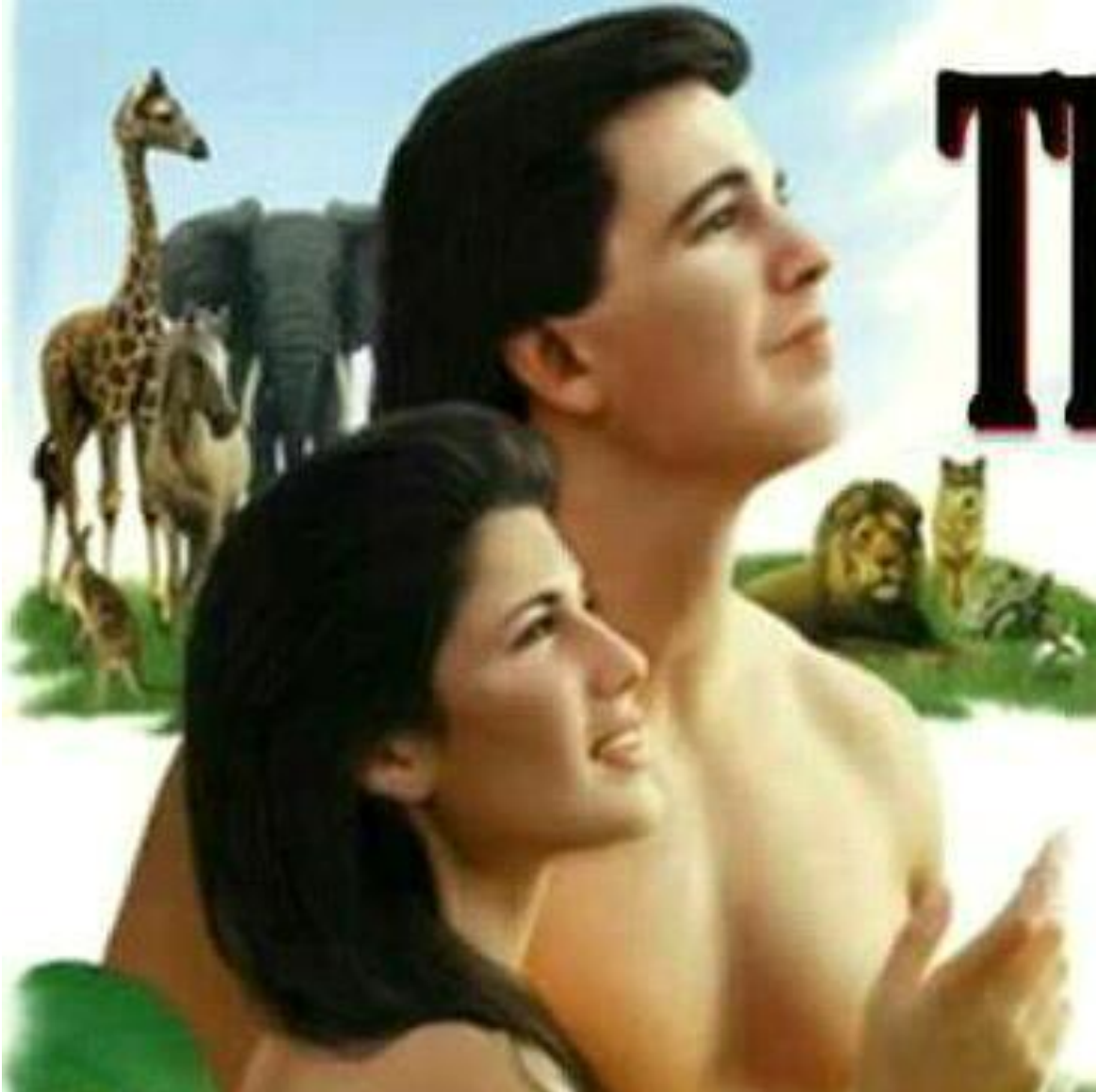


A Family Of Families



The Gospel In Relationships

Family Bible Study Guide For January - April 2017

Nurturing Department 2017

JKUSDA CHURCH

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Editorial Office

The Nurturing Department JKUSDA Church

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INTRODUCTION

Families in the family of God

*In response to the lawyer's question about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus said: " ' "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself " ' " (Matt. 22:37-39, NIV). Obviously, God cares about our relationships; otherwise, He would not have named loving others as the most important command besides loving Him. It's no coincidence Jesus linked these two commands: **Love for God cannot be manifested in any way other than love for others.** God created people as individuals with unique character traits that make them who they are. Yet, He created them also as social beings who enter into relationships with others. And nowhere is our relationship with others more important, more fraught with both temporal and eternal consequences, than in the family. Here so much of who we are, either for good or for ill, is determined. Though living as a Christian at home is crucial, it can be challenging, even harder than in public, where it is easier to put on façades. At home, generally, the masks come off. It is a lot easier to fool others than to fool those with whom you share the same table, the same rooms, the same bed day after day, year after year. **If you can be a Christian at home, you can be one anywhere.** Families fit into God's design as centers in which individuals experience intimate association with others and are prepared for the greatest intimacy of all—a relationship with God. In the family both children and adults may have a warm experience that reflects the Creator and that encourages them*

in loving discipleship. On the other hand, because of pseudolove or indifference, people may leave their home with emotional and spiritual problems that are often difficult to erase.

Just as our homes have the greatest potential to do the most good, they also can do the most harm. No wonder that the Bible says so much about family life. So much depends upon it. The wonder of our faith is the good news that God knows all about us. He sympathizes with our weaknesses and is full of compassion and longsuffering. Knowing this about Him, even experiencing for ourselves His love for us despite our faults, we do the same to others, especially those in our own family. Through family relationships God wants to show His love to the world.

As families learn to live together

according to the Word of God, His grace is diffused to all whose lives they touch, winsomely drawing others to Jesus. The family is meant to bring glory to God and blessings to humanity.

Though our families in JKUSDA can not replace the families in our homes we hope they will be a haven where the power of God's love draws diversity into oneness. Throughout this semester we want to impact the life of those around and within Juja with the message of Jesus Christ .

This study has been written in the sad recognition that for many, the haven of rest doesn't exist as it should in their families . Our goal, if nothing else, is through study of the Word to help homes and families around us be what God would have them to be: more loving, more secure in Christ.

Its our wish that throughout this semester you will bring happiness and Christ in the homes in Juja .

#JESUS IN JUJA

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families

1. *Family worships*—These should be age-appropriate for the family members in both time and content. Worships should reinforce God's

love, grace, and salvation, along with faith and hope. Each family member should have a role to play in these events. An established time for worship should be honored, with limited exceptions made.

