

Spread the Word

*A Guide to Personal Witnessing
Through Conversation, Literature, Media,
and Other Seed-sowing Activities*



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Table of Contents

Introduction	v
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Section 1: The Foundations of Witnessing

<i>Chapter 1</i> Spiritual Power for Witnessing	3
<i>Chapter 2</i> The Witness of a Christlike Character	17
<i>Chapter 3</i> Taking the Initiative	29

Section 2: Introducing Spiritual Truth

<i>Chapter 4</i> Sowing Bountifully	45
<i>Chapter 5</i> Sharing Faith With Friends	53
<i>Chapter 6</i> The Power of Invitation	65

Section 3: Distributing Literature

<i>Chapter 7</i> Why Literature Ministry?	77
<i>Chapter 8</i> Every Member a Literature Evangelist	89
<i>Chapter 9</i> Running Your Church Literature Ministry	99

Section 4: Sharing Media

<i>Chapter 10</i> Why Media Ministry?	117
<i>Chapter 11</i> Church Members and Media Ministry	127
<i>Chapter 12</i> Running Your Church Media Ministry	141

Section 5: Visiting Your Territory

<i>Chapter 13</i>	Why House-to-House Ministry?	165
<i>Chapter 14</i>	What to Know Before Knocking	173
<i>Chapter 15</i>	Organizing Your Church for Outreach	191
	Conclusion	207
	Works Cited	209

Introduction

Jesus gave us a model for fulfilling the mission of the church when He used agricultural terminology to describe it. He referred to the soil, the seed, and the harvest to explain the process of making disciples. The soil of the heart must be prepared by friendship and service, the seed of God's Word must be planted in various ways, spiritual interest must be cultivated with ongoing Bible study, decisions for Christ must be harvested with loving appeals, and the harvest must be preserved with systematic discipleship.

The primary aim of *Spread the Word* is to inspire, train, and equip local churches and their members to engage actively in the second phase of the disciple-making process—planting seeds of truth. Without this vital practice, church growth is impossible. In the natural world there can be no crop to cultivate or harvest to reap without first scattering seed. In the same way, there can be no spiritual life or growth without the power of God's Word planted in the heart. We are “born again . . . through the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23; see also 1 Peter 2:2). For this reason Jesus invites every disciple to become an active sower of the seed.

This book is designed for both members and leaders of local churches. It gives deeply spiritual and highly practical instruction for individual members, while also explaining how to develop and run active seed-sowing ministries in the local church. And while it will teach you how to find those interested in studying the Bible further, it will not explain how to give Bible studies or to conduct public evangelistic meetings. These training topics will be covered in the GROW Bible study

resources dedicated to the cultivate and harvest phases of the disciple-making process (visit grow.adventist.org for more information). Additionally, while the practical instruction in this book is mostly universal, there may be occasions when it doesn't fully apply to certain cultures or contexts without some adaptation.

It is our hope and prayer that after reading this book, you and your church will be inspired and equipped to spread the Word as never before. Yet let us always remember that “neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:7).

— The General Conference Sabbath School and
Personal Ministries Department

Section 1

The Foundations of Witnessing

1

Spiritual Power for Witnessing

P rayer, Bible study, and witnessing are essential for spiritual life. They are the necessary ingredients that keep our spiritual engines running and simultaneously prepare us for our heavenly home. Three ingredients doesn't sound too complicated, does it? Yet how fast we forget them. How prone we are to neglect what we know to be spiritual necessities in the life of every believer.

Sometimes we pray and read our Bibles, but choose not to share our faith. Ellen White points out that this neglect leads to a decline in spirituality: "He who does nothing but pray will soon cease to pray, or his prayers will become a formal routine." "When men . . . cease to work earnestly for the Master, who worked earnestly for them, they lose the subject matter of prayer and have no incentive to devotion. Their prayers become personal and selfish" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 101). Even a vibrant spirituality can soon become weak if we have no evangelistic purpose in our lives. We are called to be witnesses for Jesus:

“Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195).

However, an equal but opposite pitfall occurs when we try to witness apart from a life of personal prayer and Bible study. We can never become a fountain of life until we drink the living water ourselves. We can't give salvation to the world

Herein lies one of the greatest hindrances to witnessing—a dying spirituality.

unless we first receive it from Christ. Just as a failure to witness spoils our devotional life, a failure to commune with our Savior regularly will render our witness powerless. While the majority of this book will focus on why and how to witness, the

negative impact of trying to witness without spiritual power is so common and foundational that it deserves special attention in this opening chapter.

Jesus knew that witnessing would require a power we don't naturally have. Thus He promised the disciples a special gift: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8). Attempting to witness without the power of the Spirit in our lives is a failing proposition. Yet as Christians, how often we fail to realize this! We read books and take classes, even studying the techniques of Jesus Himself, while personal devotion to Christ is neglected. How desperately we need the spiritual power that only earnest prayer and personal Bible study can bring. Let us now consider Scripture's repeated warnings against the dangers of a powerless Christianity, followed by an exploration of the glorious remedy that can be ours through faith in Christ.

Form Without Power

One of the greatest hindrances to our Christian witness occurs when we are too easily satisfied with a superficial religious experience. The Bible refers to this as a special characteristic of the last days: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

A “form” of godliness is an appearance of godliness. We may go to church on Sabbath and even participate in outreach, but the power that transforms the life can still be missing. Ellen White strikes at the root of the problem for many end-time believers: “The love of the world, the love of some darling sin, has weaned the heart from the love of prayer and of meditation on sacred things. A formal round of religious services is kept up; but where is the love of Jesus? Spirituality is dying” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 538). Herein lies one of the greatest hindrances to witnessing—a dying spirituality. It’s hard to be an effective witness if you’re losing your interest in heavenly things. It’s hard to be enthusiastic about your faith if you aren’t experiencing victory through the power of God in your own life.

David understood this all too well. After his great sins of adultery and murder (see 2 Samuel 11), he cried out for forgiveness and restoration: “Create in me a clean heart, O God. . . . Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You” (Psalm 51:10-13). The faulty but repentant king realized that until the “joy of salvation” was restored in his heart, he would never be able to “teach transgressors” the ways of God in a manner that would

lead to their conversion. To be a successful witness requires deep conviction and genuine enthusiasm about the message of salvation. But how can we persuade others of heaven's peace and joy if our own hearts are full of guilt and anxiety over sins not forsaken?

Perhaps nothing will have a greater impact on the effectiveness of a Christian's witness than to have the joy of salvation and a fervent love for Christ restored. This is why the Bible urges us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12) and to "make your call and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). These admonitions are not suggesting that we can save ourselves, but that we should make no delay in coming to Christ for the healing and salvation that only He can give.

Truth Without Spirit

Similar to a form of religion without the power, the Bible also warns Christians to be wary of possessing the truth without the Spirit. Throughout His teachings Jesus emphasized the need for more than an accurate set of beliefs. He declared that those who worship God "must worship in *spirit* and truth" (John 4:24). Without the Spirit, the truth is powerless. Jesus sought to illustrate this in the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25. The five foolish virgins in the parable failed to prepare for the coming of the bridegroom by bringing enough oil. This oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to trust and obey God.

Notice Ellen White's penetrating description of these believers: "The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working.

They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. . . . The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 411).

What a sad paradox. The foolish virgins "have a regard for the truth" and have even "advocated the truth," but they "have not held communion" with God. They haven't "permitted their old nature to be broken up" by the Spirit. Though they are "attracted to those who believe the truth," their failure to yield "themselves to the Holy Spirit's working" has led to the fearful conclusion that "they do not know God." In the final analysis "their service to God" has degenerated into a form. Here again it is evident that a failure to commune with God, and to yield to the working of the Holy Spirit, can lead a Christian's witness to become a lifeless form.

The Lukewarm Christian

One more warning against a powerless religious experience is found in the book of Revelation. The counsel of Christ in His letter to the church of Laodicea is that they are not cold or hot, but lukewarm. They view themselves as being in "need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17), but the True Witness sees their hearts and lives as they truly are—"wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." Here we have another example of looking good on the outside while being destitute of spiritual life on the inside.

So what does Jesus advise them to do? “I counsel you to buy from Me” (verse 18) gold, white garments, and eye salve. The key is not so much what they are told to buy, but where they must go to get it. They won’t find what they need by attending religious events, or by serving the poor, or by any other attempts at good behavior or righteous causes. “Buy from Me,” He says. The only remedy is to go to Jesus.

In the last part of His letter to the Laodicean church, Jesus represents Himself as standing outside looking for entrance: “I stand at the door and knock” (verse 20). He loves us still, and if we will open the door, He promises to come in and “dine” with us (see verses 19, 20). But what is meant by the promise of dining with Jesus? Ellen White explains using a vivid description of communion with God:

*In His mercy,
Jesus offers us
a remedy.*

“The Lord draws out the soul in prayer, and gives us to feel His precious love. We have a nearness to Him, and can hold sweet communion with Him. We obtain distinct views of His tenderness and compassion, and our hearts are broken and melted with contemplation of the love that is given to us. We feel indeed an abiding Christ in the soul. We abide in Him, and feel at home with Jesus. The promises flow into the soul. Our peace is like a river, wave after wave of glory rolls into the heart, and indeed we sup with Jesus and He with us” (*Prayer*, p. 11).

That last phrase, “indeed we sup with Jesus and He with us,” equates this precious experience with the promise of Jesus to *dine* with those who hold communion with Him. It can be so easy to have the form but lack the power, to have the truth but lack the Spirit, to bear the Christian name but fail to abide

in Christ. The Bible consistently warns of this condition, which stands as a formidable barrier to the effective witness of God's people. *Especially* is this true for those of us living in the last days. Notice that Paul's counsel against a form of godliness without power, Jesus' parable of the 10 virgins, and the message of Christ to the Laodiceans have special application to the end of time. Yet in His mercy Jesus offers us a remedy. He invites us to draw near, commune with Him in prayer and in His Word, and experience His transforming power in our lives.

The Source of Life and Power

Jesus declared, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The Bible further testifies that "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Jesus is the source of spiritual life, and as we draw life from Him, we are guaranteed to bear "much fruit." This is a wonderful promise. Of course, the opposite is also true. Christ's power and virtue is so essential for effective witnessing that believers can never expect positive returns if they fail to abide in Him—"for without Me you can do nothing."

For the disciple the primary way to abide in Christ is through regular prayer and time in His Word. This is the Christian's source of spiritual life and power and the meaning behind Jesus' mysterious words "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Just as we would soon die without eating and drinking, so our spiritual life decays and soon dies without regular communion with God. For this reason Ellen White offers pointed counsel to Christians, emphasizing the danger of neglecting time alone with God:

“Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted and the health of the soul be preserved. . . . Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God” (*Prayer*, p. 12). “Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer and the searching of the Scriptures will be overcome by his attacks. Therefore he invents every possible device to engross the mind” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 519).

God gives these warnings to help us in our weakness. If we fail to commune with Him, He knows that we will be powerless to resist sin and selfishness. But if we *do* prioritize time alone with Christ, it will bear fruit in our lives and in our labors for others: “Nothing is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God. . . . This will impart to the worker a power that nothing else can give. Of this power he must not allow himself to be deprived” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 512). Communion with God not only provides for our own spiritual growth, but brings “practical results” in our witness to others!

This communion includes not only prayer, but reading and meditating on the Bible. Through its pages God communes with us directly and personally. But often we fail to recognize this. Consider the experience of Kristin, who was a new Christian when she heard that Jesus’ followers are those who “know his voice” (John 10:4). She noticed how some Christians would say “God told me” this or “God told me” that. So when she prayed, she listened hard for His “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), but never seemed to hear it. She loved Jesus and in her heart felt impressed by the truths she had learned, but her fear of not knowing God’s voice made her worry that she wasn’t a true Christian. Perhaps you or someone you know has shared these fears.

You can imagine how happy Kristin was to learn that even if believers never hear Jesus speak to them audibly, they can still be familiar with His voice through His written Word! Consider this encouraging counsel: “The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe would we open God’s Word, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts! The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 393). “Only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself is a true learner. He trembles at the Word; for to him it is a living reality” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 59).

Through prayer and the Bible, Jesus communes with His people and impresses their hearts. The Holy Spirit speaks spiritual life into their souls and illuminates their minds with glimpses of the glory of God. Thus every Christian may come to know Jesus as a personal Savior. Motivation and power for witnessing is fueled by this time spent in communion with Christ.

Making Peace With God

Now let us consider the importance of abiding with Christ through the testimony of a believer named Rob. There is no question that Rob had experienced a true conversion. The love of Christ and the truth of eternal realities had been clearly revealed to him through the Scriptures. But after a period of time his devotional life began to slip. When he neglected time with God, he would feel guilty and recommit himself the next time he prayed. But gradually the neglect became more frequent. Worldly attractions became stronger, and his character weaknesses became more prominent.

When Rob confessed to God, he experienced a sense of peace, but his frequent failures caused him to wonder if he could ever truly overcome his many faults. He began to feel insincere asking for forgiveness when he didn't seem able or willing to change. He was still going to Sabbath School and church, return-

“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”

ing tithe, and even participating in outreach activities and performing church duties—but joy and love were dying, and everything felt like an obligation. His effectiveness in witnessing had been declining for some time, but now he was losing any motivation to share his faith.

Rob's life had become a form of godliness without the power. His mind was preoccupied with earthly interests. He was losing his hold on God.

Feeling empty and increasingly uncertain about his salvation, Rob began to think about the zeal, joy, and peace he had once had with God. How had he gotten to this point? He turned to the Scriptures for encouragement and read Isaiah 27:5: “Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.” He longed for that peace. He remembered the story of Jacob, who wrestled with God until he was assured of His blessing (see Genesis 32:24-28). He decided to get serious about seeking God (see Jeremiah 29:13). He started going to bed earlier so that he could get up in time to spend a thoughtful hour in prayer and devotion every day. He made his time with God the number-one priority in his life.

Even though he still had many shortcomings, Rob felt the smile of God upon him when he prioritized his time with Jesus. Each morning he made God his refuge, and poured out

his heart before Him (see Psalm 62:8). He openly confessed his faults and failures, and pleaded with God for a new heart (see Psalm 51:10). He soon felt impressed to set aside the worthless distractions that had been preoccupying his time. He became more careful in what he chose to read and watch. As he meditated on the Bible each morning, he became excited about the truth again. He started looking forward to Sabbath School and church. Throughout the day he felt stronger to resist temptation, and he experienced victory where before he had felt helpless. Through the power of communion with God, the joy and peace of salvation was being restored. Rob couldn't keep the truth to himself anymore. He was on fire for God, and his passion for witnessing had been rekindled.

The revival that Rob experienced is the greatest need in the church today: "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. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121).

Come to Jesus

So what should you do if you fear that your Christian life and witness is more form than power? First, understand that the answer is not to put a halt to your witnessing efforts. If you wait

until you're perfect to witness for Christ, you'll never feel ready. Remember that there are three key components needed for your spiritual life to prosper—prayer, Bible study, *and* witnessing. Strengthening the first two while neglecting the third will cause a different set of problems. It's not witnessing that needs to stop, but rather any habits or practices that may be separating you from God. And for this we desperately need Jesus.

A revival of spiritual power can be ours only when we seek it in Christ and His Word. The True Witness to the Laodiceans (see Revelation 3:14) points out our pitiful condition for this very reason—so that we'll see our desperate need of Him! He highlights our flaws, not to condemn us, but to save us (see John 3:17). He tells us our failures, not to discourage us, but because He so deeply loves us (see Revelation 3:19). He longs for us to lay our feelings of guilt and shame down at His feet: “We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 64).

No matter what condition you find yourself in, the promises of God are for you. Jesus invites you with outstretched hand, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He promises never to turn you away: “Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. You may say, I am sinful, very sinful. You may be; but the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He turns no weeping, contrite one away” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 568; see also John 6:37).

Many Christians lack spiritual power in their lives because they don't truly believe that communion with Christ is transformational or necessary. These believers fail to believe fully in

His promises of forgiveness, cleansing, and peace (see Jeremiah 29:13; Isaiah 27:5; 1 John 1:9). They believe more in their weakness than in His strength. Enslaved by sinful thoughts, feelings, and habits, they question whether time alone with God will do any real good. But this is exactly the lie the devil wants them to believe. He wants to rob us of the power of Christ. The truth is that Jesus is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him” (Hebrews 7:25). Yes, “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

Whether you’ve wandered far from God or simply desire more spiritual power in your life and witness, the recipe is the same. Come to Christ, just as you are, every morning. Kneel and pray and linger in His presence. Pour out your heart before Him. Confess your sins, put them away, and pray for purity of soul. Read and meditate on His Word and claim His promises. If you don’t feel in the mood, come by faith. If you miss a morning, come in the evening. If you don’t sense an immediate change, keep coming anyway. You don’t get into shape the first time you step on a treadmill. Be consistent. Don’t doubt His power just because you don’t understand how it works. Trust God and His Word. Let nothing prevent you from pressing close to His side.

The hope you have in God will not disappoint (see Romans 5:5). Day by day, your heart will change. Your thoughts and habits will change. You will be infused with spiritual power. The love of Christ will thrill your soul and compel you to live for Him. You will be filled with love for God and your neighbor. You will rejoice over sins forgiven, victories gained, and “the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The joy of salvation will be restored to you, the power of the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and you will be His witness.

The Witness of a Christlike Character

A witness is someone who knows something by personal experience. Peter and John were “uneducated and untrained men,” but when the religious leaders of their day heard them boldly standing for the truth, “they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). It was their firsthand knowledge of Jesus that compelled them to testify: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (verses 19, 20). Education and training have their place, but only our personal experiences with Jesus make us witnesses.

Similarly, the apostle Paul became a witness after a personal encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. A believer named Ananias explained to Paul that this meeting had been carefully orchestrated by God: “The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to

all men of what you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:14, 15). Once again, becoming a witness is about personal experience—what we have “seen and heard.”

In order for people to witness for Christ effectively, they must first become witnesses by experiencing the love and power of God in their own lives. Jesus 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). Jesus did not merely tell the disciples that they would engage in witnessing activities, but that they would “be” witnesses. Similarly, He did not promise merely to train His followers how to fish for men, but assured them that they would “become” (Mark 1:17) fishers of men. Witnessing is more than an activity. It is an identity. It is not merely what we do, but who we are.

A New Person

The gospel transforms us from the inside out. When we are born of the Spirit, we become new creatures in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Through faith in Christ and His righteousness, we are justified before God (see Romans 5:1), and the Holy Spirit begins to impart to us the unselfish attributes of God (see Galatians 5:22, 23). Having received forgiveness and peace, we begin to think about those who are lost and without hope of eternal life. We become debtors to all people (see Romans 1:14), imploring them to be reconciled to God (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Thus the fundamental experience of becoming a new person in Christ is the *same one* that makes us His witnesses. It is an inward change brought about by an infusion of spiritual power.

Much of what we call “witnessing,” however, is purely mechanical and doesn’t even require the Spirit of God. Consisting only of scheduled tasks and outreach activities, this limited view of witnessing is easily turned on and off. For instance, when we pass out flyers inviting people to church or when we talk to guests at an evangelistic meeting, we recognize these activities as witnessing. But when we’re at the grocery store, we’re just buying food. When we’re at the fitness center, we’re exercising. When we’re at a family gathering, we’re socializing. Many Christians turn off the “witnessing” switch for most of their lives!

*Witnessing is more
than an activity.
It is an identity.*

Such a view often leads to witnessing efforts that are halfhearted, sporadic, and short-lived. And they are rarely successful. True soul winners are never *not* soul winners. And true witnessing is more than an outing on the schedule. It’s the saving influence of a person who has experienced the grace of Christ (see Acts 5:30-32). What we need is not more people who will volunteer to do missionary work, but more *missionaries*. Not more people who will go on an outing to fish for souls, but more *fishers of men*. Not more people to share their opinions about God, but more *ambassadors for Christ*.

There was never a time Jesus was “off the clock.” His singular purpose was to bless and save others. And no one was exempt: “Every soul was precious in His sight. . . . He saw in all, souls whom it was His mission to save” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 117). Everywhere He went, He sought opportunities to encourage, help, heal, and enlighten with the gospel. *This* is witnessing.

A Winsome Character

In the fullest sense, witnessing is an expression of who we are. To be faithful witnesses is to represent Christ in all that we do. This will certainly include the mission of sharing the gospel and engaging in outreach to our communities. But it will also include doing acts of kindness, speaking encouraging words, and overlooking the faults of those around us. Attempting to spread the gospel without demonstrations of unselfishness and love will be sadly deficient.

Ellen White emphasizes this powerful aspect of witnessing: “There are many ways in which church members may give the message to those around them. One of the most successful is by living helpful, unselfish, Christian lives. Those who are fighting the battle of life at great odds may be refreshed and strengthened by little attentions which cost nothing. Kindly words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation and doubt that gather over the soul” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 30).

We would do well to place more of an emphasis on Christlike character in witnessing. Perhaps nothing is more vital to soul-winning success than manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The Lord Himself declared, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with *lovingkindness* I have *drawn* you” (Jeremiah 31:3). Kindness and love are attractive. Without these attributes, the Bible says, our words are like a “sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). With them, our growth could be exponential: “If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one” (*ibid.*, p. 189).

While the doctrines of the Bible are logical and true, witnessing requires more than merely convincing the mind. The true science of soul winning is in reaching the heart: “Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments as upon your ability to find your way to the heart” (*Welfare Ministry*, p. 91). For this reason the truth must be wrapped in sympathy and love. We have the assurance that “while logic may fail to move, and argument be powerless to convince, the love of Christ, revealed in personal ministry, may soften the stony heart, so that the seed of truth can take root” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 57).

Loving and Lovable

The love of Christ gives a power to our witness that nothing else can. Take a moment to consider Jesus’ manner of witnessing as described in the following quotes:

“Had it not been for the *sweet, sympathetic spirit* that shone out in every look and word, He would not have attracted the large congregations that He did” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 254; emphasis supplied).

“Our Savior’s power was not in a strong array of sharp words that would pierce through the very soul; it was His *gentleness* and His *plain, unassuming manners* that made Him a conqueror of hearts” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 477; emphasis supplied).

“Whatever the evil habits, the strong prejudices, or the overbearing passions of human beings, He met them all with *pitying tenderness*” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 165; emphasis supplied).

“He who is shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace will walk as Christ walked. He will be able to speak right words, and to *speak them in love*. He will not try to drive home God’s message of truth. He will *deal tenderly* with every heart” (*Evangelism*, p. 174; emphasis supplied).

In light of the love of Christ manifested in His every look and word, is it any wonder that He was so effective at winning souls? The followers of Jesus were to be known for the same gentleness and love that made their Master a conqueror of hearts: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Ellen White reiterates and expounds on this truth: “No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470). Don’t miss this point. The “strongest argument” is not merely an airtight presentation of truth, but a “loving and lovable Christian.”

Just as the unselfish love demonstrated on Calvary was a “sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5:2), the same love seen in God’s people is what makes their message a sweet fragrance to the world (see 2 Corinthians 2:14-16). “It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 551).

By Beholding

Being a loving and lovable Christian, however, doesn’t happen by chance. For sinful, self-centered people, living to help and bless others doesn’t come naturally: “A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A

noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 331). We can be thankful that the Lord doesn’t sugarcoat the process of developing a Christlike character. But just because it doesn’t come easy doesn’t mean it’s out of reach! The secret is to keep our eyes on Jesus. Then, “by beholding we become changed” (*ibid.*, p. 355).

The apostle Paul draws from the story of Moses and God on Mount Sinai to illustrate this principle. During His dialogue with God, Moses had made the radical request “Please, show me Your glory” (Exodus 33:18). To this God responded, “I will make all My goodness pass before you” (verse 19). The glory, or goodness, of God was so awesome to behold that when Moses came down from the mountain, his face was shining like the sun! (see Exodus 34:29, 30). Paul uses this imagery to describe how the Christian’s character may reflect the glory, or goodness, of God by spending time in His presence: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The apostle John’s life testified to the truth of this principle: “Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 559). Praise God for His amazing grace! Let us behold Christ so that we too can become like Him whom we adore.

