

SEMINAR

Light Your World for God

FIVE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL EVANGELISM

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life..”
(John 8:12)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age. Amen.”
(Matthew 28:19, 20)

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
(Acts 1:8)

Based on the book *Light Your World For God*
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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: A woman spent months saving to buy a new refrigerator. Was extremely disappointed when she discovered that the refrigerator was not working. The milk spoiled, the fruit rotten and the vegetables lose their freshness. Although this was the first refrigerator she had ever owned, she knew something was terribly wrong. How could invest as much in a product that was so serious defective? Called the company where she had bought the refrigerator to file your complaint. The company sent out a mechanical appliances. He was stunned when he discovered that the refrigerator was not plugged properly. The plug was loose. There simply was no electricity.

There are many Christians with a “loose connection.” If they are to be effective soul winners, need to be connected to the source of strength and power. What they need is power: the power of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to be a successful witness for God if the Holy Spirit's power does not flow into our lives.

God has uniquely called the Seventh-day Adventist Church both to live and to proclaim His last-day message of love and truth to the world (Revelation 14:6-12). The challenge of reaching the more than six billion people on planet Earth with His end-time message seems impossible. The task is overwhelming. From a human perspective, the rapid fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission anytime soon appears unlikely (Matthew 28:19, 20).

The Church's growth rate is simply not keeping pace with the world's burgeoning population. An honest evaluation of our current evangelistic impact on the world leads to the conclusion that unless there is a dramatic and supernatural change, we will not complete Heaven's assignment in this generation. In spite of our best efforts, all our plans, strategies, and resources are incapable of finishing God's mission for His glory on earth.

Christ promise to His New Testament Church

The challenge of taking the gospel to the world is not new. The disciples faced this challenge in the first century. We face it in the twenty-first century. The New Testament Church was seemingly confronted with an impossible task. But empowered by the Holy Spirit the Church exploded in growth (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31). These early Christians shared their faith everywhere (Acts 5:42).

The grace of God overflowed from their hearts to their families, friends, and working associates. Just a few decades after the Crucifixion, the apostle Paul could report that the gospel is “preached to every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23). How was it possible for an obscure group of relatively insignificant believers to impact the world in such a short amount of time? How could so few Christians be used of God to change the world forever? Christ's Great Commission was accompanied by His great promise. The Savior commanded His disciples “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). The Savior promised, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall

be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The love of Christ controlled every aspect of the lives of the disciples and moved them to a passionate commitment to His service. They sought God for the promised power of the Holy Spirit and knelt before Him in heartfelt confession and earnest repentance. They placed priority on seeking Heaven’s blessing. They set aside times for prayer and searching the Scriptures. Their petty differences were swallowed up in their all-consuming desire to share Christ’s love with everyone they met. They were absorbed in reaching the world with the gospel. Nothing was more important. They recognized that they were powerless to accomplish the mission without the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Describing the experience of the disciples, Ellen White wrote,

*“Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. . . . Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them. . . . The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the Holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ promised.” **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37***

Christ fulfilled His Word. The Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecostal power. Thousands were converted in a day. The message of Christ’s love impacted the world. In a short time the name of Jesus Christ was on the lips of men and women everywhere.

*“By the co-operation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation.” **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 593***

Christ promise to His ed-time Church

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in the early rain was only a prelude of what is to come. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit in abundance in the last days (Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1). The earth will be “illuminated with his glory” (Revelation 18:1). The work of God on earth will be finished rapidly (Matthew 24:14; Romans 9:28). The Church will experience a spiritual revival and the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power like never before in its history. Speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter gives us this assurance: “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). Ellen White adds,

“Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not

*been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and his Word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming." **The Great Controversy, p. 464***

Hundreds of thousands of people will accept God's last-day message through the teaching and preaching of His Word. Prayer, Bible study and witness are the elements of all true revival. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit will intensify as the end approaches.

*"Near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of Man." **The Faith I Live By, p. 333***

*"By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers." **The Great Controversy, p. 612***

There is nothing more important than knowing Jesus, studying His word, understanding His truth and seeking His promise for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power for the fulfilling of the gospel commission. God's last-day prophet to the remnant wrote in words too plain to be misunderstood,

*"A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. **Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children.**" **1 Selected Messages, p. 121***

If a genuine spiritual revival is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs, should we not as leaders place priority on seeking Heaven's promised blessing with all our hearts?

Our great need: Revival and Reformation to fulfill the Mission

When we seek Jesus, He fills us with His presence and power through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We long to know Him better. The Holy Spirit reawakens the dormant spiritual faculties of the soul. There is nothing we desire more than to have a deep and life-changing relationship with Jesus. The revived heart experiences a vital connection to Jesus through prayer and the Word. Reformation is the corresponding change that comes in our lives as the result of revival.

"A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a

resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.” 1 Selected Messages, p. 128

Reformation does not manifest itself in a self-righteous attitude that condemns others. It is the transformation of character that reveals the fruits of the Spirit in the life (Galatians 5:22-24). Obedience to God’s will is the evidence of all true revival. Our Lord longs for a revived people whose lives reflect the loveliness of His character. There is nothing that Jesus desires more than a people who are passionate about personally knowing His love and sharing that love with others.

RECEIVING THE SPIRIT

The Bible outlines some practical steps we can take to prepare our hearts to receive the Holy Spirit. We may call them the **ABC** of how to receive the Holy Spirit.

A - Luke 11:13 _____

God invites us to “ask for the Spirit.” The reason we are to ask is not because God is reluctant to give His Spirit, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our asking prepares our hearts to receive. Asking is the first step in the process of reception.

B - Mark 11:24 _____

Belief is faith that God will deliver on His promises when we meet the conditions. Belief is trusting God to do just what He says He will do. The first two conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit are asking God for His gift and believing He will fulfill His word.

