted. This week, we will study all that we can do when God’s Spirit lives in us.



Jesus says we must be the same as “the light that shines for the world [all the people on the earth] to see” (Matthew 5:14, ERV).



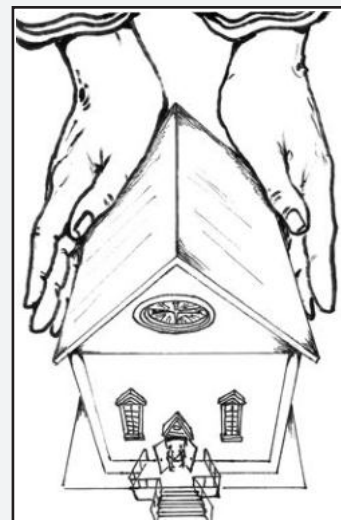
**DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL GIFTS  
(1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 18–22)**

Have you thought about how different Jesus' followers were? They had different personalities and spiritual gifts. But this was not a bad thing. It made the church stronger. Matthew was a tax collector. He was very careful with counting money. Then there was Peter who often talked before he thought about what he should say. Peter also was a natural leader. John also talked without thinking. At the same time, he had a soft heart. Andrew was a people person. He was always aware of what was going on around him. Andrew also cared deeply about people's feelings. Thomas asked questions, and he often doubted. Each of these followers had different personalities and gifts. But God used each one in a powerful way to tell people about Him.

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 18–22. What do we learn from these verses about the need for people with different gifts in the church?**

God loves to take people with different skills and talents and give them gifts to work in His church. The church is the body of Jesus Christ. The body of Christ is not a group of people who think the same way. The church is not a club with people who all come from the same place and act the same way. The church is a living group of people with different gifts. This group is joined as one in their love for Jesus and the Bible. The church wants to share Jesus' love and truth with other people (Romans 12:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12). The members of Christ's body have different gifts. Each person is important. The church needs all its members to work together. Then the church will be healthy. The eyes, ears, and nose have different jobs. But the body needs all its parts. In the same way, all gifts are necessary to the church too (1 Corinthians 12:21, 22).

Think about the human body and how it works. Even the smallest parts have an important role, right? Think about our eyelashes. What if we did not have them? Then dust will hurt our eyes. Awful things can happen to our eyes when we have no eyelashes. We may become blind. In the same way, there may be a church member who is not very important in other people's eyes. But this person is a necessary part of Christ's body. The Holy Spirit has given this person a gift or gifts. When we use our spiritual gifts fully for God, then each of us can help God save other people.



**The church is the body  
of Jesus Christ.**

**GOD: THE GIVER OF ALL GOOD GIFTS (Mark 13:34)**

1 Corinthians 12:11, 18; Ephesians 4:7, 8; and James 1:17 tell us that God is the Giver of all gifts. “Every perfect gift” (James 1:17, ERV) comes from God. So, we can trust that God will give to us the spiritual gifts that are the best ones for our personalities. God will best use our skills to serve His holy cause and bring glory to His name.

**Read Mark 13:34 and 1 Corinthians 12:11. As these verses show us, who does God give spiritual gifts to?**



**The Spirit got Jesus ready for His work on earth. In the same way, God promises us the Holy Spirit at our baptism.**

The Bible is clear. God has special work for each one of us. He wants us to share the Good News about Jesus with other people. We see this lesson when we read Jesus' picture story about the house owner in Mark 13. The house owner puts his servants in charge of his house and then leaves. Each servant has a job to do (Mark 13:34). So, we see from this picture story that God gives each person a special job to do in His church. God also gives spiritual gifts to each of us for that work. When does that happen? When we give our lives fully to Him and become baptized members of His body, the church. Then the Holy Spirit gives gifts to us so that we can serve the church and share God with people on the earth.

In 1903, Ellen G. White wrote a letter to a man. She encouraged him to use the gifts that God gave him to serve God. She writes, “We are all members of God's family. God gives us talents. We are responsible for what we do with them. Maybe our talent is big. Or maybe it is small. Whatever it is, we must use our talent to serve God. We also must accept that God gives gifts to other people too. We must let every person use his gifts for God.”

“God gives us gifts of the mind, body, and spirit. We must not ever think that any of the gifts we get from God are not important.”—Letter 260, December 2, 1903, adapted.

**Read Acts 10:36–38; Matthew 3:16, 17; and Acts 2:38–42. What do these verses teach us about the promise of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized?**

God poured the Spirit on Jesus at His baptism. The Spirit got Jesus ready for His work on earth. In the same way, God promises us the Holy Spirit at our baptism. God deeply wants us to believe that He will keep His promise.

**GOD'S PLAN FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:7)**

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:7 and Ephesians 4:11–16. Why does God give spiritual gifts to each Christian? What is God's plan for these gifts?**

God gives spiritual gifts to the church for several important reasons. He gives them to the church to make it stronger to do His work. God gives His gifts to the church to join the church as one so that it can finish His work on earth. The Bible writers give us examples of the spiritual gifts that God gives to His church. These gifts include helping others, serving, preaching, teaching, encouraging, and giving. The Bible also tells us about the spiritual gifts of feeding and being kind to guests, showing mercy, being helpful, and being cheerful. These are only a few of the gifts the Bible talks about. For a more complete list, read Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

Maybe you wonder about the connection between spiritual gifts and natural talents. How are these two things different? The Holy Spirit gives each Christian spiritual gifts to help him or her do God's work in the church and on earth. Spiritual gifts also may include natural talents that are made holy by the Holy Spirit and used to serve Jesus. All natural talents come from God. But not all natural talents are used to serve Jesus.

"In the picture story, we read about special gifts. Not all special gifts come from the Holy Spirit. Special gifts may include gifts and skills that we are born with or that God gives us. Whatever we have, we must use all our gifts to serve Jesus. When we become Jesus' followers, we give ourselves to Jesus. We give Him all that we are and have. Jesus takes the gifts we give Him. He makes them holy. Then He gives them back to us. Now we must use these gifts to give Him glory and bless other humans."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 328, adapted.

Also, God gave special gifts to the church, including the gift of prophecy. The gift of prophecy is God's special way of communicating with His church by His chosen messengers. God's special gifts also include gifts of leadership. These gifts include being pastors, elders, and teachers, who help members grow strong so that they can serve God (read Ephesians 4:11, 12). Leaders help all members learn what their gifts are. Then they teach members to use these gifts to make the church strong.



**The gift of prophecy is  
God's way of  
communicating with His  
church by His chosen  
messengers.**

**DISCOVERING YOUR GIFTS (1 Corinthians 1:4–9)**

**Compare 1 Corinthians 1:4–9 with 2 Corinthians 1:20–22. What do these verses teach us about the promises of God and spiritual gifts right before Jesus comes back?**

God promises that His church will show all the gifts of the Holy Spirit just before Jesus comes back. God's promises are sure. He gave us the Holy Spirit in our hearts to lead us into an understanding of the gifts we have from Him. It is God who gives the gifts. By His Spirit, God shows these gifts to us.

**If we want to learn more about our gifts, what does God invite us to do? For the answer, read Luke 11:13; James 1:5; and Matthew 7:7.**



**Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you to a ministry where you can use your gifts to lead other people to Jesus.**

We get the gifts of the Spirit when we give ourselves to God. Then we must ask Him to show to us the gifts He gave us. Our hearts must be empty of self and pride. Our number one wish must be to serve Jesus with our whole hearts. Then His Spirit will tell us what spiritual gifts He has for us. "Jesus' followers gave their lives fully to God in faith and in prayer. Then God poured His Spirit on them. In a special way, God gave heaven's gifts to Jesus' followers at that time. . . . The gifts are already ours in Jesus. But if we want to have them, we must first accept God's Spirit."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 327, adapted.

God gives us spiritual gifts (read 1 Corinthians 12:4–6) so that we may serve Him more fully. A ministry is the special work that God gives us to do for Him. He gives us the spiritual gifts to do this ministry. Activities or special tasks are the jobs that God gives us that allow us to use our gifts. Spiritual gifts do not come fully grown. We must use them. As we use them, they grow. The Holy Spirit will show you the work He wants you to do. Pray that He will lead you to a ministry where you can use your gifts in an activity, or task, that will lead other people to Jesus.

**What are your spiritual gifts? More important, how can you make your gifts grow stronger in the Lord's work?**



## GROWING OUR GIFTS (Matthew 25:29)

**Read the picture story about the talents in Matthew 25:14–30. What idea stands out the most to you in this story? Why does God praise the first two servants but not the last one? What does this picture story teach us about using our talents? Pay careful attention to Matthew 25:29 as you answer the last question.**

The master “ ‘decided how much each servant would be able to care for’ ” (Matthew 25:15, ERV). Then he gives each servant a different amount. One servant gets five talents. Another servant gets two talents, and another servant gets one talent. Each servant has a choice about how to use the talents that he or she gets. It is important to see that what they are given does not belong to them. It belongs to someone else who puts them in charge of it.

The master is not interested in who has the best or the most talents. He cares only about what each person does with the talent or talents he got.

In 2 Corinthians 8:12 (ICB), Paul says, “If you want to give, your gift will be accepted. Your gift will be judged by what you have, not by what you do not have.” In God’s eyes, the most important thing is not what we have or how much we have of it. What is important is what we do with it.

God praised the first two servants because they show their faith in the way they use their talents. So, their talents grow as they use them. The “evil” servant does not use the talent that the master gives him. So, his talent does not grow. It is an everlasting truth that “when we serve God, the work we do connects us to God and to other humans.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 326, adapted. The servant who had no faith in God lost his chance to serve. Then he also lost his talent, as well.

We must use the gifts God gives us. Then we will bring glory to His name. Our gifts will grow too. How can you discover what gifts God gave you? Empty your heart of all pride. Then ask God to show you where He wants you to serve Him. As God shows you His plan, start working for Him! Your gifts will grow as you use them. Then you will find joy in serving Him.

**Think about this story and what lessons it teaches you about your life. What does this story say to you about what you are doing for God with the gifts He gave you?**



**Your gifts will grow as you use them.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Talents,” pages 325–365, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*.

We need a correct understanding of the Bible teaching about spiritual gifts. Then we will have peace and agreement in the church. We also must understand that each one of us has value in God’s eyes. Every member of the church is necessary for finishing God’s work on earth. That is why God gives every member a spiritual gift to serve Him.

“God gives everyone work to do for Him. He gives each of His servants special gifts or talents. ‘He decided how much each servant would be able to care for. The man gave one servant five bags of money. He gave another servant two bags. And he gave a third servant one bag’ [Matthew 25:15, ERV]. Every servant is responsible for some amount. God decides how much to give us because of the skills we have. God does not have favorites. He does not give more to one person and less to another because He likes one person more than another person. He gives us talents that match our skills. He expects us to use our skills for Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 282, adapted.

Remember, God gives us the gifts of the Spirit for His glory, not our own. God gives them to us to bring glory to His name and to help us finish His work on this earth.



**Every member is necessary for the finishing of God’s work on earth. That is why God gives every member gifts to serve Him.**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God gives each one of us gifts. How will this make your church better? How does this idea help us to become better workers for God?
- ② Have the gifts of another church member been a blessing to your life? If yes, share with the class how you have been blessed. Also, share with the class how you discovered your own spiritual gifts. What do you think your gifts are? How do you use them to bless other people?
- ③ Our spiritual gifts grow as we use them. Look back over your own life. How have your gifts grown as you used them for God? At the same time, have you used your gifts to serve God as much as you should have?

## A MAN KNOWN ONLY AS CARLOS

**J**. Carlos Sanchez Ruiz is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uruguay in South America. In his own country, Peru, people say “Hello, pastor-president,” to a man with Carlos’s job. But things are different in Uruguay. There, Pastor Ruiz is known only as Carlos.

It was in 2011 when Pastor Ruiz became a president of the Adventist churches in Uruguay. It took him about a year after that to get used to people calling him by his first name. “Uruguay is different from other countries in South America,” Ruiz says. “Uruguayans respect leadership. But in their eyes, a leader is the same as everyone else.”

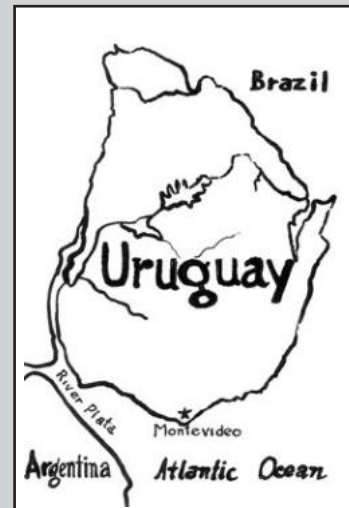
What makes the Uruguayans this way? They are very European in their thinking. Church leaders say that this helps make the country a wonderful place for sharing the Good News about Jesus. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has only 7,358 members in Uruguay. 3.5 million people live there. So, there is only one Adventist for 470 people. Uruguay is one of the countries in South America with the smallest number of Adventists. About half of the people in Uruguay live in the capital city, Montevideo.

In 2019, Ted N. C. Wilson visited Uruguay. President Wilson is the president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. He asked, “How will we help the people in Montevideo and other cities on this earth know who Jesus is?”

Then President Wilson opened his Bible to Jeremiah 32:26. He read, “ ‘I am the LORD. I am the God of all people. Is anything too hard for me?’ ” (Jeremiah 32:27, NIV). President Wilson said, “God answers His own question in a powerful way.” Then he turned to Jeremiah 33:3 to read the answer: “ ‘Judah, pray to me, and I will answer you. I will tell you important secrets. You have never heard these things before’ ” (Jeremiah 33:3, ERV).

“Ask God to answer this promise for Uruguay and for your work in the cities,” President Wilson said. “You face many difficult things. People who do not know Jesus care more about earning money and buying stuff than they do about learning Bible truth. But nothing is too hard for the Lord.”

God is working miracles to touch people’s hearts in Uruguay. People are getting baptized after going to meetings run by the church. One new member is Fernando Aguirre. He gave his heart to Jesus in 2019 after taking a class about how to manage stress. Please pray for Uruguay and for other promising places for witnessing in cities all over the earth.



**Uruguay is one of the countries in South America with the smallest number of Adventists.**



## Sharing Bible Truth



### SABBATH—AUGUST 8

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Psalm 119:105; Hebrews 1:1–3; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 1 John 1:7–9; Isaiah 50:4.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘In the same way, my words leave my mouth, and they don’t come back without results [success]. My words make the things happen that I want to happen. They succeed in doing what I send them to do’ ” (Isaiah 55:11, ERV).