Views of Christ

What then does it mean to “behold” Christ? In a sense, any time spent contemplating spiritual realities is time spent beholding Him. Yet it is Scripture that gives us the clearest views of His life and character. This is the “mirror” in which we behold His glory, and by which the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and lives (see 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Throughout the Bible the glory of Christ is revealed in various ways. Chief among these are the scenes of Jesus’ earthly life and sacrifice: “It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. . . . Everything noble and generous in man will respond to the contemplation of Christ upon the cross” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 374).

In the Bible’s record of the life of Christ, we behold unselfish love in action. Luke summarized it well when he wrote that “Jesus . . . went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). Love was not merely a feeling or an emotion to Jesus. It always led Him to *action*. Character is revealed not merely through our disposition or intentions, but through tangible deeds. Thus Ellen White encourages, “Crowd all the good works you possibly can into this life” (*Christian Service*, p. 85). As we behold Christ from the cradle to the cross, going from one good deed to the next, let us consider how our lives might reflect the life of Jesus.

Another way to behold the character of Christ is to contemplate the fruit of the Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22, 23). As you meditate

on each of these attributes, ask God to manifest them through you. Through the power of His grace, let your love bless others and lead you to labor for their salvation. Let your joy exude enthusiasm and inspire hope. Let your peace make you an anchor of security and strength. Let your long-suffering inspire others to trust in God. Let your kindness attract others and soften their hearts. Let your goodness touch their lives with compassion. Let your faithfulness inspire faith in others. Let your gentleness make you approachable and your self-control give you moral strength. Of course, none of these traits are inherent in the human heart. We can manifest them only as we pray and ask God to fill us with His Spirit.

Love was not merely a feeling or an emotion to Jesus. It always led Him to action.

One more important way to behold Christ is in His law. “God’s law is the transcript of His character” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 305). The Ten Commandments are an expression of unselfish love (see Romans 13:10) because each one requires us to deny self in order to honor God and to respect others. Meditating on the spiritual nature of the law exposes the sin and selfishness that separates us from God and harms our witness (see Psalm 119:97). For example, as we contemplate the meaning of idolatry, it leads us to surrender anything that is stealing our affections from God. Reflecting on the sacredness of the Sabbath, we’re reminded to preserve His holy day for Him. Thoughtfully considering our parents, we’re impressed with ways to respect and care for them. The law convicts us to confess any unresolved bitterness, lustful thoughts, or dishonest practices in our lives. “In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from Him” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 44). As you

meditate on God's love as revealed in His law, ask Him to write it on your heart and mind, that it may be seen in your character.

Living to Win Souls

“True holiness is wholeness in the service of God. . . . He who lives to himself is not a Christian” (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 48, 49). Herein lies the heart of the matter. To be a Christian is to live for Christ and not ourselves (see 2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 2:20). It is to serve and not to be served (see Matthew 20:28). It is to deny ourselves for the salvation of others (see Luke 9:23). When we are made new creatures in Christ, it changes our reason for living. While before we lived only for ourselves, as disciples of Christ we share the singular purpose of our Master: “We should live in this world to win souls to the Savior” (*Christian Service*, p. 270).

Do you live to bless others and win them to the Savior? Living merely for ourselves will never satisfy: “There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Savior, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely” (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 67, 68).

Don was a man who lived only for himself. He had always been someone who stood out; as eccentric as they come. He had a drinking problem, a smoking problem, and a significant drug problem. His only pursuit in life was to satisfy his desire for pleasure, but his addictions left him feeling desolate and hopeless. On one occasion Don responded to the invitation of a friend to attend an evangelistic series. When the evangelist saw Don, he could hardly be blamed for not considering him to be a strong interest. Don certainly didn't look like the church type, and the scent of smoke and alcohol followed him wherever he went. But on the very first night something touched his heart.

After the presentation, Don asked the evangelist if he could give him a hug. He said that he had never heard anything like that in his entire life. He continued to come to the meetings every night, even attending a special session on overcoming addictions. Night by night his dress changed, his scent changed, and God was delivering him from his deadly drug addiction. On the last night of the series, Don was baptized and totally changed the focus of his life. He stopped living with himself as the center. He started actively witnessing and serving the Lord through various ministries. Don had found a new purpose for his life.

What about us? Whether new in the faith or with years of experience, every one of us can fall into the rut of living for ourselves rather than fulfilling God's purpose for our lives. Let us pray that the Savior would implant in our hearts His true purpose for living. Not merely that He would help us to squeeze an occasional soul-winning activity into our busy lives, but that He would make our lives about winning souls. Not only that God would teach us *how* to witness, but that He would *make us* witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Taking the Initiative

For many Christians, witnessing is an idea that never seems to move beyond the realm of good intentions. At times we feel inspired to witness, but then we fail to follow through. The key to overcoming this tendency is to pursue the development of a side of Christian character that is often neglected: “Christian life is more than many take it to be. It does not consist wholly in gentleness, patience, meekness, and kindliness. These graces are essential; but there is need also of courage, force, energy, and perseverance” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 497).

Witnessing requires more than passive traits of character. It takes energy and courage to share Bible truth with others. In fact, active traits such as these are needed for witnessing every bit as much as meekness and kindness. While those who lack active virtues might be warm and friendly, they are slow to labor for the salvation of souls, and they often give up at the first sign of difficulty.

Ellen White states it plainly: “Some who engage in missionary service are weak, nerveless, spiritless, easily discouraged. They lack push. They have not those positive traits of character

that give power to do something—the spirit and energy that kindle enthusiasm. Those who would win success must be courageous and hopeful. They should cultivate not only the passive but the active virtues” (*ibid.*).

Seeking the Lost

Witnessing requires a certain amount of “push,” or drive to “do something.” Yet sadly, many Christians think only of Jesus’ gentle and loving disposition, while they neglect His other essential traits. They do not take time to appreciate His boldness, courage, energy, firmness, and determination, and thus fail to pattern their lives after these virtues. They end up “weak, nerveless, spiritless,” and “easily discouraged.”

Scripture testifies that Jesus came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Our Savior didn’t stay in heaven. He came down from His comfortable throne and exerted every ounce of His energy to rescue fallen humanity. He is the faithful shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep, who seeks after “the one which is lost *until he finds it*” (Luke 15:4). Now, that’s a worthy model of effort and determination!

In order to experience soul-winning success, we must follow the example of Jesus: “The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143). Christ’s fervent love for the lost compelled Him to mingle with people. He didn’t ignore them. He didn’t become so absorbed in His own interests that He didn’t have time to become acquainted with theirs. He was intentional. He chose to interact with lost people, with the ultimate goal of saving their souls.

We must draw near to those we desire to help. Jesus made this clear to His disciples when He promised to make them

“fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). If there’s anything that people who fish know, it’s that you have to go to the water, where the fish are, if you want to catch them. Nobody puts a bucket on the lakeshore and waits for the fish to flop out of the lake, across the sand, and into the bucket!

No, we have to go *fishing* if we want to catch fish. We have to *mingle* if we want to win souls. We have to *seek* if we want to find lost people. “We are not to wait for souls to come to us; we must seek them out where they are. . . . There are multitudes who will never be reached by the gospel unless it is carried to them” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 229). Then let us take the initiative and be active soul winners and intentional witnesses for Christ.

Home Missionaries

So where should we begin? Jesus taught us how to prioritize our labors: “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). Witnessing should begin with those nearest to us. The first recipients of our witness should be in our own homes and among our families. In this Jesus gave us His own example: “Christ acted in a manner that blessed the household in which He was found, for He was subject to His parents and thus did missionary work in His home life” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 290).

Notice that the initial way Jesus did missionary work was to bless and obey His parents. Showing love in our homes and encouraging our families to walk with God is the first and most fundamental form of witnessing: “If they ever learn to do genuine missionary work for others, they must first learn to

labor for those at home, who have a natural right to their offices of love” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 429). “As workers for God, our work is to begin with those nearest. It is to begin in our own home. There is no more important missionary field than this” (*Child Guidance*, p. 476). “The management and instruction of children is the noblest missionary work that any man or woman can undertake” (*ibid.*). “The first great business of your life is to be a missionary at home” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 138).

While the home is our first field of labor, it isn’t our *only* field. We should be careful to labor for those outside our homes as well. Even busy parents, in order to train their children and to grow spiritually themselves, should take the opportunity to witness to their neighbors and communities. Consider the following admonition given to someone who considered his home his only field of labor:

“Your interest, and efforts, and anxieties are for your family and your relatives. But you have not entertained the idea of reaching out for others around you, overcoming your reluctance to exert an influence outside of a special circle. You idolize yours, and shut yourselves within yourselves. That the Lord may save me and mine is the great burden. This spirit will have to die before you can flourish in the Lord and make spiritual advancement, before the church can grow and souls be added unto them of such as shall be saved.

“You are all narrowed up as to labor for others, and must change your base of operations. Your relatives are no dearer in the sight of God than any other poor souls who need salvation. We must put self and selfishness under our feet, and exemplify in our lives the spirit of self-sacrifice and disinterested benevolence

manifested by Jesus when He was upon earth. All should have an interest for their relatives, but should not allow themselves to be shut up to them as though they were the only ones whom Jesus came to save” (*ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 77).

More Fields of Labor

In addition to their families, Christians should also put forth efforts to reach their neighbors. When Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan, He made it clear that our definition of “neighbor” shouldn’t be limited to the people who live nearest to us (see Luke 10:29-37). But it certainly shouldn’t exclude them! We should draw close to those who live around us and look for ways to bless and serve them. Think of small favors you can do to lighten their burdens, such as caring for their property or animals, running errands for them, or offering to keep an eye on their homes while they’re away. On birthdays and holidays, a thoughtful gift can make a warm impression. And don’t forget the impact of a simple invitation to share a meal together.

While the home is our first field of labor, it isn’t our only field.

Most of us also have family, friends, and former neighbors and coworkers that we’ve regrettably lost contact with over the years. Though no one may be to blame, sometimes our former friends can feel hurt or forgotten. It’s never too late to seek to reestablish these relationships, whether through letters, cards, small gifts, emails, phone calls, text messages, or social media. Especially is this important if some of those we’ve lost contact with are not believers. This may be an opportunity to win these souls to Christ.

Moving beyond those we already know, there are also many witnessing opportunities in the broader community. Do you make regular or periodic contact with a store clerk, bank teller, or postal worker? Go out of your way to smile, be kind and helpful, engage in conversation, and show patience and sympathy. One day you will want to give a piece of literature or an event flyer to these individuals. Their response will be more favorable to these seed-sowing gestures if they've come to know you as someone who desires their good.

Another fertile field of labor that is often overlooked is the church. While many Christians will smile and say hello to church visitors, opportunities to win these souls are frequently neglected. When members assume that the pastor or someone else in the church will minister to these souls, the work is often left undone. Ellen White warned of the danger of leaning on the group instead of taking personal responsibility: "Everywhere there is a tendency to substitute the work of organizations for individual effort. . . . Multitudes leave to institutions and organizations the work of benevolence; they excuse themselves from contact with the world, and their hearts grow cold" (*Last Day Events*, p. 75).

Marvin was a Sabbath School teacher with a burden for souls. When a visitor named Pam came to his class, he watched closely to gauge her interest. When class was over, he approached her and said, "Pam, thanks for joining us today. I wanted to let you know that my wife and I enjoy studying the Bible with friends, and if you'd ever be interested, we'd love to have you over to our home to go through a series of Bible studies together." Pam's response was immediate: "Yes, I would love to!" She had been looking for Christian friends to study the Bible with, and after several months of study and fellowship, she was baptized.

How many Sabbath School teachers make the offer that Marvin did? How many Pathfinder directors visit the homes of parents and youth who are not members of the church? How many church members and leaders make intentional efforts to win the hearts of regular visitors, unbaptized youth, unbelieving spouses, and many others who attend our church services and events? And what about young, new, or struggling members who need our encouragement, sympathy, and mentorship? Indeed, every church needs witnesses—even in the building!

No matter what the field of labor, you will have far greater soul-winning success if you demonstrate a genuine interest in others. Think of intentional ways to bless and minister to the needs of family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, church visitors, and others in your community. As you do, here are several small but important kindnesses that will make a significant difference in your Christian witness:

- **Be grateful**—Express your thanks for emails, texts, gifts, cards, or other kind words or gestures.
- **Be hospitable**—Freely invite people to your home. Offer warmth, food, and fellowship.
- **Be generous**—Give small tokens and gifts whenever possible to show your love and appreciation.
- **Be inclusive**—Welcome people into your social circle. Include people in conversations.
- **Be helpful**—Notice when work needs done and jump in to help. Bear others' burdens.
- **Be polite**—Let others go first and choose first. Listen well and don't rudely speak or interrupt.
- **Be interested**—Ask questions about the interests of others and take care to remember the details.

- **Be gracious**—Overlook the faults of others (see Proverbs 19:11). Don't censure or criticize.

Follow these simple suggestions, and you will have far greater success when you attempt to use the methods of sharing the Word that will be outlined in the remainder of this book.

Remember the Source of Power

As we prepare to launch into much practical instruction in the chapters ahead, we pause to remember that without maintaining communion with Christ, we will never have success in witnessing (see John 15:5; Psalm 127:1). Yet Ellen White warns that many Christians have a natural inclination to rely on their own ability: The church members “are more ready for active labor than for humble devotion, more ready to engage in outward religious service than in the inner work of the heart. Meditation and prayer are neglected for bustle and show” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 535).

Bustle and show will always be more appealing to some people than prayer and meditating on God's Word. Especially does this inclination become a temptation after experiencing a measure of success: “As activity increases and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of activity. We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power which does the work” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 362).

What we are too quick to forget is that God is our source of spiritual power. Without Him, our efforts are in vain: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm

127:1). Therefore we are not wasting time when we spend it with God. On the contrary, we are wasting time if we labor all day without first receiving His Spirit and securing His blessing. “Every morning take time to begin your work with prayer. *Do not think this wasted time*; it is time that will live through eternal ages. By this means success and spiritual victory will be brought in. . . . The hands of every worker must be strengthened, his heart must be purified, before the Lord can use him effectively” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 194; emphasis supplied).

When we are Christ’s, “we feel that our highest place is at the feet of our Savior” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 15). Nothing in our lives is more important than the time we spend alone with God. No work is more urgent. Our greatest achievement and our most effective method is what happens on our knees before God: “The greatest victories gained for the cause of God are not the result of labored argument, ample facilities, wide influence, or abundance of means; they are gained in the audience chamber with God, when with earnest, agonizing faith men lay hold upon the mighty arm of power” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 259).

Faithful Intercession

Since the greatest victories are gained in the prayer closet, it follows that laboring for souls should always include praying for them: “Through much prayer you must labor for souls, for this is the only method by which you can reach hearts” (*Evangelism*, p. 342). So great is the advantage gained when we pray for others that Samuel considered it a sin to neglect doing so: “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23).

When on earth, Jesus was our example in praying for those for whom He labored. In His longest recorded prayer He spent most of His time praying for others (see John 17). And when Peter was about to face his greatest trial, Jesus assured him that He had been interceding for him: “I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail” (Luke 22:32).

Even now our salvation is dependent upon Jesus’ intercessions as our high priest: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). This text should give us great comfort and assurance. As our high priest, Jesus is the capable and faithful advocate who is always interceding in our behalf.

Jesus longs for us, as disciples who imitate their Master, to share His burden of intercession for the lost. He calls on us to pray for those who won’t pray for themselves: “This Savior, who prayed for those that felt no need of prayer, and wept for those that felt no need of tears, is now before the throne, to receive and present to His Father the petitions of those for whom He prayed on earth. The example of Christ is for us to follow. Prayer is a necessity in our labor for the salvation of souls” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 528, 529).

Paul, perhaps the greatest evangelist in the New Testament, followed the example of Jesus in praying for souls. To the converts in Ephesus, he wrote: “Therefore I . . . do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Ephesians 1:15, 16). Similarly, he assured the Philippians: “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy” (Philippians 1:3, 4). And to the believers in Rome he confidently declared:

“For God is my witness . . . that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” (Romans 1:9). What a powerful testimony of the value and importance of praying for souls!

Still, some Christians wonder what the purpose of praying for the same people again and again could possibly be. At least two reasons could be given. First, daily praying for others is a way of carrying them on our hearts. It keeps them always in view, kindling love and concern and prompting us to labor for them in different ways. “As we seek to win others to Christ, bearing the burden of souls in our prayers, our own hearts will throb with the quickening influence of God’s grace; our own affections will glow with more divine fervor; our whole Christian life will be more of a reality, more earnest, more prayerful” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 354).

*Jesus longs for us
to share His burden
of intercession
for the lost.*

A second reason to pray for souls is that we’re in a spiritual battle: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (see Ephesians 6:12). One of the terms of this battle is that when we pray, God will do things He wouldn’t otherwise have done: “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).

Our prayers for the salvation of others are not in vain. Though we may not always see the effects, yet behind the scenes God is working to answer our petitions (see Daniel 10:12-14). For this reason our prayers inspire fear among the demonic

powers of darkness: “Satan cannot endure to have his powerful rival [Jesus] appealed to, for he fears and trembles before His strength and majesty. At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan’s whole host trembles” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 346). Our prayers *do* make a difference!

Send Me!

In addition to praying for the salvation of souls, Jesus also instructed us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers into His harvest field (see Luke 10:2). Jesus doesn’t merely need more people who acknowledge the importance of the mission. What He needs is more people who will *do* the mission. He’s looking for those who will say with Isaiah, “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8). Good intentions or cheering from the sideline simply won’t finish the job.

If we are true disciples, we will embrace the mission of Jesus. We will pray, mingle, seek, and fish for souls. We will exert energy, courage, boldness, determination, and unselfish love to win them to Christ. We will “push” beyond our good intentions and comfort zones. Sadly, “many whom God has qualified to do excellent work accomplish very little, because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no definite object for which to live, no standard to reach” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 331). So many of us are capable of so much more than we’ve been giving to God! How about you? Are you willing to be a worker for Him? Ask Him to help you become an active witness for Christ.

Hopefully, these three chapters on the foundations of witnessing have both challenged and encouraged you. They’ve provided the following keys to effective witnessing:

- **Witnessing requires spiritual life and power.** The secret to this power is consistent communion with Christ, through prayer and the study of His Word, and in consecration to Him.
- **Witnessing is an expression of our new identity in Christ.** More than a purely mechanical act, witnessing includes being loving and lovable Christians in all that we do.
- **Witnessing requires us to take the initiative.** It draws on the *active* virtues of Christlike character to intentionally pray for, mingle with, and labor for souls.

In these chapters we've also focused on two types of preparation. The first is the preparation of our own hearts for spiritual success by beholding and abiding in Christ. The second is the preparation of others' hearts through loving relationships, thoughtful deeds, and Christlike kindnesses. These intentional efforts to prepare the soil of the heart are a critical phase in the disciple-making process. They build confidence and trust, leading to a greater openness to spiritual truth. Now we turn our attention to the second phase in the disciple-making process, and the primary burden of this book, which is planting the seed of God's Word through conversations, testimonies, invitations, literature, media, and house-to-house ministry.

Section 2

Introducing Spiritual Truth

4

Sowing Bountifully

In explaining the parable of the sower (see Matthew 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8), Jesus told us plainly that the seed represents “the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Perhaps nothing could better describe the mysterious power of God’s Word than the abundant life contained in a seed. It’s almost impossible not to wonder at the incredible miracle of a tiny seed’s becoming a flowering plant or a mighty tree.

As with natural seed, the spiritual seed of God’s Word is a miracle waiting to happen. The Lord declares through Isaiah: “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). What an incredible promise! Just as we have confidence that a seed planted in proper soil will result in a fruitful plant, so we can have faith that when we share the Word of God, it will not return empty. There is supernatural power in the Word to convert souls to Christ and to cause them to grow spiritually (see 1 Peter 1:23; 2:2).

There is supernatural power in the Word.

The apostle Paul declares: “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6). We can have confidence that God’s Word will accomplish its purpose. It will awaken those living only for this world to a love for Christ and a deeper longing for eternal truth. “Sanctify them [set them apart] by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). The more seeds of truth we plant, the greater will be the harvest of souls.

Every Member Is Needed

In light of this powerful formula, that the more we plant the more we reap, should we not plant the gospel seed wherever we go? God is calling on the members of His church to do just that. Regardless of age, background, talents, or gifts, every member of the church can spread the Word. This is exactly what we find the early believers doing in the book of Acts.

Just after the martyrdom of the deacon Stephen, “a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1). While the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, the lay members of the church were scattered abroad. And what does the Bible tell us about these believers? “Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (verse 4). To “preach” doesn’t refer only to proclaiming God’s Word publicly, but includes sharing the “word of truth” (James 1:18) in personal settings as well. The witness of these laypeople was so powerful that a new church was established in Antioch as a result of their truth-sharing labors (see Acts 11:19-26).

The church has been commissioned to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). As disciples of Christ, sharing

the truth is an indispensable part of our calling as “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Consider the emphasis Ellen White places on the vital role of every member in sharing the truth of God’s Word with others:

“The dissemination of the truth of God is not confined to a few ordained ministers. *The truth is to be scattered* by all who claim to be disciples of Christ” (*Christian Service*, p. 68; emphasis supplied).

“Satan is now seeking to hold God’s people in a state of inactivity, to keep them from acting their part in *spreading the truth*, that they may at last be weighed in the balance and found wanting” (*ibid.*, p. 37; emphasis supplied).

“Unbelief, like the pall of death, is surrounding our churches, because they do not exercise the talents God has given them, by imparting the light to those who know not the precious truth. The Lord calls for the pardoned souls, those who rejoice in the light, to *make known the truth* to others” (*ibid.*; emphasis supplied).

“Let ministers teach church members that in order to grow in spirituality, they must carry the burden that the Lord has laid upon them—the burden of *leading souls into the truth*” (*ibid.*, p. 69; emphasis supplied).

The Lord has given every Christian the privilege and responsibility of scattering, spreading, imparting, and making known the truth to others. This “burden” should not be viewed in the sense of an unwanted or arbitrarily assigned chore. Rather, it reflects the natural love and concern for others that is felt by every person who has received the free gift of salvation. We cannot help feeling, even if only to a limited degree, the burden

of Christ for those who do not yet know Him as their personal Savior. As Seventh-day Adventists we also carry a special burden for those who do not understand the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. The good news of the gospel, the love of our Savior, and the powerful conviction of the Holy Spirit compel us to share our message with the world!

Consider the story of Debbie, a faithful Seventh-day Adventist. She loved God and felt a burden to share the message of salvation with others, but she was extremely timid and shy. As Debbie considered what she could do, she felt impressed to distribute tracts. With great trepidation she went from house to house for two blocks, leaving a gospel tract at every door. She then went home and prayed for the blessing of God to rest on every home she had visited. She claimed the promise in Isaiah 55:11 that God's Word would not return empty but would accomplish His purpose.

A woman in one of the houses read the tract left by Debbie. The Lord spoke to her heart. The more she read, the more the Holy Spirit impressed her with the truth. She had to get more literature, but where? She looked on the back of the tract and found a church address. Soon this woman was attending Sabbath School and church. She came for several months until a visiting minister made an appeal one day at the end of his sermon. The woman sprung from her seat and came forward to commit her life to Jesus. Imagine the joy that filled Debbie's heart that day! Even if you are as fearful as Debbie, God can use *you* to spread the Word. (Story adapted from Home Missionary Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Lift Him Up*, p. 39.)