2. *Bedtime routines*—These provide wonderful opportunities to focus attention on each family member. Affirmations of love and support will

become some of their most cherished memories.

3. *Eating together*—In this age of family grazing, the connections made during shared meals should not be underestimated.

4. *Vacations*—These also can help a family build community. It is important, however, that negative attitudes be left behind. Much family bonding can occur while hiking a mountain path, going on memorable camping trips, or during similar activities.

5. *Holidays*—Could it be that a family that celebrates together stays together? Traditional and cultural holidays are perfect times for family bonding.

6. *Sabbath observance*—In what special ways does your family begin and end Sabbath? Do you have special Friday-night suppers? Are Sabbath dinners shared with others in ways that make Sabbath more of a delight?

7. *Service*—Think of how you may have been blessed by easing the load another carries. How could your family make a statement

about your love for God by serving those with real needs?

Remember that *“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who*

desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' ”—Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, p. 143.

LESSON 1

A Family of Families

Memory Text: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:19, 20, NKJV).*

The Study at a Glance: Through our family, both in our households and in His church, God longs for us to experience His self-giving love. Maurice and Sara, newly baptized Adventists who lived in a crime-ridden area, told the pastor they wanted to move to a safer place, one closer to the church, so their two daughters could attend church school. With their permission the pastor shared their hopes with the congregation. Before long a member spotted an empty apartment not far from the church. It was just what the family had been hoping for, but their hope fell at the news of the large security deposit. Telephones rang, and by the next day donations by church members helped Maurice and Sara make the deposit and the first month's rent. Church members cleaned both apartments and moved them across town. Exhausted but exhilarated, Maurice stood before the church the next Sabbath and beamed with gratitude. A man of few words, he said only, “I'm so glad I have a family!”

Family Roots

Study the origin of the family (Gen. 2:18-25). What purpose for the family is evident in this account? What's the origin and purpose of families in our church ?

“ ‘It is not good for the man to be alone’ ” (Gen. 2:18, NIV).

Together, families fend off loneliness and provide for the needs of each person (compare Lev. 25:49; Ruth 2:20; Ps. 68:5, 6).

What deeper meaning of the family emerges from reflection on the nature and Personhood of God and the creation of humankind in His image? Gen. 1:26-28. Compare John 17:11, 21, 22; 1 John 4:8, 16.

Christ wants us to be one even as he is one with the father No wonder family becomes a major metaphor in the New Testament for the church, the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

Thought Questions

Since God calls us to commitment to Him in both our church and family experience, how can energy, time, and resources be fairly distributed between these two? What dangers exist for those who, so busy in their family commitments, neglect their work for God ?

A Variety of Families

Thought QUESTIONS

As we go out ministering we are likely to meet different types of families (divorced; widowed; never married; married, no children; retired; single parents; and others). Name other kinds of families you know . How are can we interact with this families and bring them to Jesus ?

Consider the various kinds of households in Bible times: Genesis

27:1–28:5; Ruth 1:22; 2:23; Jeremiah 16:2; Hosea 1:2, 3, 6, 8; 3:1-3. What others can you think of?

Isaac and Rebekah lived with their adult son, Jacob, and his married twin brother, Esau. The grieving widows Naomi and Ruth, bound together as mother and daughter-in-law, found refuge together. Jeremiah was single. Hosea parented his three children alone before he was reconciled to Gomer. Still other Bible families include the siblings Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, who had a home in Bethany where Jesus visited (John 11:1–3, 20); Aquila and Priscilla, married but apparently never had children (Acts 18:2, 18; 1 Cor. 16:19); and the family of grandmother Lois, her daughter Eunice, and grandson Timothy, in Lystra. Timothy's Greek father may have separated from the family as an unbeliever (Acts 16:1, 2 Tim. 1:5; compare 1 Cor 7:15).

Acceptance of different family types.

That God loved and cared about such diverse families is a source of abundant encouragement in our world today. It should also lead to appreciation of widely varied family types within His church and the world at large.

What core values for family living are continually present in Scripture? Gen. 2:24, 25; Exod. 20:14; Lev. 18:22; Prov. 5:18–20; Matt. 19:6; Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 7:3–5; Heb. 13:4.

As we go out ministering we are likely to encounter people who don't believe in this core values . How are we to handle such cases ?

Is there anyone in your church/neighborhood who is living in a household different from your own? How can you show this person, or such people, appreciation and support?

One Is a Whole Number

Consider the circumstances of these single adults. In what ways did they contribute to the cause of God? Elijah (1 Kings 17:1–2 Kings 2:11); Anna (Luke 2:36-38); John the Baptist (Matt. 11:7-11); Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:8, 9). What other Bible characters remained single?

In Him who draws everyone to Himself, all are complete (Col. 2:10). Who are the single people in your church/neighborhood? How can you relate to them in a positive manner, one that affirms them in their present circumstances?

Thought Question

How is your experience of family at church similar to or different from your present home or the one in which you grew up?

Identify a Christian quality of your current home that could make a difference in life at your church. What one quality of life at church would you like to bring home?

Life-Application Approach

“A. B. Davidson tells how he was in lodgings in a strange city. He was lonely. He used to walk the streets at evening time. Sometimes through an uncurtained window he would see a family sitting round the table or the fire in happy fellowship; then the curtain would be drawn and he would feel shut out, and lonely in the dark.”—William Barclay

Thought Questions:

1 Years ago, in some Adventist communities that tended to be more sheltered from contact with the world, the word outsider could be heard often: “He’s marrying an outsider” or “There were four outsiders

in church today!” Since then, the politically correct church of today is careful not to air such negative comments, but prejudice continues to have a stronghold in more subtle ways.

Identify some of them. What measures can your church take to steer away from such prejudices?

2 The church is oftentimes comprised of a mixture of people culture, ages, and interests. How does one cope with these differences and find ministries and activities that cross these barriers?

3 How can we best relate to the new members who join our church and make them feel loved and part of the congregation too?

Application Question:

The lesson presents the church as the family of families. How far can you take this analogy or comparison? Identify some positive qualities of a human family that can be replicated by the church family. What are the negative qualities of the human family that also can be seen in the church family? How should we deal with them?

Further Study:

Ellen G. White, “The Eden Home a Pattern,” *The Adventist Home*, pp. 25–28; “Who Are My Brethren?” *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 321–327.