“Ask, believe and receive. There is too much mocking the Lord, too much praying that is not praying and that wearies angels and displeases God, too many vain, unmeaning petitions. First we should feel needy, and then ask God for the very things we need, believing that He gives them to us, even while we ask; and then our faith will grow, all will be edified, the weak will be strengthened, and the discouraged and desponding made to look up and believe that God is a rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him.” Early Writings, p 115

C - Acts 3:19 _____

Repentance is one aspect of confession. In true confession, we lay our hearts bare before God, acknowledging our sins and expressing heart felt sorrow for them. Repentance has to do with a change of mind or heart. This soul-sorrow, this sadness because we have broken God's heart,

opens our own hearts to be effective witnesses. Before Pentecost, the upper room was a place of genuine confession and repentance. Before Pentecost, the disciples asked for the spirit. They believed God's promise, claimed it by faith and opened their hearts to receive the Spirit through genuine confession and repentance.

*“There is great need of the Holy Spirit's influence in our midst. There must be an individual work done in the breaking of stubborn hearts. There needs to be deep heart-searching that will lead to confession of sin. Believers should at this time stand with softened, sanctified, broken hearts, every sin confessed in repentance that needeth not to be repented of.” **Reflecting Christ, p 102***

What will be the result of taking these first three steps?

Acts 1:8 _____

Just as the Holy Spirit was poured out on the praying, believing, confessing disciples, it will be poured out in our day. Once again the power of God will flow from His throne. God will raise up a last-day generation of witnesses. When the conditions are met, the promise will be fulfilled. The more we know Christ, the more we long to share His love with others. The more we share His love, the more we long to know Him better. The more we love Him, the more we will witness. The more we witness, the more we love Him. Witnessing to others is linked to our own spiritual growth.

*“God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ's, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy, the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice, we must participate in His labors for their redemption.” **The Desire of Ages, p. 142***

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is promised to those who are seeking God for power to witness.

*“The Holy Spirit will come only to all who are begging for the bread of life to give to their neighbors.” **6 Testimonies, p. 90***

FIVE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL EVANGELISM

A careful study of the book of Acts reveals that the success of the disciples was based on five universal principles. By understanding these five keys, pastors and lay people have come to be more effective in winning souls for Christ. As these principles are implemented in local congregations, the Holy Spirit work mightily to produce an unusual growth for the kingdom of God.

KEY 1 • _____

Churches grow when there is a genuine spiritual _____ in the spiritual life of the members.

The New Testament Christian church grew largely because each member has experienced a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

Acts 1:8

Acts 4:20, 31, 33

1 John 1:1-3

The disciples **shared** a Christ they knew.

They **proclaimed** a Christ whom they experienced.

They **witnessed** of a Christ who changed them personally.

*“No sooner does one come to Christ is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus, the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart.” **Steps to Christ, p 78***

THREE WAYS WE CAN EXPERIENCE A SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

1. Individuals and churches are revived when there is a renewed emphasis on _____.

2 Peter 1:2-4

John 17:3

Many years ago the renowned English preacher, George Whitfield, was an overnight houseguest of a wealthy, aristocratic family. They had everything except the One who counts for everything. They were kind, hospitable people, but they did not know Christ. Whitfield longed to share the Christ he loved with them. When he awoke the next morning, sun streamed through his bedroom

window. Whitfield noted an exquisite diamond ring on the nightstand by his bed. He took the ring and etched in the windowpane those familiar words from the story of the rich young ruler, “One thing thou lackest.” He said nothing to the lady of the house. After breakfast he graciously thanked his host and hostess and left. When the nobleman and his wife discovered what Whitfield had done, they were irate. Soon their anger turned to curiosity. They searched through Scripture. They discovered the story of the rich young ruler. Their hearts were touched. Those four words of Scripture burned their way into their souls. “One thing thou lackest.” Together they knelt and surrendered their lives to Christ. The Bible is powerful. It changes lives. It transforms people. The Bible is God's dynamic agency for soul-winning. The same Holy Spirit that prompted the writers of Scripture to pen God's word transforms the lives of those who read God's word.

At creation, God's audible word carried with it the power to create matter.

Psalm 33:6 - “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.”

What God says is so, even if it were never so before, because God has the power to accomplish what He declares. Ellen White in the book Education affirms the power of the word of God to change lives.

*“The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and recreates the soul in the image of God.” **Education, p. 126***

What a truth! The creative power of God is in His word. When we share God's word with others, God's creative power flows into their lives. Mark Finley, in his book Persuasion, says:

*“The life-giving promises and principles of the word of God carry with them the power to do that which they declare. Since God's word is living, it not only presents the way to live, but it carries with it the power to accomplish right living.” **Persuasion, p. 13***

There is no other book that carries as much power as the word of God. When you and I open our Bibles and read a text containing the words of God with them, we have a powerful agency that will bring about change in their lives.

Where do successful soul-winners find their strength?

Matthew 4:4

Jeremiah 15:16

Jesus met Satan's temptations with the word of God. Jeremiah declared God's word nourished his soul. When we feed on God's word, God Himself nourishes our spiritual life. God's word will give us courage, faith and a new energy.

*“There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible.” **Steps to Christ, p. 90***

*“Let us give more time to the study of the Bible. We do not understand the word as we should. The book of Revelation opens with an injunction to us to understand the instruction that it contains. ‘Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy,’ God declares, ‘and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.’ When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival.” **Testimonies to Ministers, p. 113***

What if the tree of life from the Garden of Eden was present in a remote, hidden valley a few hundred kilometers from your home? Would you make an effort to find it to eat and be renewed? What if the branches of the tree of life hung over heaven's walkway right into your backyard? Would you be interested in plucking some of heaven's life-giving fruit?