Beside All Waters

The prophet Isaiah emphasizes the importance of a wide distribution of the gospel seed: “Blessed are you who sow beside all waters” (Isaiah 32:20). When doing this, we should utilize multiple methods in order to meet the needs of various circumstances. In the remaining chapters of this book, we will explore the following ways to sow the gospel seed:

- Conversations, testimonies, and invitations
- Literature distribution
- Media sharing
- House-to-house visitation

The above topics relate to planting seeds of truth by introducing people to spiritual things. For training on how to give ongoing Bible studies or to conduct evangelistic meetings, see the resources dedicated to the *cultivate* and *harvest* phases of the GROW model at grow.adventist.org.

When it comes to planting the seed of God’s Word, different methods are needed to reach different people. While we sometimes dismiss a method because it influences a smaller number of people, we should remember that those same individuals may be difficult to reach in any other way. Therefore we should not limit ourselves to only one or two methods of spreading the truth. To employ a fishing analogy, we should “cast the net” in as many ways as possible.

Spiritual Interests

Growing churches have a specific trait that sets them apart from stagnant or declining churches. They spend a significant amount of time, energy, and resources searching for people who are open to or interested in eternal things. In evangelistic

terms we refer to these individuals as “interests” or “spiritual interests.” All around us there are people with a hunger and thirst for something more than this world has to offer. Mission-driven churches never stop looking for these individuals. Take a moment to consider the following questions:

- Do you seek out spiritual interests?
- Do you pray for spiritual interests?
- Do you put forth efforts to lead spiritual interests into the truth?
- Does your church create and oversee plans to find, pray for, and develop spiritual interests?

Healthy, growing churches have an interest coordinator that oversees an active interest list. They regularly search for new interests and make plans to generate new ones. Then they pray, plan, and work for these interests to nurture and guide them into the truth and to eventually integrate them into the life and mission of the church.

So how do we find spiritual interests? The best way to identify those who are open to the truth is to plant spiritual seeds! When we spread invitations to Bible-based studies and

*The more seeds we
plant, the more
spiritually interested
people we will find.*

events, for instance, we find those we may not have otherwise known to be interested. Similarly, when we share a testimony, an inspiring piece of literature, or a powerful sermon video, it can help us to identify people who are open to truth. In

essence, the more seeds we plant, the more spiritually interested people we will find, and the more disciples we will be able to make!

Through acts of providence and the influence of His Spirit, God is generating a spiritual interest in many people in our communities: “All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. . . . Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109). The only way to identify and gather into the body of Christ those who are open to salvation is to keep planting seeds of spiritual truth—through conversations, invitations, literature, and media.

Morning and Evening

We should ask God each day to use us as His witnesses. This we can do by praying for doors of opportunity to be opened to plant spiritual seeds: “Continue earnestly in prayer . . . that God would open to us a door for the word” (Colossians 4:2, 3). If clear opportunities don’t present themselves, we may have to take the first steps in building relationships and creating witnessing opportunities. Remember, we’re called to mingle with people, seek the lost, and fish for souls.

The Bible tells us that “he who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap” (Ecclesiastes 11:4). If we put off sharing spiritual truth until what we perceive to be the perfect time or conditions, we may never do it. The passage goes on to say, “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good” (verses 5, 6). We can’t know the perfect time to offer a Bible study, or to open a spiritual conversation, or to share a tract. Therefore the Bible urges us to sow seed “in the morning” *and* “in the evening.” Perhaps both will prosper!

Successful soul winners don't sow sporadically, but continually: "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who *continually* goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:5, 6). Many people who seem to be open to Bible truth never fully accept it. The key to significant growth, then, is to be continually planting seeds and thus finding more spiritual interests. When this is done, there will always be a harvest of "sheaves" giving us reason to rejoice. Growing churches reap bountiful harvests because they sow bountiful seeds of truth!

Sharing Faith With Friends

The parable of the sower, in addition to depicting the vital role of the Word of God in witnessing, also teaches the importance of the right kind of soil for a successful harvest. In every instance given in the parable, the sower was the same, the seed was the same, and the method was the same. The only variable was the condition of the soil, which according to Jesus symbolized the condition of the heart (see Matthew 13:19).

In order for the seed to grow, the soil must be fertile. We can help to create this favorable condition by preparing the soil. In spiritual terms this refers to the work of softening the heart to receive spiritual truth. As mentioned in a previous chapter, this is best accomplished by following the example of Jesus, who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). It was through personal ministry to those in need that Christ was able to soften hard hearts and bring down social barriers.

Ellen White elaborates: “The sowers of the seed have a work to do in preparing hearts to receive the gospel. . . . There

is need of personal labor for the souls of the lost. In Christlike sympathy we should come close to men individually, and seek to awaken their interest in the great things of eternal life. Their hearts may be as hard as the beaten highway, and apparently it may be a useless effort to present the Savior to them; but while logic may fail to move, and argument be powerless to convince, the love of Christ, revealed in personal ministry, may soften the stony heart, so that the seed of truth can take root” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 57).

A renewed emphasis on these principles has led to an increase in need-based ministries in recent years. Many churches and their members have become more intentional about helping their communities through acts of love and kindness. When we show sympathy for people and take a sincere interest in their lives, we discover that they’re more willing to listen to what we have to say about spiritual matters. Such trust is the natural result of truly caring about people’s emotional and physical needs.

Many churches tangibly demonstrate this care by offering such services as depression recovery groups, financial wellness seminars, and healthful cooking classes. Members volunteer for community service projects that provide food, clothing, home repair, and other essentials to those in need. They take part in neighborhood beautification projects, or in ministering to those who are sick or elderly, and to those in prison. These and similar efforts provide to our communities true expressions of the love that Jesus has for every person.

Following Christ’s Method

Making friends and ministering to their physical, mental, and emotional needs are vitally important, but these

by themselves fall short of Christ's full example of ministry. Ellen White explains: "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' " (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

In addition to expressing sympathy for people and ministering to their temporal needs, Jesus also invited them to follow Him and to consider the beauty of eternal truth expressed in His teachings. Unfortunately, the ministry of many Christians remains only temporal. They experience great joy when they minister to people's physical, emotional, or social needs, and such efforts are generally received with gratefulness. Sharing Bible truth, on the other hand, challenges people's beliefs and practices in a way that isn't always welcome. Therefore it's not uncommon for Christians to focus only on people's temporal needs and to leave their spiritual needs unaddressed.

There is one need all humanity shares, which is greater than all others.

Yet as we consider the work of Christ, we see that He cared about the whole person—body, mind, and soul. Yes, Jesus wanted to relieve people's physical sufferings. But He also understood what so many of us have yet to realize fully—that there is one need all humanity shares, which is greater than all others. We need the salvation that comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. Only then can the longings of the soul be satisfied.

"The great mass of mankind are engrossed in the things of this life, and divine truth can find no abiding-place in their hearts. And yet all the blessings which the world can give fail

to satisfy the wants of the soul. There is a nameless longing for something which they have not, a peace and rest that is not born of earth” (*Review and Herald*, February 28, 1882). To fully uplift humanity, we can’t address physical, social, or economic conditions alone: “It is not hardship, toil, or poverty that degrades humanity. It is guilt, wrongdoing. This brings unrest and dissatisfaction. Christ would have His servants minister to sin-sick souls” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822).

Above all else, Jesus longed to bring eternal salvation to “sin-sick souls.” The success of Christ’s method refers to the way in which He accomplished this through His ministry, when multitudes listened to His words and chose to follow Him. We too must never be content with ministering to only the temporal needs of people. We must aim to lead every soul to the Living Water, Jesus Christ, to find eternal salvation in Him.

From Common to Spiritual

Being warm, friendly, and personable is vital to being an effective witness for Christ. But for many, this is the easy part. The difficulty comes in knowing just how and when to make the transition from talking about common themes to spiritual ones. How do you bring up something spiritual without sounding like you’re preaching and scaring people off? Unfortunately, there’s no special phrase that all respond to positively. And there’s no perfect time that works for everyone. Every person is different. Their personalities, life circumstances, and religious experiences are all different. So when the time comes to plant seeds of truth, there will nearly always be a degree of uncertainty and even awkwardness to face.

Some people assume that they must spend years building relationships before sharing biblical truth. But this also

depends on the individual. It isn't always necessary to spend months or even weeks in preparing the soil of the heart. In some instances, as with the Samaritan woman Christ encountered at Jacob's well (see John 4:1-26), it can take place in a matter of minutes. We never know if God has already been preparing someone to receive the truth by the workings of providence, the ministry of others, or the quiet influence of the Spirit of God upon the heart.

The bottom line is that if you ever want to see a harvest, you're going to have to plant seeds. Farmers never till the ground indefinitely. They prepare the soil with the purpose of planting. At some point they must "test the soil" to see how it receives the seed. So it is with spiritual sowing.

Testing the Soil

Because we can't read hearts, it's impossible for us to determine with absolute certainty when a person is ready for the truth. However, there are ways to "test the soil" so that we can begin to find out. Of course in the rare instance that someone initiates a conversation and asks you a spiritual question, no testing is needed. We thank God for such obvious opportunities to share our faith. But in most cases you will need to scatter some "test seeds" by mentioning something spiritual and gauging how the person responds.

Consider a typical conversation with a friend. You begin by discussing one of the common themes upon which your relationship has been built thus far, such as family, work, world news, or weather. If she comments on the crazy weather we've been having, you could respond by saying, "You know, I was just reading something in the Bible about that." If he tells you he's

having difficulty with his teenager, you could reply, “Our pastor brought up a great way of dealing with that in prayer meeting last week.” Perhaps she shares that she’s been feeling depressed. You can respond with “I know this may sound different, but when I’ve felt depressed, the thing that has helped me the most is prayer.”

People will usually respond to spiritual elements inserted into a conversation in one of two ways. They will either show an interest in your response or change the subject and move on

It’s hard to argue with the testimony of someone’s personal experience.

to something else. This will help you to determine their level of interest in spiritual things at that particular point in time. Keep in mind that things can change quickly, so don’t stop throwing out the occasional “test seed.”

In addition to helping you *discover* people who have an interest in eternal things, planting seeds can also help to *awaken* interest. Ellen White instructs, “We must in our work not only strike the iron when it is hot but make the iron hot by striking” (*Evangelism*, p. 647). Many of the people we come in contact with are entirely desensitized to spiritual things. Unless someone draws their attention to eternal realities, they may never be awakened out of their carnal slumber. This is what it means to “make the iron hot by striking.”

“I want to say, brethren and sisters, that we must labor for the wandering where they are. You need not expect those who have the chilling influence of the world upon them to manifest anxiety for their own souls. We must manifest it for them” (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, p. 284). We worry too much about what people will think if we talk to them about spiritual

things. While we shouldn't seek to offend, we should be just as enthusiastic in telling others about Jesus and the Bible as they are about telling us what's important to them.

Telling Your Story

One of the simplest and most natural ways to bridge to spiritual subjects is by sharing your own experience of what Christ has done in your life. The apostle Paul, a well-educated theologian, did not lean on his intellectual arguments when given opportunities to defend his faith before unbelievers. Instead, he chose to share his own conversion story and to testify of what God had done in his life (see Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-29). It's hard to argue with the testimony of someone's personal experience.

Another powerful Bible example of this can be found in the story of the demoniacs of the Gadarenes. After Jesus had set them free from the powers of darkness, they were so grateful that they wanted to go with Him and leave their home behind. Instead, He commanded them, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you" (Luke 8:39).

Commenting on this, Ellen White wrote: "They could not instruct the people as the disciples who had been daily with Christ were able to do. But they bore in their own persons the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. They could tell what they knew; what they themselves had seen, and heard, and felt of the power of Christ. This is what everyone can do whose heart has been touched by the grace of God. . . . We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 340).

The power of your testimony is that it makes the “old, old story” more than just a story. It can make the good news of salvation real to someone who has previously viewed it as nothing more than a lifeless theory or an imaginary fairy tale. Accompanied by a transformed life, a personal testimony will not fail to convict hearts: “Thousands can be reached in the most simple and humble way. The most intellectual, those who are looked upon as the world’s most gifted men and women, are often refreshed by the simple words of one who loves God, and who can speak of that love as naturally as the worldling speaks of the things that interest him most deeply. Often the words well prepared and studied have but little influence. But the true, honest expression of a son or daughter of God, spoken in natural simplicity, has power to unbolt the door to hearts that have long been closed against Christ and His love” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 232).

How to Share Your Testimony

Sometimes a friend may ask you questions during a conversation that lead naturally into an opportunity to share your testimony. In other cases you might just sense that your friend would be open to hearing about what God has done in your life. You could say: “God has really changed my life in so many positive and powerful ways. I’m so thankful for the new peace I have in my life. Would you mind if I shared my story with you?” If your friend says yes, what should you do next? Is there an ideal way to share your testimony?

First, remember that your testimony is *your* story. There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to sharing it. However, we can learn valuable lessons on how to share our testimony effectively by studying how the apostle Paul shared his testimony

with King Agrippa. In this powerful address he started by speaking of his early life as a Jew, including his role in the persecution of Christians (Acts 26:4-11). He then shared his conversion experience (verses 12-18) and his life since that conversion (verses 19-23). Finally, he appealed to Agrippa to accept Christ for himself (verses 24-29). Following Paul's example, you can share your personal testimony of what Christ has done in *your* life in four simple steps:

1. **Tell what your life was like before Christ.** This is an opportunity to identify with your listeners. The purpose of this part of your testimony is not to glamorize a life of sin, but to help your listeners understand that you were not born converted (even if you have been raised "in the faith" your whole life), but have the same sinful nature as they do, with all its liabilities. Tell what your life was missing that led you to seek for something more.
2. **Explain how you came to Christ.** Tell about what happened to bring you into a real, meaningful experience with Jesus. Tell the steps you followed, and the struggles you faced, to accept Him as your Savior and Lord. Help your listeners to understand what steps a person needs to take in order to be set free from sin and guilt. Make sure your testimony is less about you and more about Jesus and His love for sinners.
3. **Tell about your new life with Jesus.** Tell about how your life has changed for the better with Christ. Don't dwell on what you have had to "give up" to follow Jesus. Share how you have been blessed by your journey since that time, and tell of the Lord's faithfulness to you in challenging times.
4. **Appeal to your listener(s) to turn to Jesus.** In a simple and direct way, encourage your listeners to "taste and see that the

Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). They can do this by reading the Bible with an open heart, seeking God through simple and honest prayer, and trusting God with whatever their current struggles may be. Assure them that everything God has done for you, He is able and willing to do for them.

It may be helpful to write out your testimony, especially if you’ve never shared it before. Practice it so that you’ll be ready if the opportunity arises (see 1 Peter 3:15). It’s often the case that time does not allow you to share all the details of your testimony, but you can still be prepared to share experiences that are part of your overall story.

The Lord will sometimes put people in your pathway who are struggling in the same areas in which you yourself have struggled and prevailed (see 2 Corinthians 1:4). These are great opportunities to share short and specific testimonies of your experience. You might talk about how God helped you through the loss of a loved one, how He led you to forgive someone who hurt you, how He gave you the victory over some destructive habit, or how He provided for you when you decided to return tithe or keep the Sabbath. As you share with others your stories of God’s faithfulness, invite and encourage them to trust and obey God in specific areas of their own lives.

Inspiring Eternal Hope

Those who don’t know Christ have never experienced true peace and joy. Though they may not openly express it, all around us are people who feel empty and dissatisfied with their lives. So many feel trapped by their circumstances or enslaved by their own sins and weaknesses. They’re looking for hope. This is precisely why planting seeds of truth through spiritual conversations or personal testimonies is so needed.

Consider the story of Kenny, who was raised in a Christian home as a young boy, but whose parents stopped going to church before he was 10 years old. In his teen years Kenny lived for the world, rarely thinking about God or heaven. If he was asked, he would claim to be a Christian, but he would hide the fact that he didn't know anything about the Bible. He thought that someday he would read just enough to avoid being embarrassed if he were ever asked about it.

It wasn't until college that Kenny opened a Bible and began to read. He couldn't believe what he found there! It wasn't like anything he had ever read before. His heart was gripped by the sacrifice of Christ. He was awakened to eternal realities and saw Jesus as His personal Savior. All his life he had tried to fit in and gain the approval of others, but he now knew that he didn't have to try in order to be loved by Jesus. He sensed that his whole life was about to change. And it was. His view of the world was now different. He had hope and purpose in his life. Kenny began living for Christ and eternity.

The world needs to hear the simple stories of people like Kenny, who have found hope through the love of God. They need to hear *your* story. Your real-life experience can help them to see that the Bible has the power to change their hearts and lives. When you insert spiritual insights or experiences into your conversations with others, you remind them that this life is temporary, but that its decisions have eternal significance. Making friends for God is an essential part of Christ's method, but Christians are not content with merely gaining friends on earth. Pray that God will open up opportunities for you to transition into spiritual conversations or to share your testimony. And by the grace of God, let's make friends for eternity!

6

The Power of Invitation

One of the most interesting facets of the life and ministry of Jesus was His prolific use of questions. He asked questions He knew people wouldn't answer. He asked questions to which He already knew the answers. He asked questions in response to those who asked Him questions. In short, Jesus asked a lot of questions!

At times Jesus asked questions to draw out people's desires or to offer them something better than their current condition. He asked two blind men, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Matthew 20:32). He offered hope to a paralyzed man with the words "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6). Sometimes Jesus would offer an invitation in a more direct manner than simply asking a question. "Come and see" (John 1:39), "Follow Me" (John 1:43), or "Come, follow Me" (Luke 18:22) were statements meant to encourage the hearer to take Him up on the offer. Sometimes they did, such as the first disciples, and sometimes they didn't, like the rich young ruler. But Jesus was never afraid to ask.

Consider again Ellen White's highly instructive description of Jesus' method of ministry: "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' " (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143). This beautiful depiction of the ministry of Jesus has often been cited for its helpful emphasis on showing sympathy for others and ministering to their needs. But equally significant are those final words: "Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' " *Bade* is of course past tense for *bid*, which is a somewhat dated word that means to offer or invite. "Then He *invited* them." Jesus ministered to people, but He didn't stop there. The regular use of spiritual invitations was central to His method of winning souls, and it should be central to ours, too.

Just Ask

The power of invitation was not limited to the ministry of Jesus. The first disciples followed His example with great success. "Andrew . . . first found his own brother Simon. . . . And he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:40-42). Who knows if we would have had Peter, the great apostle, if it were not for his persuasive brother Andrew, who brought him to Jesus! Philip was another successful evangelist, enticing his friend Nathanael to investigate the Messiah for himself with the words "Come and see" (John 1:46). Ellen White asserted that we could learn a valuable lesson from Andrew and Philip yet today: "These examples should teach us the importance of personal effort, of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbors" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 141). Not only Jesus and His first disciples, but new converts such as the woman of Samaria also utilized the

power of invitation. She urged the men of her city: “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” The Scripture reveals the effectiveness of her invitation: “Then they went out of the city and came to Him” (John 4:29, 30).

It has been consistently proven that the people most likely to become baptized members of the church are those who were personally invited to Sabbath School, church, a Bible study, or some other church event. There is simply no substitute for personal ministry. For many people the comfort of knowing that someone they trust will be attending an event is just the encouragement they need to come to it themselves. Even better than a simple invitation is an offer to bring someone with you—just as Andrew brought his brother to see Jesus. And when it comes to an event that’s a continuing series, those who attend in response to a personal invitation are far more likely to continue to the end.

Even better than a simple invitation is an offer to bring someone with you.

Inviting people to a church service or event is easy. Consider this simple canvass:

“Have you heard about our upcoming prophecy seminar? I’ve been looking forward to it for a while now. Here’s a flyer with all the dates and topics. I’m planning on being there for every session, so if you’re interested, I’d be happy to pick you up, and we could go together. Do you think you might be able to come?”

In many cases, offering to pick your friends up is exactly what is needed to make them feel comfortable and to ensure their attendance. Yet don’t apply too much pressure, as they may prefer to come alone.

Many members feel even less comfortable about asking people to study the Bible with them than they feel about inviting them to attend an event. But asking for Bible studies doesn't need to be complicated. Consider this canvass:

“Have you heard about our free Bible studies? Here's the first study guide in the series and a sign-up card if you're interested. You can study on your own, or I'd love to go through the study guides together with you. Is that something you might be interested in?”

Another simple and effective way to ask people if they would be interested in Bible studies is based on the approach of Jesus with the woman of Samaria (see John 4:1-42). In most cases Jesus ministered to people's needs in order to win their confidence. But with the Samaritan woman, He asked her for a favor instead. “Give me a drink” (verse 7) was His request. By being vulnerable and *trusting her* to meet one of His own needs, Jesus led her to *trust Him* to meet hers. In some circumstances we can offend the pride of others if we presume to be their teacher and act as if we don't need anything ourselves. But we do have needs. One of the most important is to learn how to share our faith better. So why not ask for a favor? Say: “I'm reading a book [or taking a class] about sharing my faith, and it strongly encourages me to find someone who will go through a series of Bible studies with me. I have a great set of study guides, but I'm looking for someone to go through them with me. It would take only about an hour a week. Do you think you might be willing?”

Faith was a church member who learned about this method and decided to give it a try. She called her youngest son and told him that she was taking a class to learn how to share the Bible, and she was supposed to practice on someone.

Faith asked her son if he would let her practice on him, to which he said yes! While she was at it, she asked if perhaps his wife would want to join them, and received the same response. After a couple weeks of study, Faith's oldest son walked through the door and asked what was going on. Faith gave him the same offer, and soon he was studying too. Her grandson's girlfriend was later added to the group. In the end everyone in the group was blessed by the study, and her grown children were baptized. It was quite a result from her first Bible study!

When it comes down to it, there are really only three ways to get someone you know to study the Bible with you, or to come to a church service, or attend a church event. You may want to get a highlighter out for this, because it's kind of profound:

1. You can ask them in the morning.
2. You can ask them in the afternoon.
3. You can ask them in the evening.

OK, maybe that's a little simplistic. And perhaps someone will stumble into the church by chance every once in a great while. But the only way to find a Bible study interest or to get someone to attend a church service or event is to *ask*. While we may avoid rejection if we never extend an invitation, it's equally true that no one will say yes to an invitation we never give. So just ask!

Plant With Purpose

Disciple-making is a process in which every phase is essential, and effective soul winners are always looking ahead to the next step. While they're *preparing* the soil of the heart with friendship, at the same time they're planning when they will begin to *plant* seeds of truth. While they're involved in

seed-sowing ministries, they have in view the *cultivation* phase of ongoing Bible studies. The idea is that planting seeds is not an end in itself. Every time we share our testimony or truth-filled literature with others, we should be aiming toward one day involving the individual in regular Bible studies. This is called planting with purpose. And it's why growing churches regularly offer invitations to everyone in their sphere of influence to explore the Bible further.

The primary types of invitations used to guide interests from an initial spiritual exposure (the *plant* phase) to a more in-depth study of the Bible (the *cultivate* phase) are Bible study invitations, Sabbath School and church invitations, and church event invitations (e.g., evangelistic meetings, retreats, camp meeting, etc.). Here are some practical ways to employ these invitations on a consistent basis:

Personal Invitations—Keep a list of friends, family members, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, community acquaintances, and church interests for whom you feel a spiritual burden. Regularly pray over the names on this list and ask God to prepare their hearts for a special invitation. Remember, it never hurts to offer, and it has potential for eternal gain. If a person says no, that doesn't mean you shouldn't have offered. The Lord knocks on the door of the heart again and again. Keep praying and try another invitation after some time has passed, perhaps this time to something different. Always speak positively and persuasively of the blessing to be gained by accepting your invitation. The Lord promises to be with you as you labor to bring souls to Him (see Matthew 28:20).

For a simple way to keep a list of spiritual interests, download “Praying for You” and “Operation Andrew” cards at grow.adventist.org.

Bible Study Offers at Church Events and Services—Some of the strongest spiritual interests are those who attend our church services and events. In a simple and nonintimidating way, you can offer Bible studies to every church visitor or event guest. Simply ask the question mentioned earlier in this chapter: “Have you heard about our free Bible studies?” Then leave them with the first lesson in a series of Bible study guides along with a card they can use to sign up for the full series.