Untidy living rooms. “The churches of the Revelation show us that churches are not Victorian parlors where everything is always picked up and ready for guests. They are messy family rooms. Entering a person’s house unexpectedly, we are sometimes met with a barrage of apologies. St. John does not apologize. Things are out of order, to be sure, but that is what happens to churches that are lived in. They are not show rooms. They are living rooms, and if the persons living in them are sinners, there are going to be clothes scattered about, hand-prints on the woodwork, and mud on the carpet. For as long as Jesus

insists on calling sinners and not the righteous to repentance—and there is no indication as yet that he has changed his policy in that regard—churches are going to be an embarrassment to the fastidious and an affront to the upright.”—Eugene H. Peterson, Living the Message

Discussion Questions:

1 As a family, discuss how the church should relate to those who are living in a family relationship that goes against the Scriptures. How do we show them Christ’s love and acceptance in a way that doesn’t condone their actions?

2 For singles to gain a sense of wholeness and belonging can be difficult in a culture that holds up marriage as the standard. What can you as a family do to reach out to singles in your own church and neighborhood and show them they are a valued part of the church family?

LESSON 2

TRAIN UP A CHILD ...



Memory Text: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4, NIV).

The STUDY at a Glance: Within the pages of His Word, God has unfolded His plans and purposes for families.

Visitors to a science theater were given special eyeglasses. In the darkened room the group saw dramatic nature scenes on a large screen. First, they looked at the pictures without the glasses; afterward, they put the glasses on, and when they did, a photo of an orchard in full bloom brought gasps from the crowd: "Oh, how magnificent!" "What a difference!" It seemed as if the branches stuck out from the screen over their heads. Like these three-dimensional glasses, a change

of perspective in looking at Scripture can help us see and appreciate old truths in fresh ways. This week we will put on family glasses and view the different ways in which God in His Word has revealed truths about families and family living and how this families are the building blocks of church evangelism . This perspective transforms the Bible into a contemporary textbook for life in our homes, as well as in the church, the household of faith.

Social Commandments

One way in which Scripture presents its message on family life is through relational directives. The las six commandment statements apply broadly to all relationships; some address neighborliness and friendship; while others are given for husbands, wives, parents, and children.

What do these commandments teach us about the kinds of “relational directives” we have been given by the Lord?

How can our lives be living sermons to our friends and neighbors in regard to this commandments ?

Thought story

Years ago our family took a canoe journey down the Delaware River in the eastern United States. Our trip was scheduled for ten miles, and along those miles we were expecting to see beautiful scenery and exciting wildlife while the current carried us lazily along. But we were unprepared for a 25-mile-per-hour headwind, and we had no idea how important it was to steer the canoe. What

transpired was often comical, sometimes frightening, and usually just hard work. We encountered rapids, low-hanging tree limbs that drew us like magnets into their clutches, and constant wind. With a considerable sense of accomplishment, we finally reached our goal; but the journey was not what we had expected.

Thought Question

while witnessing and during evangelism we will encounter with families which have gone through tough times which might have led to one problem or another in the family . How best can we bring back hope to this families and help them believe and trust God again?

Witnessing

Twenty-six-year-old Todd, unchurched and single, regarded family life as a necessary evil for the biological perpetuation of the species. His own family background had been full of strife, repression, and wounded love. When he started experimentally attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Todd noticed that some of the families there were genuinely happy. He observed

husbands and wives treat each other kindly and address their children with loving respect, not as brats and nuisances who constantly needed to be punished and held in check. This was a rev-

elation to Todd. He accepted invitations to several Adventist homes where he had a chance to observe the family dynamics and was amazed by how richly gratifying home life could be. If

it had not been for this practical, living demonstration of Christianity, Todd probably would not have joined the church, as he did one year later, and eventually married to raise a family, who joyfully shares the same faith and spiritual beliefs.

“The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This

will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart.”—Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home, pp. 31, 32.

Ask yourself, whether married or single: What can I do to make my home life a more effective witness in my community?

Principles of Relationships

How do you think principles in families have been affected by sin? What difference does the gospel make? Compare Matthew 12:34, 35 with Philipians 2:2-11 as you think about your answer.

Like an infectious computer virus, sin corrupts the core of human beings, rendering them self-centered and fouling the functioning of all their physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual processes. The gospel puts people right with God and with one another through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Proverbs 22:6 urges us to “train up a child in the way he should go.” “What is meant by train up? . . . The original root word is the term for ‘the palate, the roof of the mouth, the gums.’ In verb form, it is the term used for breaking and bringing into submission a wild horse by a rope in the mouth. “The term was also used in the days of Solomon to describe the action of a midwife who, soon after helping deliver a child, would dip her finger into the juice of chewed or crushed dates, reach into the mouth of the infant, and massage the gums and the palate within the mouth so as to create a sensation of sucking, a sense of taste. The juice was also believed to be a cleansing agent in the newborn’s mouth. Then she would place the child in its mother’s arms to begin feeding from the mother’s breast. So it is

the word used to describe 'developing a thirst.' ”

A paraphrase of Proverbs 22:6 could read: “Develop in a child a thirst for the Lord, and when he is grown he will not depart from Him!”

Thought Question

How best can we train up our spiritual children in the way they should go so that when they 'are grown up' they will not depart from it ?

Application Question:

Evaluate the failed ministries of your church. Think of reasons why they did not succeed. Next, read the icebreaker and compare the church with the midwife. Is your church in the business of training up people for God? Come up with at least four different ways you can create a thirst for the Lord in your community.

LESSON 3

Living With Lambs- Follow-up activities



Memory Text: "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young" (Isaiah 40:11, NIV).

Having spiritual Children, indeed, is a gift from God; outside of life itself (both temporal and eternal), they are the most wonderful of all gifts. Yet, the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility upon those who receive the gift. Thus, a precious opportunity, and solemn calling, is open to all of us as 'parents' to share with our 'children' the simple good news of Jesus' love and life-giving power.

Thought questions

1 have you ever been to mission ?

2 besides the daily visitation how many have ever done follow-up visit to those interested in knowing the truth ?

3 what about after mission , do we participate in follow-up activities on those whom we baptized ?

4 what are the possible forms of follow-up activities ?

5 what do you think is the important of follow up on the newly converted ?

(assume you were newly converted would you love to be visited by church members ?

The newly converted to share their experiences immediately after joining the faith)

THINK

think of everything (and everyone as the lords)

Study Psalms 50:10-12; 127:3; Isaiah 43:1, 7; and 1 Peter 2:9

What do these texts tell us about our responsibility and obligations toward our spiritual children?

Everything is God's by right of creation and by redemption, as well.

Though Satan claimed to be the rightful ruler of this planet after sin,

God reclaimed His rulership of the world through Christ. This

reclaiming includes everyone. As stewards we must always

remember whose children the people really are. This is certainly

one case where no one wants to be deemed an "unjust steward" (Luke 16:8).