Here are some almost unbelievable truth:

*“The knowledge that comes from God is the bread of life. It is the leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations.” **Our Father Cares, p. 272***

*“‘Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,’ says Christ, ‘hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day... the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.’ This is eating the fruit of the tree of life.” **Manuscript 112, 1898***

*“It is the opening of the heart to receive the word which is as the leaves of the tree of life. Jesus is the source of power, the fountain of life... He brings us to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves for the healing of sin-sick souls.” **Lift Him Up, p. 252, 264***

*“He who has given us His word--the leaves of the tree of life--will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children.” **Ministry of Healing, p.199***

*“The Word of God is our sanctification and righteousness, because it is spiritual food. To study it is to eat the leaves of the tree of life.” **Letter 17, 1902***

The Scriptures change lives because:

- A. The Word of God is _____ . It lasts from generation to generation.
Isaiah 40:8
Mathew 24:35

- B.** The Word of God is _____ applicable. Applies to every kindred, nation, tongue and people.
Matthew 24:14
Revelation 14:6
- C.** The Word of God is _____. God's Word has the power to convert hearts and minds.
1 Peter 1:23
Psalm 119:11
- D.** The Word of God is _____. Many books may be inspiring, but God's word is inspired.
2 Timothy 3:16
John 17:17
- E.** The Word of God is _____ - _____. The Word of God contains the divine life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.
Psalm 119:50
Deuteronomy 8:3
- F.** The Word of God _____ hard hearts. The Word of God burns away the dross in our lives through the purifying presence of the Holy Spirit.
Jeremiah 23:29

We need a revival in Bible study. A knowledge of God will cover the entire earth and when this happens, hearts and lives will be changed throughout the world.

“A revival in Bible study is needed throughout the world... The gospel is to be preached to all nations. The Bible is to be opened to the people. A knowledge of God is the highest education, and it will cover the earth with its wonderful truth as the waters cover the sea.” Manuscript 139, 1898

2. Individuals and churches are revived when there is a renewed emphasis on _____.

Colossians 1:3, 9

Philippians 1:3-5

The Apostle Paul remembered the churches he raised up through his evangelistic journeys. Daily he prayed for the churches at Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse and Thessalonica. Paul had his prayer list. He prayed for individuals by name. He prayed for churches and he prayed for individual cities. Do you have your prayer list? Are you praying for your loved ones by name? Are you holding up your community before God? Soul-winning necessitates God's power to do God's work.

Why Intercessory Prayer?

In the great controversy between good and evil, God has established some basic ground rules. He will not violate freedom of choice. He does everything he can to save each individual. He sends His angels. The Holy Spirit impresses hearts. He arranges circumstances in each life. But He only goes so far. Intercessory Prayer unleashes heaven's power. God honors our choice for others. His life-giving love is poured out through us to them. Intercessory Prayer is also a channel for God's wisdom to flow through us to reach others. He provides us with the knowledge to share His love. He gives us the keys to their hearts.

*“There is necessity for diligence in prayer; let nothing hinder you. Make every effort to keep open the communion between Jesus and your own soul.” **Steps to Christ, p. 98***

What are two essential ingredients in soul-winning? **1 John 5:14-16**

1. _____
2. _____

When we seek God in earnest intercession for others, He promises to make us a channel of His life-giving power. The river of water of life from God's throne is poured out through us to touch other hearts. Our prayers and our faith make a dramatic difference in their lives. Ellen White makes this very clear when she talks about these two essential ingredients.

*“Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish.” **Ministry of Healing, p.509***

*“It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.” **The Great Controversy, p. 525***

There are over 130 studies on the effectiveness of intercessory prayer and healing in the medical literature. Prayed-for people simply get well quicker, have fewer complications, need less medication and return to the hospital less. In the physical realm there is a dramatic difference when people are prayed for. If this is true in the physical realm, then it is certainly true in the spiritual realm as well.

Winning a soul is not like repairing an automobile or making a cake, for which there is a certain formula, and anyone who follows it will be successful. No, each person is different, and although there are basic soul-winning principles that apply to every situation, we need the wisdom of God in applying them. Otherwise, minds will not be impressed. Lives will be left unchanged.

Nothing can substitute for prayers for souls. No person can be won to Christ without prayer. Conversion is a miracle. Soul-winners are not simply convincing sales people pushing a product. We are dealing with the most precious thing in the world—people.

Four Reasons to Pray for Souls

Why is it necessary to pray for souls? Doesn't God already want to win them? Isn't He doing everything He can without our praying? There is a great deal about the science of prayer that the human mind cannot comprehend. This should not discourage us. Not knowing everything about electricity does not keep us from employing the benefits of light, heat and electrical power. Although we will never fully understand the science of prayer, there are at least four reasons we should pray for souls.

- 1. Prayer enables God to speak to us about the sins in our own lives that are a hindrance to successful soul-winning. Psalm 51:10-12, 13.** David longed for purity of heart. He hungered for the presence of God in His life. He yearned for the fullness of God's Spirit. A renewed experience with God leads to the desire to share that experience with others. An infilling of His Spirit leads to an out-flowing of His love. **Before God can do something with us, He must do something for us. Before God can do something through us, He must do something in us.** God's power is limited when there is cherished sin in our own hearts. Often, as you and I pray for others, Jesus impresses our own hearts with the need of a closer fellowship with Him.
- 2. Prayer deepens our desire concerning the thing for which we are praying. Matthew 26:39.** One of the model intercessory prayers in the Bible is the one Jesus prayed for our salvation in Gethsemane. As the Savior prayed, He experienced a conflict with the powers of hell. On His knees He cried out, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." There in the garden Jesus won the battle. His desire to save us intensified as He prayed. The thing that He prayed for—our salvation—became the all-consuming passion of His life. Surely He desired to save us before He prayed, but after His prayer His desire to save us was even stronger. **The more we pray for someone's salvation, the more we desire it. The more we desire it, the more we will look for creative opportunities to reach that person.**
- 3. Prayer puts us in touch with divine wisdom. James 1:5.** The only One who is wise enough to win souls is God. Jesus reveals the right words to say to men and women. **Without His wisdom we may have keys, but we do not know which key fits where.** Only as Christ imparts wisdom to us will we know the right key to open hearts to receive the treasures of the gospel.
- 4. Prayer enables God to work more powerfully than He could if we did not pray. Daniel 10:12 and James 5:16 (last part).** As the Apostle James declares, "the effective fervent prayer" of a righteous person makes a dramatic difference. As the angel announced to Daniel, "your words are heard." When we intercede for others, life flows from the throne of God through us to touch other lives. In the great controversy between good and evil, we become God's channel of blessing. Daniel 10 tells the story of how Daniel's prayers ascended to heaven for three weeks with no apparent answer. Yet at the end of those three weeks Gabriel explained to Daniel that a great battle had been going on over the mind of Cyrus. The good angels attempted to drive the evil angels back so that Cyrus could make the right decision. The evil angels attempted to destroy the good angels, to enshroud Cyrus in darkness. As Daniel prayed, this battle raged. Finally Jesus came down, beat the evil angels back, and gave Cyrus an opportunity to make a clear and

intelligent decision—a decision that allowed Israel to go free. Daniel's intercessory prayer proved effective.