Door-to-Door Invitations—Sometimes we need to go where the people are. This is the power of door-to-door ministry, and it can be very effective. You can personally go to the homes in your neighborhood or organize your church for outreach (see chapters 13-15). When a large number of church members are mobilized, thousands of Bible study offer or event flyers can be delivered throughout your church’s territory in a surprisingly short amount of time.

Bible Study Offers With Literature—Every piece of literature should be combined with an invitation to take Bible studies. Many sharing books and tracts include free offers on the back page, but you may want to consider something more prominent. Tuck a tract or card, one with the singular purpose of offering Bible studies, inside the front cover. Or affix a label offering Bible studies onto the front or back cover of tracts, books, and magazines. Be sure anything you utilize is either designed by a professional or looks like it is.

Bible Study Offers With Media—When you’re sharing audio or video sermons, it’s a good idea to include a link to an online offer for free Bible studies. The same link can be used whether posting on social media or texting with a friend. You could also put the link to the free offer into the body of an email or include it as part of your regular email signature.

Advertise Free Bible Study Offer Website—Advertise a website that accepts local requests for free Bible studies and assigns them to your local church for follow-up (such as biblestudyoffer.com). Leave tracts and cards with the website address wherever you go, and place flyers in waiting rooms around town. Send a mass mailing of Bible study request cards into your neighborhood or church territory. Utilize yard signs, car stickers, posters, signs, and billboards. Use online advertising to target those searching for phrases such as “Bible study” and social media advertising to spread the news even further. With a website that offers free Bible studies, you always have an open door to receive Bible study requests. Remember, the more spiritual interests you find, the more disciples you will make.

To get more information on how biblestudyoffer.com can be used in your local church’s Bible study ministry, visit biblestudyoffer.com/info.

Future Event Flyers at Current Events—A lot of churches print flyers to advertise their events, but the problem is *when* they print them. Churches should know the dates and locations of their upcoming events and have invitation flyers prepared *months in advance*. The reason for this is that at every event, we must be ready to invite the attendees to the next few events. Much is lost when we fail to take advantage of this opportunity.

Interest List Mailings—The church’s list of spiritual interests is another fertile field in which spiritual seeds can be sown. Send periodic invitation letters with event flyers to your interest list. You may be surprised to find people at your events who you thought were no longer interested.

Say, “Come!”

One of the most compelling invitations in all the Bible is given in the final chapter: “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). This text reveals a loving invitation from the Spirit of God to receive the water of life. But a careful reading reveals something more.

The Holy Spirit and the bride give an open invitation to come. But those who hear the invitation are not only to “come,” but to “say, ‘Come!’ ” In other words, those who respond to the invitation are called to extend the same invitation to others.

Ellen White points out this responsibility in plain terms: “The charge to give this invitation includes the entire church. Everyone who has heard the invitation is to echo the message from hill and valley, saying, ‘Come’ ” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 110). The job of inviting people to hear and receive the gospel belongs to everyone who has heard the gospel. We are to sow invitations bountifully, and beside all waters. Every member is to experience personally the power of invitation.

*We are to sow
invitations
bountifully, and
beside all waters.*

Sometimes people just need a personal touch. Consider Susan, a woman whose life had left her feeling bitter over many things. Deep down, she was looking for hope. In the lead up to an evangelistic series, a nearby church engaged in a broad advertising campaign. Susan saw many of the advertising offers. While taking the bus, she saw a beautiful advertisement and promptly ignored it. She then received a full-color, graphically pleasing brochure in the mail. She promptly threw it into the

recycling bin. A day later she was watching television and saw a 30-second commercial inviting people to come to the series. Once again, she ignored it.

The next day one of Susan's neighbors came to her door. That neighbor happened to be a member of a local Seventh-day Adventist church, and she was a friend of Susan's. The friend personally invited Susan, using the same brochure she had received in the mail, to the evangelistic series. This time Susan placed that brochure on her refrigerator and made a decision to attend the series. She attended every night and was eventually baptized. We cannot depend upon advertising to make invitations for us. Yes, using multiple forms of advertising is important and probably helped even in Susan's case. But there is nothing like a personal invitation. Because that church member gave a personal invitation, Susan gave her heart to Christ and became part of the family of God.

Take time to consider the people you know. Is there a friend you could invite to church or to an evangelistic series? Is there a regular church visitor who has perhaps never received an offer to take Bible studies? What about neighbors, coworkers, classmates, or even family members? Pray and ask God to give you courage and strength to invite others to know Christ for themselves. You've accepted the invitation; now it's time to offer it.

Let him who hears say, "Come!"

Section 3

Distributing Literature

Why Literature Ministry?

God was the author and publisher, Moses was the literature evangelist, and the Israelites were the recipients of God's first written message. We might call it the beginning of the Lord's own literature ministry: "And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). God used tables of stone to engrave the moral law of love, the Ten Commandments, with His own finger.

Through the centuries God inspired prophets to write His messages to humanity on ancient scrolls: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The focus and purpose of these writings, though not always understood, was made clear by Jesus: "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46). "You search the Scriptures, for

in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (verses 39, 40). The written Word was to reveal to humanity the living Word, Jesus Christ, and to invite us to find salvation in Him.

The Gift of Printing

The enemy of souls has always fought to keep people from finding salvation through Christ. Thus he has sought to hide or obscure the truth in all its forms: “The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 51). During the Middle Ages Satan sought to restrict access to the Bible by common men and women so they couldn’t read and study it for themselves. The lament of Samuel the prophet so many years prior was indeed applicable to that time also: “And the word of the Lord was rare in those days” (1 Samuel 3:1).

Yet God always cared for His people. In every era He raised up men and women who would champion the sharing of God’s Word in printed form. Such were the Waldenses, believers living in the pre-Reformation era. Here was the method they employed to share Scripture: “Their garments were so prepared as to conceal their greatest treasure—the precious manuscripts of the Scriptures. These, the fruit of months and years of toil, they carried with them, and whenever they could do so without exciting suspicion, they cautiously placed some portion in the way of those whose hearts seemed open to receive the truth” (*ibid.*, p. 70). Many of these “smugglers of faith” sacrificed their lives to share God’s Word in written form.

In addition to the Bible itself, God has also used writings that share and clarify the teachings of the Bible. We know that

the Czech Reformer John Huss, for instance, was impacted greatly by the writings of English Reformer John Wycliffe: “These works Huss read with interest; he believed their author to be a sincere Christian and was inclined to regard with favor the reforms which he advocated. Already, though he knew it not, Huss had entered upon a path which was to lead him far away from Rome” (*ibid.*, p. 99).

About a half century later, in the mid-1400s, the world would encounter an invention that would illuminate the earth with gospel literature as never before. Many would finally experience the words of the psalmist: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). The inventor was Johannes Gutenberg, a German blacksmith, and the invention was a movable-type printing press. The printing revolution that followed contributed mightily to the spread of Reformation teachings throughout Europe. A famous quote attributed to Martin Luther, the well-known German Reformer, beautifully expresses the importance of Gutenberg’s invention: “Printing is the ultimate gift of God and the greatest one.”

Streams of Light

In the early 1800s North America and other parts of the world experienced a spiritual awakening. In preparation for the proclamation of the soon return of Christ in 1844, God was laying a foundation for His message to be received. Bibles were placed in the hands of the people in their own languages through the work of Bible societies, established for the translation and distribution of Bibles.

The Millerite movement consisted not only of preaching but also the widespread distribution of pertinent literature

whenever opportunities allowed. “Before the great disappointment of October 22, 1844, eight million copies of Adventist literature found the people and spread the word” (C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World*, p. 18).

When studying the history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, one cannot help seeing the impact literature has made on the development of the church. Many regions of the world were first reached by the printed page, and many have seen their memberships strengthened and increased as a result of the publications distributed, read, and studied in their territories.

Ellen White wrote: “Our publishing work was established by the direction of God and under His special supervision. It was designed to accomplish a specific purpose” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 138). It was God who directed our church in the start of its publishing ministry and established the

The distribution of literature will prepare people for the Second Coming.

specific goals literature would achieve. She continued: “The publications sent forth from our printing houses are to prepare a people to meet God” (*ibid.*, p. 139). God inaugurated the publishing work so the world could be prepared for Christ’s imminent return.

“Throughout the world they are to do the same work that was done by John the Baptist for the Jewish nation” (*ibid.*). What a profound thought! The distribution of literature will prepare people for the Second Coming, *just as* John the Baptist prepared people for Christ’s first coming.

In 1848 Ellen White had a vision about the future publishing work. She related the message to her husband, James White, urging him to start publishing a short periodical. She remarked,

“From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world” (*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 125). Ellen White would later see her husband publish that little paper, now fully assured by her prophetic vision that future generations of faithful Adventist believers would carry the publishing torch forward. With the flame of mission burning in their hearts, more and more literature would be printed and distributed, giving light to our darkened world.

The key to embracing the role of literature in our day is never to forget the original purpose and plan of God for the publishing work: “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (*ibid.*, p. 196).

The Future of Literature

No one denies that literature has been a powerful instrument for good in the past, but what about in today’s digital age? What is the future of the church’s literature ministry? Are ebooks taking over? Should we expect the demise of printed literature? Contrary to the expectations of many people, the dawn of electronic media has not replaced the demand for literature. Printed books are proving to be timeless, holding their popularity even among younger generations. Ellen White’s words concerning the importance of literature still ring true today: “Were it not for the work of the canvasser, many would never hear the truth” (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 316). And again: “Many minds can be reached in no other way” (*Evangelism*, p. 160).

Perhaps in the past people didn’t have access to information unless someone brought it to them. But today, especially

since the dawn of the Internet, access is not the primary issue in most areas of the world. The challenge we face now is how to capture people's attention in the midst of an overabundance of information. While the need may be different, the vital role of literature remains the same.

A gift of relevant literature, given by a kind and caring person, is often just what is needed in order for a life-or-death message to be truly considered. When we hand someone information in the form of a piece of literature, we increase its visibility and make it more likely to be read. "Our books and papers are to be brought before the notice of the people" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 63). "In the work of scattering our publications, we can speak of the Savior's love from a warm and throbbing heart" (*ibid.*). Bringing literature to the notice of others, especially when combined with a personal touch, will greatly increase the chances that they will consider Bible truth.

The Purpose and Power of Literature

To say that Ellen White was a strong advocate for literature ministry would be an understatement: "If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the Scriptures" (*Christian Service*, p. 145). The prophetic voice to the remnant church could be heard again and again, signaling the importance of this vital ministry. Ellen White was certain that if Seventh-day Adventist church members could see the essential role of literature in fulfilling our end-time mission, many more would get involved in its distribution: "When church members realize the importance of the circulation of our literature, they will devote more time to this work" (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 7). Now consider the following inspired explanations of the purpose

and power of literature, making clear why an active literature ministry should be an integral part of the evangelistic strategy of every local church:

Literature Brings Souls to Christ—“Our publications are now sowing the gospel seed, and are instrumental in bringing as many souls to Christ as the preached word. Whole churches have been raised up as the result of their circulation” (*Christian Service*, p. 146).

Literature Prepares the Way for Mass Conversions—“More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day, most of whom will trace their first convictions to the reading of our publications” (*Evangelism*, p. 693).

Literature Prepares People to Meet God—“The publications sent forth from our printing houses are to prepare a people to meet God. Throughout the world they are to do the same work that was done by John the Baptist for the Jewish nation. By startling messages of warning, God’s prophet awakened men from worldly dreaming. Through him God called backsliding Israel to repentance. . . . ‘Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ was John’s message. Matthew 3:2. This same message, through the publications from our printing houses, is to be given to the world today” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 139).

Literature Lightens the Earth at the End of Time—“In a large degree through our publishing houses is to be accomplished the work of that other angel [Revelation 18] who comes down from heaven with great power and who lightens the earth with his glory” (*ibid.*, p. 140).

Literature Spreads the Truth Quickly—“The book work should be the means of quickly giving the sacred light of present truth to the world” (*ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 69).

Literature Breaks Down Walls of Prejudice—“I have been shown that the publications already have been doing a work upon some minds in other countries, in breaking down the walls of prejudice and superstition” (*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 214).

Literature Can Go Where Ministers Can't—“There are many places in which the voice of the minister cannot be heard, places which can be reached only by our publications—the books, papers, and tracts filled with the Bible truths that the people need” (*Christian Service*, p. 153).

Literature Can Get Around Pride—“If you do not succeed by personal visits, try sending them the silent messenger of truth. There is so much pride of opinion in the human heart that our publications often gain admittance where the living messenger cannot” (*Evangelism*, p. 411).

Literature Is Equal in Importance to Preaching—“The importance of this work is fully equal to that of the ministry. The living preacher and the silent messenger are both required for the accomplishment of the great work before us” (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 8.)

Literature Is Used by Angels to Impress Minds—“I was shown men and women studying with intense interest papers and a few pages of tracts upon present truth. They would read the evidences so wonderful and new to them, and would open their Bibles with a deep and new interest, as subjects of truth that had been dark to them were made plain, especially the light in regard to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. As they searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so, a new light shone upon their understanding, for angels were hovering over them, and impressing their minds with the truths

contained in the publications they had been reading” (*Christian Service*, pp. 149, 150).

Literature Nurtures Faith and a Missionary Spirit—“The Lord is calling upon His people to continue with courage and faith their work of circulating the printed page. Every church should seek for a revival of the missionary spirit” (*Review and Herald*, November 5, 1914).

Literature Equips for Total Member Involvement—“Tracts, papers, and books, as the case demands, should be circulated in all the cities and villages in the land. Here is missionary work for all to engage in” (*Counsels on Health*, p. 466).

In 2012 Seventh-day Adventist world church leadership was placing a great emphasis on the distribution of the book *The Great Controversy*. After prayerful consideration, a local church in Hagerstown, Maryland, decided to set the lofty goal of placing a book in every home in its territory. The church purchased 40,000 books, enough for every home, and the decision was made to deliver each book personally. Several dates would be needed for distribution. The excitement over this endeavor not only brought the church together but attracted members from surrounding churches who came to be part of the ambitious effort. Everyone divided into groups, and each group was sent out with a map and the number of books needed to distribute to the homes in a particular territory.

Many stories could be told of how God blessed those efforts. One such story involves Mark Thomas, who was president of the Review and Herald Publishing Association at the time. While actively involved in the door-to-door distribution, he came to a home where the owner was outside working in his yard. This man was an atheist, bitter against God, and poked

fun at these Christians distributing literature. Yet as Mark and this man began to engage in conversation, the man shared about a terrible loss he had suffered. Soon he was in tears. With a gentle spirit Mark began ministering to the man, and soon Mark and his group were offering to pray with him. The man accepted the offer and was moved to tears again through the compassion he felt. He now *asked* for the book that was being distributed! Later that same day Mark returned with a book that would minister to the man's specific circumstances. Over the years many individuals have come through the doors of the Hagerstown church owing in large part to the seeds of literature that had been planted in their homes.

Motivation for Mission

There are many reasons for local churches and their members to be more intentional and active in distributing literature. In addition to the inspired counsel encouraging us to do so, there are countless real-life stories that could and should be told of people finding God and Bible truth through Adventist literature. Now is the time to embrace this ministry with the same level of enthusiasm and sacrifice as our early Adventist pioneers, many of whom dedicated their lives to writing, printing, funding, and distributing literature. Leaders at every level of the church should aim to help God's people experience a renewed interest in literature ministry. This they can do by giving greater priority to participating in, promoting, training for, and investing financially in this seed-sowing outreach.

But Seventh-day Adventist church members don't need to rely upon others to motivate them to share literature. Simply *reading* our literature is enough to rediscover the power of the truth and be motivated to share it. Members who read

truth-filled literature grow closer to Christ and feel compelled to share the incredible blessings they've received. Then, in passing that literature along, they receive a second blessing. There is a mysterious but undeniably positive impact that sharing the gospel has on our *own* spiritual condition. "There are many who would work if urged into service, and who would save their souls by thus working" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 82).

Ellen White once related the story of a man who was traveling through a winter blizzard. As he walked through the deep, drifting snow, he was getting cold and weak. Just as he contemplated giving up and succumbing to his exhaustion and the frigid conditions, he heard a cry for help. Stirred with sympathy, he mustered all his energy to reach the fellow traveler and help him through the same drifts of snow that he had once doubted he could get through alone. Ellen White highlights the critical lesson discovered by the brave man: "When he had borne his fellow traveler to a place of safety, the truth flashed home to him that in saving his neighbor he had saved himself also" (*Christian Service*, pp. 92, 93). So it is with us. In helping others to discover Christ and salvation, we will help ourselves, too. May God bless *you* as you utilize the power of literature to bear others safely to the Savior.

Every Member a Literature Evangelist

Not long after the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially organized in 1863, literature distribution began to grow as a key means of accomplishing its mission. While tracts and books were already being circulated by Adventist believers, a more organized effort would soon be formed. In 1868 four women from South Lancaster, Massachusetts, came together to pray for their children regularly. As the women prayed for their loved ones, a desire grew within their hearts to do something more. They soon began to lend books, papers, and tracts to neighbors. Then they expanded the ministry further and started to mail tracts and papers overseas. Some of the women began to study German and French so they could better minister to the recipients of the literature. In June 1869 they organized themselves into the Vigilant Missionary Society.

Stephen Haskell was one of the brightest and most mission-minded pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In November 1870, having witnessed the fruit of the

Vigilant Missionary Society, Haskell established the New England Tract and Missionary Society. Meanwhile, over in Battle Creek, Michigan, James and Ellen White were considering even greater possibilities. “A vision of a denomination-wide enterprise, built on the same plan as the New England Tract and Missionary Society, loomed large in the mind of James White” (Ella M. Robinson, *S. N. Haskell—Man of Action*, p. 32). With the General Conference’s blessing, Haskell was soon traveling from conference to conference organizing tract and missionary societies.

On January 1, 1874, a new monthly journal called *The True Missionary* was inaugurated to promote interest in these tract societies. It included reports and training in effective methods of personal evangelism through literature. In the

*Every member
can share truth-
filled literature.*

book *S. N. Haskell—Man of Action* Ella Robinson notes: “Societies began to spring up here and there; and wherever there was a lively Tract and Missionary Society there was sure to be a growing, thriving church” (p. 32). The combina-

tion of truth-filled literature and caring church members was established as a winning formula!

Haskell urged everyone to get involved, and even young children were making sacrifices to invest their pennies in this missionary cause. In 1874 the General Conference organized the General Tract and Missionary Society, which was designed to unify the state societies. In 1876 it was renamed the International Tract and Missionary Society, to underscore its new global reach. This marked the beginning of the worldwide systematic distribution of literature in the daily life of dedicated church members.

The Leaves of Autumn

It's easy to see how publications can impact the thinking and beliefs of people, but before they can have an influence they must be shared. Ellen White points out, "Publications must be multiplied, and scattered like the leaves of autumn. These silent messengers are enlightening and molding the minds of thousands in every country and in every clime" (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 5). This imagery paints a vivid picture. Ellen White had spent many years in the northeast regions of the United States, where the autumn season is marked by a seemingly countless number of leaves falling from the stately trees. Red, brown, yellow, and orange leaves in many places form a blanket several inches deep after falling to the ground. This picture is the true destiny of literature distribution. Not a few members leaving a sprinkling of books or tracts every once in a great while, but many leaving a rich blanket of literature that should be spread so abundantly that everyone in our communities is given opportunity to discover the truth.

In order for this to become a reality, every member is needed: "Let every believer scatter broadcast tracts and leaflets and books containing the message for this time" (*Christian Service*, p. 145). "Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church so that everyone shall be working for Him according to his ability" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 111). This is the beauty of literature distribution. It's within the "ability" of everyone. Every member can share truth-filled literature.

The Literature Lifestyle

The fact that you're reading this book means you probably want to be a witness for Jesus. You resonate with the power of literature and the need for its distribution as described in the previous chapter. This is an important first step, but if you stop here you will be like multitudes of others who never put their convictions into action. Literature distribution is a good intention far more than a way of life for most Adventists. The key is to turn the sharing of books and tracts into a habit. With this goal in view, consider the following ideas for developing a literature "lifestyle":

Read Sharing Literature—Get acquainted with the church's sharing literature and experience the transforming power of its message before you pass it on to others. This not only motivates you to share, but gives you credibility and influence when you can speak with conviction about the literature you are sharing.

Pray for Divine Appointments—Pray that God will give you a burden for souls. Then ask Him every day to lead you to people who would be open to receiving a piece of literature. Ask for discernment to know what to share with others and the courage to share it.

Carry Literature With You—Be prepared to share literature every day. Choose a pocket on your person or in your purse for holding literature when you're out and about. If it's not with you, you'll never share it. "Carry with you, wherever you go, a package of select tracts, which you can hand out as you have opportunity" (*Christian Service*, p. 151). Maintain a small inventory of literature in your vehicle and in your home. Be sure there is a label, card, or tract offering Bible studies with every piece of literature you plan to share. If your church provides free

literature for distribution, plan to stock up as needed when you go to church each Sabbath.

Share Literature—The only way to develop a habit of sharing literature is to start sharing it! Give out books and tracts or leave them somewhere where they will be noticed and picked up. God will bless abundantly every piece of literature shared by church members: “The same ministry of angels attends the books that contain the truth as attends the work of the minister” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 316).

Tell Others—After sharing literature and seeing how God has blessed your efforts, tell others about your experience. The psalmist declared: “O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works” (Psalm 71:17). As you describe your experience to others, it will inspire and motivate them to share literature with others also.

Ways to Share

There are numerous ways to plant seeds of truth using literature. All it takes is intentionality and a little creativity. Think about the various places you go and the wide variety of people you interact with every day. Everywhere and everyone is a candidate to receive literature.

When it comes to sharing books and tracts, there are two fundamental ways to share. You can hand someone a piece of literature in person, or you can leave it behind for someone to find. Consider the following ideas for each of these methods:

Share a Book or Tract in Person—As you interact with people on a day-by-day basis, look for opportunities to hand them literature. You might say:

“It was great to meet you today. Here is something I think you would really enjoy reading. It gives some excellent information on the topic we were talking about. I would love to connect with you again and visit some more.”

Or, here’s a script for when you give literature to thank drivers, hairdressers, cleaning personnel, store clerks, or others who provide you with gifts or services:

“Thank you so much for _____. I’d like to give you this little gift to say thank you. It’s really short and easy to read, but it shares some powerful things that have really impacted my life. I hope we can connect again soon.”

Exchange contact information so that you can stay in touch by text or email. Depending on the relationship that has been built and the level of interest, you might also extend an invitation to a future lunch or other social setting. Remember that it isn’t the literature alone that makes an impact, but the impression made by the spirit and character of the one who shares it.

- **Shopping Malls or Stores**—Give to cashiers or other employees at supermarkets, malls, or markets.
- **Home or Neighborhood**—Give to home maintenance or repair professionals, delivery personnel, or neighbors, or simply distribute door to door in the neighborhood.
- **Restaurants**—Give to servers at sit-down restaurants or cashiers at fast-food windows.
- **Beauty Parlors**—Give to barbers or hairdressers.
- **Gas Stations**—Give to attendants or customers.
- **Rental Cars**—Give to agents at the counter.
- **Office Visits**—Give to receptionists, doctors, dentists, nurses, or other customers.
- **Drivers**—Give to bus, shuttle, taxi, or Uber drivers.

- **Work**—Give to coworkers.
- **Travel**—Give to fellow air, bus, or train travelers.
- **Outings**—Give to fellow hikers or attendees at zoos, parks, and beaches.
- **Inner City**—Prepare a bag of food for homeless individuals and put a piece of literature inside or distribute on busy street corners.
- **Hotels**—Give to front desk workers and cleaning personnel.
- **Parking Lots or Garages**—Give to attendants.
- **Banks**—Give to tellers.
- **Civic Leaders**—Give to mayors, police and fire chiefs, and other civic leaders after asking how you can help meet the needs of the community.
- **Special Occasions**—Give for birthdays or holidays.
- **Send to People by Mail**—Send to someone special, with your bills, with a greeting card, to relatives of the deceased in obituaries, or to any others to whom you send mail. You might also send a letter with a book or tract to the names and addresses found in a community phone book or directory. Consider mailing a fixed number, such as 100 per month, until you have mailed to everyone in your territory.