THOUGHT QUESTION

are you acting a faithful steward in evangelism ?

When you think of spiritual parenting as a unique stewardship, what insights

come to mind? Why is this kind of stewardship different from every other kind? What might faithful stewardship of spiritual children mean? 1 Cor. 4:2.

Lessons From the Heavenly Parent

The Bible describes God as a Parent. Jesus called God “Father” and introduced Him in winsome ways (Matt. 5:16; 6:9, 14, 15, 18). God wants to be Father to each of us personally. This picture of God complements the view of those who grew up in loving homes, while those who had difficulty relating to a parent may have trouble trusting Him. All who come to God, however, are treated with the care that only this Parent, the most attached and nurturing of all fathers, can give. Before we parent our children, we must be parented by Him.

Question

1 how can we support (demonstrations of warmth, affection, and sense of belonging) our new converts? Compare with the biblical concepts of Mic. 6:8

2 taking the imagery of little children, What was Christ’s warning to those who would offend children or cause them to sin? Matt. 18:5, 6; Mark 9:42.

Further Study:

Younger members of the Lord’s family.

“Your children are the younger members of the Lord’s family—brothers and sisters entrusted to your care by your heavenly Father for you to train and educate for heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 251.

lesson 4

Disciples Making Disciples



Memory Text: “ ‘All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children’ ” (Isaiah 54:13, NKJV).

Like an Olympic runner passing a torch, Moses sought to put faith in the hands of those who followed him.

A disciple is one who follows his master’s teaching (John 8:31). This kind of disciple is formed by sharing the truths of Christ so another person absorbs them. Elsewhere, Jesus defined disciples as individuals who know how to love others (John 13:35). Making disciples by this definition means helping people become the kind of individuals who love God and love people.

Question

1 Jesus commissioned His followers to go everywhere and make disciples. In what way does His teaching about making disciples and being disciples help define the mission of the Christian home? Matt. 28:18, 19; John 8:31; 13:35; compare Deut. 6:6-9.

2 What is the prerequisite for Christians before attempting to guide others spiritually? Deut. 6:5, 6; compare Deut. 6:18.

Witnessing

Discipling comes about through the intimate contact of mind with mind and the daily example that teachers and parents set before those they wish to instruct. Children note everything that adults do. They observe our facial expressions, tones of voice, style and tempo of movement, as well as the things we say and the priorities that engage our attention. We are all living epistles, but the question to be settled is What content may be read in the scroll of our lives?

Thought Story

Mary Jane grew up in a home where worships were exploited as a platform for her father to assert his authority as the head of the house. He lengthily catechized Mary Jane and her siblings to cease being rebellious and always to obey their father. He assured them that they were all on the path to perdition, because they did not adequately conform to his requirements. Mary Jane and her brothers and sisters actually did strive to do what was right, but their performance always fell short of their father's burdensome expectations and inquisitorial probes. As a teenager Mary Jane determined that when she became a parent, she would not turn

family worship into a judicial inquest. It took her many years to discover how much God loves His children and seeks to impart His joy to them and how different His discipline is from the censure and condemnation that was wrapped about her childhood like a shroud.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Nineteenth-century Scottish preacher Horatius

Bonar asked 253 Christian friends how old they were when they were converted. Here's what he discovered:

Under 20 years of age—138

Between 20 and 30—85

Between 30 and 40—22

Between 40 and 50—4

Between 50 and 60—3

Between 60 and 70—1

Over 70—0

(Daily Bread [<http://www.christianglobe.com/Illustrations/theDetails.asp?whichOne=c&whichFile=children>]).

Who do you think are the best age bracket to reach out ?

Thought Question:

A 35-year-old, third-generation, Seventh-day Adventist single man unburdened his heart to a female friend one day. He said, "I'm an Adventist only by habit. I believe in God. I read my Bible and pray every day. Yet, I don't know who Jesus really is. Where do I find that intimate relationship you have with Jesus?" While his friend searched for words of consolation, she thought of her mother, her grandfather, and her junior Sabbath School teacher, who showed her the real Jesus. She realized how fortunate she was to have met Jesus when she was younger.

Discuss why your church loses church members. Identify discipleship programs and methods for the under-twenty five-age-group members of your church.

Further study

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NKJV).

Keeping the heart in heaven.

“Christians should be careful that they keep the heart with all diligence. They should cultivate a love for meditation, and cherish a spirit of devotion. Many seem to begrudge moments spent in meditation, and the searching of the Scriptures, and prayer, as though the time thus occupied was lost. I wish you could all view these things in the light God would have you; for you would then make the kingdom of heaven of the first importance. To keep your heart in heaven will give vigor to all your graces, and put life into all your duties. To discipline the mind to dwell upon heavenly things, will put life and earnestness into all our endeavors. . . . We are dwarfs in spiritual attainments. . . . [Eph. 4:13].”—Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1157.

Lesson 5

Religion In The Work Place

Memory Text: "The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out" (Proverbs 10:9, NIV).

In the aftermath of a ferry disaster in 1987 near Belgium, the experts faced serious problems in identifying all the victims. They found that one of them had a double identity; he had lived for years under one name in England and under another name in France. Just imagine how difficult it must have been for this man to keep those two lives, with two families and two sets of friends, in two different countries, totally separate.

This kind of situation does not, of course, occur very often. But in many ways people can live double or even multiple lives. That goes for Christians too. We must make sure not to compartmentalize our life into totally different spheres, in which we are quite different persons in different places. We must be the same kind of person in the workplace as we are at home or in church, operating with the same set of Christian values. This week we'll take a look at some Bible principles on how we as Christians should behave in the workplace.

"Whatsoever Thy Hand Findeth ."

(Eccles. 9:10).

Whether in the poignant paintings of Vincent Van Gogh, who tried to capture the hardship of coal miners toiling at their task, or in some of the

beautiful prose of Leo Tolstoy, who all but romanticized the toil of peas-

ants in the field, human beings have sought to capture, in one way or another, the inescapable fact of work. With rare exceptions, most people

have worked in one capacity or another. Many people, in fact, spend a great deal of their time working. The big question for Christians, then, is

What kind of relationships should we have in the workplace?

Thought Question.

What kind of relationships should we have at school and with classmates?

What manner of conversation should we engage in with our friends moreso in school ?

Is it hard or easy to witness to our friends ? Why do you say so ? (be honest while answering this question)

Read Ecclesiastes 9:10. What is this text telling us that could give us a principle for the Christian on the job?