**In addition to praying alone, what instruction did Jesus give us about praying with others?
Matthew 18:19-20**

Prayer bands provide the basis for successful evangelism. The work of conversion is not natural; it is supernatural. A salesman might be able to persuade a person to buy a new car. Advertising companies may entice an individual to purchase a new suit. A real estate broker might interest a person in an attractive new home. These sales people can get results by following certain techniques. They can sell their product. It might even be possible for a Christian minister to persuade a person to join the church. But only God can bring genuine conversion to the soul. Successful evangelism must include a ministry of prayer.

“Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then still another?” 7 Testimonies, p. 21

Take a moment right now and write the names of people on the lines below that you think Might be open to the gospel. These people may be family members, work associates, friends, neighbors or casual acquaintances.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Seek God for these people each day. Write down their names and petition heaven for their souls. If possible, choose a prayer partner. Together bombard heaven with your prayers. God will answer. You will become a channel of His abundant blessing. Prayer enables us to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. Prayer allows us to see with God's eyes. If we are going to reach people for Christ, we must understand how best to approach them, how to answer their questions and how best to appeal to them. Only God can lead us to the people we will be most effective in reaching.

To be the most effective witnesses for God, we are looking for people God has especially prepared for us to work with. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

- Every person in the world is not your assignment!
- Pray that God will lead you to the person He wants you to witness to.
- Look first at the people God brings into your life each day.
- Watch for opportunities to share God's love and observe their response.

“Begin to pray for souls; come near to Christ, close to His bleeding side. Let a meek and quiet spirit adorn your lives, and let your earnest, broken, humble petitions ascend to Him for wisdom that you may have success in saving not only your own soul, but the souls of others.” 1 Testimonies, p. 513

By asking we receive. The reason we often don't receive from God is because we don't ask. We will have success in soul-winning when we begin to pray for souls. You will become part of the fulfillment of this marvelous statement.

“Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest.” 9 Testimonies, p. 126

Since we are living in the days of earth's final harvest, it is essential to consecrate ourselves to God for service. **The success of any Bible study work or evangelistic campaign is dependent on the Holy Spirit.** As pastors and lay people unite together in an integrated, coordinated approach in winning souls for Christ, praying for the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God will give unusual results. The Holy Spirit will be poured out and souls will be won.

3. Individuals and churches are revived when there is a renewed emphasis on

As the disciples shared their faith, their faith grew. As they testified to their personal commitment to Christ, they became powerful proclaimers. The more we give, the more we will receive.

“If you will go to work as Christ designs that His disciples shall, and win souls for Him, you will feel the need of a deeper experience and a greater knowledge in divine things, and will hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Steps to Christ, p. 80

After a person has spent time with Jesus and is spiritually renewed, the heart's desire is to be trained and equipped for service.

KEY 2 • _____

Churches grow when each member is _____ and _____ for service.

Our Lord encouraged his disciples to follow him in these words: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). The disciples were equipped and trained by the greatest teacher in the world. Jesus spent three and half years training and preparing his disciples. In the book of Acts, they applied the lessons that Jesus taught. The disciples went out in the name of Jesus, meeting the needs of men and women, touching people for the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 4:11, 12

*“Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and encouraged. Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, and how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking schools and classes in various lines of Christian help work. There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts.” **Ministry of Healing, p 149***

*“One worker who has been trained and educated for the work, who is controlled by the Spirit of Christ, will accomplish far more than ten laborers who go out deficient in knowledge and weak in the faith.” **Evangelism, p. 474***

If every church member should be engaged in some line of service for the Master, where do we begin? Ellen White tells us in the book Evangelism.

*“In our churches let companies be formed for service. The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err.” **Evangelism, p.115***

When church members are equipped to serve, as they form small groups to reach their community with Bible-based ministries, the church will have an explosion of growth. A revived church, filled with members equipped to witness, is a church that is ready to reach its community.

KEY 3 •

Churches grow when there is a planned process of community outreach that meets the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of people.

Matthew 4:23

Following the example of the Savior, the New Testament church met the needs of people in the name of Jesus. These early disciples showed an interest in the whole person: physically, intellectually, socially and spiritually (See Acts 3:6, Acts 6:1-4).

*“Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior 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.’” **Ministry of Healing, p. 143***

Growing churches have a variety of programs that meet the needs of different groups of people. Just like Jesus, who met the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs, His people, full of love, do the same.

In the natural world as well as in the spiritual world, there are laws of the harvest. One of the most basic is simply this: “To have a crop, it is necessary to plant the seed.” No farmer expect God to work a miracle and germinate seed he has not sown.

- The only **visits** God can bless are the ones we make.
- The only **literature** God can bless is literature we distribute.
- The only **prayers** God can bless for souls are prayers we offer.
- The only **Bible studies** God can bless are the ones we give.
- The only **evangelistic seminars** God can bless are the ones we conduct.

It is presumptuous to believe we can have a great harvest without adequate effort in sowing the seed of God's word. In fact, it is in the process of sowing that our own hearts are watered by the Holy Spirit and prepared for the harvest. As we participate with Christ in touching the lives of others with the gospel, the Holy Spirit transforms our own heart making our churches centers of His healing grace.

When interest in the gospel is developed through Bible studies and felt-need ministries, the fourth key logically follows.