Leave a Tract or Book Behind—Leave literature behind in public places where people can find it. Pray and ask God to help those who most need the truth to discover your literature. Be careful to follow any local laws and to be discreet about the location and quantity of the literature left behind. As a general rule, it is best to leave no more than a few tracts and to avoid leaving them in the same place repeatedly. You don't want a lack of moderation to cause anyone to begin viewing your tracts as a nuisance.

- **Stores**—Leave in shopping carts.
- **Community Bulletin Boards**—Pin to bulletin boards.
- **Gas Stations**—Leave at the gas pump.
- **Rental Cars**—Leave in the glove compartment.
- **Waiting Rooms**—Leave inside magazines or on tables.
- **Rides**—Leave on the seat before leaving.
- **Libraries**—Leave in returned books or on tables.
- **Work**—Leave in break rooms.
- **Schools**—Leave in lunchrooms.
- **Gyms**—Leave in lockers.
- **Restaurants**—Leave on the table with a tip.
- **Flea Markets or Bazaars**—Leave on tables.
- **Vending Machines**—Leave in vending area so it is picked up with the next item.
- **Rest Stops**—Leave in restrooms or on bulletin boards.
- **Travel**—Leave in airport lounges, in train or bus terminals, or on plane, train, bus, or metro seats.
- **Parks**—Leave on benches.
- **Shopping Malls**—Leave in sitting areas or dressing rooms.
- **Used Items**—Put in pockets of used clothing or inside furniture being sold or given away.
- **Restrooms**—Leave in a dry, convenient place.
- **Funeral Homes**—Leave on a display table.
- **Hotels**—Leave in Gideon Bibles, in a telephone book, or with a tip and thank-you note for the cleaning personnel.
- **Parking Lots or Garages**—Leave on car door handles on the driver's side.
- **ATM Machines**—Leave on top.
- **Laundromats**—Leave on tables or counters.

- **Mailboxes or Porches**—Leave in mailboxes if legal (this practice is illegal in the United States) or on front steps or porches.
- **Display Racks**—Set up small literature display racks wherever you can gain permission.

One day a Muslim woman received a missionary book about the Sabbath. Intrigued by the topic, she finished reading the book in just three days. She loved it! In that simple book she learned about her Creator and the true Sabbath rest. She then went to her workplace and requested Saturdays off. The employer declined to grant her request, reminding her of the country's high unemployment rate. She would have to choose between her job or keeping the Sabbath. Wisely and courageously she chose God's holy day.

Soon her Muslim husband noticed that she was not going to work anymore. As he looked into the situation, he discovered that she had lost her job because of reading a certain book. He decided to read the same book to convince his wife that she had gotten it all wrong. She should disregard the Sabbath and go back to work. However, reading the book didn't turn out as he had thought. Now he was convicted of the Sabbath, which resulted in his losing his job also. Eventually they both joined God's family through baptism.

But the story isn't over yet. That one book began to circulate among other family members and resulted in nine additional baptisms! As for the couple that lost their jobs, they are both now serving as full-time literature evangelists. The book? It's still being passed around among their relatives. Only in heaven will we learn the full impact of that one sharing book.

God is ready to use flyers, tracts, pamphlets, books, newspapers, and magazines to impress people all over the world with the truth. These silent messengers need only to find their way into people's hands. This is why everyone is needed—children, youth, adults, and seniors—in the great work of planting seeds of truth through literature: “Think of how great a work can be done if a large number of believers will unite in an effort to place before the people, by the circulation of these books, the light that the Lord has said should be given them. Under divine guidance, go forward in the work, and look to the Lord for aid. The Holy Spirit will attend you. Angels of heaven will accompany you, preparing the way” (*Review and Herald*, January 27, 1903).

Running Your Church Literature Ministry

Most churches have used literature to some degree in their ministries. But a sparse or rarely used literature rack or a once-a-year book promotion comes far short of the potential of this ministry in our local churches. There's a big difference between lackluster efforts to make literature available and an *active* literature ministry. In light of its importance to our end-time mission (see chapter 7), local churches should lead their members to place a higher priority on planting seeds of truth through literature: "The church must give her attention to the canvassing work. This is one way in which she is to shine in the world" (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 7).

In this chapter you will learn how a local church can establish an *active* literature ministry. Such a ministry will help to create an evangelistic culture in the church, bless the individual members, and prepare the community for the coming of Jesus. "The great and wonderful work of the last gospel message is to be carried on now as it has never been before. The world is to

receive the light of truth through an evangelizing ministry of the Word in our books and periodicals. Our publications are to show that the end of all things is at hand” (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 177).

The Literature Ministry Team

In order to have an active literature ministry in the local church, members need to be regularly reminded, encouraged, trained, and equipped. Specific plans and clear direction must be given. The church cannot be passive or sporadic in these areas and expect to accomplish much. This is why the key to an active literature ministry is to develop a strong team to propel it forward and to keep it fresh in the minds of the members.

Leader—The most important person on the literature team is the one elected or appointed to lead the ministry. This could be the personal ministries leader, an assistant personal ministries leader, or a local church publishing ministries coordinator (see *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, pp. 96, 101). The ideal leader is one that has a burden for literature distribution and is not carrying too many other responsibilities.

Secretary—At least one person is needed to maintain the church’s inventory of resources, place orders as needed, and make sure literature displays and shelves are always well stocked for easy access by church members and visitors. Some or all of these tasks may be assigned to the personal ministries secretary, but it could also be helpful to appoint other members to assist as well.

Ambassadors—In addition to those directly responsible for the ministry, all church officers and department leaders should consider themselves ambassadors of the literature ministry. This is because most if not all departments of the church will benefit

from incorporating literature distribution into their ministries. The literature ministry leader should personally visit with all other local church leaders to suggest and provide literature that could be used in their ministries and to recruit them as ambassadors of the literature ministry.

Bible Study Ministry Coordinator—All literature distribution should be done with the intent of leading to the next phase in the disciple-making process, which is to further cultivate spiritual interest with Bible studies. Therefore, the Bible study ministry coordinator should ensure that every piece of literature includes a prominent offer for free Bible studies. This can be done by placing a label on the outside of books and tracts, or by including a small tract or card on the inside.

Literature Types and Criteria

The wise selection of literature is one of the first and most important steps in developing an effective ministry. A wide range of Seventh-day Adventist literature is available, covering various doctrines, spiritual growth, practical Christianity, health, prophecy, and more. The literature chosen should:

- Be theologically sound and Christ-centered.
- Cover every major doctrine and key decision point.
- Vary in length from brief tracts to full-message books.
- Be inexpensive enough for free distribution, if possible.
- Look attractive with an up-to-date design.

If you have outdated literature gathering dust in an old closet, pull it out and offer it to the church members for a few weeks. Your church board might also discuss possible uses for it, but don't use it as part of your literature ministry display. It might contain good information, but its dated appearance could cause people to view your church in a negative light.

Another important consideration is size and format. Various types of literature are available in order to meet the need of any situation. “Let the leaflets and tracts, the papers and books, go in every direction” (*Christian Service*, p. 151). Consider the following popular formats and ideal uses for each:

Sharing Books—The Conflict of the Ages series, *Steps to Christ*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, and *The Ministry of Healing*, each authored by Ellen White, are some of the best time-tested sharing books. Every year the church also produces a new Missionary Book of the Year that is excellent for sharing. Local publishing houses often produce their own sharing books also, covering a broad range of topics. Sharing books are great for personal gifts, door-to-door outreach, mass distributions in a city, giveaways at fairs and conventions, or as supplemental reading for Bible study interests.

Sharing Booklets—Small sharing booklets of about 32 pages cover a single topic in a succinct but thorough way. A wide variety of doctrinal, practical, and prophetic topics may be found in booklet form. Sharing booklets are great to give to friends or as supplemental reading for Bible study or evangelistic meeting contacts.

Tracts and Leaflets—Small, pocket-sized sharing tracts and leaflets, often around eight pages long, are among the easiest to carry with you in your daily activities. They too are available in a wide range of topics. And because they’re both small and inexpensive, tracts and leaflets are excellent for both day-to-day sharing and mass distribution. They fit easily into purses, bags, and pockets, making them quickly accessible for friendship evangelism opportunities or to leave behind in public places.

Magazines—The church and its supporting ministries produce truth-filled magazines on various topics that can be distributed

in the same way as sharing books or booklets. They also work especially well in waiting rooms. Some magazines are periodically produced and require a subscription, providing those who receive them with regular and ongoing opportunities to discover truth.

See an example of a local church literature list at grow.adventist.org.

Making Literature Available

Once your local church has assembled a literature team and tentatively chosen the literature it would like to distribute, the following steps are needed in order to obtain the literature, make it available, and encourage members to share it:

Develop and Approve a Budget—Develop an estimated budget to be approved by the church board. The budgeted cost should cover enough literature for church visitors and event guests, regular distribution by members, mass distribution projects, department ministries, and community displays. It should also cover any racks, shelves, or displays you may need to purchase. Most churches have not invested much in literature, so don't be surprised if some people initially object to spending more than usual. Be prepared to share the importance of this ministry using the encouragement and counsel found in chapter 4. We can't afford *not* to invest in the central purpose of the church—spreading the gospel message.

Order Literature and Display Racks—Once the annual literature ministry budget has been approved, place your first order of literature. The personal ministries secretary usually does this, placing orders with Adventist bookstores and publishing houses. Ordering larger quantities than you may currently need is the best way to obtain discounted prices. But as a rule, limit these quantities to no more than what you estimate can be distributed

in one year's time. If you don't already have them, you'll also need to purchase display racks, shelving, or cabinets with the proper dimensions for your variety of literature. If you have difficulty finding displays with the proper dimensions, you can sometimes find church members willing to build something suitable.

See images of sample literature displays at grow.adventist.org.

Prepare Literature for Distribution—The literature you share should include a special advertisement for Bible studies or more literature. Consider placing printed stickers on the literature with the information needed in order to request these additional resources. This could be a website, phone number, or email address. Alternatively, you could place on your literature rack small cards or tracts that are specifically designed to offer Bible studies, which can then be tucked inside any literature that is shared. If you choose this method, however, be sure to train and then remind members often of the importance of including this Bible study offer.

Set Up the Literature Display—Every church should have an evangelistic resource center where its literature, Bible study guides, and physical media are made available. This display is vital, serving as a refill station for members as well as a free resource for interested visitors. Consider these tips for an effective literature display:

- Put the display in the most prominent location possible, generally the church foyer. It should be a high-traffic location where people congregate. Some members may suggest displaying the literature in a back room or closet to avoid ruining the aesthetics of the church. While extra inventories of literature and Bible study guides may need

to be stored in a separate resource room, don't put your free display there. Make every effort to make it attractive, but put it in a prominent place. Getting out literature is more important than appearances.

- Allow room for a table or counter to be set up, whether permanently or only on special Sabbaths, where members of the literature ministry team can pass out flyers or new resources, sign people up to participate in a literature distribution project, etc.
- Always be sure that the literature display is well stocked and no resource is missing. Nothing will kill a literature ministry like barren display racks and shelves. To avoid this, the personal ministries secretary will need to monitor inventories regularly and purchase more as needed.
- Literature racks tend to collect Adventist periodicals that are meant primarily for church members. Keep these publications separate so they don't take up the space intended for your evangelistic literature.

Promote Literature Distribution—It is a good practice to focus on personal ministries for five to 10 minutes during Sabbath services each week. This focus should often emphasize literature distribution. Include live testimonies, tips for sharing literature, or instructions regarding literature projects and initiatives. Members should be encouraged to take literature from the church's free inventory each Sabbath for distribution.

Literature Projects and Initiatives

The weakness of the literature ministry in many local churches is a failure to include literature initiatives and projects in their evangelistic plans. To these churches, literature is viewed as an available resource, but it isn't an integral part of the mission

strategy. The key to strengthening the literature ministry in these churches is intentional planning.

The literature team should meet in the fourth quarter of each year to lay plans for the following year. They should develop a list of literature initiatives and projects, with corresponding dates and goals, to recommend to the church board for the following year. The board will likely want to see a tentative budget before approving these plans. Once approved, the plans should then be communicated and promoted regularly to the congregation. Every member should be enlisted to help, with special efforts being made to involve the children and youth of the church.

Consider the following ideas for your literature ministry, remembering to include with every piece of literature an offer for Bible studies or an invitation to an evangelistic event. Depending upon the size of the church, a typical year could include several of these projects and initiatives:

Dedicated Pocket—Every church should include this initiative in its annual evangelistic plans, whether the idea is given a title or not. It is the essence of literature ministry. The concept is drawn from a quote shared in the previous chapter: “Carry with you, wherever you go, a package of select tracts, which you can hand out as you have opportunity” (*Christian Service*, p. 151). All the church members are encouraged to “dedicate a pocket” to the Lord, whether on their person or in a handbag or purse, where they can carry truth-filled literature with them wherever they go. Each one can share these “silent messengers” (*ibid.*, p. 147) with others.

Sabbath School Mission Projects—It is recommended that Sabbath School classes adopt quarterly mission projects to carry out in their local communities. At least one of these quarterly

projects each year could be to distribute literature. Each class can set a distribution goal for a specific book or tract it would like to share with the community. Then, at the beginning of class, a progress report can be shared and more pieces of literature given to the class members for distribution the next week. Asking different members to share testimonies is a good way to motivate the rest of the class. Scheduling an afternoon outreach for mass distribution can also help the class to meet its goal.

Prayer Meeting Mission Challenge—Most churches have a prayer meeting or small group Bible study that meets each week. Incorporate a weekly “mission challenge” for those who attend and incorporate literature distribution. Here’s an example of 12 mission challenges:

1. Share 10 tracts.
2. Share 10 cards advertising Adventist TV or radio programming.
3. Share 10 cards offering Bible studies.
4. Share three missionary books.
5. Share five invitation flyers to an upcoming health event.
6. Invite someone to church.
7. Invite a neighbor or coworker to your house for lunch or dinner.
8. Share 10 invitation flyers to upcoming evangelistic meetings.
9. Invite a church visitor to lunch.
10. Share your personal testimony with someone.
11. Offer to bring three people to upcoming evangelistic meetings.
12. Post three spiritual websites or invitations on social media.

GLOW-athon—A marathon is 26 miles. A GLOW-athon is 26 days of sharing GLOW, or other small tracts, with the people in your community. Give a small card to every member with tips for sharing tracts on one side and a place to record the number of tracts distributed on each of the 26 days on the other side. Set distribution goals for each Sabbath School class, the church school, the departments of the church, as well as an overall church goal. Provide goal updates, training tips, pictures, and inspiring testimonies on every Sabbath of the GLOW-athon.

World Impact Day and Literature Week/Month—Every year the Adventist Church sets aside a day, typically the third Sabbath in April, for members around the world to distribute the Missionary Book of the Year in their communities. As with any outreach, preparations for this special day should be made well in advance. Please see chapter 15 for details on how to organize and conduct an effective door-to-door outreach effort. Though such efforts are often limited to about one hour of actual outreach, mass distribution projects like Impact Day may last a few hours to maximize the number of books that can be distributed.

The Sabbath of Impact Day is also the kickoff for a full week of literature distribution emphasis called Literature Evangelism Week. After an exciting mission-fueled Sabbath, members can continue the distribution of missionary books in their neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and communities. Some have found that a literature emphasis *month* is even better than limiting it to a week! Plan literature outreach activities for each of the four Sabbaths in April to get the members involved and to plant thousands of seeds of truth.

To find ideas and resources for global literature distribution days, visit publishing.adventist.org/mission365.

Global Youth Day—No segment of the church has as much energy for literature distribution as our youth. While their unique talents and abilities should be harnessed for every outreach effort, Global Youth Day is a special opportunity for the young people in our churches to engage in ministry at the same time as other Adventist youth around the world. Each year the world church’s Youth Department sets aside a Sabbath in the middle of March to focus on serving local communities. As young people minister to people’s needs and gain their confidence, they can also distribute large quantities of literature.

To learn more about Global Youth Day, and for more youth ideas and resources, visit youth.adventist.org.

A Book in Every Home—While the Missionary Book of the Year is the special burden of Impact Day, there may be other books that your church might choose to distribute to every home in your territory at different times. For instance, many churches want to ensure that *The Great Controversy* and *Steps to Christ* are in every home. Others take advantage of holiday seasons, when many people’s hearts are more open to spiritual themes, to distribute relevant literature to everyone in their territories.

Large Event Distribution—This idea was given to us in the writings of Ellen White: “I was given instruction that as we approach the end, there will be large gatherings in our cities. . . . Leaflets containing the light of present truth should be scattered among the people like the leaves of autumn. To many who attend these gatherings these leaflets would be as the leaves of the tree of life, which are for the healing of the nations” (*Evangelism*, pp. 35, 36). Today our churches can mass-distribute “leaflets” such as GLOW tracts at large sporting, political, cultural, and religious gatherings.

Community Literature Displays—One excellent way to distribute literature is to set up displays in public places. These can vary in size from single displays holding multiple copies of one book to large racks holding a variety of titles. Whether owned by church members or other residents of the community, such sites as businesses, Laundromats, doctor’s offices, auto repair shops, grocery stores, libraries, and many other locations are perfectly suited for a small tract rack or literature stand. Ask members to sponsor a literature display, which involves finding a location that will allow the display and then making sure it is regularly stocked with literature. A simple sign or label stating “Free: Take One” should be affixed to the display. A similar method is to place newspaper boxes filled with Adventist newspapers or subscription magazines in strategic places in the city or town where there is heavy foot traffic—near city centers, shopping centers, mass transit exits, and sporting arenas.

Fairs and Festivals—Most communities have gatherings that draw large crowds and provide local organizations with the opportunity to sponsor tables or booths. Local churches should take advantage of this opportunity to bring awareness to the ways in which they serve their local communities. They can advertise health programs, children’s programs, Bible studies, and evangelistic events. They can also offer free items such as water and literature to everyone who stops by the booth.

Literature Gift Bags—A good project to get your more creative members involved is to make literature gift bags. Place a tract and a small item, such as a sweet treat, inside a small resealable bag. Include a designed note tag with a Bible verse and a creative saying that draws attention to the tract and gift inside. The note could say “May you feel the warmth of God’s love for you this winter—John 3:16” and be accompanied by an herbal tea bag and

a tract on salvation. Another way you can share literature as a gift is to include a sharing book or other literature in a cellophane-wrapped gift basket along with other practical items. When literature is presented as a gift, it is often more readily received.

Evangelistic Meetings—Before a series of public evangelistic meetings, consider advertising with customized small tracts used in conjunction with other advertising methods. Then, during the meetings, a resource table can be set up to sell or give away literature that reinforces the messages being preached. Many people are greatly benefited by books that help them better understand the distinctive subjects presented at evangelistic meetings. These topical books are valuable tools for aiding interests in making decisions to believe and follow Bible truth.

Church Departments—Every department of the church should be encouraged to utilize literature in its ministries and events. Youth ministries and Pathfinders can harness the energy of the youth by adopting unentered territories to distribute books and tracts. Public campus ministries can strategically share books and tracts with classmates and staff and leave some behind in various places. Community services can maintain literature racks in their food and clothing centers and share books and tracts when doing acts of mercy. They can also distribute literature as part of the church's annual Ingathering campaigns. Adventurers and children's ministries can include literature when preparing care packages for local police and firefighters. These are just a few examples of how local church departments can prove true the words of Ellen White regarding literature ministry: "Here is missionary work for all" (*The Publishing Ministry*, p. 44).

Magazine Subscriptions—The Seventh-day Adventist Church produces a variety of outreach magazines focusing on different

topics—spiritual, lifestyle, religious liberty, etc. Subscription magazines provide a *continual* witness and reach into people’s homes. Encourage members to subscribe themselves first, then their families, friends, and neighbors. The church itself can sponsor subscriptions to inactive members, evangelistic interests, businesses that have waiting rooms, civic leaders, and prisons.

Other Creative Ideas—In addition to the projects and initiatives already mentioned, there are many other creative ways to distribute literature. You could share a musical talent on a busy street corner and distribute books to those who stop by, offer free books on public campuses, give books to members to mail to those on their Christmas card lists, visit public servants and civic leaders to give them sharing books and pray for them, or go into a busy downtown or mall and share books with business owners. The possibilities are endless.

Follow-up—Many churches view literature distribution as a single event. It is not uncommon for churches and their members to share literature without ever intending to follow up at a later date. Much is lost when this approach is taken. We should maintain regular contact with anyone who has shown an interest in truth-filled materials. A good follow-up plan will often include correspondence, invitations, and offers given to interests in both personal and digital forms.

Required for Mission

Every Seventh-day Adventist church has been called to be a light “on a hill” (Matthew 5:14) and to share the three angels’ messages “with a loud voice” (Revelation 14:7). This is accomplished not only through sharing the Word verbally, but also through the more subtle influence of literature: “The

living preacher and the silent messenger are both required for the accomplishment of the great work before us” (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 8).

Most local churches have embraced evangelistic preaching in some form, but many have failed to recognize that literature ministry is also “required for the accomplishment of the great work before us.” If literature distribution projects were made a priority and members were trained to carry literature with them wherever they go, new opportunities would open before us: “Golden opportunities occur almost daily where the silent messengers of truth might be introduced into families and to individuals” (*ibid.*, p. 84).

“Golden opportunities occur almost daily.”

If you’re a pastor or local church ministry leader, remember that your role goes beyond your own missionary efforts. You have the privilege and responsibility of equipping church members for mission. Ellen White relates a story in which this role is made clear: “The owner of a large mill once found his superintendent [pastor or ministry leader] in a wheel-pit, making some simple repairs, while a half-dozen workmen [church members] in that line were standing by, idly looking on. The proprietor, after learning the facts, so as to be sure that no injustice was done, called the foreman [pastor or ministry leader] to his office and handed him his discharge with full pay. In surprise the foreman asked for an explanation. It was given in these words: ‘I employed you to keep six men at work. I found the six idle, and you doing the work of but one. Your work could have been done just as well by any one of the six. I cannot afford to pay the wages of seven for you to teach the six [church members] how to be idle’ ” (*Christian Service*, p. 70).

God has not raised up church leaders to teach the rest of the members how to be idle. But this is precisely what happens when they do all the work themselves instead of training and equipping church members for ministry. This is precisely why literature is so valuable to church leaders. It is one of the simplest and most effective ways to get church members involved in active evangelistic efforts.

May God use your literature ministry to help your church to experience total member involvement in mission. And as members engage in sharing literature, having been equipped “for the work of ministry” (see Ephesians 4:12), may their faith grow stronger and many souls be won to Christ.

Section 4

Sharing Media

Why Media Ministry?

We live at a time when many people “visit” a church online before they actually visit the church in person. They want to learn about it from a distance before taking the risk of being seen there. The impression received through the church’s online presence will determine whether they want to engage further or not. All over the world God is using websites, online Bible studies, podcasts, social media, and more to reach people with His saving message. Maximizing these and other media tools will allow more seeds to be scattered for a more abundant harvest. Any church that takes the gospel commission seriously in a digital age will take digital evangelism seriously.

Especially is this true since the year 2020, when the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 became a global pandemic in only a few short months. All over the world people were instructed to stay home, self-quarantine, shelter in place, and practice “social distancing.” Restaurants and businesses closed their doors, and church congregations stopped gathering for corporate worship. Local churches and their members were forced to stay connected through video conferencing and to find new ways of reaching out to their communities. Sabbath School,

church, vespers, Bible studies, and evangelistic meetings were streamed over the Internet and social media.