**Without the Bible, the Holy Spirit is limited in what He can show our hearts about Jesus.**

**WE TALK ABOUT JESUS** when we tell people what they must do to be saved. But how can we expect to know anything about Jesus without the Bible? Without the Bible, how can we know anything about the worldwide war between good and evil? Or God’s love? Or Jesus’ life and death? Or the Second Coming?

Nature shows us God’s power and beauty. But it does not show us God’s plan to save us. We learn about God’s saving plan from Jesus. Jesus “is the true light that gives light to all people” (John 1:9, ERV). Even so, we need the Bible to explain fully God’s truth. The Bible is God’s Word. It gives us the best understanding about Jesus. Jesus is the Living Word. Without the Bible, the Holy Spirit is limited in what He can show our hearts about Jesus.

Jesus says, “ ‘You study the Scriptures [Bible] carefully. You study them because you think they will give you eternal [everlasting] life. The Scriptures you study are a witness [proof] about me’ ” (John 5:39, NIV). Every Bible teaching shows us what is in Jesus’ heart. We share Bible truth so that we can show people the love of Jesus.



**WORD PICTURES FOR THE BIBLE (Psalm 119:105)**

**Read Psalm 119:105; Jeremiah 23:29; Luke 8:11; and Matthew 4:4. What five word pictures for the Bible do you find in these verses? Why do you think these five word pictures were chosen to show us God’s Word, the Bible?**

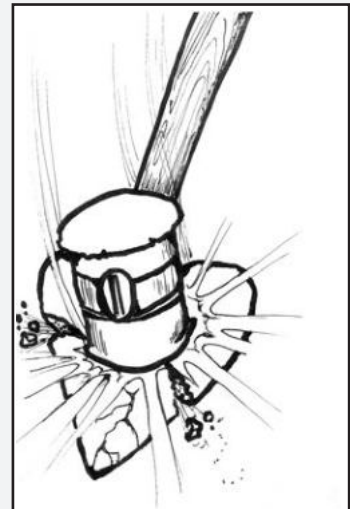
The word pictures in these verses show us the power that the Bible has to change hearts and lives. When we share the Bible with people, it is the same as our shining a light. This light shows people the truth about life. Jesus says, “ ‘I am the light of the world [all the people living on earth]’ ” (John 8:12, ERV). Our misunderstanding is the same as darkness. Jesus, the Light, shines in our hearts. He shows us who God is. Jesus makes our misunderstanding about God disappear. The Holy Spirit teaches our minds about who God is. The Spirit shows us by the Word of God.

Jeremiah compares the Word of God to a fire and a hammer. The Bible breaks our hard hearts. The same thing happens when we help people see the beauty of Jesus in the Bible. Then their hard hearts break. Jesus’ love is the same as a fire. It destroys every selfish and greedy feeling in the heart. It removes sin from our lives.

The Bible also is the same as a seed. Seeds give life. Seeds also take time to grow. Not all seeds grow at the same time. Not all plants grow fast. But when things are right, the life in the seed bursts from the soil into new life. Remember this word picture when you “plant” the “seed,” or Bible truth, in people’s hearts. We will not always see things happen right away. But the seed grows. In God’s time, the seed we planted in someone’s heart will grow. Then that person will be ready for God’s kingdom.

Jesus says that the Bible is the same as bread. The Bible removes hunger from the heart. It feeds our spiritual wish to be close to God. So, share the promises of the Bible with people. Help your family, friends, and coworkers discover that Jesus is God’s Word. Then their lives will be changed by Jesus’ love. Jesus’ love will charm their hearts. His mercy will surprise them. He will fill every wish of their hearts.

**Think about the truths that we know only from the Bible. What should this tell us about why we should hold dear what the Bible teaches us?**



**The Bible is the same as a hammer. It breaks our hard hearts.**

## THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD, THE BIBLE (Hebrews 1:1–3)

**Compare Hebrews 1:1–3; Hebrews 4:12; and Psalm 33:6, 9. What do these verses tell us about the power of God's Word, the Bible?**

The Bible is the Word of God. It is the Living Word. God's Word has the power to do what it says. Human words can say what something is. But God can talk about things that are not done and make them happen. He makes things happen by the power of His Word. The Bible is a Word that has the power to make things happen. The words that God says have the power to do everything that He says.

In Genesis 1, the words "God said" are written again and again (Genesis 1:3, 6, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29, ERV). God's words are very powerful. When He speaks, His words cause dry land to come from the water. His words also make plants grow, flowers bloom, and animals come alive.

We see an interesting Hebrew word in Genesis 1 for God's power to make things. It is the word "**bara**." This word shows us God's power to make something from nothing. The verb is written only when God is the subject. That is, only God can "**bara**," or make things from nothing. God makes something from nothing by the power of His Word.

God made this earth by the power of His Word. He also keeps it going by this same Word too. This same power that is in God's spoken word is in His Written Word, the Bible. The same Holy Spirit that helped God make the earth also helped men to write the Bible. The Holy Spirit is there with us when we read the Bible or share it with people. There is life-giving, life-changing power in the Bible. "The power that made the heaven and earth is in the Bible. The Bible gives power. It gives life. Every command in the Bible is God's promise. When we accept one of God's promises, it carries with it the life of God. That is why God's promises can change our hearts to be the same as God's."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 126, adapted.

When we trust in God's promises, our lives will be changed. When we help people to believe in them, the Holy Spirit will change their lives too.

**Make a picture of this in your head: God said a word and the thing He said happened or came alive from nothing! Wow! That is wonderful! What does this tell us about God's power? Why should this truth about God's power comfort us?**



**There is life-giving,  
life-changing power in the  
Bible.**

## THE BLESSINGS WE GET FROM BIBLE STUDY (2 Timothy 3:14–17)

There are many different blessings we get from studying the promises in God's Word, the Bible. Peter tells us why we should study Bible promises. When we study "these promises you can have God's own life in you" (2 Peter 1:4, NLV). James also talks about what happens when "God's teaching . . . is planted in your hearts." Then "this teaching can save you" (James 1:21, ERV). Paul also talks about " 'God and the message about his grace [forgiveness and mercy]. That message is able to give you strength, and it will give you the blessings that God has for all his holy people' " (Acts 20:32, ICB). The Bible is part of God's plan to save us. We see Jesus in the Bible, and we are changed. By seeing Jesus in His Word, we become as loving and holy as He is (2 Corinthians 3:18). "Here is an important rule about the mind and the spirit. Our minds and spirits become changed by what we see. The mind little by little changes itself to become the same as what it thinks about."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 555, adapted.

**Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17 and John 17:14–17. What other blessings do we get from studying the Bible?**

Paul tells Timothy to obey the Bible. Then Paul talks about the blessings we get from Bible study. Paul says that the Bible shows us what to believe. The Bible also helps us to see what is false. The Bible shows us God's plan for humans. The Bible also shows us our sins. It corrects our wrong ways of thinking. It shows us how to live a holy life. The Bible shows us the saving mercy of Jesus. The Bible leads us away from sin to become the same as Jesus in our hearts. The Bible shows us Jesus' unselfish love. Then we see how selfish we really are. In the Bible, we see how deeply Jesus loved and cared about people. This Bible truth changes our lives. When we share Bible truth with people, their lives are changed too. When we see Jesus in the Bible, we start to love people more. We become the same as He is in our spirits. Witnessing is not about sharing what we think or believe. Witnessing is all about sharing the everlasting truths found in the Bible. The Bible has blessed our lives in wonderful and surprising ways. So, we should tell people how it can bless their lives too.



**When we see Jesus in the Bible, we start to love people more.**

## LIVING THE TRUTH (1 John 1:7–9)



On the cross, Jesus won the war against sin when He died.

There are more than 3,000 promises in the Bible. Each promise comes from the heart of a loving God. This God “can do much, much more than anything we can ask or think of” (Ephesians 3:20, ERV). Bible promises are promises that God makes to each one of us. What happens when we trust in these promises and teach people to trust them too? Then God pours out His blessings on us. In Romans, Paul tells us the reason why God does this: “He even let his own Son suffer for us. God gave his Son for all of us. So now with Jesus, God will surely give us all things” (Romans 8:32, ERV). Peter explains the reason a little more. Peter says, “Jesus has the power of God. And his power has given us everything we need to live a life devoted to God” (2 Peter 1:3, ERV). On the cross, Jesus won the war against sin when He died. He also won the war against Satan, the power of evil, and the grave. Jesus’ winning allows Him to give us everything we need to live a holy and spiritual life. Jesus also promises to take care of our basic needs.

**Compare 1 John 1:7–9 and Philippians 4:13, 19. These promises are very different from each other. But what do they teach us about what is in God’s heart? How have these promises made your life better?**

Each promise in these verses is different. But both promises give us a picture of God that is the same. These promises show us that God is loving and forgiving. He has all power in heaven and on earth. God also cares for our basic needs. So, these promises show us that God cares deeply for us.

**Read Hebrews 3:19; Hebrews 4:1–3; and Matthew 13:58. What do these verses tell us about our need for faith?**

God gives us many wonderful Bible promises. How do we make these promises ours? We must believe in them because Jesus made them. Then the blessings in these promises become ours. So, why do God’s promises not come true in our lives? Because we do not show enough faith. We do not believe God will do what He says He will do. So, pray that God will lead you to someone who needs the Bible’s promises. These promises will fill hearts with hope.



## SHARING BIBLE TRUTH (Isaiah 50:4)

Good news is for sharing. Think about the times in your life that good news made you happy. Maybe it was the day you got married. Or the day your child was born. Or the day you got a new job, a new car, or a home. You were so excited you wanted to share the news.

Sure, it is wonderful to share our joy with people. But the best news we can share is about Jesus. Think about the times when you discovered a beautiful truth in the Bible. You wanted to share it, right? The same thing happened to Peter. The religious leaders try to stop Peter and his friends from preaching Bible truth. But Peter tells them, “ ‘We cannot be quiet. We must tell people about what we have seen and heard’ ” (Acts 4:20, ERV).

“As soon as someone comes to Jesus, he wants to tell people that Jesus is his precious Friend. Nothing can stop him from sharing this truth. When Jesus makes us holy, we are filled with the joy of His Holy Spirit, who lives in us. We want to tell people about it.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 78, adapted.

In Romans 1:14–16, NLV, Paul writes: “I must help the people who have had a chance to hear the Good News and those [people] who have not. I must help those [people] with much learning and those [people] who have never learned from books. So I want to preach the Good News to you who live in Rome also. I am not ashamed of the Good News. It is the power of God. It is the way He saves men from the punishment of their sins if they put their trust in Him. It is for the Jew first and for all other people also.” Paul never gets tired of telling his story about how Jesus changed his life. For Paul, good news must be shared. He cannot keep quiet.

**What important rules about sharing Bible truth do Isaiah 50:4; Ecclesiastes 3:1; and 2 Timothy 4:2 give us?**

Jesus gives us the chance to share our faith when we give our lives fully to Him. He opens people’s hearts. Then He brings these people into our lives. When we share our faith, we must remember three rules: what we say, how we say it, and when we say it.

**How can you be a better witness for Jesus to the people in your life?**



**The best news we can share is about Jesus.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “A Knowledge of God,” pages 87–91, in *Steps to Christ*; “Bible Readings With Families,” pages 192, 193, in *Gospel Workers*; and “Bible Work Techniques,” pages 481–486, in *Evangelism*.

God works on hearts all around us. We need to have the spiritual eyesight to see God’s work. Then we will see the chance to share Bible truth with people. God gets their hearts ready for us to plant the seeds of truth. The Holy Spirit got the heart of Nicodemus ready. The Holy Spirit also got the heart of the Samaritan woman at the well ready. And the heart of the woman with the flow of blood, the thief on the cross, the Roman army leader, and other people too. The Spirit made them ready to accept Jesus before Jesus ever met them. The Spirit did this by giving them different experiences in life. The Spirit also filled their hearts and minds with thoughts from God.

We may be shy about asking people if we can pray with them, share a Bible promise, or give them some magazines about the Bible. But did you know what is really happening when you want to share your faith with someone? Many times the Holy Spirit already got that person ready to hear what you have to say.



God gets the hearts of people ready for us to plant the seeds of truth.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What if someone comes to you and says he feels very guilty. He needs God to forgive him. What advice will you give him? What Bible verses will you share? What has been your own experience with guilt and the power of God’s forgiveness in your own life?
- ② Sometimes God brings people into our lives because He wants them to know His truth. What can we do to make sure we are ready to help the ones God brings to us?
- ③ Think more about God’s power and His Word in the Genesis story about how God made the sky and the earth. Outer space is so big. It is hard for us to make a picture of it in our minds. But the God who made it must be even more powerful than what He made! This powerful God loves us too. How can this thought comfort us? What hope do we get from knowing these things about God? How can this knowledge help us share our faith in a more powerful way?

## A NEW HEART FOR ALEX

Alex was born with a hole in his heart. Alex is from Finland. The doctors hoped that Alex's heart would heal. But it didn't. So when Alex was eight, doctors operated on Alex's heart. After the operation, Alex's mother looked with wonder at her small boy. She thought, *For some reason God let this happen. God has a special plan for our lives.*

Alex's mom wrote about the experience on Facebook. Many people in Finland read about Alex's experiences on his mom's Facebook page. This gave Alex's mom the chance to talk about God with people who normally do not have any interest in talking about God at all. God used little Alex as a worker for Him!

Alex healed fast from the operation. He went home after only five days. It was a miracle! The devil tried to snatch this little boy's life away. But Jesus gave Alex a new heart.

That summer it was very hot. Alex complained about a pain in his chest. At the hospital, doctors saw that Alex's heart had swelled to double its normal size (see photo below). The doctors rushed Alex to the operating room. Hours later, the doctors announced that the operation was a success. The devil had tried to snatch this little boy's life away again. But Jesus had given him a new heart.

Alex acted strange after he got home. Usually, he was a very nice and quiet boy. But he started to fight and shout. He was very nasty to his father. One night, Alex was worse than usual. He was angry and yelled mean words. He threw his eyeglasses on the floor.

"Why are you behaving this way?" Father asked. Father put his hand on Alex's head to pray. This was something that Father had done many times in the past before they prayed.

But this time, Alex refused the prayer. "Take your hand away!" he yelled.

Father went into the kitchen, where Mother was fixing dinner. "This behavior is not normal," he said. "This is not our Alex. We need to pray."

Father and Mother walked over to Alex. Without saying a word, Father put his hand on Alex's head. Mother put her hand on Alex's face above his eyes. "In the name of Jesus, we command you, evil spirit, to leave Alex," Father said. "We give Alex to God, and you are not welcome in our son's life."