One thing most of us have learned, or at least should have learned, is that if we profess to be Christians, people will watch us. As Christians, we make some pretty bold claims, claims about having a new life in Christ, about having a peace that passes all understanding, about striving

for a higher moral ideal. We are witnesses, in one way or another (Isa. 43:10, 1 Cor 4:9, 2 Cor 3:2). Thus, think for a moment: Which would give a better witness to your faith: if you were a hard, diligent, honest worker who did not only what was expected of you but perhaps even more, or if you were a slacker—cutting corners, trying to get away with as much as you could? The answer, of course, is obvious. Sure, there are

all sorts of circumstances that can, at times, make it difficult for us to be good witnesses at work, at school but, as a rule, a Christian should be a reliable, honest worker doing what he or she is paid for, knowing the true reward is not here but in a new heaven and a new earth. In this context, Ellen White wrote of Christ's early years: "He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character. By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable. . . . All should find some-thing to do that will be beneficial to themselves and helpful to others. God appointed work as a blessing, and only the diligent worker finds the true glory and joy of life."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

Christian Values in the Workplace

Buying a secondhand car is often considered a rather hazardous adventure. The car may be beautifully cleaned and polished, but what dark secrets are hidden under the hood? Can you trust the odometer? It is said that one should never buy a car from, or sell a car to, a friend, since this may well put the friendship in jeopardy. This should not apply to Christians. Our business deals must be above reproach, whether we privately sell our car or whether we trade professionally. Indeed, whatever work or business we are in and whatever level at which we work, we should be honest, honorable, and fair, because that is what our God tells us to be.

Look up the following texts. What is each one saying, and what are their messages for Christians in the workplace? Lev. 19:35, 36; Prov. 10:17; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5.

Whether employer or employee or student , as a Christian we need to be honest and fair with either our employer or employees. The only thing worse than employees who abuse their work situation by being dishonest are employers who are dishonest with those under their supervision.

Read again Leviticus 19:35, 36. What motivation is given for honesty in business dealing?

Because we are Christians, our concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, aren't based merely on the fluctuating whims of culture and time, which change from culture to culture and from time to time; rather, they are based on the eternal God, who never changes (James 1:17). Thus, we should do what is right and honest, because those things that are right and honest are rooted in God, our Creator and Redeemer. We shouldn't manifest honesty, integrity, and fairness only when they suit us, when they work to our advantage; rather, they should be foundational principles that underlie all we do as Christians, whether at home or in the workplace or in school .

DISCIPLINE

Read Proverbs 16:32, 10:1, and 12:1 carefully and prayerfully. What do these texts teach us regarding the importance of discipline and correction?

Whether it is the army or a school or a factory or whether we talk about the home or the church, discipline is essential. The issue of discipline is a coin with two sides. Most of us will, at least from time to time, have to discipline others: children, co-workers, or church members. We must learn how to do this with consistency, tact, justice, and compassion. But we must also be receptive to discipline and learn how to accept counsel, direction, and, if necessary, correction all in a mature and constructive manner. As Christians in the workplace, we must learn

not only to give discipline and correction but to receive it, as well.

We have all through the Bible, particularly in the Gospels, examples of Jesus either forgiving offenders (John 8:4-11) or teaching us the principles of forgiveness (Matt. 18:21, 22; Luke 15:11-32). How helpful are these texts for a Christian Student who is dealing with a troublesome students? Do these texts, though, imply that no discipline or correction should be administered, or are they, instead, teaching a principle that could, in the right context, be applied in the workplace?

At the same time, a Christian student could believe he or she has been treated unfairly by his or her friend or lecturer. Jesus, however, expressed some powerful words regarding the attitude of those who are treated unfairly (Matt. 5:38-42).

Seeing Potential in Others (Acts 15:36-41, 2 Tim. 4:11).

Unfortunately, we do not always look for the best in others. We

often tend to see the things others cannot do rather than the things they could do if properly trained and challenged to do so! In our relationships with fellow students , we need to build on one another's strengths rather than to focus primarily on one another's weaknesses.

Thought questions .

Do we have friends whom we think cannot be converted ?

Is it right to have friends who do not belong to our faith ? If yes how should we relate with them ?

What kind of people did Christ choose as His disciples? What does that teach us? Matt. 4:18 -22, 9:9, Luke 5:1 -11.

It has often been remarked that very few of us would have chosen these kind of men as our closest co-workers. But Christ saw the potential in some uneducated fishermen, as well as in an unpopular tax collector, and He challenged them to follow Him and work with Him. They received three years of intensive training and then went out into the world. Jesus discovered them and recognized a potential in these men that few of us would have detected.

Paul had a sharp disagreement with Barnabas about John Mark's suitability for a leading role in the work of the church. Barnabas believed there was potential in John Mark, while Paul pointed to John Mark's weakness in the past. See Acts 15:36 -41, 2 Tim. 4:11. What lessons are here for us (in the context of today's study)?

When we hear a sermon on these passages, there usually is sharp criticism for Paul and praise for Barnabas. However, we owe it to Paul

to put ourselves for a moment in his shoes. John Mark deserted and left Paul and Barnabas when they reached Pamphylia on their first missionary journey, even before the task was completed. It stands to reason that Paul did not want to run the risk that this would happen again.

In our day and age, we tend to argue as Paul did. If we have a choice, we do not continue with someone who has let us down at a crucial moment. Yet, on the other hand, how many of us know people who never again faltered when given a second chance to prove themselves? Maybe we ourselves have been such a person.

Dwelling on the lesson for today, ask yourself, Have I too quickly written off someone who has failed me in the past, either in the workplace, school or in any other situation?

If you have taken advantage in your business dealings, which the Lord calls injustice, this must be adjusted before you can be honest and righteous in the sight of God. These things need to be corrected by our people everywhere. . . . When you take up this work of readjustment and getting right with God, angels of heaven will cooperate with you, giving you discernment to see where you have viewed matters in a wrong light....

"The Lord can not bless the men who corrupt themselves by unjust business dealings, either with their brethren or with worldlings. And those who do such things lose their spirituality; they grow cold and formal and selfish. They gloss over their past mistakes by theories of their own invention that are opposed to the principles of the Word of God."—Ellen G. White, *This Day With God*, p. 343.

Discussion Questions:

- Putting aside the obvious things that involve outright crime

or vice, are there certain respectable jobs that Christians, in good conscience, cannot do? If so, what are they, and why should a Christian in good conscience not do these kinds of work?