While most churches would not normally have engaged so actively in online ministries, there were positive results from doing so. Many church members who had resisted learning about technology became quite proficient at using it during the pandemic. Church services and evangelistic events became more accessible to visitors and to people who didn't live close by to the physical building. The use of Zoom and other video conferencing services often led to higher attendance because of convenience of use. Though connecting through technology can never fully replace the need for in-person contact, it has proven to be a powerful, inexpensive, and efficient communication tool for ministry. If we didn't realize it before, we now know that the vital role of technology and digital media in the mission of the church is here to stay.

The Language of the People

Every generation has needed believers who would herald the gospel in the language of the people. Before the dawn of the Protestant Reformation, people were starving to hear the Word of God taught in their own language. Medieval clergy conducted religious services in Latin, a language not understood by the common people. The only Bibles that could be accessed legally were stored in secluded monasteries or libraries, and these Bibles were in the unknown tongue of Latin or the original languages of Greek and Hebrew. Then came the Reformation, which inspired a growing number of Bible translations in the various languages of the people across Europe. Once the common people could read the Bible in their own languages, they gained the courage to exercise freedom of thought and religion. God's Word

published in the native tongue dispelled ignorant traditions and motivated people from all classes to put their faith in God instead of humankind.

Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the middle of the fifteenth century made it possible for Bible translations to be published in large quantities for the first time. Before the printing press, books were copied by hand. Now they could be mass-produced by machine. Multitudes of people began learning the Bible for themselves. Papers and books went places before the preachers arrived, and stayed long after they left. These publications, combined with the personal touch of preachers and teachers, altered the course of history. Millions paid attention and began thinking for themselves. Since that time, the door has continued to open wide for the gospel. Many more Bible translations have been completed, hundreds of commentaries made available, and wide varieties of study tools developed.

Digital media has the potential to fuel the spread of the three angels' messages.

Every Possible Means

Today digital media has the potential to fuel the spread of the three angels' messages just as the printing press fueled the spread of the Protestant Reformation centuries ago. Seventh-day Adventists stand as successors of the Protestant Reformation. We continue an aggressive work to spread the truth of God's Word in languages the people can understand.

Adventists have a long history of utilizing innovative ways of spreading the truth: "[The members] are to go forth into the

highways and byways of life to win souls for Him, using every possible means to make the truth appear in its true character before the world” (*Medical Ministry*, p. 318). While the same beautiful message needs to be given to every culture and every generation, the language and methods may change. A quick review of Adventist history shows the creativity and diligence of our pioneers to get their message to the masses.

Early Adventist preachers utilized the best visual aids available for teaching. The “1843 chart” traveled everywhere with Adventist evangelists, visually explaining to audiences the beasts and time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Charles Fitch set up a large carved image of the Daniel 2 statue to interest the audiences coming to his tent. Other evangelists

*Methods of teaching
and communication
...were to be adapted
for our own use.*

used impressive papier-mâché replicas of the beasts of Daniel and Revelation (see *Evangelism*, p. 204). Adventists captured the attention of large crowds with their preaching and creative displays.

Throughout her ministry Ellen White urged church members and leaders to continually advance their methods of communicating truth: “Our Sabbath schools should be made more interesting. The public schools have of late years greatly improved their methods of teaching. Object lessons, pictures, and blackboards are used to make difficult lessons clear to the youthful mind. Just so may present truth be simplified and made intensely interesting to the active minds of children” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 69, 70). Using a blackboard may not sound very advanced today, but there was a time when it was an innovative new method. Ellen White advocated such methods to make our Sabbath Schools “intensely interesting.”

She did not intend that the church would be the innovator of every new technique, but that it would not fail to harness the successful practices used by others. “The modes of teaching which have been adopted with such success in the public schools could be employed with similar results in the Sabbath schools and be the means of bringing children to Jesus and educating them in Bible truth” (*ibid.*, p. 70). Methods of teaching and communication used successfully by others were to be adapted for our own use. Adventist leaders such as Ellen White would be the first to encourage the creative use of technology for communicating Bible truth.

This doesn’t mean, however, that we must embrace every style and tone of communication that is popular in our culture today. Sensational messages and headlines, brash personalities, and excessively stimulating or dramatic productions may garner the most attention, but that doesn’t mean they are the best way to lift up Christ. Jesus Himself used a variety of approaches in sharing the gospel, but He avoided any method that would detract from the sacredness of His message: “We are to keep as far from the theatrical and the extraordinary as Christ kept in His work” (*Evangelism*, p. 396). We should tread carefully and not allow our methods of ministry to take on a worldly mold.

Yet while demonstrating great discernment, it is still imperative for the church to study how to utilize current forms of communication. If the language of the people includes blackboards, we should use blackboards. If it includes radio and social media, we should make wise use of radio and social media. This is no time to discontinue the Protestant tradition of translating the message into the language of the people and using every means possible to spread it.

Adventist Media

Throughout the history of technological advancement, Adventists have used every major tool of communication as it has become available. Our success with radio and television ministry should invigorate us to keep pace with the rapidly changing landscape of digital media. Consider this brief history of how the Adventist Church has used media for mission:

Radio—The invention of radio allowed for previously unimagined transmission of the gospel. One of the first Adventist voices to give our message on radio was H.M.S. Richards on the Voice of Prophecy broadcast. Today Adventist World Radio and other ministries broadcast the three angels' messages in various languages all over the world. Shortwave radios broadcast the gospel into closed countries where groups listen in secret lest they be discovered and punished. Radio has indeed proved to be an enduring mode of communication. Today people are still responding to messages, visiting churches, and choosing to be baptized wherever radio is used to broadcast the Adventist message.

Television—Soon after television was introduced, Faith for Today, It Is Written, and other media ministries produced television programs. Hope Channel and 3ABN later launched dedicated channels with 24-hour broadcasts. Many television ministries have started in countries around the world with programs in local languages. As with other media ministries, television is done best when strategies are pursued to develop relationships with the audience. This is done with book offers, telephone prayer lines, Bible study offers, fundraisers, and other calls to action that engage the audience.

Bible Correspondence Schools—Radio and television ministries soon began promoting Bible correspondence schools that allowed students to complete Bible studies through the mail. Some media ministries developed systems for local churches to run their own Bible correspondence schools. These schools connected the television and radio interests with someone local. Media ministry is always incomplete without intentional efforts to develop a personal connection with people.

Audio and Video Recordings—In addition to benefiting the mission field, new recording technologies advanced the ministries of local churches. Even small congregations began recording and duplicating their messages using cassette tapes, followed by CDs and DVDs. The ability to record and share sermons from the local church has opened a fruitful opportunity for personal ministries that continues today.

Portable Media Players—The invention of digital media players opened the door for the wide distribution of God’s Word in dialects without a written language. For the first time, primitive people groups listened to the Bible and heard biblical messages preached in their own languages from these small devices. This is one more way Adventists have carried the mantle of Protestant Reformers in making the Bible available in the common languages of the people.

Presentation Technology—The advancement of electronic technology opened the door for updated visual aids that would be used with great success. For years Adventist pastors and laypeople used carousel film slide projectors to show pictures and illustrations of prophetic imagery. The invention of computers led to digital presentation software such as PowerPoint and Keynote, making the use of visual aids easier than ever before.

Today it's hard to imagine an Adventist evangelistic series without a multimedia presentation.

Into the Digital Age

The vision to utilize every conceivable tool to publish and broadcast our message as far and as widely as possible has never died. The current generation has more possibilities than ever before for spreading our message through digital media. This is an opportunity the church can't afford to miss. The rich history of Adventist media evangelism, mingled with the sober reality of Jesus' soon return, should motivate every one of us to take this ministry seriously: "Let every worker in the Master's vineyard study, plan, devise methods, to reach the people where they are. We must do something out of the common course of things. We must arrest the attention. We must be deadly in earnest. We are on the very verge of times of trouble and perplexities that are scarcely dreamed of" (*Evangelism*, pp. 122, 123). We need to plead for the Holy Spirit to guide us into strategies that God can bless beyond our expectations.

Media ministry is needed to reach the unreached. Consider the story of Nancy, who in 2015 stumbled upon a broadcast of *It Is Written Canada* while flipping through the channels on her television. She had suffered from depression for many years and, as she would later explain, had actually made the decision to end her life that day. She had tried a variety of medications and other therapies before finally giving up. But the Lord used media ministry to rescue her. She found a program that day on the topic of depression and anxiety. She was drawn in by the presentation, and a spark of hope was born inside her. She changed her mind about ending her life. She continued watching the series and began to implement the things she learned. Her

interest soon bridged to spiritual things, and she wrote to the It Is Written Canada office to express her thankfulness for the light she could now see at the end of the tunnel.

Many more people in this dark and dying world need to see the light of hope in Jesus Christ. Today, more than ever before, we need zealous Adventist missionaries who will keep pace with the rapidly changing landscape of media technology for the purpose of mission. It will require great creativity and discernment to adopt and adapt the most effective methods. Yet the gospel must be “preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations” (Matthew 24:14) before the end will come. It must go to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6). To a great degree, advancements in media and technology have made this possible as never before. In the tradition of the Reformers and our Adventist pioneers, we must take advantage of every means possible to spread the hope of salvation to the world.

Church Members and Media Ministry

No one can deny that the advancement of technology has changed our personal lives in significant ways. The same can be said of the influence of technology on the mission of the church. Never before has it been so easy to share the Adventist message. In the 1800s a church member couldn't just share a YouTube video of a favorite speaker preaching the truth about the Sabbath. Today we can.

Today's church is incredibly privileged to be able to so easily share powerful, Spirit-filled presentations, among other things, with our friends and communities. Of course we should never lose sight of the importance of drawing close to those we're trying to reach, or of the need to share the truth from our own hearts in addition to what we share through websites and videos. Yet when infused with personal interaction and follow-up, church members who take advantage of the witnessing opportunities afforded by new technology have found great success.

The Essential Role

There are many media ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church actively planting seeds of truth. These include ministries with headquarters at the General Conference, such as Hope Channel and Adventist World Radio. They include ministries led by communications or media departments at every level of the church, including thousands of local church-based media ministries. And they include long-established ministries such as the Voice of Prophecy, Faith for Today, It Is Written, Amazing Facts, Breath of Life, and 3ABN. Yet for all the wonderful work being done, many of these ministries have

We can't make disciples with books or videos alone.

not yet reached their full potential for one primary reason. The collaborative effort needed between media ministries and local church members has not yet been fully realized.

We must always remember that the mission to go and make disciples was given to the disciples themselves (see Matthew 28:18-20). It takes *people* to make disciples. “The Lord desires that His word of grace shall be brought home to every soul. To a great degree this must be accomplished by personal labor. This was Christ’s method” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 229). We can’t make disciples with books or videos alone. Therefore, every media ministry is entirely dependent upon the members of local churches for the all-important personal contact. This vital role of church members in media ministry falls into two categories:

1. Sharing and promoting media content
2. Following up media interests

Media ministries produce and collect high-quality sermons, seminars, interviews, and documentaries. They create television and radio programming, professional web pages, podcasts, and YouTube channels. The individual members of the church generally can't produce such material on their own. But just as members need media ministries, these ministries need church members in order to be truly successful. First, they need members to share their material with others and get the word out about their resources and programming. Second, but no less important, they need members who will follow up personally with those who have been reached by their ministries.

Share and Promote

Church members should consider the media produced by the various media ministries of the church to be valuable tools in their own witnessing efforts. As Seventh-day Adventists, we all share in the goal of telling the world about the soon return of Jesus Christ. Thus, in a very real sense church members are local representatives of the ministries that broadcast this message. Not only can they offer their prayers and financial support, but the value of their personal influence makes them the best promoters of these ministries to their friends and families. Distant personalities and programs, as powerful as they might be, still need tangible, local members to interact with the people in their own communities. Here are several ways church members can share and promote the content and programming produced by media ministries:

Group Events or Studies—One of the best ways to combine personal interaction with the programming produced by a media ministry is to host a livestream evangelistic event or a viewing of prerecorded video presentations (using DVDs, YouTube, or Internet downloads). Instead of waiting for your church to hold

an evangelistic meeting, host a small one in your own home! Invite friends, coworkers, family members, neighbors, and church visitors to view a video series on prophecy, health, or some other topic of interest. Provide a warm home, a light meal or refreshments, a friendly smile, and a caring spirit. If you feel a bit nervous about leading out in a Bible study, using videos by your pastor or by an evangelist you appreciate is a great way to ease yourself into it.

CDs, DVDs, and USB Drives—While physical forms of media may be on their way out, we should be careful not to exclude them completely. There are still people who have CD or DVD players in their cars or homes, some of whom are intimidated by viewing, downloading, or purchasing digital files directly off the Internet. Common and effective ways to use these forms of media are to share CDs of Sabbath sermons and DVDs of evangelistic meeting presentations. USB drives are another good way to give someone a full series of presentations in a small package. The obvious benefit of physical forms of media is that you can distribute them in person, which is preferable. The downside is that many people—especially in the younger generation—are no longer using these forms of media. One caution before duplicating and sharing messages in this way is to be careful not to infringe on any copyright laws.

Email and Text—Sharing Internet links to video sermons, audio podcasts, free Bible study offers, articles, books, tracts, and other spiritual content via email or text can be highly effective when done prayerfully and selectively. Between text and email, texting is preferred in most cases. It is more common, and people are more likely to see texts than emails on their cell phones. The key in either case is that these messages are shared by someone they know personally.

Social Media—One of the best ways to share a video or other online content with a large number of friends at one time is over social media. Different regions of the world utilize different social media platforms, so be sure to identify and use the most popular platforms for your area. Videos posted to social media are most likely to be viewed if they are kept under one or two minutes. Be sure that your captions and comments posted on social media are kind and respectful, reflecting the Spirit of Christ. Otherwise, the media you share and any positive message you attempt to send may not be taken seriously or could even have a negative effect.

One way for the content you share to gain as wide an audience as possible is to use hashtags, which are words or phrases preceded by the hash sign (#). Adding hashtags to your social media posts enables people to find them when interested in that specific topic. People may look up #Adventist to learn more about Adventists or #Sabbath to learn more about the Sabbath. Churches with active social media users may want to create a hashtag that all members can use when posting about local church initiatives and events. Hashtags have the potential to become quite popular and attract a lot of positive attention.

Electronic Literature—There will always be a need for printed material, even in a digital age. But how can we share the truth-filled tracts and books we love with those who prefer electronic media? The General Conference Publishing Department has developed a helpful website, where anyone can read, download, and share digitized versions of print literature.

For electronic versions of many tracts and sharing books, go to sharinghope.com.

Online Bible Studies—There are some people who are interested in Bible studies but who would rarely if ever leave the Internet in their search for knowledge. These people wouldn't be interested in printed lessons, which is why online Bible studies such as those offered at bibleschools.com are essential. In the past, online lessons were done anonymously, and there was no way to know who was completing these lessons. But online Bible schools are now connecting online students with church members who live in the same local community. This is a wonderful opportunity for church members to connect online evangelism with human relationships.

For more information on how your church can connect with online Bible students, email discoverschool@vop.com.

AWR Cell Phone Evangelism—Adventist World Radio has developed an innovative and effective way for church members to share biblical audio messages as “cell phone evangelists.” After a simple sign-up process, the church member receives a teacher contact code, which they can actively share with friends and acquaintances. When this code is texted by the church member's friends to the AWR chatbot number, they are automatically signed up to receive powerful evangelistic messages on audio every week. The church member is given updates on the activity and progress of their interested friends. As a cell phone evangelist, the member interacts with his or her friends about the audio messages, asking for questions or prayer requests and maintaining open communication.

This system has already resulted in thousands of people regularly listening to biblical messages and multitudes of people being baptized around the world. The first key to its success is the fact that nearly everyone has a cell phone that they keep with them

throughout the day. Second, the audio messages are convenient because they can be listened to while driving or doing other activities. And finally, the system set up by AWR is simple and easy for church members to use. Remember, technology will never reach its evangelistic potential unless it is combined with personal contact by someone who cares.

The AWR chatbot works on a variety of platforms. For the chatbot number, and to get resources and training on how to become a cell phone evangelist, go to awr.org/training or send your questions by email to cpe@awr.org.

Hope Channel App—Hope Channel has developed an easy way to share inspiring videos through which the gospel is proclaimed. Simply tell your friends and acquaintances to search for and then download the Hope Channel app onto their favorite device. Many of Hope Channel’s nearly 60 global affiliates have hours and hours of Christ-centered television programs available in many languages. Freely accessed through the Hope Channel app, these programs address a wide range of topics. No matter whom you meet, there is likely a program in the Hope Channel app that will interest them.

Promotional Cards and Flyers—There is a lot of good Adventist programming that the people in your community may know nothing about. To remedy this, distribute cards or flyers advertising the Adventist radio, television, and online programs and stations for your local area. If your church offers free Bible study resources through a website, you can advertise this and other church websites. It is recommended that you limit the number of sites on one card or flyer to only a few. An advertisement fully dedicated to one ministry or website will be generally most effective.

Follow-up Media Interests

Adventist media ministries have a genuine concern for the people who contact them with questions, prayer needs, or requests for material. They offer whatever help they can, but if they aren't local, their interaction is limited to periodic phone or email contact. Many people would respond favorably to someone visiting them to offer prayer, a sympathetic ear, an invitation to a local event, or more spiritual materials. By doing this, you may also find people who are interested in studying the Bible with you or in attending a Sabbath church service. Here's what you need to know about following up media ministry interests, whether generated by a local church or a larger media ministry:

Preparation—You or someone in your church, such as the personal ministries leader, should periodically contact any Adventist media ministries that: (1) reach into your church's territory, and (2) keep contact information of those who interact with the ministry. Ask these ministries for a list of anyone in your local area who has requested materials, enrolled in a Bible school, or otherwise expressed interest. When you're doing this, it's important to explain that church members intend to visit these interests for follow-up, and to note carefully any instructions given by the ministry's representatives. Be sure also to collect the contact information for any interest generated through your local church's media ministry.

When visiting media interests provided by an outside organization or ministry, you are representing that ministry rather than your local church. One of the first tasks of the visit is to help the interest to recognize the ministry you're representing. Bring along a brochure with the ministry logo or even a picture of the ministry speaker (if applicable). If you're following up on those

who have taken a Bible course, take a copy of the first lesson in the series to show at the door. When contacting the media ministry, request a pack of these lessons and some sharing gifts you can give to thank those you visit for their support and interest in the ministry. Many ministries will have these and be happy to send them to you.

If you have emails and phone numbers for media interests, you may be tempted to call or email these individuals before visiting. But this is not recommended. People tend to turn down visits offered over the phone or through email, especially if they don't know you. Many of the same people who quickly decline a visit over the phone would actually be open to accepting literature or Bible studies if these were offered to them by someone friendly and respectful at their doors.

Before visiting media interests, decide what approach you want to take. Will you invite them to an upcoming event? Will you offer them personal Bible studies? Has the interest already been taking Bible studies through correspondence? Consider the following canvasses based on three different approaches.

Church Event Invitation—Here is a sample canvass for visiting a media ministry interest with an invitation to a prophecy seminar:

“Good [afternoon/evening], I’m [your name], and this is my friend [your partner’s name]. We represent [name of media ministry], a Christian [TV or radio] ministry that broadcasts in this area on [give station channel and time]. Do you recall watching [or listening] to [name of speaker]? Today we’re visiting those who have contacted or requested materials from [name of ministry]. We first want to thank you for your interest, and we have a little

gift for you [give ministry brochure and any other small gift items from the ministry].

“We would also like you to know about a free Bible prophecy seminar that is coming to this area beginning [give date]. This brochure gives all the details [point out speaker, some of the topics to pique their interest, and other details such as location, child care, etc.]. We know you would be blessed by this seminar, and we hope you’ll consider attending! Here’s how you preregister [show instructions on brochure].

“Well, it was nice to meet you! We’d like to have a short prayer with you before we go. Is there anything special you’d like us to pray for? [Take requests and offer brief prayer.] Thank you for your time, and we hope to see you at the seminar.”

Bible Study Invitation—Here is a sample approach for visiting a media ministry interest with an offer to take Bible studies:

“Good [afternoon/evening], I’m [your name], and this is my friend [your partner’s name]. We represent [name of media ministry], a Christian [TV or radio] ministry that broadcasts in this area on [give station channel and time]. Do you recall watching [or listening] to [name of speaker]? Today we’re visiting those who have contacted or requested materials from [name of ministry]. We first want to thank you for your interest, and we have a little gift for you [give ministry brochure and any other small gift items from the ministry].

“We also would like you to know about a free set of Bible study guides we are offering [open the Bible study guide

and explain how to fill it out, then hand it to the interest as you share a few common questions these lessons will answer]. These lessons are our gift to you. Study this first one on your own, and then I can come back and we can review it together. Does that sound of interest to you? [If the interest seems hesitant to meet with you, suggest that the lessons can also be completed alone, and you can simply deliver a new lesson or two each week.] Wonderful! When would be a good time to come back next week to review the lesson and give you a new one?”

Correspondence Bible Study Follow-up—Here is a sample approach for visiting an interest who has already been taking Bible studies through a correspondence Bible school operated by a media ministry:

“Good [afternoon/evening], I’m [your name], and this is my friend [your partner’s name]. We’re local representatives of [name of Bible school]. I understand you have received some of our Bible study guides in the past [show a sample of the first Bible lesson in the series]. How did you first learn about our Bible school, and how have you enjoyed the lessons so far? How many do you think you’ve completed? That’s wonderful!

“I’d like you to know about another set of Bible study guides I think you’ll really like. They’re called [give name of lessons, hand the first lesson to the interest, and offer selling points about that specific series of lessons]. We personally deliver these guides free of charge so we can help answer any questions you may have or even review the lesson with you, if you choose. People find they get a lot more out of the Bible studies this way and complete

the course faster, too. Would this be of interest to you? [If the person says yes, leave the first lesson and set up a time to return the following week to review the lesson together and bring the next study guide.] It was a pleasure meeting you, and we'll see you next week!"

Finally, here are a few helpful suggestions when visiting media ministry interests:

- If the individual doesn't remember making contact with the media ministry, don't worry. Simply explain a little about the ministry, give the free gift, and continue with what you planned to offer.
- It's often the case that media ministry interests turn out to be Seventh-day Adventists. To determine if this is the case, you can ask such questions as: "Did you learn about this ministry from your church or somewhere else? How long have you been watching/listening?"
- If the media ministry interest asks about denominational affiliation, simply tell them it is a ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Adventist media ministries plant millions of seeds of truth every year, many of which would benefit greatly from being followed up by a visit from someone local. Someone like Christine. Christine was a church member who learned from an Adventist media ministry about a woman who had completed a series of correspondence Bible studies. The woman also indicated that she was interested in finding a church. Rather than call, Christine chose to visit the woman at her apartment. It took several attempts, but eventually Christine found her home. Christine offered to meet once a week for Bible studies, and invited the woman to church. The weekly studies helped the

two women to build a trusting relationship as they discussed life's most important questions. Eventually the woman began attending church and was baptized. In time, her husband was also baptized. This precious couple were ripe media interests that might still be wandering outside the fold of the remnant church if they not been visited by a dedicated member. God will help you as you partner with Adventist media ministries in providing the personal touch so needed in the great mission of making disciples.

Personal Media Ministry

Digital evangelism is not limited to sharing content from church media ministries. Members can also utilize technology to share their own devotional thoughts and Scripture passages with others. They can post encouraging and challenging messages that will serve as a welcome contrast to the river of negativity in the news and culture around them. Spiritual messages cause people to think and, in some cases, reach out for dialogue. Many life-changing conversations have been started when somebody saw a challenging post, blog, or quote. Social media groups and online chat rooms have also been created and used by members to hold spiritual discussions with those they're trying to reach.

Members can also utilize technology to share their own devotional thoughts.

In addition to written messages, church members can also record podcasts or videos, stream live on social media, or utilize video conferencing software to witness to others. Recording your own video or podcast is easier than ever, and it can be done with only a smartphone. Streaming live on social

media enables church members to broadcast everything from large spiritual events to small family worship experiences with devotional thoughts and music. The use of video conferencing equips members to host group Bible studies with people who are both nearby and far away.