After the prayer, Alex became his normal self. He smiled and laughed as if nothing bad had ever happened!

The devil had tried to snatch this little boy's life away again. But Jesus gave him a new heart. Mother hopes that Alex will serve Jesus when he grows up and that his story will continue to change hearts.



**"In the name of Jesus, we command you, evil spirit, to leave Alex," Father says.**



# Helping People as Jesus Helped Them



## SABBATH—AUGUST 15

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 5:13, 14; Matthew 8:5–10; Matthew 4:23–25; Matthew 25:31–46.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “He saw the crowds of people and felt sorry for them because they were worried and helpless. They were like [the same as] sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, ICB).

**JESUS DEEPLY CARED** about people. He lived to serve people, not Himself. Jesus met the needs of the people around Him. He served God by showing people love and mercy. He healed their bodies, minds, and hearts. Jesus healed people with awful skin problems. He helped the blind to see and the deaf to hear. He set people free from demons. Jesus fed the hungry. He took care of the needy. When Jesus did these things, the hearts and lives of people were changed.

Why were the lives of people changed? Because people saw that Jesus deeply cared about them. His love was real. That is why their hearts were open to the Bible truths He taught. “Only Jesus’ way will give us true success in reaching people. The Savior spent time with people. He wanted what was best for them. He was kind to them. He took care of their needs. He won their hearts. Then He told them, ‘Follow Me.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143, adapted. Jesus saw that people on this earth needed to see the Good News in action, not just hear people talk about it. When we live the way Jesus did, our lives will show Bible truth. Our lives will give power to our words about Jesus.



When we live the way Jesus did, our lives will show Bible truth. Our lives will give power to our words about Jesus.



## **HOW DID JESUS FEEL ABOUT PEOPLE? (Matthew 5:13, 14)**

Jesus always looked for the good in other people. He brought out the best in them. The religious leaders in Jesus' day blame Jesus because He " 'welcomes sinners and even eats with them!' " (Luke 15:2, ERV). The leaders are worried because Jesus is friendly with people who do not respect God. The leaders' ideas about religion are different from Jesus' ideas. The leaders think religion is about God's people separating from sinners. They say, "We should not involve ourselves with sinners in any way." So, the leaders are surprised when Jesus says, " 'I have not come to get those who think they are right with God to follow me. I have come to get sinners to follow me' " (Matthew 9:13, NIV).

The Jewish leaders' religion is about avoiding sin. They think, "We must do everything we can to keep from getting dirty from sin." So, they stay away from people they think are bad or full of sin. Jesus' way of doing things is very different. He came to this earth. It is the same as a pit filled with snakes. But Jesus does not avoid us. He jumps right in to save us. He is " 'the light of the world' " (John 8:12, ERV).

**Read Matthew 5:13, 14. What two word pictures does Jesus use to show us who His followers are? Why do you think Jesus uses these word pictures? Read also John 1:9; John 12:46; and Philippians 2:15 for the answer.**

Salt is very important during New Testament times. It is worth a lot. At times, the Roman army used salt as money. So, salt is a word picture for riches. Salt also gives flavor to food and keeps it from spoiling. When Jesus says His followers are the same as salt, what is He really saying? He is saying that the true riches on this earth are not the people with the most power and money. The true riches on this earth are Christians who build up the kingdom of God. Their kind and unselfish works help to keep love alive on this earth.

The second word picture Jesus uses in Matthew 5:14 is light. Light does not avoid darkness. Light shines in the dark. Light does not separate from darkness. It makes the darkness become light. Jesus' followers must bring the light of God's truth to people whose lives are dark with sin.



**This earth is the same as a pit filled with snakes. But Jesus does not avoid us. He jumps right in to save us.**

**JESUS IS KIND TO PEOPLE (Matthew 8:5–10)**

**Think about how the centurion feels when Jesus tells him that his faith is bigger than anything Jesus ever found in any person in all of Israel.**

As we learned yesterday, Jesus always wanted to bring out the best in people. Even when times were hard, Jesus acted with mercy and love. Luke tells us that the crowds “were amazed [surprised] at the beautiful words he spoke” (Luke 4:22, ICB). John tells us that “grace [mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin] and truth came through [from] Jesus Christ” (John 1:17, ERV). Jesus won people’s hearts. His kind words caused them to open their hearts to Him.

**Read Matthew 8:5–10 and Mark 12:34. What hope-filled words does Jesus say to a Roman army leader and a Jewish religious leader?**

Jesus’ words to the centurion, or Roman army leader, are a big change from what the Jewish religious leaders think. Think about how the centurion must feel when Jesus tells him that his faith is bigger than anything Jesus ever found in any person in all of Israel! Wow! Think also about what the Jewish religious leader feels when Jesus tells him, “ ‘You are not far from God’s kingdom’ ” (Mark 12:34, NIV). What kind words! Jesus has the skill to bring out the best in people. Our kind words, thanks, and praise can help people to open their hearts to the Good News. Look for the good in the people around you. Let them know how much you are thankful for them and what they do.

**Compare Isaiah 42:3; Colossians 4:5, 6; and Ephesians 4:15. What important rules do these verses teach us about sharing our faith with other people and being friendly to them?**

When our words are encouraging and filled with God’s love and mercy, we will have power to change people’s lives for the better. Isaiah tells us that Jesus “will not break a broken branch or put out a little fire” (Isaiah 42:3, NIV). These word pictures show us that Jesus is so loving that He is careful not to hurt someone who is just coming to believe in Him. Jesus will not remove or destroy the smallest “sparks” of faith in their hearts.

**“How” we say something is as important as “what” we say. Maybe it is even more important. Why is this true?**

**JESUS' HEALING WORK: PART 1 (Matthew 9:1–7)**

Jesus shared the truth in ways that were powerful and full of life. Every day Jesus met people who had many different needs. We meet these same types of people too. Their minds, bodies, hearts, and spirits all have needs. Jesus is excited to work with us to meet the needs of these people. How do we work with Jesus to do that? By showing that we care for people when they are sad or lonely. Jesus also helps us show people that we care about their joys, hopes, and dreams.

While on earth, Jesus meets people's everyday needs so that He can meet their deepest spiritual needs. These everyday needs also are named "felt needs." A felt need is a problem that someone knows that he or she cannot solve on his or her own. This person needs help. Maybe he or she needs to stop smoking, lose weight, eat better food, or needs help with stress. Maybe this person has more basic needs. He or she may need food, a house, or to see a doctor. Or this person may need advice about his or her marriage or family.

Felt needs are different from an ultimate need. An ultimate need is the thing that humans need most. They need a personal connection with God. They need to know that the choices they make in this life can lead to everlasting life or death. We live on a planet ruined and hurt by sin. So, our becoming one with God is our ultimate need.

**Read the story in Matthew 9:1–7 about the man who cannot walk or move his body. Also, read the story in Mark 5:25–34 about the woman who has bled for 12 years. How do these stories show us that Jesus felt that healing the body was connected with helping people to become one with God?**

Jesus' healing work includes much more than healing the body and mind. Jesus deeply wants people to become whole again. For Jesus, healing someone's body without healing his or her spirit is not true healing. God's love should cause us to want the best health for people. God's love will help us to care even more for their spiritual health. We should want people to live happy and healthy lives here and in heaven. Remember, every person that Jesus heals on earth dies later on. So, his or her real need above everything else is spiritual, right?



**While on earth, Jesus meets people's everyday needs so that He can meet their deepest spiritual needs.**

**JESUS' HEALING WORK: PART 2 (Matthew 4:23–25)**

Each time Jesus heals someone He shows people who God is and what is in His heart.

**Read Matthew 4:23–25 and Matthew 9:35. What three things did Jesus do to meet people's needs? How did these three things change people's lives for the better?**

Jesus' work on earth has three parts: (1) teaching, (2) preaching, and (3) healing. Jesus shares Bible truth so that we will have a reason to live. He says, " 'I have come so they may have life. I want them to have it [life] in the fullest possible way' " (John 10:10, NIV). Jesus' work on earth is filled with grace. Grace is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. Jesus came to fill our lives with grace now and forever.

**Read Mark 1:32–39. Jesus spends all day healing the sick and casting evil spirits out of people. Then the next morning He spends time in prayer when the crowds likely come again to Him for more healing. Then Jesus leaves for another city. Why doesn't Jesus heal the people? Do you see His reason in Mark 1:38, 39?**

This story is very helpful. Jesus heals many people. The next day, Jesus leaves the crowds. They come looking for Jesus. They also need healing. So, why doesn't Jesus stay and heal them? Jesus says that the reason He came to this earth is to preach the Good News. Jesus is not only a miracle worker. But He also is God's own Son who came to save humans. Jesus does not want to heal only people's bodies. Jesus also wants people to accept the gift of everlasting life. He wants to give them this gift. Jesus tells us in clear words why He came to this earth: " 'The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them' " (Luke 19:10, ERV). Each time Jesus heals someone, He shows people who God is and what is in His heart. Every healing act that Jesus does ends suffering and gives someone the chance for everlasting life.

**Maybe you are poor or sick. Can your life be full of the grace that Jesus offers you anyway? Does Jesus offer people something deeper than only healing their bodies? If yes, what is it? In what ways can we lead people to spiritual truths when we help take care of the needs of their hearts and bodies?**



**WHAT JESUS CARES ABOUT MOST (Matthew 25:31–46)**

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells His followers three end-time picture stories. These picture stories show us what Jesus expects of His end-time people who wait for His Second Coming. The picture story about the ten sleeping girls shows us that it is important to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The picture story about the ten talents shows us why we must use the gifts that God gives to each one of us. The picture story about the sheep and the goats shows us that true Christians take care of the needs of the people that God brings into our lives each day.

**Read Matthew 25:31–46. What does Jesus say that real Christianity is all about? Make a list of the types of work done for God in these verses.**

The picture story in Matthew 25:31–46 talks about taking care of people's health needs. At the same time, is there something more to this story? Yes, there is. Humans have a hunger and thirst for Jesus in their spirits. Only Jesus can fill that need and take away their hunger and thirst (John 6:35; John 4:13, 14). We are all empty until Jesus fills us with His holy life. Jesus covers us with His love and forgiveness the same as a person who puts on clothes is covered (Revelation 3:18; Revelation 19:7, 8).

The Old Testament messengers often say that humans are sick and cannot be healed (Isaiah 1:5; Jeremiah 30:12–15). But Jeremiah shows us the one thing that can heal us: “ ‘And I will bring your health back and heal your wounds [deep cuts],’ says the LORD’ ” (Jeremiah 30:17, ERV). Jesus heals us from the sin that makes us sick and kills us.

The picture story about the sheep and goats warns us to take care of the needs of people around us. It also shows us how Jesus takes care of the deepest needs of our hearts. This story also invites us to work with Jesus to take care of the needs of people around us. So, we do not want to live selfish lives and do nothing to help people. Then we will be in danger of losing everlasting life. In the picture story, Jesus praises the people who give their lives to help people. Then the Lord welcomes them into heaven to live with Him forever. But He does not welcome the people who lived selfish lives. They did not care about helping people on this earth. So, Jesus does not welcome them into heaven.



**Jesus covers us with His love and forgiveness the same as clothes.**



**We must go to people and touch their lives where they are.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “Many have no faith in God. They also no longer have any faith in humans. But their hearts are moved by kind, helpful acts. The person who moves their hearts does not work for praise or money. He comes to their homes. He helps the sick. He feeds the hungry. He gives clothes to people who do not have any. He comforts people with sad hearts. He leads the ones he helps to Jesus. This human worker shows he is Jesus’ messenger. The love and pity in his human heart come from Jesus. As the people see all the kind acts he does, their hearts are moved. They feel grateful. Faith grows in their hearts. They see that God cares for them. They are ready to listen as the Bible is opened and taught to them.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 145, adapted.

Jesus’ work helps people to trust Him and helps them to accept the Good News. The church is Jesus’ body on earth. With loving hearts, church members meet the needs of people everywhere. Jesus sends us out in His name. He sends us into our towns and neighborhoods to make the lives of people better. Yes, we need to be careful about not being made dirty by sin and the evil things on this earth. At the same time, we must not stay away from people. We must go to them and touch their lives where they are. We must let God use us to do His work. God wants to take people from where they are and bring them to where they should be.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why is the loving work that Jesus does for God so powerful in melting hard hearts and helping people to accept spiritual truths? What if we as a people showed the same concern for people that Jesus did? How will it make us better witnesses for God and Bible truth?
- ② Think about a time when you said something that was true. But you said it in the wrong way. What did you learn from that experience to help you not to do it again? Why is it best to share the truth only when we are calm?
- ③ What types of work for God can your church do in your community that you are not now doing?

**F**or Seventh-day Adventist couples living in Sudan, life often can be difficult. That was true for me and my wife, Suzanne. We worked for ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, in Sudan. ADRA is a special office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that helps people in need in other countries. Some days the temperature outside in Sudan was between 102 and 108 degrees (39–42 degrees Celsius) from May to September. For sure, a cold drink was something special on days this hot.

Coming home one day, I followed my wife Suzanne into the kitchen. I sat on the counter and talked with her as she made our meal. Suzanne asked me what I wanted to drink.

“What do you have?” I asked.

She listed the names of some cold drinks we had in the refrigerator. But I didn’t want any of them.

I told her that what I really wanted more than anything was a big, cold bottle of my favorite drink. I had not had this drink since we left our home in the United States.

“We don’t have any,” Suzanne said.

Two hours later, a friend pulled into our driveway. Our friend worked with USAID, the United States Agency for International Development, in Sudan’s capital in Khartoum. USAID is a special office of the United States government. USAID helps people in need worldwide.

Our friend worked with us on several ADRA plans that USAID helped to support with money. Our friend allowed us to get mail at her home address. When the mail arrived, she brought it to us. On this day, she brought us a box filled with things that we needed badly from the United States. One of those things was shampoo. I opened the box. I knew that our American friends also had put a bag of raisins in the box for our friend too. The bag of raisins lay right on top. Under the raisins I saw two bottles of hair shampoo. But wait! Something else was in the box. I dug under the paper and found a big bottle of my favorite drink!

I never asked anyone from the United States to send me my favorite drink. But on a hot day in Sudan, I felt that God sent me a special gift. Weeks before, when I had asked my wife Suzanne for my favorite drink, the bottle was already on its way to Khartoum. God cares about even the smallest parts of our lives. He loves to give good gifts to His children too. “When we give, we show what living is all about.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 623, adapted. God promises, “But those people who go to the Lord for help will have every good thing” (Psalm 34:10, ICB). God saw my wish for my favorite drink earlier that day in the kitchen. He must have smiled and thought, “Wait and see what I have for you!”