KEY 4 • ---

Churches grow when God's word is preached through

Evangelistic churches are growing churches. The New Testament church gave priority to evangelism. They shared the Word of God full of confidence, anticipating the blessing of the Spirit.

Acts 4:31

Acts 5:42

Acts 8:4

The purpose of evangelism is to proclaim the message of God's grace in such a persuasive way that individuals will trust in Jesus as their personal Savior, embrace Him as their soon-coming Lord, and unite their lives with His church, where, through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, they serve God's cause. "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). The pastoral task is closely related to evangelism. Both are inseparable. Expansion of the church through personal and public evangelistic activities, preparing individuals for baptism, planting new congregations, and developing disciples should be the first emphases of every minister.

Evangelism must be viewed as a process leading to discipleship, not just an event that leads to membership. While increased membership is a by-product of evangelism, the great commission envisions each believer becoming a mature, disciple-producing minister. The task of evangelism is not finished until new believers are nurtured, trained, deployed, and winning souls themselves. Disciple-making must be viewed as integral to the evangelistic process, not just an appendage of "follow-up" after the main evangelistic event. Winning members without discipling them is ultimately self-defeating.

BUILDING A CHURCH GROWTH VISION

A clear vision comes as a result of a life in permanent communion with God, possessed by the Holy Spirit. The church is a spiritual entity, and members expect their pastors to be spiritual leaders filled with the Holy Spirit. A congregation usually never goes beyond where the pastor leads it by precept and example.

The time spent with God will give each minister a clear vision to fulfill God's dream and experience more vividly that

*"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world" **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 9***

This will lead to a massive mobilization of every believer guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy must regain primacy in every pastor's life. **The Word of God must be the best source for sermons.** It is the message that comes from the heart of God to the heart of every person. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been given a special end-time message to proclaim (Rev. 14:6-12) the present truth within the context of the Gospel message. The inspired writings of Ellen G. White, especially *The Acts of the Apostles*, *Evangelism*, *Gospel Workers*, *Christian Service*, and *The Great Controversy*, should be a must-read for every pastor to help keep the vision alive while accomplishing the mission of the church.

REAPING A HARVEST

When the seed of the gospel has been sown, it is time to reap a harvest. God promises to grant a harvest through biblical preaching and public evangelism. The disciples were powerful evangelists. Thousands responded to the preaching of Peter, Thomas and Paul.

Acts 6:7

“Most startling messages will be borne by men of God’s appointment, messages of a character to warn the people, to arouse them... We must also have, in our cities, consecrated evangelists through whom a message is to be born so decidedly as to startle the hearers.” Evangelism, p. 168

God is preparing for a unusual large final harvest that will surprise us. Think of it. Jesus invites us to participate with Him in reaping the largest harvest of souls in the history of the world.

In the first century, the disciples were looking forward to a future harvest. **What did Jesus say to them about the harvest?**

John 4:35

The harvest was ready. It was right before their eyes and they did not see it. The Samaritans were open to receiving the gospel. Once again, in our day, the harvest is ripe.

What prediction does the prophet Joel give about an end-time harvest?

Joel 3:13-14

Three simple principles for a successful harvest

These principles are universal and applicable to all methods of harvest.

1. Ask

Ask God to give you spirit-anointed eyes to see people as winnable.

- What did Jesus say regarding the Canaanite woman? **Matthew 15:28**
- What amazing statement did Jesus make to one of the scribes? **Mark 12:34**

In each instance Jesus saw people as winnable. He complimented them because He was genuinely interested in them. His confidence in them opened their hearts to the gospel. They became what He saw them as. Jesus had vision.

Vision is the ability to see with the eyes of God. Most people have sight, but only a few people have vision. Most people have eyes, only a few people really see. Vision is the ability to see

beyond what is to what can be. Vision penetrates through the present. It sees the possibilities. Vision looks beyond the problems to the potential. Jesus saw everyone He came in contact with as winnable. He saw people not as they were, but as refined and ennobled by His grace. He saw the following people not for who they were, but who they could become.

- **Peter** - Not as an ignorant, loud-mouthed, cursing, smelly fisherman, but as a powerful preacher.
- **Matthew** - Not as a conniving, shrewd, lying, dishonest tax collector, but as a careful, meticulous chronicler of the gospels.
- **Mary Magdalene** - Not as an immoral, lewd, low-class woman of ill repute, but as a tenderhearted, loving witness of His love.
- **The Roman Centurion** - Not as a rough, hardened leader of the opposition, but as a candidate for the kingdom of God.
- **Nicodemus** - Not as a legalistic, argumentative, opinionated Pharisee, but as a sincere seeker after truth.

Jesus saw people as valuable. He saw people as winnable. He saw people as redeemed for the kingdom of God. Since he saw them that way, they rose to meet His expectations. They became what He believed them to be.

2. Believe

Believe it is God's will for you to have success. It is the will of God that our churches grow. It is the will of God for the lost to be found. "There is more joy in heaven over one soul who repents." (Luke 15:7)

- Why were the disciples unable to cast the demons out of a little child? **Matthew 17:20**
- What did Jesus say was the necessary ingredient to see mountains of difficulties removed? **Matthew 17:20**

Belief or faith is the hand that reaches up and grasps God's power. Faith is powerful because unites us with an all-powerful God. Faith moves mountains because it puts us in touch with a God who moves mountains. Prayer and faith are the twins of success. Pray, "Lord, please give me a burden for lost human beings all around me. Lord, give me a desire to see men and women reconciled to You." God will not allow your work to go without reward.

*"God will not permit this precious work for Him to go unrewarded. He will crown with success every humble effort made in His name." **Gospel Workers, p. 192***

Believe God's grace is stronger than any obstacle holding the person you are studying with, from making a decision for Christ. Believe God's power is stronger than the chains that bind people in sin. Believe God's truth is stronger than deception and error. Believe, and you will be able to move mountains.

3. Come Close

Come close to people as Jesus did. Jesus cared for people. He cared about their heartaches. He always got close enough to people to know what their needs were.