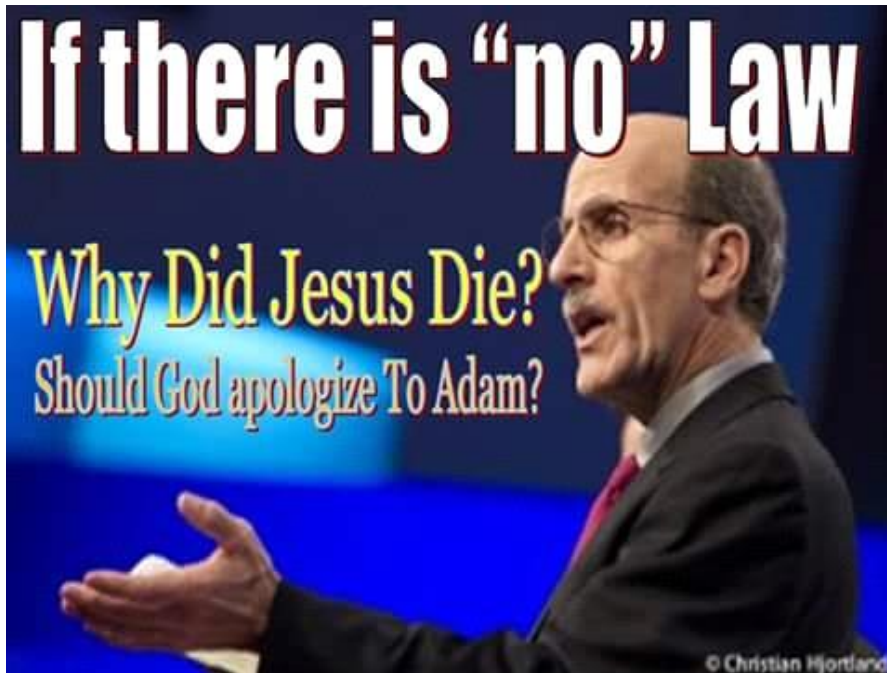
- Suppose your boss asked you to work on Sabbath; you said you couldn't but knew someone else in the office who would take your place. Suppose, however, your boss asked you to steal or lie, and you said you couldn't but knew someone else in the office who would take your place. What, if any, is the difference between the two situations?

Summary

As Christians, we bring our religion with us as we enter the workplace. Though there are usually limits to the amount of open discussion about religious subjects that can take place, we must still operate only with Christian values. Working together with others in a positive spirit is high on our agenda. Absolute honesty and integrity—as well as love, compassion, and justice—will characterize our conduct. And while we seek to display these values ourselves, we will also try to bring out the best in others and do what we can to make them realize their full potential.

Lesson 6

Christ's Other Sheep



Memory Text: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16, NIV).

However committed we should be to our message, we mustn't read more into it than is there, such as the belief that we alone as Seventh-day Adventists are saved. That view has not, nor has ever been, the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: "We recognize those agencies that lift up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world, and we hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ."—General Conference Working Policy (1999-2000), p. 494, Policy O 100, art. 1.

The question for us this week is How should we relate to these other

Christians, those who, for all we know, have been redeemed by the blood of Christ?

The study at a Glance: If you don't have to be an Adventist to be saved, why should we seek to reach other Christians with our beliefs? What advantages does our faith give us over those who might be Christians but in another denomination? How should we relate to other Christians?

Read John 10:16. What point was Jesus making here? (Keep in mind to whom He was speaking.) What principle can we, today, pull from His words, especially in the basic context of today's lesson?

For any of us to proclaim dogmatically who is or is not saved is to play God. It is to take prerogatives that belong only to Him. The Lord alone knows the heart; the Lord alone can judge motives; the Lord alone knows those who are His. As Seventh-day Adventists, we are called to preach our message to the world; we are not called to pass judgment upon who is or is not saved.

"God has children, many of them, in the Protestant churches, and a large number in the Catholic churches, who are more true to obey the light and to do [to] the very best of their knowledge than a large number among Sabbathkeeping Adventists who do not walk in the light."—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 3, p. 386.

What are the following texts saying that help reinforce the point the Lord made in John 10:16?

Mark 9:38-40

Acts 10:35

2 Tim. 2:19

The fact is that, all over the world, the Lord has His faithful people, those who are living in accordance with all the light they have. Our job, in a sense, is to give them more light, to lead them into light that points more directly to Jesus Christ and the events surrounding His return. All people, no matter of what faith, need to hear what we have to say. How people respond is, basically, between them and God. All we can do is preach, teach, and reveal to people in our lives the love and grace of God.

If you don't have to be an Adventist to be saved, then what's the purpose of trying to evangelize? Keep in mind Revelation 14:12 as you answer.

PRESENT TRUTH

Read 2 Peter 1:12. What insights does that, though expressed in a context different from ours today, give us regarding our Seventh-day Adventist message and the need for us to spread it around the world?

The fact remains that no one else is preaching what we as Seventh-day Adventists are preaching. And this point becomes important, especially in the context of the last days, when the whole world is to be divided into those who fit the description in Revelation 14:12 and those who don't.

Read Revelation 14:1-12. What's at stake here?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been called to preach to everyone the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. Christ's other sheep

need to know the things we know; they need to understand how the deep issues in the great controversy between Christ and Satan are going to be manifested at the close of time. We have been called to point these people not only to the texts that make prominent the "faith of Jesus" but

to the "commandments of God," with the special emphasis on the fourth commandment. Again, because we don't know the hearts of any-

one, we must tell everyone—"faithful Christians" in other denominations—the present-truth message as found in Revelation 14. They need to know what we know, especially as we near the closing crisis.

Read Revelation 18:4. Whom is the Lord calling out of Babylon, and why? How does this text help us better understand how we are to relate to faithful Christians of other denominations?

Lesson 7

The Adventist Difference



However important the issues surrounding the mark of the beast (as depicted in Revelation 14), our message isn't just limited to warnings

about end-time persecution. There's so much we have been given that can be a blessing in a very practical and personal way now. That's why we must share it, even with Christians of other denominations.

Below are some texts that are tied in with our message. Write down some of the benefits we have, here and now, from understanding these important truths:

Exod. 20:8-11

Eccles. 9:10

Mal. 3:8-10

Rom. 8:34; Heb. 8:1, 2

1 Cor 6:19

Though, of course, some of these truths are understood, to some degree, by various Christians, we alone have them tied nicely into a complete package. And, indeed, these special Adventist truths don't depict mere marginal differences with other Christians. They represent important biblical concepts, and people who do not know about them miss out on something that can make a major difference in their Christian experience. The Adventist message helps us to know where we are in human history. It unveils the great-controversy perspective, which shows us the larger picture of what God is doing for our rebellious planet. It tells us about the ongoing heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ and the hope He presents for us as erring sinners.