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by GLENN MITCHELL

**A SURPRISE  
IN SUDAN**



**I dug under the paper and  
found a big bottle of my  
favorite drink!**



# What Jesus Felt About People



## SABBATH—AUGUST 22

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** John 4:7–30, 39–42; Matthew 15:21–28; 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4; Romans 15:7; 1 Peter 3:15.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But keep the Lord Christ holy in your hearts. Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have” (1 Peter 3:15, ERV).



Jesus accepts people who feel awful guilt and have given up hope in life.

**THE MORE WE STUDY JESUS' LIFE**, the more we are surprised by His skill to accept people and make them feel that they have worth. True, Jesus scolds the religious leaders of His day. But Jesus also gladly accepts people who fight against sin. Jesus accepts people who feel awful guilt and have given up hope in life. Jesus gives them His grace. Grace is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. Jesus gives His grace to the worst sinners. His forgiveness is deep. It goes deeper than their sins. Jesus' love has no limits.

Jesus has no pride in His heart. He does not behave as if He is better than anyone. He sees in every person someone that God made. Yes, humans are fallen, but Jesus came to save them from sin. No one is too far away for His love to reach. Jesus shows respect to everyone He meets. He causes people to want to join His kingdom because He believes in people. Their lives are changed by His life because He cares for them so deeply. So, people become what He believes they can become.

In this week's lesson, we will explore more deeply Jesus' thoughts and feelings about people. We will learn how to live this way in our own lives.



**HEARTS THAT ARE OPEN TO THE GOOD NEWS****(John 4:7–30, 39–42)**

**Read Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4:7–30, 39–42. How does this conversation show the truth that all types of people are open to the Good News, even in places we do not expect?**

Samaria is the last place that Jesus' followers expect to find anyone ready to accept the Good News. The Samaritans always fought with the Jews about correct teachings and worship. This disagreement went on for many years. Hundreds of years before, the Samaritans wanted to help build the temple in Jerusalem. But the Jews did not let them. Why not? The Samaritans married wives who worshiped false gods. Also, the Samaritans had wrong beliefs about religion. So, the Jews refused their help. Because of this, the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. No wonder Jesus' followers are more than ready to skip going to Samaria to share the Good News!

Jesus sees in Samaria what His followers do not see: hearts open to the Good News. John's story about the Samaritan woman at the well starts with these words: " 'So he left Judea and went back to Galilee. On the way to Galilee, he had to go through [into] the country of Samaria' " (John 4:3, 4, ERV). Jesus "had to" go into Samaria because the Holy Spirit told Him about people there who were open to the Good News. When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, our vision changes. We see all the wonderful things that are possible where other people see only trouble.

**Read Acts 8:4, 5, 14. What happens in Acts because of Jesus' visit to Samaria and the work He does there?**

Jesus' followers wanted to pass by Samaria without giving the Samaritans the chance to know about the Good News. Jesus sees what His followers do not see. Jesus understands that the Holy Spirit helps the woman to be willing to accept the Good News. She gives her life to Jesus. It is a miracle that changes the lives of many people in that city. We will not always see fast or big changes happen from the work we do to share Jesus. But we must share the Good News with people anyway. We must plant the seeds of truth in their hearts. Then later on, when the seeds grow, these people will bring other people with them into God's kingdom.



**Jesus understands that the Holy Spirit helps the woman to be willing to accept the Good News.**

**A HEART CHANGE (Matthew 15:21–28)**

Our thoughts and feelings often can change people's lives for the better. A mean and nasty spirit will push people away from you. They often will not want to hear anything you have to say, even if you share the truth.

But thinking good things about other people causes people to want to be with us. Kind words and acts help friendships to grow. Jesus makes this rule plain and clear when He says, “I no longer call you servants, because servants don't know what their master is doing. But now I call you friends, because I have told you everything that my Father told me” (John 15:15, ERV). Friends accept each other, even if they make mistakes. Friends freely share with each other their joys and sorrows.



**A mean and nasty spirit will push people away from you. They often will not want to hear anything you have to say, even if you share the truth.**

**Read Matthew 15:21–28 and Mark 14:6–9. These verses tell us about two women who are very different. Jesus does not act the same with both women. He is gentle with one woman. But He does not pay attention to the other woman at first. What do you see in each story that shows you that Jesus tries to save each woman and build her trust in Him?**

The woman in Matthew 15 is a Canaanite. Jesus does not give her what she wants at first. But she continues to ask Him to help her. This causes her faith to grow. In the end, Jesus gives the woman what she wants. Then Jesus says something so surprising. No Jewish religious leader at the time would say this to a suffering Canaanite woman. Jesus says to her in front of everyone, “‘Woman, you have much faith’” (Matthew 15:28, NLV). Jesus praises the Canaanite woman's faith. He says one of the best things a religious teacher could say to someone searching for truth. The woman's heart must have been filled with joy! For sure, Jesus' words changed her life in a big way.

The woman who washes Jesus' feet with expensive perfume is a Jew. She also is a woman that other people look down on. They do not think well of her at all because of her past. She has made many mistakes and sinned often. But Jesus forgave her. He changed her and made her new again. When other people talk bad about her, Jesus praises her actions. He says, “‘For sure, I tell you, wherever this Good News is preached in all the world, this woman will be remembered for what she has done’” (Mark 14:9, NLV).

**SHARING THE TRUTH IN LOVE (2 Thessalonians 1:1–4)**

Friendship by itself does not win people to Jesus. We may have many friends. Friends are people we enjoy being with. They also enjoy being with us. But what if we never tell our friends what Jesus means to us? Or let them know how He changed our lives? Then our friendships will not help anyone find everlasting life. Sure, we may be fun to be around. But God asks us to be more than that because friendship is not enough to bring people to Jesus. Worse, unkind words and feelings can drive people away from Jesus.

Paul tells us to say “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15, KJV). Friendship grows when we agree with people as much as possible. Friendship also grows when we show people that we accept them and praise them when they do something good. It is important that we make a habit of looking for the good in people. We must not look for the bad.

**Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4. Make a list of some of the things that Paul praises the Thessalonians for.**

There are some people who love to look for things that are wrong with other people. They feel joy when they can find something wrong that a person has done. It makes them feel better to think about the mistakes other people make!

Paul is different. He looks for the good in the churches he serves. Yes, Paul shows the churches their mistakes. Paul does not accept sin. But Paul wants to build up the churches that he started. One way that Paul does this is to talk about what the churches do right.

Ellen G. White also tells us that good friendships are important. “We must empty our hearts of pride. Then we must be kind and full of pity for other people. We must be nice to them and have tender hearts. If we do this, one hundred people will join the church where there is only one person who joins it now.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 189, adapted.

**Think about Ellen G. White’s quotation above. What will happen if the heart of every member in your church is kind, sweet, and full of mercy? What will people say about your church? Look into your heart. How can you do better in showing God’s love to other people?**



**Friendship grows when we show people that we accept them and praise them when they do something good.**

## THE BIBLE REASON FOR ACCEPTING PEOPLE AS THEY ARE (Romans 15:7)



**Jesus knows about all the things in your life that other people may not know anything about. Yes, He knows all of that and accepts you anyway.**

**Read Romans 15:7 and Ephesians 4:32. As these verses show us, what is the reason for accepting other people as they are? What does it mean to have a heart that accepts other people?**

In Romans 15:7 and Ephesians 4:32, Paul talks about the important rules that explain why we should accept each other. Jesus forgives and accepts each one of us. So, how can we refuse to forgive and accept each other? Because Jesus accepts us, we can accept each other, even if we have made mistakes or are not perfect.

Think hard about what this means. Think about who you really are. Think about some of the things you have done and are fighting against right now. Maybe these are things that only you know about. But you are scared at the thought about what will happen if other people know.

By your faith, Jesus accepts you anyway. He knows about all the things in your life that other people may not know anything about. Yes, He knows all of that and accepts you anyway. Not because of any good you have done. But because of His holy life and good works. Knowing all this, how should you think and feel about other people?

Accepting people means that we accept them as they are. We accept them with all their sins and bad habits. Why? Because God made them as copies of Himself. Because Jesus died for us “while we were still [anyway] sinners” (Romans 5:8, ERV) and “brought us back to God” (Romans 5:10, NLV).

First, we must build an accepting, caring friendship with someone. Then we need to share Bible truth with them in a loving way. If we do not do this, then we do not really love our friends. As friends, we care enough to share life-changing, everlasting truths with our friends.

Did Jesus say to His followers to “do whatever you want. It is all right. I will accept you anyway”? No. Jesus made it clear that “Even if you made mistakes, I will forgive you and give you power to change.” When we share Bible truth in Jesus’ spirit and with loving hearts, we will win hearts to Jesus and change lives.

**How can we accept people and, at the same time, not accept their bad behavior or sin?**



## GOD ASKS US TO SHARE THE TRUTH IN LOVE (1 Peter 3:15)

Jesus did not fail to share the truth in love. If He had failed to share it, then that would not have been love. Love always wants the best for another person. There is no disagreement between love and truth. So, we must share the truth in a kind way with no pride in our hearts. When we do that, we show love. Jesus says, “ ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’ ” (John 14:6, ERV). Jesus is the only way for us to be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus’ mercy and loving-favor save us so that we can know His truth and live His life. Truth without love leads to obedience without any real spiritual life. “Love” without truth leads to a religion of feelings that cannot save you. That is why truth always must be shared in love. Then truth can lead us to a real Christian experience that gives us the true reason to live.

**Read 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 4:2; and Titus 3:4, 5. How important is it for our hearts to be empty of pride when we share Bible truth? What words in these verses show us the answer?**

The New Testament writers never put love above truth. The writers mix love and truth in a beautiful way, and mercy with the law, and being kind with being honest. Peter tells Christians to “Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have” (1 Peter 3:15, ERV). You need to know what you believe and why you believe it so you can convince other people about your beliefs. But we can do this only if our hearts are empty of pride.

Paul tells Timothy to “Preach the word. Be ready to serve God in good times and bad. Correct people’s mistakes. Warn them. Encourage them with words of hope. Be very patient as you do these things. Teach them carefully” (2 Timothy 4:2, NIV). Paul tells Titus that God saves us because He is kind and loving. That is why we have new life in Him (Titus 3:5).

God also asks us to share the truth in love with a heart empty of pride. Our Lord has an end-time message for the people living on this earth. The Lord invites us to join Him in sharing His truth in love.

**What if someone asks you, “Why are you a Christian?” What will you answer, and why?**



**God asks us to share the truth in love with a heart empty of pride.**



**As God's servants, we must talk about heaven's Gift: Jesus.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Jesus is as gentle as a shepherd. He is as loving as a parent. His mercy cannot be matched by anything. Jesus is our loving Savior. He shows us His blessings in the most attractive way. Jesus does not only want to tell us about His blessings for us. But He also wants us to want them with all our hearts. As His servants, we must talk about heaven's Gift: Jesus. The wonderful love of Jesus will melt hearts. His love will do what talking only about teachings and Bible truth cannot do. "Your God says, 'Comfort, comfort my people.' 'Zion, you have good news to tell. Go up on a high mountain and shout the good news. Jerusalem, you have good news to tell. Don't be afraid; speak loudly. Tell this news to all the cities of Judah: "Look, here is your God! . . . Like [the same as] a good shepherd, he takes care of his people. He gathers [holds] them like lambs in his arms." ' Isaiah 40:1, 9–11 [ERV]."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 826, 827, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① It is sad that some people try to feel better by talking about the mistakes other people make. How can we be sure not to fall into this same trap?
- ② A friend of yours comes back from a funeral. He says to you, "I am so glad my aunt is up in heaven looking down at me. It makes me feel so good." From what we learned this week about how to share the truth, how will you answer?
- ③ "The act of looking for evil in other people causes evil in the ones who look for it. When we think about the mistakes of other people, we are changed. We become the same as them. But when we look at Jesus and talk about His love and perfect life, we become changed. Then we start to become the same as Jesus is. When we think about the beautiful holy life Jesus lived, we shall become holy and pure in heart. We shall live with God. When we live with God, a light shines from our lives that brightens the life of everyone who is connected with us."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, page 479, adapted.

**19**-year-old Simo Vehkavuori started to think that maybe he had made a big mistake in life. This thought came to him when he visited his Seventh-day Adventist uncle and aunt in Sweden. Three years earlier Simo had made a decision at a summer camp to follow God. But Simo didn't keep his promise to God. Now Simo was worried. He wondered, "Have I lost God's loving-favor?"

One night, Simo went to the garden behind his uncle and aunt's house. He knelt by a large flower bush. Tears wet his face. "Jesus, will You please accept me? If tonight is the right time to give my heart to You, please show me a sign," he cried. "Maybe You will let a star fall."

Simo stood and looked up. A large star fell in the night sky.

Then Simo left his aunt and uncle's house and went back home to Finland. Soon the whole farming community heard about Simo's decision to follow God. Some people made fun of Simo. Simo started to wonder if maybe he should not be so bold about sharing his faith with people.

One evening, a government manager came to check on his family's farm. The government manager had heard that Simo had given his life to Jesus. She made fun of Simo as he milked the cows in the barn.

"I hope you did not become a Christian in Sweden," she said. "You should go to dances and movies with other young people and just have fun."

Simo looked up at the woman. "Dear friend, I met Jesus as my personal Savior in Sweden. I want to go wherever He leads me."

Just as he finished talking, a loud bang shook the barn. Lightning struck the ground. The lightning exploded between Simo and the cow that he milked. The cow dropped dead. The other cows fell on their knees. Then the cows started to moo wildly. Simo's rubber boots had kept him safe from the shock.

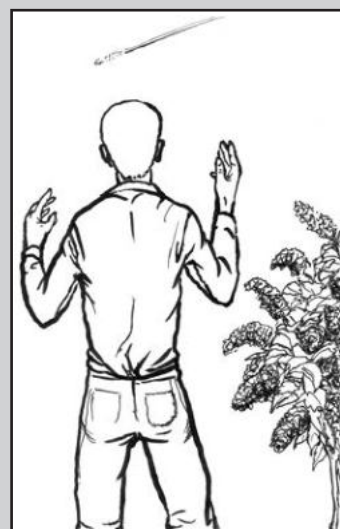
The government manager did not move. Her face was pale. Her work equipment fell in the nearby gutter filled with cow poop. At last she said, "Simo, can you forgive my careless words?" She no longer made fun of him. "Stay on your chosen road." After a pause, she asked, "How can I get on the same road to God as you?"