- What short question reveals one of Jesus' most powerful soul-winning success secrets?

John 1:38

Jesus was always interested in the people around him. He was asking “What are you seeking? What are your longings? What needs do you have? I am interested in meeting them.” Throughout the following chapters of John’s gospel, Jesus demonstrated His immense care for people by meeting a variety of their needs.

- **John 2 - Jesus met a social need.** At the wedding feast at Cana, the host ran out of wine. Jesus turned six stone jars of water into refreshing new wine. He alleviated the host's social embarrassment.
- **John 3 - Jesus met a spiritual need.** Nicodemus, a Pharisee, asked for a meeting in the dead of night. Jesus showed him exactly what he was looking for and how to get it. He said, “You must be born again.” He satisfied Nicodemus’ soul, which was longing for salvation.
- **John 4 - Jesus met an emotional need** with the woman at the well. This woman had gone through six husbands. Jesus offered her emotional support, treating her with kindness.
- **John 5 - Jesus met a physical need.** This man had lain by the pool of Bethesda for 38 years. Jesus said, “Do you want to be made whole?” then healed him.
- **John 6 - Jesus met another physical need** that of physical nourishment. Jesus was confronted with thousands of hungry people on a hillside. Jesus received five barley loaves and two fish from a young lad and multiplied them. Thousands ate and were filled.

Jesus is the One who can meet every human need. He reached people where they were, touched them at their point of need and gave them a glimpse of His wonderful love. Follow Jesus' example to achieve success!

*“Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior 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.’” **Ministry of Healing, p. 143***

Jesus first ministered to people’s needs, then he asked them to follow Him. If you want to be successful, get involved in the lives of your Bible study contacts.

*“Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourses.” **Gospel Workers, p. 193***

As the result of Jesus’ loving ministry, tens of thousands were baptized when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost. The seeds of love and truth sown by Jesus in people's hearts sprouted and grew to a glorious harvest.

Again in our day, the spirit will produce a great harvest. The earth will be lightened with His glory. The latter-rain power of the Holy Spirit will be poured out. Thousands will be converted in a day. Every honest-hearted person on the face of planet earth will have one final opportunity to accept or reject God's offer of salvation. All the seeds sown for millenniums will spring up for one final harvest.

Think of it: God has chosen us to prepare a dying world for His soon return. He has chosen us to share His love with the people around us. He has chosen us to sow the seeds and participate with Him in earth's final harvest. What a privilege! What an honor! And to top it off, He guarantees us success.

A PRACTICAL APPROACH: “SABBATH MORNING EVANGELISM”

Transform the pulpits in our churches into evangelistic centers through the “Sabbath Morning Evangelism” plan. Every Sabbath thousands of visitors pass through the doors of our churches, and the evangelistic sermon is the most appropriate for an appeal. Much more can be done from the pulpit on Sabbath morning. Every pastor and elder who is called to preach can take advantage of this flexible, inexpensive, and successful plan. Once a year the Ministerial Association will help develop a miniseries of illustrated, Christ-centered, prophetic doctrinal sermons in PowerPoint for multiple languages. This plan, among other things, will accomplish the following:

- Accustom the ear of members to evangelistic preaching on Sabbath morning, exposing them and visitors alike to the whole message, including distinctive doctrines. This will establish the believers upon a solid biblical foundation, increasing faithfulness and avoiding apostasy.
- Each pastor is encouraged to prepare a quarterly or yearly preaching plan. This will ensure that all the essential Bible teachings are included within a calendar year. This will allow members and visitors alike to know in advance the subjects to be presented and will encourage them to bring friends and relatives to worship services on Sabbath.
- Develop more pastor evangelists and lay evangelists.
- Allow the same sermon to be preached in multichurch districts. The pastor can assign the same sermon to all elders.
- Help many decide for Jesus and Bible truths. As a result baptisms will follow year-round.

Public evangelistic meetings will reinforce the truths the Bible students learned. These reaping meetings will solidify their interest and lead them to a decision for Christ and His truth.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO MAKE AN APPEAL

One of the biggest problems from our pulpits is that many sermons don't finish with an appeal. Imagine a colporteur doing a good presentation of the book he is offering; the customer is almost convinced about the product, but the colporteur never does the closing. Imagine a couple in love, having a beautiful relationship, both wants to get married, but the boyfriend never makes a proposal.

No sermon should end without a strong appeal. The sermon is more than a good piece of speech to inform or to be admired, is a piece of bread to be eaten. Worshippers must respond to the message presented, must be confronted and challenged to accept and to live the truth presented, otherwise the sermon is not complete.

From the beginning of the sermon, let the congregation know what you expect from them, mention that at the end you want to pray for them. During the sermon remind them that at the end they will have the opportunity to respond. When the time of the appeal comes, invite them to respond while an appropriate soft music is heard in the background, or while a singer executes a appeal song.

Different types of appeals:

- Raising one hand and the other in the heart.
- Standing up.
- Pray for them while standing or kneeling.
- Allow them to pray in silent.
- Invite them to come forward.
- Fill out a decision card (with prayer requests in the back) and bring them forward to pray and reaffirm the decision.
- Ask the members to bring their visitors to the front.

The appeal could be in three stages:

- General (stand up or rise hand)
- Specific (come to the front to present the need before the Lord)
- More specific (to surrender the life to Jesus and to be baptized)

Always invite the visitors to pray for them at the end of each sermon. Come down from the platform to receive them as they approach to the front.

God will pour out His Holy Spirit through you. You will reap a harvest. In your home, church or hall, people will accept Christ and His truth for these last days and will be saved in His kingdom. There will be people in heaven as a result of the reaping meetings you have conducted. You can have the absolute certainty of success. The seed of the word of God will be planted in the soil of hundreds and thousands of minds. These seeds will spring up to an eternal harvest of souls for Christ. The seed has life-giving, life-changing power. Plant it in the soil of minds and hearts and there will be an abundant harvest of souls through your ministry. In eternity we can look back and measure the results.

KEY 5 • _____

Churches grow when new converts are _____ to testify.