The Adventist message also helps us to follow through on our commitment to Christ in very concrete ways: in finding physical and spiritual rest on God's holy day, in living a life of faithful stewardship of all that has been entrusted to us, and in learning how to take care of

our bodies while we're still in this mortal clay.

Thought Question

If asked by a Christian of another denomination how the Adventist faith is different from what most other evangelical Christians believe, what would you say?

Adventist difference continued .

Just because someone is a Christian doesn't mean there's no more truth for him or her to learn. On the contrary. Many of Paul's letters were

written to Christians, often on the assumption that these people already

knew the Lord and were already in the faith. Indeed, most of the New Testament was written to those already in the faith. Nevertheless, that didn't stop Paul (and the others) from giving the churches more light.

Read Romans 1:1-7, Galatians 1:1-5, Ephesians 1:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. How do these texts help affirm the above paragraph?

As we relate to other Christians, we must remember: The issue isn't that we judge who's saved and who isn't (remember the Ellen White quote in the earlier section); rather, the issue is, Do we have something to say, not just to the world at large but to other Christians? The answer, of course, is that we most definitely do.

For instance, millions of Christians believe the dead go right to heaven or right to hell immediately at death. Others believe in purgatory, where the dead are purged from worldliness before entering into heaven. Most of these people have no protection, therefore, against spiritualism of any kind, and who knows how many fear that right now some loved ones are suffering the flames of eternal torment?

Others believe final events will unfold with a massive Mideast war,

in which some future antichrist power will make a pact with the Jews in Israel, an event that will begin a seven-year tribulation period, before which all true Christians are taken to heaven. Most who believe this way have no concept as to how final events regarding Rome, America, and the issue of the Sabbath will unfold.

All over the world, many Christians have no knowledge of health principles; thus, they eat, drink, and live like so much of the non-Christian world.

Millions of others believe salvation can be found in Jesus only through the mediation of their church body and that they must perform various works in order for the merits of Christ to be applied to them. Most of the Christian world totally ignore not just the seventh-day Sabbath but the whole concept of a serious rest day. Not only do they miss out on the spiritual blessings of the Sabbath but they also miss out on the physical renewal that Sabbath keeping offers.

What other things do we as Seventh-day Adventists teach that could be a blessing, even now, to other Christians?

Love One Another

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35).

Read the above quote, the words of Jesus. How are all to know who are Christ's disciples? How well have His disciples followed that command?

There's no question: Christians are to show their love to one

another. Sadly, that has hardly been the case. History is filled with examples not just of hatred between different churches but of violence, as well.

Whatever the immediate context of Christ's words, we can hardly believe they meant we were to love only those of our own denomination, whatever that denomination or church body happens to be. Love should know no denominational boundaries and certainly not be limited only to those who know the truth. Indeed, there's no more powerful wit-

ness for truth than the love compelled and generated by that truth. Of course, loving someone isn't the same as agreeing to his or her beliefs; rather, it's acknowledging the value of this person in the sight of God and the commonality we have as followers of Jesus, however different our expressions might at the present time be.

As Seventh-day Adventists, with the understanding we have been given of God's love for us, particularly as revealed in the context of present truth, we should be the most loving of all Christians. And that's because to whom much has been given much is expected, and because we have been given much, we should give much, not just to the world at large but to our brothers and sisters in other churches, as well. And nothing we can give means anything without love.

Examine your own relationship with Christians in other churches. Do you look down on them? Do you see anything in them that you could learn from them? Do you feel a need to tell them what we know? Based on what we've studied this week, what changes, if any, in your attitude toward them should you make?

Further Study:

Ellen G. White has a lot to say about our attitude to other Christians. See, for instance, *Evangelism*, section 17,

"Laboring for Special Classes," pp. 552–586.

"Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock." —Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 78.

"You may have opportunity to speak in other churches. In improving these opportunities, remember the words of the Saviour, 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.' Do not arouse the malignity of the enemy by making denunciatory speeches. Thus you will close doors against the entrance of truth. Clear-cut messages are to be borne. But guard against arousing antagonism. There are many souls to be saved. Restrain all harsh expressions. In word and deed be wise unto salvation, representing Christ to all with whom you come in contact. Let all see that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace and good will to men. Wonderful are the results we shall see if we enter into the work imbued with the Spirit of Christ. Help will come in our necessity if we carry the work forward in righteousness, mercy, and love. Truth will triumph, and bear away the victory." —Ellen G. White, Evangelism, pp. 563, 564.

Discussion Questions:

. Imagine that you are given the pulpit in another church; it will be your only opportunity to preach there. What would you say, what wouldn't you say, and why?

- Is it wrong to worship with Christians in their church on Sunday, or not? Justify your answer.*

Lesson 8

How to Relate to Non-Christians

Memory Text: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NIV).

many people today no longer want to hear about absolute truth. The various religions, including the Christian faith, are seen as equally valid ways to reach the beyond. Many claim that, in essence, we all worship the same God—we simply have different historically and culturally conditioned ways of doing so. Everyone should be allowed to have his or her own truth. And no belief system should claim superiority over another.

As Christians, of course, we reject that concept. The very nature of our Christianity demands we do. We maintain that the religion of Christ is unique and that we must continue to call people everywhere to become His disciples.

The question, then, remains for us: How should we relate to those who are not of the Christian faith? This week we look at some broad principles regarding this important topic.

The study at a Glance: Why, as Christians, must we reject the notion that all religions are valid? How should we treat non-Christians? What's the best way to witness to them? Why should we witness to them? To whom does the three angels' messages go?

Incurably Religious

All through human history, in almost every culture, in every age,

even in the most adverse and trying conditions, humans have had belief in some sort of god or gods. Through the centuries the question has been asked: Where does this belief come from? Was religion "invented" or "discovered"? Does humanity's belief in God originate in humanity itself, as a projection of some inner need? Has humankind always been religious? And if so, why so?

As Christians, we believe that religion originated with God, who has revealed Himself to us in various ways, the greatest revelation being that of Jesus Christ coming in the flesh, where He revealed to us the love and self-sacrificing character of the Lord.

Not everyone, though, has heard or known the good news of the love and character of our Lord. And yet, God has not forsaken these people, either. Remember, at the Cross, Christ died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2); His death, by default, excluded no one (John 3:16); He suffered death for every person (Heb. 2:9). No one was left out, not even those who have never heard, nor will ever hear, of Christ's death, at least in this life. Why would the Lord die in their behalf if they weren't, somehow, offered the option of salvation?