Simo made up his mind not to be shy or afraid about sharing his faith ever again. In his room that night, he prayed, "Take my whole heart and life. Let me follow wherever You lead me."

## INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY

### TALKING BOLDLY IN FINLAND



**Simo stood and looked up.  
A large star fell in the  
night sky.**



**Simo is now 84 and  
retired. He worked for  
many years as a pastor  
and church leader  
in Finland.**

# An Exciting Way to Be Part of God's Work



## SABBATH—AUGUST 29

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 1:1, 2, 26; Exodus 18:21–25; 1 Corinthians 12:12–25; Acts 18:1–5; Acts 4:31.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Then He said to His followers, ‘There is much grain ready to gather [pick; collect]. But the workmen are few. Pray then to the Lord Who is the Owner of the grain fields that He will send workmen to gather His grain’ ” (Matthew 9:37, 38, NLV).



Small groups are part of God's plan for making our faith grow stronger.

**SOMEONE SAID,** “There is strength in numbers.” What does that mean? It means that when we work together as a group, we have more success. You exercise more if you do it with a group than if you exercise alone each day. That is why many people join health clubs and gyms. They believe they will exercise more and enjoy it better if they exercise with other people. In the same way, God made us for friendship. We do better if we have a group of friends who support us. This is very true with our spiritual life too.

Small groups are part of God's plan for making our faith grow stronger. Small groups help us learn more about the Bible. Small groups deepen our prayer life and help us share Bible truth. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were a small group when They made the earth. Moses was a small-group leader. Jesus started a small group of followers. Paul traveled the kingdom of Rome with his small group of friends. They shared the Good News about Jesus everywhere.

During this week's study, we will look at what the Bible says about small groups. We will discover exciting ways to be a part of them.



**SMALL GROUPS: GOD’S IDEA FIRST (Genesis 1:1, 2, 26)**

**Read Genesis 1:1, 2, 26; Hebrews 1:1, 2; and Ephesians 3:8, 9. How do these verses show us that God the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit are in agreement with each other?**

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit worked together to make this earth. Each One had a different job to do. But They all worked together as One. The Father was in charge of how everything should look. He came up with the plan for the earth. Jesus carried out the Father’s plan with the help of the Holy Spirit. Wow! It is hard for us to even understand how They worked together to make this earth. But we can understand that God made this earth, the sky above, and outer space with everything in it (read Romans 1:18–20).

God invented small groups. We need to be careful when we talk about the mystery of God. At the same time, we can say safely that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit were the first “small group” in history. They worked together to make humans. And They worked together to make a plan to save humans after they sinned.

**Compare John 10:17, 18 with Romans 8:11 and 1 Corinthians 15:15. How does Jesus’ waking up from the dead show the agreement of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit in their plan to save humans?**

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit worked together as a “small group” to save humans. “God’s plan to save humans was in place before time began.”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 186, adapted. Nothing is more important to God than saving as many people as possible (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Small groups can have many jobs. We will look at some of those different jobs this week. But the most important work that small groups can do is win souls to Jesus. When we work together in small groups, we help ourselves and other people too.

**Think some more about the agreement between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is hard to understand fully. But we can believe and trust in what we do not fully understand anyway, right? Why is this rule so important for us to follow when it comes to faith?**



**The most important work that small groups can do is win souls to Jesus.**

**SMALL GROUPS IN THE BIBLE (Exodus 18:21–25)**

The Bible shows us many examples of small groups. The people in these groups spend time together. They pray, encourage each other, and work together for Jesus. Small groups give us the chance to share God's work and fully use our different spiritual gifts.

**Read Exodus 18:21–25. What good advice does Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, give that helps Moses in a big way? Why is this plan so important?**



**Small groups give us the chance for warm, caring friendship, spiritual growth, and problem solving.**

Every person in the camp of Israel became part of a group of ten people. A leader was put in charge of each group. The leaders of these small groups helped solve problems. The small groups offered their members friendship. These small groups helped spiritual life to grow. People in the groups talked about God's plans for Israel. They built strong, caring friendships. People had problems that other people helped them with. It is the same for us today. Small groups give us the chance for warm, caring friendship, spiritual growth, and problem-solving.

Do you want to know something interesting? Small-group experts tell us that the best size for small groups is between six and twelve people. This is the exact size that both Moses and Jesus used when they made their small groups.

**Read Luke 6:12, 13; Matthew 10:1; and Mark 3:13–15. Jesus has two reasons for choosing His followers to be part of His small group. What are these reasons?**

Jesus used small groups to train His followers to do God's work on earth. Their friendship with Jesus helped their spiritual lives to grow. In their small-group meetings, Jesus' followers learned how to work and serve in better ways. Day by day, they saw Jesus take care of the needs of the people around Him. This taught them how to use their own gifts to serve God. Jesus used small groups to teach His followers how to share the truth with people.

**Think about a time when you were part of a small group that cared about each other. What did you learn from that experience that can help you understand why small groups should be an important part of our faith?**

## COMING TOGETHER TO SERVE GOD (1 Corinthians 12:12–25)

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–25. How is the human body an excellent word picture for the way that people work together in small groups?**

Paul shows us why spiritual gifts are important in the life of the church. He also gives us a list of the most important gifts.

When we study the body, we see that the organs of the body are put into different groups. Spiritual gifts are much the same as the different parts of the body. These spiritual gifts work best when they are put into groups. Most parts of the body cannot work alone. Each job that the body does is part of a larger job. All the different parts of the body work together to keep us alive and healthy.

The body's different parts teach us something about what we need so that we can best use our spiritual gifts. It is easy to lose hope when we work alone. But when we are part of a small group, we work much better. We are part of a group of people who are interested in the same things we are interested in. These people want the same things we want. That helps us work better and do more.

Small groups give us the best place to use our spiritual gifts. Small groups can become the center of a church's efforts to share the Good News with other people.

Ellen G. White talks about the worth of small groups: "God does not make mistakes. He has shown me that it is important for Christians to work in small groups. If there is a large number of people in a church, the members should meet in small groups. They should work for church members and for people who do not believe. Let us say there is a place where only two or three people know Bible truth. Then they should join together in a small group of workers. They should join together and not break apart. They should come together in love and agreement. They can encourage each other to move forward in God's work. Then they will get courage and strength from each other."—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 7, pages 21, 22, adapted.

God accepts the work done by small groups. These groups help each church member's spiritual life to grow stronger. Small groups also help members to build strong friendships. In small groups, members can use their God-given gifts to serve Him.



**It is easy to lose hope  
when we work alone.**

**NEW TESTAMENT SMALL GROUPS (Acts 18:1–5)**

**Paul and his friends help each other in their work for God.**

The New Testament church grew big fast. In a few short years, it grew from a small group of believers to tens of thousands of worshipers. There are many reasons for this fast growth. (1) Jesus' work on earth helped get people ready to accept the preaching of His followers. (2) After Jesus went back to heaven, God poured His Spirit on Jesus' followers. (3) The New Testament church grew so fast because it was divided into small groups.

**Read Acts 18:1–5 and Acts 20:1–4. Why do you think that Luke tells us in these verses the names of some of the people that Paul worked with closely?**

It is interesting to see that Luke tells us the names of some of the people that Paul works with. Each person is important to Paul. He knows them by name. Paul and his friends help each other in their work for God. Luke does not tell us the names of every person that Paul worked with. But the names that Luke does tell us show that it was important to Paul to work closely with his friends, even in small groups.

Each of the people in Acts 18:1–5 and Acts 20:1–4 has different gifts. They all come from different countries with their own culture or ways of life. So, they do not always look at things in the same way. At the same time, each person has some special work to do for God. Each one has a personal experience with Jesus. Their different gifts and experiences help the New Testament church to grow.

**Compare Acts 16:11–15, 40 and Acts 12:11, 12. As we see in these verses, what invitation does Lydia give to Paul right after she becomes a Christian? Where do both Paul and Peter go after God makes them free from prison?**

The New Testament believers met in homes. Christian homes became important places for sharing God's truth. They also became the centers for the work that small groups did for God.

**Have you thought about starting a small group in your home? Maybe you already belong to one. If yes, how have small groups been a blessing to your spiritual life?**



**THE WAY SMALL GROUPS WORK (Acts 4:31)**

God uses small groups to grow His church. Small groups are safe places for people to share their problems and the things they are interested in or worried about. Small groups give people the chance for spiritual growth. Friendships and caring also are part of the small-group experience. Many non-Christians feel more comfortable going to a small-group meeting in a home than going to a church for the first time.

**Read Acts 4:31; Acts 12:12; and Acts 20:17–19, 27–32. Make a list of all the different things that these New Testament groups did. What did they do?**

The New Testament Christians met together to pray for people. They also prayed about things they were worried about. They shared warm friendships, studied the Bible, learned how to serve God better, protected each other against false teachers, and witnessed together.

Small groups make life better. People in small groups join their gifts to serve God together. They let the Holy Spirit use them to share the Good News with people. Small groups are powerful “tools” in God’s hands.

**Read Matthew 9:37, 38. As we see in these verses, what does Jesus say about the big “crop” of people that needs to be brought into God’s kingdom? How does Jesus say that the problem can be solved?**

Jesus’ followers saw very little hope for the Good News to be shared with people. But Jesus saw great chances for success. Jesus told His followers the wonderful news that “ ‘there is such a big harvest [crop] of people to bring in’ ” (Matthew 9:37, ERV). Then Jesus told His followers that there was a problem. “ ‘But there are only a few workers to help harvest [collect] them’ ” (Matthew 9:37, ERV). Jesus’ answer to the problem was prayer. “ ‘Pray then to the Lord Who is the Owner of the grain fields that He will send workmen to gather His grain’ ” (Matthew 9:38, NLV). Small groups are an answer to Jesus’ prayer. Small groups help the number of workers to grow.

The most important work that small groups have is serving God and telling people about Jesus. Small groups must lead people to Jesus and grow their faith. Then they can become witnesses for Jesus and Bible truth.



**Many non-Christians feel more comfortable going to a small-group meeting in a home than going to a church for the first time.**



**Small groups can make big changes happen!**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Many years ago, a small church in Europe decided that it had to do something big and important for God. The church was not growing. No one had been baptized in the church in a long time. The church did not have a bright future. The pastor and the church leaders prayed. They thought about a plan to help the church.

They started to study the New Testament. As they studied, they decided to start a small group to serve God more fully. Nine church members got excited about the plan. They decided to pray together and study how to use their small group to best serve God. Soon they decided to make each of their homes a center for sharing Bible truth with other people. The members in the group learned to use their gifts in different ways. They started new groups for prayer and helping the poor and needy. They built friendships with people in their community. They showed more love to members of their own families, friends, and Adventists who no longer went to church. The nine small-group leaders started Bible studies in their homes. 40 guests came. The small-group members got excited at what the Holy Spirit did. Soon 17 of the 40 guests were baptized. What does this story show us? Small groups can make big changes happen! Small groups are one of God's ways of including many different church members in the work of the church.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In class, talk some more about Thursday's study and the important things that the small groups do. What other things can a small group be a part of? What are ways that a small group can help people with special gifts use those gifts as they have never used them before?
- ② Why is it necessary that small groups always remember that their most important work is to share the Good News with people who do not know it? Also, why is it important for small groups to always stay connected with their local church body?
- ③ Have you ever been part of a small group that died out? Why do you think this happened?
- ④ Think about the story you read in today's study about the small church in Europe. What made the small group a success? What part did their working in homes have in their success? Why are homes safer or better places to meet in than churches when you first start your work for God in your neighborhood or community?

## **FORGIVEN IN EAST TIMOR**

In 2017, a man tried to kill a Seventh-day Adventist store clerk in East Timor. But that man was not punished. The East Timor leaders accepted the store clerk's decision not to punish the man who attacked him. The story has shocked the East Timor town of Lospalos. In Lospalos, people often get even with people who hurt them. It is their way of life. Even the police were shocked that the store clerk, Edu Wachumura, chose to forgive his attacker. The attacker was named Juvinil Ananias.

The attack happened after Juvinil walked into the store, drunk. He cussed at 28-year-old Edu, who worked behind the counter. Edu had just joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church after studying the Bible with the store's owner, Zelindo João Lay. Edu kindly told Juvinil not to use bad language in the store. Juvinil then promised to kill Edu. But Juvinil backed off when he saw the other customers in the store.

"I'm going to kill you tonight!" Juvinil said. Then he headed out the door.

That night, Edu heard a knock on the double metal doors at the back of the shop. Edu went over to the doors. They were locked and chained together. Edu looked between the doors to see who was outside. Just then, a spear pierced the doors and entered the store. Edu raised his arm and blocked the spear. The top of the spear cut off the tip of his nose.

Two days later, police came to the store to ask Edu if he wanted his attacker to go to jail. Edu shook his head no. "I forgive the man," he said.

The police put Juvinil in jail for a week anyway. Then they let him go. So, two years later, Edu met Juvinil at the Lospalos police station. Police officers watched in surprise as Edu signed a paper announcing that he forgave Juvinil. Juvinil told Edu that he felt bad about his actions.

"I am sorry," Juvinil said. "Thank you."

In 2019, the judges finally announced that Juvinil was forgiven for his crime.

Zelindo, the store manager, hopes that the surprised local community will understand that God wants to forgive them just as Edu forgave Juvinil. After the attack, Edu's brother and sister were baptized. Zelindo hopes many more people will follow their example.

"Everyone is talking about Edu's decision to forgive. No one understands it," Zelindo said. "It is the power of God!"



**Edu raised his arm and blocked the spear. The top of the spear cut off the tip of his nose.**



# Sharing the Story About Jesus



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 5

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Ephesians 2:1–3; 1 John 1:1–4; Mark 5:18–20; Hebrews 10:19–22; Galatians 2:20.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “I write this letter to you who believe in the Son of God. I write so that you will know that you have eternal life now” (1 John 5:13, ERV).



**We must show that every Bible teaching is about Jesus and shows His love too. Then people will want to accept what the Bible says.**

**AS WE SAID ALREADY,** the most powerful proof for the Good News is a changed life. People may argue with your beliefs. They may disagree with your Bible teachings. They may say that you do not understand the Bible. But who can argue with your personal story about what Jesus means to you and what He has done in your life?