*“When men and women **accept the truth**, we are not to go away and leave them and have no further burden for them. They are to be looked after.” **Evangelism, p. 345***

We don't dip them and drop them. We immerse them and instruct them. Jesus told Peter: “When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.” He also asked Peter, “Do you love me?” He said, “Feed my lambs.”

Our love for Jesus leads us to have a deep interest in spiritual growth of new believers. As new believers develop their own prayer life and a personal devotional life through Bible study, and they become actively involved in witnessing, they continue to grow spiritually. One of the most effective ways to help new believers grow in Christ is to _____ them how to share their faith.

*“After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after... These newly converted ones need nursing, watchful attention, help and encouragement. These should not be left alone, a prey to Satan's most powerful temptation; they need to be educated in regard to their duties, to be kindly dealt with to be led along, and to be visited and prayed with...” **Evangelism, p. 351, and Gospel Workers, p. 322***

Evangelism is incomplete without a comprehensive strategy to nurture new converts. Jesus' great commission is not merely to baptize. It is to make disciples. “Disciple-making” is not the result of impromptu decisions in evangelistic meetings. It is a process resulting from systematic nurture of new converts.

Baptism is not a magic formula to solve all spiritual problems. It is not a panacea to deliver people from all their difficulties. Baptism is not the end of a spiritual journey, but the beginning of a new life of fellowship with Christ in the context of His church.

Often, immediately after baptism, new believers are faced with some of their most serious challenges. The devil zeroes in on them. His goal is to sever their relationship with the body of Christ. New believers need to be nurtured in order to grow and become mature Christians.

*“After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after. The zeal of many ministers seems to fail as soon as a measure of success attends their efforts. They do not realize that these newly converted ones need nursing, —watchful attention, help and encouragement. These should not be left alone, a prey to Satan's most powerful temptations; they need to be educated in regard to their duties, to be kindly dealt with to be led along, and to be visited and prayed with. These souls need the meat apportioned to every man in due season.” **Evangelism 351***

Let's identify the principles that will anchor new believers in their faith:

- New believers grow in faith when they develop a meaningful devotional life.
- New believers grow when they are equipped to serve.
- New believers grow when they are involved in ministering to others.
- New believers grow when they become actively involved in sharing the Word of God with others.
- New believers grow when they develop a network of friends in the church.

When Jesus met with Nicodemus in a private meeting at night, the Savior surprised him with the statement: "You must be born again." As individuals who are satisfied with their spiritual life need to be born again, so entire congregations need a rebirth of evangelistic vision.

Entire congregations need a new birth. The churches are born again when they teach, follow and implement these five keys.

Apostasy will be avoided if there is:

- A carefully-planned process of after-care to reinforce their new doctrinal understanding.
- A program set in place to teach the new believers how to keep growing spiritually. An understanding of how to have a meaningful devotional life, as well as uplifting family worship, is vital to spiritual growth.
- A measure of tolerance for their mistakes as they are given latitude to grow.
- An organized visitation program set in motion immediately after their baptism.
- A conscious effort to integrate them into the social network of the church.
- A process to teach them how to live the Seventh-day Adventist Christian lifestyle.
- An attempt to involve them in some kind of witnessing or outreach program. New believers become strong if they are actively involved in sharing their newfound faith.

The book of Acts gives us insight into solid nurture and follow-up work. The Scripture tells how the disciples met the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the large number of new converts to the Christian faith.

1. Personal Devotional Life. In the New Testament there is evidence of a vibrant devotional life and a personal life of prayer. (Acts 4:13, 31)

a. Practical ideas

- i. Give them the yearly devotional book; set a time to read the first few chapters with them to help them get started.
- ii. Share how to have a meaningful devotional life. As you visit new believers in their homes, share how to start their own personal devotions using the yearly devotional book. Share your own testimony of how blessed you are daily by doing this.
- iii. Teach them to pray with the **ACTS model**. Pray with them. Share with them how to include the following aspects of prayer.

1. Adoration and Praise.
 2. Confession and Repentance
 3. Thanksgiving and Gratitude
 4. Supplication
- iv. Repeat the biblical message a second time. Organize Bible study groups at home or at the church.
 - v. Educate them on how to have a better lifestyle through
 1. Healthful cooking, homemade breadmaking, how to obtain a balanced menu, etc.
 2. Systematic benevolence.
 3. Seminar on spiritual gifts

2. Fellowship House-to-House. In the New Testament, spiritual and social needs were met in small groups as they broke bread or shared a common meal and prayed together. (Acts 2:42). Visitation is extremely critical if new members are to grow in Christ and feel at home in the church. It is possible for a new convert to be doctrinally convinced, but not socially integrated into the church. Although they have been baptized, they still feel like an outsider. They feel uncomfortable with this new group of people. The following are some things we can do to help them feel at home.

a. Practical ideas.

- i. Organize visitation teams to visit the new converts. Church growth studies indicate the more friends a person has in the church, the less likely he/she will drop out.
- ii. Love and care for these new believers can be practically demonstrated in a brief visit. If we can get new converts reading the Bible, in harmony with the writings of Ellen White, they will grow into strong Christians. *“Patriarchs and Prophets and Great Controversy are books that are especially adapted to those who have newly come to the faith, that they may be established in the truth... in Desire of Ages, Patriarchs and Prophets, Great Controversy and Daniel and the Revelation, there is precious instruction. These books must be regarded as of special importance, and every effort should be made to get them before the people.” Letter 229, 1903*
- iii. The visitation schedule can be organized as follows:
 1. Month 1 - Visit and give a copy of Patriarchs and Prophets
 2. Month 2 - Visit and give a copy of The Great Controversy
 3. Month 3 - Visit and give a copy of Desire of Ages
 4. Month 4 - Visit and give the yearly devotional book
 5. Month 5 - Visit and give a copy of the Adventist Review
 6. Month 6 - Visit and give a copy of Studying Together
 7. We suggest visitation teams be organized so that different church officers and members deliver
- iv. Send a note indicating they are in your thoughts. In between the monthly visits, the pastor/church members can send a note to the new believers demonstrating their care for them.
- v. Give them a casual, friendly phone call. Making a short casual phone call

inbetween visits will help to solidify new believers in the church.