Consider how you can use technology to share your own spiritual messages with others, while also utilizing the content produced by the church and its supporting ministries. Share media, get the word out about programming, and follow up on interests. With your help, and the help of church members around the globe, millions of seeds planted through technology and media will bear fruit for the kingdom of God.

Running Your Church Media Ministry

Today it's become more achievable than ever for local churches to utilize technology for ministry and to produce local media content. One benefit of sharing audio or video of your own church's sermons, seminars, or evangelistic events is that it can attract the people in your community to your church rather than to a distant television or Internet personality. Seeing a local impact can also motivate more church members to support and become personally engaged in sharing media.

Here's a sampling of the ways local churches can use technology for ministry:

- Produce DVDs and CDs for sharing
- Livestream church services and events
- Broadcast on TV or radio
- Operate local church websites
- Build a social media presence

- Utilize a website to offer Bible studies or to promote a series of evangelistic meetings
- Advertise on the Internet and employ strategies for search engine optimization

Media trends vary greatly in different parts of the world. The goal of a local church should be to communicate the gospel using every type of media actively used in its own community. Of course, this can feel overwhelming if a church is just beginning to use technology for ministry. So another good principle is to expand the ministry in every area that can be done *well*. While we want to scatter as many seeds of truth as possible, in as many ways as possible, we should never stretch our ministry so thin that we sacrifice quality and misrepresent our Lord.

Old Technology or Cutting Edge?

The world has changed a lot in the past few decades. In the 1980s we began the switch from audio cassettes and vinyl music records to CDs. In the 1990s people started carrying around cellular phones, and the Internet exploded onto the scene, opening the way for email, video calling, online shopping, and a host of other lifestyle-altering inventions. In the 2000s phones were transformed into miniature computers with the dawn of the smartphone. And in the 2010s people started finding out the news and weather and adjusting their thermostats by talking to their new electronic friends, Siri and Alexa.

With the dizzying speed at which technology has changed the way we live, is it any wonder that the church has had a hard time keeping up? After all, some of our current church leaders' grandparents grew up going to church in a horse and buggy! It can be helpful to remember that people and cultures adapt

at different rates to changing technology. Factors such as age, background, culture, and availability each have an effect on the speed at which advancements are embraced. So should the church explore cutting-edge technology? Yes! Should we hang on to old technology? Yes again! In order to engage and minister to a wide range of people, it's important that we have a wide range of technology options and that we leave no one behind.

Finding Technical Help

There are few areas of ministry that require as much technical knowledge as media ministry. This chapter will give you a vision of what can be done and instruction in certain essentials to guide in the oversight of a well-rounded media ministry. However, it isn't possible in one short chapter to equip someone with the technical skills needed to livestream church services, launch a website, advertise over the Internet, or perform similar tasks. This is why one of the most important steps in establishing an effective media ministry is finding capable personnel.

Different areas of technology require different levels of technical skill. For instance, a reasonably tech-savvy member of your congregation may be capable of recording on video and audio, duplicating CDs and DVDs, and creating social media accounts. It may be harder to find someone who can create a website, set your church up to livestream its services, or utilize Internet advertising. The key is *not* to eliminate a ministry idea simply because you don't know anyone who knows how to do it. You just might know someone who knows someone!

If upon reading this chapter you feel impressed to launch a particular media ministry idea, but you don't feel you have the technical knowledge to do it, try one or more of the following:

- If it isn't too technical, you may be able to gain the knowledge needed by searching on Google or YouTube, such as: "How to Set Up a Church Facebook Account."
- Survey your congregation or put an announcement in your church bulletin to identify hidden talents among the members of your church.
- Contact your conference communication or media technology departments for advice and potential suggestions of skilled individuals who could perform the task at a reasonable price.
- Look for churches that are effective in the area you are wanting to launch, and ask them for advice or references of people who could help your church.
- Consult with organizations that specialize in digital evangelism.

One ministry specializing in digital evangelism ideas and support is the Center for Online Evangelism. Visit centerforonlineevangelism.org.

If you contract with someone to help you with a task, such as building a website, it is vital that a representative from the local church carefully oversee the project. To illustrate this importance, imagine that you ask someone to paint your house. Since the painter is the expert, you decide to leave the detailed decisions up to the painter. When you come home, you find that the paint has been applied to perfection, but there's one problem. The color is the ugliest you've ever seen! Even though the painter is the "expert," you still need to know what you want and give the oversight and direction to make sure it happens. Similarly, though someone else may have the technical ability needed to build a website, you need to have a vision of what you

want and ensure that the end product meets your needs. This is vital. The practical instruction in this chapter will give you a basic vision of what is needed in different media ministry areas both to guide you and to help you guide others.

The Local Church Media Team

For many churches “media ministry” has historically consisted of one or two people to operate the sound system and maybe a video projector. But times are changing. As technology becomes more and more interwoven into our daily lives, the need for more extensive media ministries continues to grow. While there is no personnel structure for this ministry outlined in the *Church Manual*, it is still wise to assemble a team either to perform the various tasks involved or to oversee paid contractors. These tasks and their duties may include, but would not be limited to, the following:

The need for more extensive media ministries continues to grow.

Livestream Plus Recording/Editing—Ensure the smooth livestream of church services and events, and record these messages on audio and video. Record short videos of events and activities in the life of the church, including member testimonies and interviews, to be posted on the website and social media. Help with the setup of sound equipment, cameras, lighting, digital recorders, projectors, screens, and any other media equipment needed at church services and events. Ensure that postediting of audio and video files is completed.

CD and DVD Duplication—Ensure that recordings of the Sabbath morning messages, evangelistic meeting sermons, and

other recorded seminars and events are duplicated and made available on CDs and DVDs for sharing. Be sure to obey any local copyright laws that may apply to sermons, music, photos, or illustrations.

Website Administration—Oversee the development and maintenance of the church website, ensuring that it is updated regularly with fresh content. If someone else is responsible for site maintenance, provide electronic files of video and audio content such as sermons, seminars, and concerts to be uploaded.

Social Media Administration—Oversee the creation and maintenance of the church's social media accounts. Approve and post videos, quotes, photos, event invitations, and more to the church's social media accounts and YouTube channel on behalf of the church.

Internet and Social Media Advertising and SEO—Oversee the church's Internet and social media advertising campaigns and its search engine optimization (SEO) strategy.

The responsibilities above require a broad range of technical skills. It could be that your church already has an audiovisual team that handles the church's sound system and sermon recordings, but perhaps no one on this team has the technical knowledge to administer a website or social media account. This is why different people with various skill sets must often comprise the media ministry team rather than expecting one or two people to do everything. A good approach is to appoint a leader to assemble a media team and to serve on the local church's personal ministries council. The media team is a great opportunity to involve a wide range of people, especially young people, in an important ministry of the church.

Plan and Budget

Once your local church has appointed a media ministry leader and begun to assemble a media team, plans should be laid for the year ahead. This will likely require input from the pastor, elders, or personal ministries council. Once a plan is in place, a budget should be developed and presented to the church board for approval. Here are a few thoughts to consider when preparing the budget:

Equipment and Supplies—Conducting a local church media ministry will require an investment in equipment and supplies. This could include cameras, lighting, digital recorders, computers, editing software, duplicators, recordable media, and more. The wisest course for most churches is to make a modest initial investment and then gradually upgrade or add to their equipment as the ministry grows. A good start might include a modestly priced video camera, a digital audio recorder, and a computer. Your church may also need to pay for a good Internet service if you plan to livestream or to upload electronic files.

Platform Decor—Evaluate the area to be captured by your video recordings with questions such as: Is it organized, clean, and attractive? Does the podium need upgrading? Would flowers or plants help to make the area more appealing? Is better lighting needed? Whether these items will come out of the media ministry budget or not, you will want to present these needs to the board.

Internet and Social Media—If you want a new website but no one in your church has the technical ability to create one, you may have to hire someone to help you. The same could be true of setting up Internet advertising, search engine optimization,

or other tasks requiring a certain level of expertise. Be sure to include estimates of these and any other expenses related to your Internet presence and social media accounts in your budget.

Recording Services and Events

One of the first and most important steps for a local church media ministry is to get into the habit of recording sermons, concerts, evangelistic meetings, or other notable events. Pastors or elders asked to speak at an event outside the local church can utilize a recording device so that even these sermons are captured and made available through the church's media ministry. Churches with successful media ministries are those that produce a steady stream of Bible-based teaching, preaching, music, and other content. The rule of thumb is that websites and channels that are rarely updated are rarely visited.

Of all that can be recorded by the local church, perhaps the most basic and essential is the Sabbath morning sermon. People who begin viewing these sermons not only are blessed by

Websites and channels that are rarely updated are rarely visited.

the preaching of God's Word, but also begin to establish a connection with the local congregation and speaker. A close second to the Sabbath sermon in terms of potential impact is an evangelistic seminar or series of sermons preached by a local church pastor or layperson.

Members can multiply the reach of these messages by sharing them long after the event has ended. Once again, the tendency of viewers to connect with the speaker can be a motivating factor in leading them to visit your church.

Share a few simple tips with anyone who will be captured on video. For instance, speakers should be encouraged to engage

not only with the live audience but also with the camera, noting those who are watching online or who may watch the recording later. Speakers should be instructed to hide their microphone and recorder cords in their shirts or jackets rather than leaving them in plain sight, dangling in front of them. If there will be platform participants sitting behind the speaker, make sure they know that the camera will also be on them. They should dress appropriately, pay attention, and avoid falling asleep for the camera! The more your church records its messages and events, the better everyone involved will become at ensuring the highest quality possible.

Local churches can also benefit from assigning members who will take pictures and record short videos at various events and activities in the life of the church. These might include cooking schools, community service events, church socials, and much more. Short testimonies and interviews of church members, often taken on cell phones, can be shown during Sabbath School and church services, posted on the website, and shared on social media.

A word of caution is needed here. Be aware of any privacy laws in your territory before taking pictures or videos and posting them on the Internet or social media. Obtain written permission or whatever else might be required before sharing these media on public platforms.

CD and DVD Ministry

Physical forms of media, while they may not be around for much longer, can still be effective in certain territories and demographic groups. In these cases, duplicating Sabbath morning messages on CDs can provide great opportunities for sharing. It is best to duplicate these recordings as soon as possible

to seize the moment when members are interested in listening to it a second time or sharing it with others.

A full evangelistic series on DVD is another great use of physical media. These DVDs can be made available in the same area as your church's literature display. Consider sorting and stocking the series by individual DVD rather than packaging the entire series together. This allows members to share one or two messages at a time with their friends, family, and coworkers, and avoids waste if an interest decides not to finish the series.

If your church isn't yet recording local content, consider contacting a larger media ministry to ask permission to duplicate and distribute their messages on CDs and DVDs.

Livestreaming

YouTube Live, Facebook Live, and many similar services have made video streaming very popular. As it becomes more common, people are using online church services to evaluate whether or not they want to attend in person. Offering an online experience can subdue the fear of the unknown and give people the level of comfort or familiarity they need to visit your church.

The benefits to be gained by livestreaming Sabbath services and other special events are abundant. One of the greatest advantages is that members who are homebound because of illness or weather can watch the services and feel included. Your church members will also appreciate the ability to invite anyone, anywhere, to watch their church's services. The only requirement to watch is a good Internet connection. And perhaps one of the least appreciated, but most impactful, benefits of livestreaming is that many people will discover your church's messages simply by browsing the Internet.

Streaming your services doesn't require an elaborate or complex setup. While investing in higher quality equipment is certainly preferable, many churches have successfully started streaming with only a smartphone. Different video platforms attract different viewers, so you might consider maintaining accounts with a variety of platforms to reach an even greater audience. Be sure also to publish links to fresh audio and video content on the church's website and social media accounts.

TV and Radio Broadcasts

As a general rule, local churches don't have the resources to finance or operate television or radio stations. However, this doesn't mean that these forms of media cannot be included in a local church media ministry. Contact local television and radio stations, generally Christian ones, to see if they would consider broadcasting your services or hosting a daily five-minute devotional or a 30- or 60-minute program on health or Bible topics. It may require funding, but sometimes these stations are looking for good programming to fit into available time slots. This kind of ministry often works best when a group of Adventist pastors and churches collaborate together to make it happen.

The Church Website

Every local church with access to the Internet should utilize a church website to engage its community. It's quickly becoming just as important to provide a pleasant online experience as it is to have smiling greeters in the church foyer each Sabbath. The location of the all-important first impression has changed for many people. They will go to the Web to find the address for the church, to see what it's about, to see what ministries they can get involved in, and to see what worship

services are like. Many people are deciding whether or not to try out a church based solely on what they first see online.

For these reasons and more, a well-designed church website is an invaluable tool for all aspects of the church's mission. Bible studies, sermons, health programs, community service opportunities, mission trips, musical concerts, and other events or ministries your church provides should be featured and regularly updated on the church website. The home page especially needs to showcase *fresh* content that points people to upcoming events, new media, free Bible studies, and ministry opportunities. One of the biggest mistakes made by local churches is an out-of-date or static website. Not only is this a lost opportunity, but it can create a negative impression that actually discourages people from attending your church.

A church website will generally include, but not be limited to, the following elements:

Evangelistic Home Page—Many websites provide information about the church, but aren't intentional about offering content and services. Use prime space on the home page to invite website visitors to do such things as view your latest videos, request free Bible studies, leave prayer requests, subscribe to devotionals and newsletters, or get updates on upcoming events. The more intentional you are about extending offers, the more people you will find who are interested.

Church Address and Phone Number—Contact information and service times are perhaps the most important information on the site. Include the church address and phone number on the home page and in the header or footer of every page. The address should be a hyperlink to an online GPS map

program for immediate access to voice-guided directions. As for voicemail messages, be sure to respond within no more than 24 hours.

Church Service Times—This information should also be easy to find on the home page and preferably be part of the header or footer on every page. Include a minimum of Sabbath School, church, and midweek service times.

Church Bulletin—It can be very helpful to include the church bulletin in PDF format on the home page. Post the bulletin for the upcoming Sabbath a few days ahead of the service, and archive previous bulletins for those who were unable to attend.

About Us—This page should share summary information about the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as the local congregation. Include an attractive photo of the inside and outside of the church. A summary of the church’s mission and beliefs could be included, or a link to a separate “What We Believe” page. Information about church leadership could be included, with pictures and bios. Finally, share a simple list of what to expect from a church visit, such as children’s Sabbath School, average service length, fellowship lunch, and a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Streaming and Media—Include a page where you will livestream your services and events, post weekly Sabbath sermons, and keep archives of audio and video recordings. It is especially important for this page to have *fresh* content. Try to limit the time needed to post a sermon to only a few days. Members will often go to the website to view or share a message that’s recent in their memory, but if it’s not available, they may not return. The longer it takes to post a video or audio, the less impact it generally has.

Events—This page should advertise evangelistic events but can also include a full calendar of events in the life of the church. This is another page that is very important to keep up-to-date.

Ministries—This page is primarily for church members and attendees. More than merely providing a list and description of the ministries of the church, it should provide a way for people to sign up or volunteer in their areas of interest.

Contact Us—In addition to listing the address and phone number on this page, provide a form or email address for people to send you correspondence.

In addition to the above components, there are several other factors to consider in order for your church website to be effective:

Public-friendly—Remember that your site is on the *World Wide Web*. Everything on it should be suitable for people who know nothing about Seventh-day Adventists. It isn't the place for Adventist lingo, sensitive financial information, in-depth beliefs that require a foundation that hasn't been laid, obscure quotes by Ellen White that require context or explanation, or communications that are more for members than the public.

Mobile-friendly—Today far more people access the Internet on their phones than on their computers. This means that even more important than your site's desktop version, it must have a mobile-friendly design that looks attractive and works perfectly on smartphones.

Appealing Design—Website styles experience changing trends. Be sure your design and user interface are appealing and up-to-date. This will generally require getting ample feedback from a

broad range of people, including those of younger generations and those with experience in website design.

Good Photos—Don't underestimate the value of attractive photos. The church should identify its most talented photographers and make arrangements for good photos to be taken at events and services. In addition to the website, these photos can be used on social media, in church newsletters, and in any other public relations tools the church may use. Don't use photos randomly downloaded from the Internet. If you want to use someone else's photos, visit a website that offers stock photos. Some of these are free, but many images require a fee in order to obtain the rights to use them. Try to avoid using photos that are used by other church sites.

Don't Overwhelm—Use brief and simple descriptions with plenty of white space and compelling images. Use sufficiently large font sizes, ample line spacing, and wider margins for easier readability and a more open feel. If significant reading is required, provide a link to a separate page or downloadable file.

Easy Navigation—Users should be able to go anywhere they want on the site with just a few clicks and get to the most important information with a single click. Include links on the home page to all site content and cross-links on pages with related information.

Easy to Share—Include links that make it easy to share content on various social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).

Adventist Identity Guidelines—Always comply with the Seventh-day Adventist denominational visual identity guidelines.

For detailed guidelines, go to identity.adventist.org .

Social Media

Billions of people all over the world actively use social media every day. Just as Jesus went where the people were in His day, we should find ways to reach people where they are in our day—on social media. Here are some simple steps you can take to develop a social media presence for your local church:

Set Up Church Social Media Accounts—Local churches can develop their own social media accounts on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using simple online processes. Church leaders should consider recruiting members who are knowledgeable in social media to assist in this setup.

Choose Administrators—Carefully select the individuals who will oversee your church social media accounts. In addition to having technical knowledge and ability, administrators must also be discreet and discerning and have a mature understanding of personal ministries and outreach. Assigning more than one administrator can prevent being locked out of your accounts and can make transitions smoother.

Choose Content to Post—Administrators should post content that can be reposted on church members' accounts with the purpose of reaching their friends. Invitations to church events can be posted regularly. The scripture reading for each upcoming Sabbath service can be posted with an invitation to Sabbath School and church. Post short videos or messages containing devotional thoughts, testimonies, church updates, or ministry reports. It's important that every post rightly represents the message, mission, and spirit of the church. Because posts on church accounts are made on behalf of the church family rather than an individual, they should never push personal or political agendas. Remember, too, that they are intended for curious

seekers as much as church members. Nothing should ever be posted on social media that is intended for church members only. If needed, posts can also include a link to the local church website—the church’s primary online home.

Consider Multiplatform Posts—Churches can use social media posting systems to post to multiple platforms at once. By creating an account with one of these social media schedulers, they can post simultaneously to church accounts on Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Doing this can help the church reach a wider range of demographics than if they were only to choose one platform. For instance, in some regions of the world Facebook is currently more popular with older generations while Instagram appeals more to the youth.

Take Pictures and Video Recordings—As mentioned previously, someone could be designated to take pictures and short video clips at church events to share on social media. Don’t be afraid to post simple videos. In today’s culture, even politicians sometimes skip high-quality productions and choose to release raw videos taken from a smartphone. Quality productions made with choice cameras and lighting are still preferable when the church has the resources, but videos taken from a smartphone are certainly acceptable.

Promote Social Media Accounts—The church’s social media addresses should be printed in bulletins and other printed materials such as church posters and mailers. Invite attendees at health, prophecy, or other church services and events to “like” or “follow” church social media accounts. Once they do this, they will continue to see your church’s posts. The more followers and likes your accounts get, the wider your social media influence will become.

Consider Messenger Bots—Messenger or chat bots are computer programs that use artificial intelligence to simulate a conversation. For instance, a messenger bot can automatically send out mass messages to anyone that shares a new popular video your church just released. When people respond to the message, the bot sends out another automated message with a predetermined reply. Your administrators can finish the conversations in person when they log in to the account. This approach can increase personal connections in social media.

Consider Social Media Advertising—Churches can buy paid social media ads for targeted groups in their community. This kind of social media advertising has been very effective for many churches. Through strategic and frequent social media advertising, they have increased attendance at evangelistic meetings and other events and generated many requests for free Bible studies and literature.

Evangelistic Websites

In addition to the church website and social media pages, there is also value in participating in specific website ministries such as bibleschools.com or biblestudyoffer.com that can be used by local churches to offer free Bible studies. To become a participating church is simple and free. Then if someone who lives in the area of your church requests Bible studies through the website, the church is assigned that individual to follow up. Churches are also notified when Internet users in their area study lessons online.

For information on how to utilize bibleschools.com in your church's Bible study ministry, email discoverschool@vop.com. For more about biblestudyoffer.com, visit biblestudyoffer.com/info.

Another kind of website that can be effective for local churches is one dedicated to a series of evangelistic meetings. Ministries that offer evangelistic handbills and supplies often provide dedicated websites or Web pages that can be used by local churches to advertise their evangelistic meetings and preregister guests. Using these dedicated websites with online preregistration processes has helped churches to increase both their number of interests and their actual meeting attendance.

Churches can also obtain QR codes for all their websites. By including a QR code on advertising materials, people are led directly to the site after scanning the code with a smartphone. Free QR codes for each of your church websites may be obtained from an online QR code generator and then printed on your event flyers and other advertising materials.

Internet Advertising and SEO

Churches naturally become interested in search engine optimization (SEO) as they get serious about the online mission field. SEO refers to the strategy used to ensure that a website appears high on the list of search results when certain key words or phrases are used. The algorithms used by search engines to determine where your church will appear on a list of websites is constantly changing. If a church wants people in its area to see its website when searching for “Jesus,” “Bible,” “prophecy,” “church,” “Sabbath,” “Second Coming,” or other key words and phrases, it will need a search engine optimization strategy.

In addition to search optimization, churches can pay for Internet advertisements through Google and other search engines. This can be a very effective way to target advertisements toward people who search for specific words or phrases. Let’s say

you want people in your area who are interested in Bible study to see your online Bible study offer. You can pay for your website to appear in an advertisement at the top of the page when people in your area search for “Bible study.” Cost is then incurred only when the individual who sees the ad clicks on it. This kind of targeted advertising can be a cost-effective way of finding people who are interested in studying the Bible. Internet advertising can also be used to advertise your evangelistic meeting website to anyone searching for “prophecy” or similar words and phrases that you choose. Someone will likely need to test different words and phrases to discover the most effective approach.

The All-Important Follow-up Plan

If a local church takes to heart the ideas shared in this chapter, it will no doubt find many people who have an interest in subjects of eternal significance. Equally important to finding these individuals, however, is to follow up with them regularly. This is neglected far too often. Many churches make the mistake of failing to make regular contact with individuals who don't immediately start Bible studies or begin attending church. A vital key to the success of any ministry, including media ministry, is to establish a systematic follow-up plan that incorporates regular correspondence, invitations, and offers directed toward individuals who have expressed interest. Much of this can be scheduled and accomplished using digital methods such as group or individual emails, texts, social media messages, or social media advertising. In addition to these, the plan should also incorporate more personal methods, such as visits and phone calls.

Final Encouragement

Seventh-day Adventists have been given a message to proclaim to the world. Could it be that God wants to use advancements in technology to equip His people for their special mission? The truth is that electronic media are already playing a significant part, both for good and for evil, in the last struggle between light and darkness in this world. Every Seventh-day Adventist church and every member can utilize such media and digital technology to be a light on a hill. We can be a voice of hope in the midst of immorality, corruption, and despair. Let us not grow timid now. The world needs the message God has entrusted to us. It is time for thousands of Adventist churches to cover TV, radio, the Internet, and social media with seeds of hope and divine truth. Jesus is coming soon!

For more best practices, tips, and training in digital evangelism, visit centerforonlineevangelism.org or sdadata.org.

Section 5

Visiting Your Territory

Why House-to-House Ministry?

In Luke 15 Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep, urging His hearers to consider the special efforts that a shepherd is willing to make for his flock. If a shepherd loses one out of 100 sheep, he will leave the 99 in the wilderness to “go after the one which is lost until he finds it” (Luke 15:4). The implication is clear. If a shepherd is willing to put forth such earnest effort to rescue an animal, how much more should we make active, diligent efforts to search for wayward souls? Those who are lost in the darkness of this world need our help to find their way to the light of truth.