Witnessing is sharing what we know about Jesus. Witnessing is letting other people know what Jesus means to us and what He has done for us. Some people think that witnessing is only about trying to prove what they believe is right and show that other people's beliefs are wrong. But if we talk about Bible truth that way, we will not win many people to Jesus. Our sharing about Jesus must come from a heart that has been changed by His mercy and forgiveness, His love and His truth. Then other people will see how the truth we believe has changed our lives. That is the best reason why we must live what we believe.

We must show that every Bible teaching is about Jesus and shows His love too. Then people will want to accept what the Bible says.

**JESUS IS THE REASON FOR OUR TESTIMONY  
(Ephesians 2:1–3)**

As Christians, we all have a personal story to tell. This story is about how Jesus changed our lives and what He has done for us.

**How did we behave before we knew Jesus? What becomes ours when we accept Him?**

**A. Our life before we knew Jesus (Ephesians 2:1–3).**

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**B. Our life after we knew Jesus (Ephesians 2:4–10).**

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Wow! Look at how much we changed! Before we knew Jesus, “[our] spiritual lives were dead because of [our] sins” (Ephesians 2:1, ICB). We “used to live as sinners” and “followed the ways of this world [the people on this earth and their ways of life]” (Ephesians 2:2, Nlrv). “We did all the things our bodies and minds wanted” (Ephesians 2:3, ERV). “God was angry with us like he was with everyone else” (Ephesians 2:3, Nlrv). Before we knew Jesus, we were lost.

Maybe we thought we were happy. But deep inside we were sad and felt that we needed something more to give our lives meaning. Then we came to Jesus. His love changed everything. Now in Jesus we are truly alive. That is because “God gave us new life with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5, ICB). God did this because He “loves us deeply. He is full of mercy” (Ephesians 2:4, Nlrv). “He did this so that for all future time he could show the very great [endless; having no limit] riches [plenty] of his grace [loving-favor]. He shows that grace by being kind to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7, ICB). In Jesus, life has new meaning. As John says, “Life was in him, and that life was the light for all people” (John 1:4, Nlrv).

**Read Ephesians 2:10. What does this verse tell us about how important good works are to the Christian’s faith? At the same time, we believe that people are saved “because of their faith. They are not saved by obeying the law” (Romans 3:28, Nlrv). If we are not saved by works, then why do we need them? What part do good works have in our lives?**



**Then we came to Jesus. His love changed everything.**



**OUR PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT JESUS (1 John 1:1–4)**

John and James were the sons of Zebedee. James and John also were known as the “ ‘Sons of Thunder’ ” (Mark 3:17, NIV). Jesus is the One who gave James and John this name. John had a bad temper. He got angry fast. The Bible tells us about the time when John got mad. Jesus and His followers traveled across Samaria. They tried to find a place to stay for the night in a village. But the Samaritans did not like the Jews. So, the Samaritans did not offer Jesus and His followers a place to stay anywhere in their village.

James and John think they knew how to solve the problem of the Samaritans’ bad behavior. James and John say, “ ‘Lord, do You want us to speak [pray] so fire will come down from heaven and burn them up as Elijah did?’ ” (Luke 9:54, NIV). Jesus’ answer surprises James and John. Jesus scolds them. They all leave the village quietly. Jesus’ way is the way of love, not force.

By being around Jesus, John’s temper changed. John became a loving, kind, and gentle spirit. In John’s first letter, the Greek word for “love” is written more than 40 times.



**The strongest proof of Christianity is a changed life.**

**Read 1 John 1:1–4; 1 John 3:1; 1 John 4:7–11; and 1 John 5:1–5. What do these verses tell you about John’s personal story about Jesus? What changes happen in John’s life because of his friendship with Jesus?**

There is a very important law of life. Ellen G. White talks about it: “Our using force goes against God’s government. God wants people to serve Him only because they love Him. Love cannot be commanded. Love cannot be won by force or power. Only love can cause love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 22, adapted.

When we give our lives fully to Jesus, His love will fill us. Other people will see this love. The strongest proof of Christianity is a changed life. Does this mean we will not make any mistakes or fail to show the love and mercy of Jesus? No. A changed life means that Jesus’ love will be seen in our lives. It will be a blessing to the people around us.

**How well do you show the love of Jesus to other people? What does your answer tell you about yourself?**

**TELLING THE STORY ABOUT JESUS (Mark 5:18–20)**

Who are the first people that Jesus sends to share the Good News? They are not His long-time followers. The first people Jesus sends had been filled with demons. Before Jesus came into their lives, they scared everyone in the countryside and filled their hearts with fear.

The demons made one of the men strong enough to break the chains that held him. Then this man screamed in an awful voice. He cut his own body with sharp stones. The cries of these men show the deeper pain in their spirits (Matthew 8:28, 29; Mark 5:1–5).

But then these two men meet Jesus. Their lives are changed forever. Jesus causes the demons to leave their bodies. The demons enter a herd of pigs. Then the pigs jump off a cliff into the sea (Matthew 8:32–34; Mark 5:13, 14).

**Read Matthew 8:28–34. What happens to these men? What do the townspeople find when they come to see what happened?**

The men who had been filled with demons are changed by Jesus' power. The townspeople find the men sitting at Jesus' feet. The two men listen to every word Jesus says. Just so you know, Matthew's book says there were two men that Jesus saved from demons. But Mark's story tells us about only one of them. The important thing to understand is that Jesus made both men new. He healed their bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits.

**Read Mark 5:18–20. As you can see from the verses, the changed man wants to stay with Jesus. But what does Jesus send him to do?**

"These men heard Jesus' teaching for only a short time. They never heard Jesus preach one sermon. Jesus' followers had been with Jesus daily. So, they knew how to teach the people. But not these men. At the same time, their changed lives were living proof that Jesus was the Savior. These men told what they knew. They told what they had seen, heard, and felt of Jesus' power. This is what everyone can do whose heart has been changed by God's loving-favor."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 340, adapted. The personal stories that these men told about Jesus helped to get the people ready in Decapolis to accept Jesus' teachings.



**The cries of the two men show the deeper pain in their spirits.**

**HAVING A FIRM TRUST AND A SURE FAITH IN GOD  
TO SAVE US (Hebrews 10:19–22)**

**Read 1 John 5:11–13; Hebrews 10:19–22; and 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2. What hope do these verses give us about our everlasting life? Why can we say with firm trust and sure faith that God has saved us?**



**Jesus lives in our hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. Because of this, we have the gift of everlasting life today!**

If we do not believe that Jesus has saved us, we cannot share this faith with someone else. We cannot share what we do not have ourselves. There are wonderful, kind Christians who always live in fear. They wonder if they will ever be good enough for God to save them. As a wise, old preacher said, “When I look at myself, I see no way of being saved. When I look at Jesus, I see no way I can be lost.” The Lord’s words were true when He said them, and they are true now: “ ‘All you who live anywhere on earth, turn to me and be saved. I am God. There is no other God’ ” (Isaiah 45:22, NIV).

Our Lord wants to save us. What is more, He freely gives us the gift of everlasting life. He wants this gift to fill our hearts with joy. He wants us to be made clean from sin and guilt. He wants us to be made right with Him. Paul says, “We have been made right with God because of our faith. So we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1, ERV). Paul also says that we can trust that “anyone who is in Christ Jesus is not judged guilty” (Romans 8:1, ERV). John tells us that “whoever has the Son has life. But the person who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12, ICB).

By faith we accept Jesus. Then He lives in our hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. Because of this, we have the gift of everlasting life today! Does that mean we can never lose the gift of God’s loving-favor and saving mercy? Of course not! (Read 2 Peter 2:18–22; Hebrews 3:6; and Revelation 3:5).

We always have the free choice to turn away from God. But why would we ever want to? We now know His love. We understand more and more why He died for us. So, we will look each day for the chance to share with people the loving-favor that we have in Jesus.

**Do you believe that you are saved in Jesus? If yes, why are you sure? Where in the Bible do you find reasons for your trust? If you are not sure, why are you not sure? How can you find the firm trust that you need?**

**NEWS WORTH SHARING (Galatians 2:20)**

**“I have been put up on the cross to die with Christ [Jesus]. I no longer live. Christ lives in me. The life I now live in this body, I live by putting my trust in the Son of God. He was the One Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, NLV).**

Sure, there are things we must give up when we accept Jesus. He asks us to give up these things. Jesus makes plain what we must do to follow Him: “ ‘If anyone wants to follow me, he must say “no” to the things he wants. Every day he must be willing even to die on a cross, and he must follow me’ ” (Luke 9:23, ICB). Death on a cross is a painful death. When we give our lives to Jesus, our old lives are put to death on the cross (read Romans 6:6). That is painful. It is painful at times to give up the things we want and lifelong habits. But the rewards are worth any pain we must suffer.

Stories about what Jesus has done for us can change lives. These stories are not about what we give up for Jesus. They are about what Jesus does for us.

The history of Christianity is filled with stories about people who gave up many things for Jesus. Were these people trying to earn everlasting life by their acts? No. Nothing we do can earn us favor with God. These men and women understood what Christ did for them. So, they were willing to give up everything for Jesus and follow Him.

**Our personal stories about Jesus are always about what Jesus does for us. Read John 1:12; John 10:10; John 14:27; and 1 Corinthians 1:30. List some of the gifts of God’s loving-favor that you find in the verses above.**

As you read the verses above, think about what Jesus has done for you. Maybe you have been a loyal Christian your whole life. Or maybe you came to God after a powerful experience changed you. Think about how good Jesus has been to you and the peace and happiness He gives you. Think about the times He gave you the strength to meet hardships and difficult times in life.

**What has Jesus asked you to give up for Him? What have you learned from your experiences? How can what you learned be a blessing to other people?**



**When we give our lives to Jesus, our old lives are put to death on the cross.**



**“The woman who reaches out her hand to touch Jesus believes that she will be made whole.”**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Mark 5:25–34. “The crowd close to Jesus does not feel any special healing power when they touch Him. But the woman who reaches out her hand to touch Jesus believes that she will be made whole. So, she feels Jesus’ special healing power. The same thing is true in spiritual things. What if we talk about religion in a careless way? Or what if we pray with no real hunger in our spirits? Or what if we have no living faith? Then our talk, prayers, and faith will have no power. What if we believe that Jesus has the power to save? That is not enough to bring healing to our souls. Saving faith is not simply knowing the truth. . . . It is not enough to believe **about** Jesus. We must believe **in** Him. We must accept Jesus as our personal Savior. That is the only faith that will heal us. By faith we accept Jesus’ holy life as our own. . . .

“God chooses us to show Jesus to the people on this earth. Sure, we must believe what the Bible tells us about God’s loving-favor. But our personal stories about our own experiences are even more powerful proof. We are witnesses for God. As His witnesses, we show that God’s power works in us. There is no other person the same as you or me on the earth. Each one of us is special and different from everyone else. So, we each have an experience that is different from everyone else’s too. God wants us to praise Him. The praise we give God will not be the same as anyone else’s. When we give God praise and are filled with Jesus, then our praise will have power that will work to save people.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 347, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What makes a personal story about Jesus exciting and interesting? Read Paul’s personal story that he told to Agrippa (Acts 26:1–23). What reason does Paul give for his personal story?
- ② Why do you think our personal stories about Jesus are so powerful? How do you answer the question: “What do I do if I have not had the same experience as you? Why should I follow Jesus?”
- ③ What should you **not** say when you share your personal story with someone who does not believe in Jesus?
- ④ Think about being sure that we are saved. Why is this such an important part of our Christian experience? How can we be sure that we are saved?



**T**omasz Karauda is a 28-year-old Seventh-day Adventist doctor in Poland. A woman was brought to him from another part of the hospital where he worked. Tomasz was asked to sign a paper saying that the woman was dead. But there was one problem. The woman was alive.

The woman looked dead when the nurse brought her to Tomasz. The woman came from the part of the hospital for patients who were very sick and needed a lot of care. That part of the hospital was very crowded. The doctor there could do nothing more to save the woman. So, he sent her out so that he could free up a bed for another patient who badly needed care. A nurse asked Tomasz if the dying woman could stay in the part of the hospital where he worked.

That part of the hospital did not have any free beds. So Tomasz placed a bed in the hall. He laid the woman on it. Then he pulled up a chair next to it and talked to the woman for the next two hours.

The woman had lung cancer. She had smoked for many years. As she talked, her body started to grow hard and cold with death. The blood in her body pooled in her lower back. Her skin turned pale as her blood drained into the larger veins in her body. Nothing could be done to save her.

"I never saw anything that looked the same as this in my life," Tomasz said. "The woman was dead. But she was sitting in the wheelchair. And she was talking with me!"

The woman said she was very sorry for her life choices.

"I spent my whole life smoking," she said. "I wish I could go back and live my life over again."

Tomasz felt as if he was in the middle of the Bible story about the thief on the cross. He held the woman's hand.

Finally, the woman stopped talking. That is when Tomasz signed the paper saying that she was dead.

"Being a Christian doctor is a very responsible job," Tomasz said. He had studied at a public medical school. "No one taught us in medical school what to do or say when something this sad happens."

Tomasz says it is helpful to take someone's hand and offer words of hope. But other times, he says, "the only thing you can do is hold someone's hand and pray for him or her in your heart."

The people on this earth are dying in sin. Many times, death sets in. Nothing can be done to save them. What will you do at that time for the dying? Will you hold their hands? Will you pray for them and with them? Will you offer them hope?

## INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY

### THE LAST WORDS OF A DYING WOMAN



**"The woman was dead. But she was sitting in the wheelchair. And she was talking with me!"**



# A Message Worth Sharing



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 12

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Revelation 14:6–8, 14–20.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Then I saw another angel flying in the heavens [high in the sky]. He was carrying the Good News that lasts forever. He was preaching to every nation [country] and to every family group and to the people of every language and to all the people of [on] the earth. He said with a loud voice, ‘Honor God with love and fear [respect and obedience]. The time has come for Him to judge all men. Worship Him Who made heaven and earth and the sea and the places where water comes out of the earth’ ” (Revelation 14:6, 7, NLV).



**Jesus died the death we should have died so that we can live with Him.**

**JESUS** died for everyone who ever lived. So, the Good News is for everyone. The Good News is all about Jesus. It is about how Jesus wins the war against the devil and death. Jesus joins us to God again. He came to make us free from sin's punishment and power. Jesus makes us clean and holy. Jesus died for us and now lives for us. Jesus died the death we should have died so that we can live with Him. Soon He will cover us with glory and give us bodies that will not die. Jesus will come again to make us free from sin forever.

The Bible tells us about Jesus' two comings. He came the first time to save us. He will come back to take us home. The book of Revelation was written to help us get ready for the Second Coming. This week, we will look at why Revelation is important for people today. We will look at Jesus' invitation to His end-time church to help Him share this final message of mercy with the people on earth.