- vi. If they miss church, you can send them a copy of the bulletin and a copy of the sermon. If they continue to miss church, be sure to give them a call to determine if there is any serious problem. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to get them back.
- vii. Implement a Spiritual Guardianship plan.
 1. This plan assigns each new member a spiritual guardian. The goal is to find church members with like interests and of a similar background. The established church member becomes a spiritual guardian for the new member. Once the new member is rooted in the church, he/she can become a spiritual guardian for the next new member.
 2. How to be a spiritual guardian: Your major role is to be a friend. Your role is not to be a spiritual policeman. You certainly are not a judge of what they do wrong. You are a mentor for the new convert. He/she is the mentee. New believers need someone to look to—to help them grow spiritually as well as physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Show your care as you seek to come close to them.

3. Corporate Worship and Praise. In the New Testament, spiritual and social needs were also met through Sabbath worship, biblical preaching and praise. (Acts 2:46) New believers will grow in their spiritual experience as they come to God's house each Sabbath. We receive strength from one another.

a. Reasons for and value of corporate worship.

- i. To praise and give thanks - Ephesians 5:19-20; Psalm 150; Psalm 67:3
- ii. To hear the word of God - Acts 13:44
- iii. To sing - Hebrews: 2:12
- iv. To pray - Acts 16:13
- v. To report all God has done - Acts 14:27
- vi. To encourage one another to good works - Hebrews 10:24-25
- vii. To study - 2 Timothy 2:15

b. Practical ideas.

- i. Inviting these new members home to dinner is a wonderful way to get acquainted with them better on a social basis. This will help them to feel loved and accepted
- ii. Plan church social events such as picnics, camping trips, vespers at the beach etc., that these new believers can become involved in.

4. Involvement and Witness. In the New Testament, new believers grew spiritually as they were actively involved in witness and faith-sharing. The early Christians were specifically involved in ministering to physical needs in their community as well as sharing the gospel. (Acts 6:7, 8:4)

a. Benefits of being involved in soul-winning.

- i. Soul-winning work drives an individual to his/her knees. It also makes one dependent upon Scripture. It will dramatically strengthen the

individual's faith. The questions others ask will lead them to study the word.

- ii. New converts have a network of friends who can be won. They have family members who will be eager to know what they believe. Acts 8:4.

b. Practical ideas.

- i. Prayer ministry, literature ministry, Bible study ministry, home Bible seminar ministry, health ministry, children's ministry

As you implement these principles, the Holy Spirit will help you to grow strong disciples for Christ. New converts will mature into solid Christians. Some will become leaders in your church. Many will actively share their faith with their relatives and friends.

As a rock thrown into a pond sends ripples across the water, the influence of this after-care program will have a ripple effect on scores of lives. Only eternity will reveal its lasting influence.

CONCLUSION

Ellen White, God's last-day messenger, clearly describes how the work of the great gospel commission can be accomplished.

*"This can best be done by personal efforts, by bringing the truth into their houses, praying with them, and opening to them the Scriptures." **Review and Herald, December 8, 1885***

*"It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." **Christ Object Lessons, p. 69***

*"Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church, so that every one shall be working for Him according to his ability." **Acts of Apostles, p. 111***

Pastors and lay involvement is the key to fulfilling the great gospel commission. Listen to this inspired statement:

*"The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers." **Gospel Workers, p. 352***

God is gathering His people around the world for a final movement at the climax of earth's history. He will pour out His Spirit on them as they use their gifts to proclaim the Good News. Evangelism is the dynamic heartbeat of the New Testament church. The book of Acts is alive with every member witnessing for their Lord. Jesus called Peter, a fisherman, Matthew, a tax collector, and Luke, a physician, to be His witnesses. Both men and women, were called to share their faith.

On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 were baptized in a day. A few months later, the church grew to 5,000 men, not even counting women and children. The Christian church numbered from between 15,000 to 20,000 shortly after Pentecost. What caused this unprecedented evangelistic explosion? The entire church was focused on the central objective of winning the lost to Christ. Each member had a passion for soul-winning. Their energies were directed to saving lost people.

What vision of God's work on earth did God give the apostle John in Revelation? Revelation 18:1

Imagine this scene!

- The lights are on at a church on Tuesday evening. The parking lot is jammed. Church members are gathering for an evening of witness.

- Prayer groups are scattered throughout the church. People are on their knees seeking God. Earnest, heartfelt prayers of intercession for the lost ascend to God's throne.
- Visitation teams leave the church to visit former Adventists and encourage them to return to church.
- Parents and children are distributing literature in the area around the church.
- Pastors and lay people are giving Bible studies to hundreds.
- The Holy Spirit is poured out. Revival fires are kindled. The church is ablaze with the glory of God.

In one of the most magnificent visions in the Bible, John saw the earth lightened with the glory of God. Ellen White describes exactly how this prophecy will be fulfilled.

*“I saw jets of light shining from cities and villages, and from the high places and the low places of the earth. God's word was obeyed, and as a result there were memorials for Him in every city and village. His truth was proclaimed throughout the world. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families, and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence.” **Evangelism, p. 699***

You can be part of the fulfillment of this prophecy. You can be one of God's streams of light. Every pastor and Bible instructor is a point of light. You will be forever thankful that you got involved in the most thrilling and lasting work in the world, soul-winning. There is power in the word of God. Study it! Share it with others! It will bring everlasting, eternal results.

We as church members have an awesome responsibility. This responsibility can be combined with an awesome promise, summed up on the last page of the book Evangelism.

“Our watchword is to be, onward, ever onward! Angels of heaven will go before us to prepare the way. Our burden for the regions beyond can never be laid down till the whole earth is lightened with the glory of the Lord.”
Evangelism, p. 707

God's promises are sure! There will be a great harvest! Praise God!