Read Romans 1:18-20, 2:14-16. What do these texts tell us about those who haven't heard directly about Jesus and the salvation He offers? Are they still accountable to God, and, if so, why?

Those who consciously turn their backs on God do so at their eternal risk, that's for certain. But many have always lived in darkness through no fault of their own. Yet, even these people have had a limited revelation of God and, thus, will be held responsible only for what they knew in their deepest of hearts.

The Universal Claims

Read John 14:6. What is Jesus saying? Why would many people, especially in today's world, find such words so hard to accept?

The religion of the Bible knows nothing of the notion of relativism, of each person seeking his or her own version of truth. There is only one God, one Creator, one Redeemer, one Lawgiver, and one means of salvation. Given the very nature of what we believe as Christians—that all the world is fallen into sin and that at the Cross Jesus Christ bore the sins of all people upon Himself—it's hard to see how there can be different truths for different folk. The very claims of the Bible regarding Creation, Redemption, sin, are universal, encompassing every human being. Given these claims, then, it's not realistic to assume that every other spiritual or religious path is valid, as long as those who are on these paths act from a sincere and loving heart.

Look up the following texts. What point do they make about the universality of the claims of the Bible? Gen. 1:1, Rom. 3:23, 5:12, Heb. 2:9, Rev. 20:13.

What all this means, then, is that we, as Christians, should preach to non-Christians, sharing with them what we believe. If Christianity is true, then other religions have to be false. This doesn't mean there isn't some good in these faiths, and we certainly aren't in a position to judge the hearts of others, whatever their beliefs. Instead, because of the universal claims of Christianity, we must, in meekness, humility, and love tell others the good news of a loving God who sent His own Son into human flesh and in that flesh ransomed the world from sin. The claims of the Cross included everyone; everyone, therefore, must be told about it.

How do you respond to someone who makes the claim, "Well,

your religion is just your truth; I have my own truth"? What's wrong with that statement?

Christ—the Only Way

(Acts 4:12).

It is often pointed out that other religions also have their heroes, just as Christianity has Christ. And, indeed, we must have great respect for Muhammad, who insisted—in a highly polytheistic society—upon the worship of one God. Who can't help respecting and admiring the Gautama Buddha's compassion and sensitivity to human suffering? And there's much good, too, in the profound teachings of Confucius.

But these people do not begin to compare with Jesus Christ, not in who they were nor in what they accomplished, nor even claimed to accomplish, for the world. To suggest that Jesus and these other people are simply different versions of good men teaching good things is to pervert the basic teaching of Scripture grossly. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Either we accept the claim fully, or we reject it fully. It's hard to see, with such a claim, how there can be any middle ground, any compromise.

What fundamental truth must we recognize when comparing Christianity with other religions? Acts 4:12; see also Isa. 45:5.

It's precisely because of the universality of what Christ has done that, as Christians—having now been redeemed by Jesus (Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14, Heb. 9:12)—we should be motivated to tell others in order that they, by faith, can share in the promises of God made to them, as well.

"How then should we relate to those of other religions? First of all, we must treat them as fellow human beings—with respect and

honor. . . . We need to approach them with openness, ready to listen and learn. In our finiteness we do not have all that we need at any point in our experience. Different points of emphasis may help to strengthen our own experience. Nor should we apologize for what we believe or our conviction that we have truth in having Jesus Christ. Never should we hesitate to witness to another. But our efforts must always reflect humility and avoid a spirit of triumphalism or a subtle attitude of imperialism."—S. Kubo, *The God of Relationships* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Pub. Assn., 1993), p. 138.

How do you show respect for people and for their personal faith and integrity, while at the same time rejecting their beliefs? Or can you?

All Things to All Men

Though the truths of what we believe are eternal and unchanging, the context in which we spread those truths is always changing. The approach one would take with an Indian shaman wouldn't be the same as with a New Age German banker; the witness to a Canadian Inuit living in the far end of the Yukon wouldn't be the same as with a Singaporean business executive. Though the message is the same, the methods often vary.

Thought Question

How did the apostle Paul apply this basic principle in his ministry? Acts 16:1-3, 1 Cor 9:19-23. How does that explain his actions in Jerusalem? Acts 21:17-26. What principle of ministry do we see here by Paul's words and actions? Remember, too, that he is the same man who wrote Galatians 1:8, 9.

"More than 2 billion of the world's population will hear the gospel only if cross-cultural missionaries will make themselves servants and

become all things to them. From tribes in Africa to heavy-metal rockers in the 'jungles' of New York City, from the sophisticated professional to the troubled teenager next door, people desperately need to hear the gospel in a context they can understand. Who will humble themselves and become incarnate as slaves for the sake of these souls? Who will go through the hard, risky business of contextualization so others may clearly hear the gospel?"—Jon Dybdahl, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation: How to Contextualize the Gospel," *Ministry* (November 1992), p. 17.

In what perfect way was this principle of reaching people where they are realized in the ministry of our Savior? Phil. 2:5-11. Christ came to meet us where we are. He assumed human form. He expressed Himself in human language. He became one of us. If, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the church wants to reach the modern world with the message of Christ, it will have to meet people where they are and speak the language of the people of today and not of a century ago.

Christ's Method Alone

We've tried to show this week a crucial point regarding the universality of our faith; we can't be true to what we believe without believing that these truths that offer us so much hope, offer that same hope to every other human being. The nature of the claims cry out for us to tell them to others. Indeed, that's an essential component of who we are as Seventh-day Adventists. It's also why, through the grace of God, we are in almost every country of the world.

Read Revelation 14:6, 7, the first angel's message. What does it tell us about whom we are to preach to?

That's every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, which would

include those of every faith. Our commission is set before us in no uncertain terms.

At the same time, we must remember that no matter where people live, no matter their religious faith, no matter their beliefs, we are all the same, beings created in the image of God, beings who are sinners, beings who have basic needs. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we believe that the light that God has given us can help meet those needs better than anything else the world has to offer. The better we seek to meet those needs, the more we can reveal to the non-Christian world the love and character of God, and the more effective our witness will be.

Look at this quote from Ellen White: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143. Why would an approach like this be effective for whatever people group we were seeking to reach?

The bottom line is that we live in a world filled with hurting, suffering people; the good news is that we worship and know the Lord, who cares about these people and their suffering. As Adventists, we can minister to them, even from our own personal sufferings, and point them to something better in this life, as well as to the only One who can give them eternal life. This is our calling; to do anything else would be unfaithful to that calling.

Talk to those in your church about ways to reach out to the non-Christian faiths in your own community. What practical things

could you do to make a positive impact for the Lord?

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU
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