**PETER'S SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR HIS TIME  
(2 Peter 1:12)**

All during Bible history, God sent special messages to His people. These prophecies, or special messages, helped God's people to get ready for what was coming. God always knows what will happen (Isaiah 46:9, 10). So, God helps His people get ready for the future by sending to them His prophets, or special messengers. The prophets warn God's people before God's punishment comes against them (Amos 3:7). In the days before the Flood, God sent Noah a message. Then Noah warned the people on the earth that the Flood was coming. In Egypt, God chose Joseph to help the people get ready for the food shortage seven years before it happened. The Jewish prophets warned the Israelite leaders that the armies of Babylon were coming to destroy Jerusalem. John the Baptist's message helped the Jews get ready for Jesus' first coming.

**Read 2 Peter 1:12. What words does Peter write in this verse to talk about the message God gives him for the Christians in his day?**

**Read 2 Peter 1:16–21. As these verses show, what “present truth” message do Peter and Jesus' followers announce? Present truth is the truth that people need most for the time they live in.**

The present-truth message for Peter's day was that Jesus came. Jesus' death on the cross showed God the Father's love. Sin leads to death. But Jesus made it possible for everyone to have everlasting life. It is our choice to accept this gift (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8). The message about God's gift of everlasting life in Jesus will never be out of date. It is present truth for all people for all time.

The Bible's last book is Revelation. Revelation shows Jesus and His gift of everlasting life. This book was written to help people living in the end times to get ready for Jesus' Second Coming. Revelation shows us everything that is wrong with human ways of life and selfish religion. From the first page to the last page, Revelation shows Jesus and the work He does to save people. Jesus is the true witness. He shows us who His Father is. Jesus “is the head [top leader] over all the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5, NLV). Revelation is all about Jesus.



**Revelation shows Jesus and His gift of everlasting life.**

**REVELATION'S END-TIME MESSAGE (Revelation 1:7)**

**Our Lord invites everyone who seeks for everlasting life to come to Him.**

The first four books of the New Testament are known as the Gospels. The Gospels are mostly about Jesus' first coming. They tell the story about Jesus' being born, His life, His work for God on earth, His death on the cross, and His waking up from the dead. The Gospels talk about the Second Coming. But that is not their most important topic. The book of Revelation does what the Gospels do not do. Revelation's most important topic is the end of the war between God and Satan. Almost all of its most important prophecies, or special messages, end in the Second Coming.

**Read Revelation 1:7; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 14:14–20; and Revelation 19:11–18. What happens in each of these verses? How do they all end?**

From the first chapter to the last chapter in Revelation, almost every prophecy ends in Jesus' Second Coming. The “ ‘Lamb [a word picture for Jesus] who was killed’ ” (Revelation 5:12, ERV) will come again. He is the King “ ‘who rules [has control] over all’ ” (Revelation 19:15, NIV). Jesus will beat all the enemies who hurt God's people and attacked them because of their faith (Revelation 17:14). Jesus will set free His people from this life of sin. He will bring His people home to live with Him in glory. The worldwide war between good and evil will end. God will make the earth new. The saved will live there with their Lord forever (Revelation 21:1–4).

In Revelation 22:7, NIV, Jesus says, “ ‘Look! I am coming soon! Words of prophecy are written in this book. Blessed is the person who obeys them.’ ” (Read also Revelation 22:12, 17, and 20.) Jesus' final message to all humans is clear. He wants them to be ready for His Second Coming. So, He asks them to accept His love and mercy and to obey Bible truth. The book of Revelation ends with Jesus' invitation: “ ‘The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” Everyone who hears this should also say, “Come!” ’ ” (Revelation 22:17, ERV).

Our Lord invites everyone who seeks everlasting life to come to Him. Then He invites us to join Him in inviting other people to accept His message of love too. Jesus sends us to share His message with people. This message will help them get ready for Jesus' Second Coming. He is coming soon. Let us work together with Him!

**REVELATION'S END-TIME MESSAGE  
(Revelation 14:14–20)**

The center of Revelation is chapter 14. This chapter is very important to God's people in the last days. It shows God's end-time message to humans. This message is important to God's people and all humans on the earth.

**Read Revelation 14:14–20. What word picture is used in these verses to show Jesus' Second Coming?**

The word picture of collecting grain is used in the Bible to show Jesus' Second Coming (read Matthew 13:37–43; Mark 4:29). In Revelation 14, the crop of ripe grain shows us the people that God saves. These people obey God. The ripe grapes show us that God will destroy evil people. Revelation 14:6–12 has an important end-time message. This message will help men and women get ready to be part of the final "crop" that God saves from the earth.

**Read Revelation 14:6, 7. What are these verses saying? How do these verses help us to understand who we are as Seventh-day Adventists?**

The First Angel's Message gives our lives meaning. That is something that people in our time deeply want. The First Angel's Message shows that God will forgive anyone who accepts His gift of mercy. God's grace, or loving-favor, cleans us from the guilt of sin. God's grace helps us win the war against sin. The First Angel's Message gives us the reason for our worth: Jesus made us and saves us. The First Angel's Message also shows us that in the future God will judge and punish evildoers. This is wonderful news! It shows us that evil will not last forever.

**"In a special way, God made Seventh-day Adventists to be the same as guards and lights on this earth. God gave Seventh-day Adventists the last warning for a dying planet. God gave Seventh-day Adventists wonderful Bible truth. God also gave Seventh-day Adventists work to do that is very important. Their job is to announce the First, Second, and Third Angels' Messages to the people on earth. No other work is as important. Seventh-day Adventists must not let anything else take their attention away from this work."—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pages 119, 120. How can we make sure we give this work our full attention?**



In Revelation 14, the crop of ripe grain shows us that God saves people who obey Him.



## UNDERSTANDING GOD'S END-TIME MESSAGE MORE FULLY (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14)

Revelation's end-time message shows Jesus and His saving grace, or loving-favor. This grace is for all humans everywhere (Revelation 14:6). This end-time message asks us to obey and honor God in all that we do. God now works as our Judge. So, we must respect His commands and obey His law (Revelation 14:7). To "fear God" (Revelation 14:7, KJV) is to obey and respect Him. Fearing God is about how we think too. To fear God means we live to please God. We must put Him first in all our thoughts. Then we will want to obey God with our whole hearts and minds. This thought and feeling will lead us to live holy lives (Proverbs 3:7; Acts 9:31; 1 Peter 2:17). The First Angel's Message also invites us to "give glory" to God (Revelation 14:7, KJV). We do that by honoring God in every part of our lives.



**The First Angel's Message helps us to remember that now is the time when God will judge the people on the earth.**

**Read Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 and 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. How do these verses help us understand what it means to both "fear God" and give glory to Him?**

We live at a time when most people do not want to be responsible for what they do wrong. Millions of people feel that they do not have to answer to anyone at all. The First Angel's Message helps us to remember that now is the time when God will judge the people on the earth. So, we must be responsible for our actions. There is a connection between honoring and obeying God, and His work as our Judge. Obedience comes from a saving friendship with Jesus. Only His holy life is good enough to save us at this time. We are safe because He is right with God. In Him we live to give glory to God's Name in all that we do.

**Read Revelation 14:7; Revelation 4:11; Genesis 2:1–3; and Exodus 20:8–11. What is the basic reason for all true worship? How does the Sabbath show this reason to us?**

Satan has attacked the Sabbath. He knows that the Sabbath is at the center of worship. The Sabbath honors Jesus as the One who made the earth. The Sabbath is God's invitation to everyone everywhere to " 'worship him who made the heavens and the earth' " (Revelation 14:7, NIV). This is an important announcement for this time. Most people believe false ideas about how the earth was made.

**GOD'S FINAL INVITATION (Revelation 14:8)**

**Read Revelation 14:8; Revelation 17:3–6; and Revelation 18:1–4. What do we learn about spiritual Babylon from these verses?**

In the book of Revelation, “Babylon” is a word picture for a false religious power. This false religious power teaches people that their own good works save them. This lie is only one of Babylon’s many false teachings. This false religious power also teaches people to respect man-made ideas and ways of life that go against Bible truth. Babylon praises humans and their good works above Jesus and His holy life. Babylon puts the commands of human religious teachers above the commands of God. In the Old Testament, Babylon was the center of the worship of false gods, sun worship, and the belief that the soul lives on after the body dies. Modern Babylon mixes many of Old Testament Babylon’s religious beliefs and ways of life into its worship today. God’s end-time message to our dying planet is the message that only Jesus and His holy life save us. That is why God warns us, “ ‘She is destroyed! The great [big and powerful] city of Babylon is destroyed! . . . Come out of that city, my people, so that you will not share in her sins. Then you will not suffer any of the terrible punishment she will get’ ” (Revelation 18:2, 4, ERV). God started the Seventh-day Adventist Church to announce the message of Jesus fully. That means we are commanded to bring people’s attention to everything Jesus taught. We must announce the One who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, KJV). We must show how the mistakes and faults of Babylon compare to Jesus’ Bible truths.

**Read Revelation 14:7, 9–11. What two different things are being worshiped in these verses?**

Revelation 14 shows two different acts of worship. (1) There is the worship of the One who made the sky and the earth. (2) There is the worship of the wild sea-animal power. These two acts of worship show us what the final war between good and evil will be about: the Sabbath. The true Sabbath is a sign of the rest, hope, and trust we have in Jesus to save us and come again as our King. The false sabbath is a sign of human ideas and man-made laws.



**God’s end-time message to our dying planet is the message that only Jesus and His holy life save us.**



**“The cross on Calvary shows every person who accepts Jesus how much a soul is worth.”**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “God commanded the people of Israel during Bible times to stand as His witnesses on this earth. God commands His church today to do the same thing. God separated the Seventh-day Adventist Church from other churches and from the people on the earth. God used truth the same as a sharp knife to cut His people away from the other churches. The truth God used to separate His people was the First, Second, and Third Angels’ Messages. God separated His people to bring them close to Himself. God gave His people His law and the special messages for this time. God expects His people to share these Bible truths with everyone on earth. God asked Israel to do the same thing in Bible times when He gave them His holy laws.

“The Three Angels of Revelation 14 are a word picture. They show us the people who accept the Three Angels’ Messages and warn everyone on the earth. Jesus says to His followers: ‘You are [the same as] the light that shines for the world to see.’ Matthew 5:14 [ERV]. The cross on Calvary shows every person who accepts Jesus how much a soul is worth. ‘Jesus said to the followers, “Go everywhere in the world. Tell the Good News to everyone.”’ Mark 16:15 [ICB]. We must not let anything stop us from doing this work. It is the most important work for our time. . . . Jesus showed how much He loved humans when He died on the cross to save them. This same love will cause Jesus’ followers to work.

“Jesus very gladly accepts every human who gives himself fully to Him. Jesus joins humans to God. Then Jesus uses us to communicate His love to everyone on earth. This love is a mystery. It caused Jesus to become a human and come to earth. Talk about this love. Pray about it. Sing about it. Fill the whole earth with the message of Jesus’ truth.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church*, pages 58, 59.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How do the Three Angels’ Messages in Revelation 14 show us the reason for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and why we are here on this earth?
- ② Every week, God commands us to remember Him as the One who made us and saves us. How does this Bible truth help us understand why the Sabbath is important?
- ③ We must be gentle and kind when warning people about Babylon and the wild sea animal’s mark. How can we share these Bible truths in the best way possible?

## WHAT JESUS MEANS TO ME

The old woman listens carefully in Sabbath School in southeast Asia. You can tell that she studies the Bible a lot. She has answered all the questions in her Bible study guide. Many verses are underlined in her Bible. In class, she gives money to help the church do its work worldwide. The woman is known as “Grandmother.”

U.S. church leader Gregory Whitsett met with Grandmother after church. He asked her why she left her non-Christian religion to become a Seventh-day Adventist.

Grandmother told a sad story. When she was five years old, her parents died in an accident. Then evil spirits attacked her for many years. She went to medical doctors and to spiritual mediums. Mediums are people who talk to spirits. But the medicine they gave Grandmother only helped her for a little while.

Soon, an Adventist pastor moved next door. Grandmother watched people come to his house every Friday evening. She stood at his gate to find out what was happening. That is when she heard the music coming from his house. Peace filled her as she listened to the music each week. Then the pastor learned about her spirit problems. Grandmother agreed to let him pray for her. Soon the evil spirits left her for good. Her heart filled with thankfulness. She accepted Jesus and joined the Adventist Church.

Gregory Whitsett also is the manager of the Center for East Asian Religions. The center is part of the Adventist Church’s Global Mission work. Gregory asked Grandmother to explain what Jesus meant to her.

The old woman answered in her own language. Then a woman told Grandmother’s words to Gregory in English. “Jesus means everything to me,” she said. “He healed me. He gives me peace. I talk to everyone I meet about Jesus. I am an old woman. I don’t have much longer to live. I love Jesus so much that I decided to be Adventist in my next life too.”

Her next life? The woman who shared in English what Grandmother said was shocked. This same woman had studied the Bible with Grandmother in the past. The woman thought that Grandmother had fully stopped believing in wrong ideas from her old religion.

Grandmother’s experience is nothing new. Many people from other religions have trouble giving up old beliefs after they become Christians. That is why the Center for East Asian Religions, along with other Global Mission centers, was started. Learn more at [GlobalMissionCenter.org](http://GlobalMissionCenter.org). Please pray for the work of the centers and for people with Grandmother’s views.



**She stood at the gate to find out what was happening.**





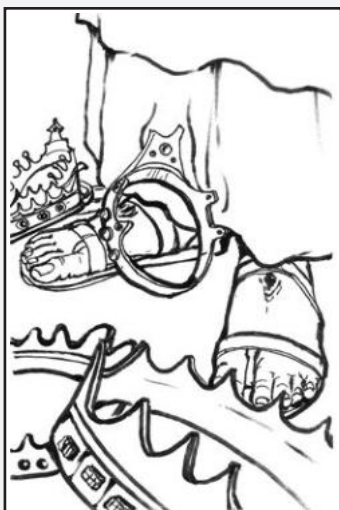
# Moving Forward in Faith



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 19

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Philippians 2:5–11; Matthew 4:18–20; Acts 9:3–6, 10–20; John 21:15–19.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “In your lives you must think and act like [the same as] Christ Jesus. Christ himself was like [the same as] God in everything. He was equal with God. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be held on to. He gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like [the same as] a servant” (Philippians 2:5–7, ICB).



“[Jesus] accepted the risk that He may fail and lose everything. When we understand this, we will throw our crowns at His feet.”

**JESUS LEFT EVERYTHING** to come to this earth. He left behind heaven, the angels, and His face-to-face friendship with God the Father. Jesus came to this evil planet to show us God's love. He came to win back the hearts of humans and to save sinners from death. “We cannot ever understand how much it cost God to save us until we stand with our Savior in front of God's throne. Then we will see heaven's glory. We shall remember that Jesus left all this for us. Jesus left heaven. But He did more than that for us. He accepted the risk that He may fail and lose everything. When we understand this, we will throw our crowns at His feet. We will sing the song, ‘ “The Lamb, who was put to death, is worthy! He is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength! He is worthy to receive honor and glory and praise!” ’ Revelation 5:12 [NirV].”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 131, adapted.

When we work with Jesus to save sinners, we must give up things too. We must move forward in faith and obedience.



## JESUS GAVE AT A BIG COST TO HIMSELF (Philippians 2:5–11)

Paul encourages us to let the mind, or thoughts, of Jesus live in us. This leads us to some interesting questions. What was the mind of Jesus? What controlled His thinking? What did He think about?

**Read Philippians 2:5–11. How do these verses show what Jesus' thoughts were all about? What important rule controlled His whole life?**

From the start, Jesus was equal with God. Paul announces this everlasting truth in these words: “Christ [Jesus] himself was like [the same as] God in everything. He was equal with God. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be held on to” (Philippians 2:6, ICB). The word written as “like” comes from the Greek word “**morphê**.” “**Morphê**” means “what something is made of.” It shows us that two things are equal in worth: the Father and the Son. *The SDA Bible Commentary* says: “Jesus is equal with the Father. He is above every other power. Paul tells us this to show us that Jesus came down very low when He became a human.”—Volume 7, page 154, adapted. Ellen G. White adds, “In Jesus is life. This life does not come from anything else. It was not made. It is not borrowed from anything.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 530, adapted.

Jesus was equal to God from the start. “But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing” (Philippians 2:7, NCV). This wording “made himself nothing,” has an interesting meaning in the Greek. These words can be written as “to empty.” So, Jesus freely chose to “empty Himself” of His honor and glory as God’s equal. Then He chose to become born as a man and live in a human body. He became a servant to humans. He showed heaven’s law of love to everyone in heaven. Then He showed the biggest act of love: He died on the cross for our sins. He gave His life to save ours forever.

Jesus’ thoughts were filled with love. His love made Him give up His life. We follow Jesus when we love as He loved. We also must serve as He served. We must work as He worked. We must let the Holy Spirit empty us of selfish wishes and plans. To do this will cost us something. It cost Jesus everything. But that is why the Bible says, “God raised [honored] Christ to the highest [most important] place. God made the name of Christ greater [gave it more honor and glory] than every other name” (Philippians 2:9, ICB).



**We follow Jesus when  
we love as He loved.**

**JESUS' INVITATION (Matthew 4:18–22)**

Make this picture in your mind: Peter and Andrew are in their boats. It is a beautiful morning in Galilee. The sun takes the chill from the air. Peter and Andrew think about catching fish. A lot of fish. The fishing has been good these days. So, Peter and Andrew hope they will have another good day. Then in the early morning light, Peter and Andrew see someone walking to them. It is Jesus of Nazareth. They have no idea that soon their lives will change forever.

**Read Matthew 4:18–22. How do these verses show us that Jesus wants Peter and Andrew to do more than catch fish? Why do you think Peter and Andrew decide to follow Jesus?**

John in his Gospel tells us that he and Peter already knew Jesus for more than a year. But John and Peter have not given their lives fully to Jesus. There must be something in Jesus' words, face, or actions that shows Peter and John that Jesus invites them to serve God. Peter and John leave their boats, jobs, and everything they know to follow Jesus. Why? Jesus invites them to do something more with their lives. Peter and John are ordinary fishermen. But they understand that Jesus asks them to do something very special. Maybe God is not asking you to leave your job today. But He wants you to do something special for Him. He wants you to share His love. He also wants you to tell people about His truth and bring glory to His name.



**Jesus invites Matthew to follow Him.**

**Look at Jesus' invitation to Matthew, the tax collector, in Matthew 9:9. Why is this so surprising?**

Tax collectors in the kingdom of Rome often took money from other people by force. So, tax collectors were hated in Israel. But Jesus invites this tax collector to follow Him. Jesus' invitation shows us that Matthew heard about Jesus and wished to follow Him with all his heart. When Jesus invites Matthew, Matthew is ready. Matthew is surprised that Jesus wants him to be one of His followers.

Deep in our hearts, we want more in life too. We want to live for something bigger than ourselves. That is why Jesus asks us to follow Him the same as Matthew.

**Think about what people have to give up to follow Jesus. Why, in the end, will it always be worth it?**

**PAUL: GOD'S CHOSEN LEADER (Acts 9:3–6, 10–20)**

When Paul accepts Jesus, Paul's whole life changes in every way. Jesus gives Paul a whole new future. Jesus also leads Paul into experiences that he never dreamed were possible. The Holy Spirit guides Paul and helps him to preach Bible truth to thousands of people living around the Mediterranean Sea. Paul's message changes the history of Christianity and the rest of human history too.

**Read Acts 9:3–6, 10–20. How do these verses show us that Jesus has a plan for Paul's life?**

Jesus often chooses people that we do not expect. Think about the two men filled with demons. Or the Samaritan woman at the well. Mary Magdalene. A tax collector. Fishermen. And now Paul, the man who attacks Christians! All these men and women are changed by God's mercy and love. Then Jesus sends them out to serve Him with joy in their hearts. They tell the story of everything that Jesus did in their lives. They never get tired of telling the story. What Jesus did for them is so wonderful that they must share it. They cannot stay silent.

**Compare Acts 28:28–31 and 2 Timothy 4:5–8. What do we see in these verses that shows us that Paul gives his whole life to serve Jesus?**

At the end of his life, Paul says, " 'God has sent his salvation [the Good News that Jesus saves sinners from the punishment of sin] to the non-Jewish people. They will listen [hear]!' " (Acts 28:28, ERV). The book of Acts says that Paul meets with anyone who visits him. Paul preaches the Good News to them (Acts 28:30, 31). At the end of his life, Paul tells Timothy to do the work of a preacher. Paul says about himself, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7, ICB).

Maybe our experience is not as exciting as Paul's. God invites us to work with Him anyway. Paul has many hard times in life (2 Corinthians 11:25–30). But Paul stays loyal to God. Paul's story is powerful. It shows what God can do with someone who gives his life fully to God.

**What has God asked you to do? Are you doing it?**



**Jesus often chooses people that we do not expect just as He chose the Samaritan woman.**

**WHAT LOVE ASKS OF US (John 21:15–19)**

Love always shows itself in what we do. Our love for Jesus causes us to do something for people who are lost. Paul tells the same thing to the church at Corinth: “the love of Christ puts us into action” (2 Corinthians 5:14, NLV). Christianity is not only about giving up bad things so that we can be saved. Jesus did not “give up” bad things in heaven so that He could be saved. He gave up good things so that He could save other people. Jesus does not invite us to give only our time, talents, and treasures to His cause. Jesus also invites us to give Him our lives.

One morning, Jesus met with His followers on the beach in front of the Sea of Galilee. There, Jesus told His followers all about love and what love asks of us.

**Read John 21:15–19. As we see from these verses, what question does Jesus ask Peter three times? What is Peter’s answer? Why does Jesus ask Peter this question three times?**



**Love causes us to help people in time of need.**

Peter rejected Jesus by his words three times. So, Jesus asks Peter for an answer of love from Peter’s own lips three times. Jesus does this in front of His followers to rebuild their trust in Peter and Peter’s trust in Him. Jesus wants Peter to believe that God forgives him. Also, Jesus wants Peter to see that God has work for him to do.

**Read John 21:15–19 again. This time pay special attention to Jesus’ answer to Peter’s love for Jesus. What does Jesus tell Peter to do?**

God’s love always takes action. Real love is more than a warm feeling and a nice idea. Real love is about giving yourself fully to someone. Love causes us to act. Love causes us to help people in need. Jesus says to Peter, “‘Take care of my lambs,’” (John 21:15, ERV). This is both a command and words of comfort. Jesus asks Peter to answer His love. Jesus also encourages Peter to believe that God wants him to continue to work for Him, even after Peter turned away from Jesus. Peter behaved as if he did not know Jesus. Worse, Jesus told Peter it would happen.

Why are we talking about this topic? Because you may have failed your Lord many times the same as Peter. The good news is that God forgives you. He is not done with you. He has work for you to do if you are willing to do it.

**LOVE'S PROMISE (John 21:18, 19)**

Jesus and Peter finish their conversation. They walk along the beach. As the waves come to shore, Jesus tells Peter how much it costs to be His follower. Jesus wants Peter to understand fully what he will experience if he accepts Jesus' invitation to " 'Take care of my lambs,' " (John 21:15, ERV).

**Read John 21:18, 19. What does Jesus tell Peter about how much it costs to follow Him? Why do you think Jesus shows something so surprising to Peter at this time?**

In John 21:18, 19, Jesus tells Peter how he will die. Peter's hands will be stretched on a cross. Why does Jesus tell Peter about his death before it happens? Jesus wants to give Peter a choice. Jesus offers Peter life's biggest joy: seeing people saved for God's kingdom. On the day of Pentecost, Peter will see thousands of people accept Jesus. Pentecost is the time when God pours His Spirit on His church after Jesus goes back to heaven. Peter will do miracles in Jesus' name. Peter also will give glory to God in front of many more thousands of people. Peter will have the everlasting joy of working with Jesus. But that reward will come with a price. Peter must give up his life. Jesus does not hide this truth from Peter. Peter now knows that he will give up anything that Jesus asks him to give.

**Read 1 John 3:16–18. What does John say that real love is? How do we show that our love is real?**

In heaven, we will feel that we did not do enough for Jesus. Jesus will give us far more in heaven than we ever gave Him in this life. That is why we should be happy to show our love for Jesus by our words and actions. We show God we love Him when we do not hold anything back from Him. God's love also helps us to share Bible truth with people and show them Jesus. Then we live out God's plan for our lives. Jesus says, " 'Now you know these things. So you will be blessed if you do them' " (John 13:17, NIV). Share God's truth and His love. Live your life for Him. When you give God glory, you will know real joy and lasting happiness.

**Make a picture in your mind of everlasting life with Jesus. How does that picture look? Share it with the class.**



**When you give God glory,  
you will know real joy and  
lasting happiness.**



**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “The leaders in charge of the church should find ways to include every church member in some part of God’s work. This has not been done enough in the past. The talents of everyone in the church should be used to serve God. Plans should be made and followed to do that. Very few people understand how much we as a church have lost because we have not followed this advice.

“The leaders in God’s cause must be wise as generals. They must make plans to move forward. They must study the work that can be done by church members for their friends and neighbors. God’s work on this earth cannot be finished until church members do the work that needs to be done. They must join with the pastors and church leaders.

“The work to save people includes personal work that we all must do. We must share with other people Bible truth. We must not wait for people to come to us. I wish I could find the right words to say to men and women to wake them up and cause them to work! We do not have much time left. We are standing on the border to everlasting life. We have no time to waste. Every second is important. Time is too precious to use it to please ourselves. Who will seek God? Who will get strength and power from God to be His loyal workers on this earth?

“In every church there are skills. These skills may be developed to become a wonderful help in God’s work. That will happen when our people use these skills in the right jobs. What we now need the most to build up our churches are workers who understand the talents that are in the church. These talents must be developed. We must educate ourselves to use our talents for God.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, pages 116, 117, adapted.



**“I wish I could find the right words to say to men and women to wake them up and cause them to work!”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What is the most important idea in the Ellen G. White quote above? How can developing our gifts and talents change the way we share Jesus with people? How can it make your church’s message about Jesus to other people stronger too?
- ② How is real love always shown? What are some examples of love that are not real?
- ③ Talk about the things that people give up for the Lord. What about people who lost their lives for their faith? What can you learn from these stories?

## INSIDE *Story*

by GLENN ERNFORD LIE

### **A WOMAN WHO HAD A BABY INSIDE HER BELLY FOR TWO YEARS**

Fanta Camara was excited when she saw the bump on her belly. But as the bump grew big, she started to feel sick. So she went to the hospital in Conakry, Guinea. A doctor examined her belly. "You aren't going to have a baby," he said.

Fanta didn't believe the doctor. She asked a nurse in her family to look at her. "There is a baby in your belly," she said. "You will have a baby!"

Fanta was happy but still sick. The family member wasn't sure how to help Fanta. So Fanta went to another hospital. The doctor there said, "You are not going to have a baby." Fanta visited a third hospital. "You are going to have a baby," the doctor said. But he didn't know how to help Fanta. As the weeks passed, Fanta felt worse. She could hardly walk.

Five months passed. Then a stranger showed up in her bedroom. He had a man's feet and legs. But he had a leopard's face and chest. Fanta was scared. "You will not have that child in your belly!" the stranger said. He turned and walked out the bedroom wall. Or at least it looked that way to Fanta.

The next night, the stranger again showed up in her bedroom. "You will not have that child in your belly," he said. Every night he visited Fanta and said the same awful words.

A year passed. Then two years. Fanta felt awful. Then she remembered Tranquille Fassinadouno. He was the only Christian in her neighborhood. So Fanta stayed away from him. But Fanta was in deep trouble. Tranquille was a Global Mission worker. He heard Fanta's story. Then he prayed and ate no food for three days. During that time, Tranquille asked God for wisdom.

Then Tranquille went to Fanta. He opened his Bible to Ephesians 6:12 and read, "Our fight is not with people. It is against the leaders and the powers and the spirits of darkness in this world [on this earth]. It is against the demon world [powers of darkness] that works in [against] the heavens [God's government]" (NLV).

Tranquille said, "All spirits who do not confess the name of Jesus Christ leave right now in the name of Jesus Christ." Then Tranquille turned to Fanta and said, "If you see that evil spirit again, you must command it to leave in Jesus' name."

That night, Fanta lay on her bed when the evil spirit showed up again. Before he said anything, she said, "Leave in the name of Jesus Christ." The evil spirit disappeared. It never came back again.

Three days later, Fanta's baby was born. It was a healthy baby girl. "I believe in Jesus now," Fanta said.



**"You will not have that child in your belly!" the stranger said.**



**Thank you for your 13th Sabbath gifts of money. They will help people in Guinea and in other places in West-Central Africa learn about Jesus. Fanta Camara is pictured above with her baby.**