Jesus Himself is the Good Shepherd, who searches for His lost sheep: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). In this Jesus was setting an example for His disciples, whom He would send out to do the same work: “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Luke 10:1).

Ellen White further detailed this work: “The disciples were to work earnestly for souls, giving to all the invitation of mercy. They were not to wait for the people to come to them; they were to go to the people with their message” (*The Acts of Apostles*, p. 28). So it is today. We are not to wait for the people to come to us. Instead Jesus urges us, “Go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite” (Matthew 22:9).

Public Efforts Aren’t Enough

The apostle Paul, often considered the greatest evangelist in the early Christian church, did not rely only on the public proclamation of the gospel in order to reach the people. He told the church at Ephesus, “I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). Ellen White highlighted the apostle’s balanced approach, which was a combination of both public *and* personal evangelism: “The apostle’s efforts were not confined to public speaking; there were many who could not have been reached in that way. He spent much time in house-to-house labor, thus availing himself of the familiar intercourse of the home circle” (*The Acts of Apostles*, p. 250).

The key reason the apostle did not confine his work to public speaking was that “there were many who could not have been reached in that way.” The same is true today. Throughout her writings Ellen White affirms the importance of personal labor and of visiting the homes of those in our communities in search of lost sheep:

“Of equal importance with special public efforts is house-to-house work in the homes of the people. In large cities there are certain classes that cannot be reached by public meetings.

These must be searched out as the shepherd searches for his lost sheep. Diligent, personal effort must be put forth in their behalf. When personal work is neglected, many precious opportunities are lost, which, were they improved, would advance the work decidedly” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 111).

“Wherever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in missionary work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood, and know their spiritual condition” (*ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 296).

“This house-to-house labor, searching for souls, hunting for the lost sheep, is the most essential work that can be done” (*Evangelism*, p. 431).

Addressing Common Questions

Many sincere Christians have questions or concerns about the wisdom and effectiveness of house-to-house labor. Before addressing these, it is important to note that when Ellen White uses the term “house-to-house” she is not always referring to “cold calling,” or making unsolicited visits to people’s homes. Sometimes her counsel refers to visiting people who have expressed an interest in spiritual matters.

Such was the case with Mike and Irene, a couple who had responded to a flyer and were attending a public evangelistic series. While they seemed interested, they also kept to themselves and never made any decisions when appeals were made. Eventually the evangelist visited them in their home. There in the living room Mike and Irene shared the details of Irene’s mother’s death. They also shared the loneliness that they both felt without any close friends. They were moved by the evangelist’s visit and the personal concern he expressed. The evangelist and faithful

members of the church continued to visit Mike and Irene in their home, and the couple was eventually baptized. This experience helps to illustrate the wisdom of Ellen White’s counsel. Public ministry is important, but it can never replace the personal influence of home visitation.

Still, to visit those who are spiritually interested is not the only type of house-to-house visitation recommended in the writings of Ellen White. She sometimes includes not only the homes of those who are interested, but *every* home, such as her counsel to “visit every family in the neighborhood.” It is this type of labor that seems to be less popular among many members. Their feelings are expressed with questions and concerns, such as: “Does knocking on doors really work in today’s culture?” “Why would

“Visit every family in the neighborhood.”

I knock on someone else’s door if I don’t want anyone knocking on mine?” “Wouldn’t going door to door make people associate us with Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses?”

For those who share these questions and concerns, here are some important factors to consider about house-to-house ministry:

Inspired Counsel and Biblical Examples Encourage it—When we weigh any ministry method, we must give proper weight to the inspired counsel found in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. While the cultural context has changed since the days of Jesus, Paul, and Ellen White, we would be unwise to set aside their examples and abundant counsel. The inspired principle of personal ministry and searching for lost sheep continues to be applicable today.

It May Be the Only Way to Reach Some People—It is true that visiting homes unsolicited may not be the best method to reach

most people. However, there may be some people who will not be reached in any other way. If we make ourselves available, perhaps God will use us to find some of His lost sheep: “Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 479).

Secular Organizations Do It Because It Works—From politicians to corporations, door-to-door efforts are still used regularly. The heart of the “ground game” so vital to the success of many political campaigns is door-to-door canvassing. Yet everyone knows that interrupting people’s lives to tell them about something they may not be interested in is often unwanted and uncomfortable. So why do these secular groups do it? Because it works. Many people may have thought briefly about an issue or product, but their busy lives have kept them from looking into it. A face-to-face encounter can cause them to do just that. In the same way, many people have had fleeting thoughts about religion that only a face-to-face encounter could lead them to consider more seriously. For example, a much higher percentage of people will accept an offer for Bible studies given by someone at the door than will generally do so if the offer comes in the mail.

Religious Groups Do It Because It Works—There are many ways in which Seventh-day Adventists may choose to be different from Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses, but door-to-door ministry should not really be one of them. It is an undisputed fact that these groups continue to be, at least partly as a result of their aggressive witnessing strategies, among the fastest growing denominations. We should consider how the converts won to these groups could have been won to the three angels’ messages.

You Can Use It to Build Relationships—If you are concerned that the people in your community may not be receptive to door-to-door offers for Bible study or invitations to church events, you could begin building relationships by simply offering prayer or other helpful services. And regardless of what you offer, you can make positive impressions on the people you visit by manifesting sincere kindness, humility, politeness, and respect for their wishes. Consider leaving behind a thoughtful and practical gift. Show that you care for them and desire their good. This was Christ’s method.

It Can Be Beneficial When Done in Different Ways—Even without knocking on anyone’s door, churches can leave Bible study offer cards, event flyers, and truth-filled literature outside every door in the community. When enough members do this, it has the benefit of engaging them in mission work while also saving on the cost of mailing. As mentioned previously, another variation from “cold calling” is follow-up visitation. Those who express interest in Bible studies or other programs should receive personal visits, as should those who visit our church or attend cooking schools, evangelistic meetings, or other events. This beneficial form of “house-to-house” labor should not be neglected.

Into the Streets and Lanes

There are people all over the world, and in every community, who are searching for God and eternity. Yet while the “harvest truly is plentiful” (Matthew 9:37), it’s also true that those who are open to biblical truth are in the minority on this sinful planet. That means the majority of those we visit from house to house will likely decline our offers. But should fear of rejection, or of failure, or of what people might think, prevent us from trying? Remember that Jesus “came to His own, and His

own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). He knows what it’s like to face rejection. Though He suffered and died to give salvation to all, He did it knowing that there would be “few who find it” (Matthew 7:14). We can be thankful that Jesus didn’t allow the cold rejections of the *many* to deter Him from saving the *few*. And He will imbue us, when we pray and give ourselves to Him, with the same spirit of love and sacrifice for others.

*What if no one
had ever knocked
on her door?*

In one small Adventist church a group of youth and young adults decided to offer Bible studies from door to door in the community. One of the apartments they visited was occupied by a young woman named Amy, who had been going through a series of difficulties in her life. Amy was so impressed by the kindness shown to her by the young person at her door that she agreed to take Bible studies. After joining a group Bible study at the home of a local church member, Amy was soon baptized and became an active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Naturally of a meek and gentle disposition, Amy was well liked by everyone. But at the young age of 40 she died of leukemia. Sad as it was to lose such a bright light from this dark world, her friends were at least thankful that their grief could be mingled with the hope of eternity. What if no one had ever knocked on her door?

House-to-house ministry has a valuable role in reaching our communities and fulfilling the mission of the church. When other methods have been tried, and still there is room in the Master’s house, we are to “go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city” (Luke 14:21) and bring the people to Jesus. We are to “go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in” (verse 23), that His house may be filled. We are

to “go” into our communities and “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). We are not to wait for the people to come to us. “From door to door His servants are to proclaim the message of salvation” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 29).

What to Know Before Knocking

In the book of Revelation, Jesus beautifully portrays His approach to reaching the hearts of people. He announces, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” (Revelation 3:20). While He won’t force His way in, His love is far too strong to sit back and wait for us to come to Him. This same love is what compels God’s people, despite feeling nervous and inadequate, to carry the good news of the gospel to their neighborhoods and communities. This chapter will provide valuable instruction for house-to-house labor, endeavoring to equip and inspire church members with faith and confidence.

Before You Go

As with most spiritual endeavors, there are important steps to consider before carrying out the missionary effort itself. Consider following this plan before knocking on your first door:

Prepare Your Heart—Be sure to spend time at the feet of Jesus in prayer and Bible study and to ask for the baptism of the Holy

Spirit. Only then will we “know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary” (Isaiah 50:4). The apostle Peter urges us to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

Ask God to Guide You to Searching People—Just as He guided Philip to the Ethiopian (see Acts 8:26-39), we have the assurance that God will guide us to the right people when we ask Him: “All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in. An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts” (*The Acts of Apostles*, p. 109). “He will guide them to the homes of those who need and desire the truth” (*Evangelism*, p. 434). Pray for divine appointments, for the right person to open the door, for quick rejections if people aren’t interested, for energy and cheerfulness, and for God to speak through you.

Claim God’s Promises—Spend some time fortifying your mind with Bible promises that increase faith and protect from doubt and discouragement. Consider these gems: Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:3-5, 9; Exodus 4:12; Jeremiah 1:9, 17-19; James 1:5; Romans 8:31, 37-39; Isaiah 55:10, 11; Psalm 126:5, 6.

Choose a Partner—When Jesus sent out 70 of His followers for missionary work, He “sent them two by two” (Luke 10:1). It is always best to engage in house-to-house labor with a partner. Within each team of two, one person should take the lead in

speaking at the door while the other prays. It's best if the partners take turns so that both gain a full experience.

Choose a Time—Local churches will often schedule outreach activities on a Sabbath afternoon to maximize the participation of members. If you're part of a small group that has decided to knock on doors, or just you and a partner are planning to do so, you may be able to consider other possible times. Ask yourself: What time of day gives me the best chance of finding people home? Would a day during the week be better received than a weekend? If you have the flexibility, it is good to try different days and times to reach a wider range of people.

Dress Respectfully—First impressions are important. Be sure to dress in respectful and modest attire and to maintain good hygiene when visiting the people in your community. This will vary in some respects based on the local culture. In most cases it is not necessary to wear full church attire, but you may also want to avoid appearing too casual. Be sure to wear shoes that you can walk in comfortably.

Gather Materials—Plan carefully and collect any materials you may need (map with highlighted streets, clipboard, pen, record sheet, survey, door canvass, literature, invitation flyers, Bible study enrollment cards, Bible lessons, etc.). If you have a lot of materials to carry, such as for a literature distribution project, consider using a backpack or similar bag.

Practice Your Approach—Take adequate time to practice what you will say at the door before going out. It can be helpful to role-play with a partner. This doesn't mean to practice until the nervousness goes away, because most members will continue to feel anxious until after they actually start visiting homes.

Visiting the People

Once you have made the necessary spiritual and practical preparations, it's time to begin your house-to-house visitation. Follow these best practices to maximize your results:

Be Respectful—Be respectful of the residents' property, personal space, opinions, and time. Walk on sidewalks rather than taking shortcuts across personal property. Ring the doorbell only once or knock firmly just a few times, then be patient before trying again. Don't peer into the windows, but step away from the door after knocking to give adequate personal space. Keep your visit brief, and don't be pushy. If some are not interested in what you have to offer, simply thank them for their time, wish them a great day, and move on to the next house. If no one is home and placing material inside a mailbox is illegal, leave it on the door. Know the laws in your territory and respect them. In essence, follow the golden rule (see Matthew 7:12).

Be Friendly and Enthusiastic—As soon as you see someone, smile. If you're nervous, remember to speak slowly and loud enough to be heard. Do your best to relax and speak as naturally as you would to a friend. Then be enthusiastic about what you are sharing. No one will be interested in what you have to offer if you don't seem interested in it yourself! Remember also to be a good listener, showing a genuine interest in what the resident has to say.

Gauge the Response—If someone seems friendly and eager to talk, don't feel as though you have to rush through your canvass. Seek to make a friend. Ask questions, give sincere encouragement, and build connections. On the other hand, if someone acts busy, reluctant, or annoyed, shorten your canvass to the bare minimum and quickly get to your point.

Put Materials in Their Hands—Retail companies have understood this principle for a long time. If you touch their products, you will begin to experience the feeling of ownership and be more likely to buy them. When you place literature and other materials in people’s hands, it can have the same effect. They will experience the feeling of ownership and be more interested to hear about what they’ve been given.

Walk Fast—There are some good reasons to walk fast when going on outreach. The most obvious is that the faster you walk, the more people you can reach. It also has the benefit of preventing you from dwelling on discouraging encounters. Walking with confidence and purpose communicates that you have something important to share. And finally, walking fast is healthful, producing a positive effect on your mood and outlook.

Lift Up Jesus—There is power in our Savior. When we lift up Jesus, He draws people to Himself (see John 12:32). “God will impress those whose hearts are open to truth and who are longing for guidance. He will say to His human agent, ‘Speak to this one or to that one of the love of Jesus.’ No sooner is the name of Jesus mentioned in love and tenderness than angels of God draw near, to soften and subdue the heart” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 339).

Stay Focused—Some people will see you as an opportunity to share their unique ideas or beliefs. Others will see you as good companionship even if they aren’t interested in spiritual things. Both types of people can monopolize your time if you allow it. If you sense this is happening, kindly conclude your visit. Avoid being distracted from searching for those who are truly interested.

Stay Positive—Remember that most people are not actively searching for truth. So even if no one seems to be responding favorably, don't be discouraged. God has children everywhere who are looking for light. Your goal is to find them. Speedy rejections just mean you will find seekers more quickly, so keep pressing on! "Those who work for God will meet with discouragement, but the promise is always theirs: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Matthew 28:20. God will give a most wonderful experience to those who will say: 'I believe Thy promise; I will not fail nor become discouraged' " (*ibid.*, pp. 335, 336).

Leave Contact Information—Whatever your particular outreach approach, be sure there is a way for those you visit to get in touch with you or request further information. In most cases you should leave a Bible study enrollment card, an event brochure, or a piece of literature with clear instructions on how they can respond or contact you in the future.

Offer to Pray—When God impresses you, offer to pray before leaving. Pray a short but genuine prayer asking God to bless and guide the individual and any family members. These prayers have power to convict and soften hearts.

Record Your Visits—Write down the names and addresses of those who respond positively so that you can visit them again. You may also want to record the addresses of those who were not home so you can try to visit at another time. Record names, prayer requests, materials left behind, and other notes before you forget.

Download a "Street Record Sheet" at grow.adventist.org.

Pray and Share—Conclude your time of outreach by praying with your partner for those you visited. Share testimonies of your

experience with others to be an encouragement to them and to solicit their prayers for your ongoing efforts for these souls.

Outreach Approaches

There are many different ways to minister to the families in our neighborhoods and church territories. Changing the approach periodically can help you to reach a wider variety of people and will provide a break from the monotony of following a single method. Below you will find brief explanations and sample canvasses for several different approaches. In each approach you will want to share who you are and the name of the church or ministry you're representing, keep your visit to only a few minutes, communicate that your offer is free, and look for opportunities to pray with people. Then be sure to follow up periodically with those who show interest, building a relationship and offering invitations to explore the Bible further or to attend church services or events.

Be sure to follow up periodically with those who show interest.

Offer Prayer—A simple but effective way to spread the love of God in your territory is through prayer. Begin by having teams pray for the occupants of every home, asking that the Holy Spirit lead these families closer to God and open their hearts to receive truth. Next, visit the homes to let them know you've been praying for them and to ask if they have any particular requests for which you could pray. If they're willing, pray with them at the door, then leave behind a tract on the power of prayer. Such an approach can break down prejudice and soften hearts. Bring a small notebook to jot down the date, addresses, names, and prayer requests. Continue to remember these requests in your personal and family prayers and as an outreach team. After

several weeks you can revisit these homes to inquire about any matter for which you've been praying and to eventually offer invitations to study the Bible or attend a church service or event.

Here's a sample script:

"Hello. My name is [your name], and we're from [name of church or ministry]. We've been praying for people in this neighborhood, and we're wondering if you have any specific prayer requests for which we could pray. It could be a financial or health concern, a sick family member, or something more general [pause for a response, and ask for the person's name]. Would you mind if we said a prayer right now for this situation?"

"Dear God, thank You for being the one who brings hope to every heart. I want to pray for [name of person], who is having a struggle with [specific need]. I ask You to [specific request]. Lord, please be with [name of person at the door], and bless this home. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

"We'd also like to leave this little tract with you on the power of prayer [hand the person a tract]. We think it will be a real blessing to you. We'll be praying for you! Have a nice day."

After two or three weeks, make a follow-up visit:

"Hello! A few weeks ago we stopped by to ask for prayer requests. We just wanted you to know that we've been praying for you and your family. You had also asked us to pray for [specific request]. How is this situation now? Has there been any change? [Listen, rejoice in answers to prayer, then pray with the person and leave another piece of literature.] We will continue to keep you and your family in our prayers. Have a wonderful day!"

Offer to Meet Community Needs—Every community is filled with people who need encouragement, support, and practical help in facing life’s challenges. Jesus showed us how to model the gospel by ministering to these people: “He sympathized with the weary, the heavy-laden, the oppressed. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. Constantly He went about doing good. By the good He accomplished, by His loving words and kindly deeds, He interpreted the gospel to men” (*Counsels on Health*, p. 498). Both Isaiah 58 and Matthew 25:31-46 give practical ways to minister within our communities, but how do we begin?

Start by assessing the resources your church has to offer. What outreach programs or ministries of the church could be made available to your community? It could be cooking schools, finance seminars, or community services such as clothing and food. Perhaps your men’s, women’s, children’s, or family ministries departments, or your deacons and deaconesses, could offer services to the community. You could also survey your membership to discover special skills or expertise in practical areas (painting, home repairs, financial planning, physical fitness, gardening, etc.). It’s important to know what your church can provide before extending offers to serve your community.

Next, you may want to do some research to determine the most pressing needs in your community. Talk to civic leaders and organizations already actively serving in your area. Ask your regional Adventist Community Services or ADRA departments. After assessing your church’s resources and the community’s greatest needs, decide which services you will plan to offer. Now it’s time to survey the homes in your territory to discover the specific needs of individuals and families and to suggest the services your church is prepared to offer.

Download a sample survey at grow.adventist.org.

Here's a sample script to accompany a neighborhood needs survey:

“Hello. We're with [church or school name], and we're visiting everyone in the neighborhood to understand better the needs of the community and to make them aware of a variety of programs and services we offer at no charge. [Go through survey and list of services.] Which one(s) of these are of interest to you?”

Distribute Literature—One of the most effective ways to spread the truth door to door is through the mass distribution of literature. Literature evangelists have a long history in the Seventh-day Adventist Church of selling truth-filled materials, but many churches purchase inexpensive books, magazines, or tracts for their members to distribute as free gifts. Oftentimes churches will choose one or more books to give to everyone in their territory, such as *Steps to Christ*, *The Great Controversy*, or the Missionary Book of the Year. They can also choose literature that coincides well with a particular time of year, such as a holiday season. Another theme could relate to physical needs, such as tracts and periodicals on various health topics.

Here's a sample script for distributing *The Great Controversy*:

“Hello. My name is [your name], and this is [your partner's name]. We won't take up your time, but we'd like to leave you with this free book [hand the person the book with a free Bible study offer tucked in the front cover]. It's called *The Great Controversy*, and it explains what is currently happening in our world in the light of Bible prophecy. We believe it's so life-changing that we're giving one to everyone in the community. You owe it to yourself to read this book!”

Here's a sample script for distributing literature on health topics:

“Hello. My name is [your name], and this is [your partner's name]. We won't take up your time, but we'd like to leave you with this free health magazine [hand the person the magazine with a free Bible study offer tucked in the front cover]. It's called [name of magazine], and it explains how you can feel better, maintain a healthful weight, and greatly minimize your risk of disease. We believe it's so life-changing that we're giving one to everyone in the community. Be sure to read it, OK?”

If you're trying to disperse a significant amount of literature quickly in order to reach a distribution goal, one approach is simply to drop it off without speaking to anyone at the door. In this case, consider placing it in a clear door-hanger bag along with a cover letter that explains the gift you're leaving behind. You may also include a brochure about the church and its events or simply a card offering free Bible studies.

Conduct Surveys—Another approach is to conduct surveys from door to door on a variety of topics. These surveys are a way to find out the views and opinions of those in your community, engage them in spiritual conversations, determine their needs, and offer services to bless and help them. Surveys often conclude with an offer for Bible studies and may also be followed up by leaving some free literature. Common surveys include community religious surveys, prophecy surveys, neighborhood needs surveys, and community health surveys.

Download sample surveys at grow.adventist.org.

Here's a sample script:

“Hello. We're from [name of church or ministry], and we're conducting a [name of survey] to learn about the views and needs of our community. Could you help us out by taking just two or three minutes to answer a few questions?”

Take residents through the survey, but don't feel the need to rush through it if they're open to conversation. Conclude by asking if they have interest in Bible studies or any need-based programs that you or your church may offer. Offer to pray before leaving, and leave behind free literature.

Offer Bible Studies—Though most door-to-door approaches incorporate an offer for Bible studies in some way, at times you may want to make this the sole reason for your visit. Give those you visit the first Bible study guide in a series. Then offer to come back and review it with them or simply to drop off another lesson or two each week. Be sure to let them know that the study guides are free. If no one is home, leave the first lesson with a Bible study sign-up card that explains how the resident can sign up to receive more. “Carry the Word of God to every man's door, urge its plain statements upon every man's conscience, repeat to all the Savior's command, ‘Search the Scriptures’ ” (*Evangelism*, p. 434).

Here's a sample script:

“Hello! We're from [name of church or ministry], and we're offering free Bible study guides to everyone in the community [hand the first study guide to the person]. A lot of people wish they knew what the Bible said about life's biggest questions, but they don't know where to begin looking. These study guides are perfect because they help you find the answers straight from the Bible

[open lesson and point out features like the question-and-answer format, fill-in-the-blank, etc.]. People really love them! They're free, there's no obligation, and you can stop receiving them at any time. Would you like to give them a try? Wonderful! Complete this lesson, and we'll bring you the next one at this same time next week, if that works for you. If you have any questions, we can try to answer those when we drop by. Enjoy your study, and we'll see you next week!"

Sing Hymns or Carols—In some cultures, taking a group to sing well-known hymns door to door can be well received. “Learn to sing the simplest of songs. These will help you in house-to-house labor, and hearts will be touched by the influence of the Holy Spirit” (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 91). Even cultures in which this is less common are often open to groups singing Christmas carols at the end of the year. When sharing music from house to house, consider having children come along and give a small gift with some literature and an offer for Bible studies to the residents.

The following Christmas caroling canvass is simple and easy for children to give at the door while carols are being sung by the rest of the group:

“Hello. We’re from [name of church or ministry], and we just wanted to bring you some holiday cheer. Here’s a little gift for you [hand the person a nice gift along with information about your church or an appropriate piece of literature].”

Visit Interests—House-to-house labor can include following up with those who have already expressed an interest. These include church visitors, event guests, Bible study interests, media ministry interests, literature evangelism interests, and

many others. Sadly, many of these individuals have never been personally visited, prayed with, spiritually encouraged, given literature, or offered Bible studies. Yet these can be some of your best contacts, having already shown an interest in something your church has to offer. Many of them could develop into solid interests and even begin attending church if they were regularly visited and befriended by church members. Consider the sample scripts below.

Church Visitors:

“Hello. My name is [your name], and I’m a member at [name of church], where you recently visited. Did you have a good experience when you visited us? [Listen to feedback and ask follow-up questions as appropriate, such as “Was this your first time visiting a Seventh-day Adventist church?”] The church would like to give you [“and your family,” if applicable] a small gift for coming. [Hand the person a small sharing book or other gift.] While you were visiting us, did anyone tell you about our free Bible study offer? [Listen to response, then hand the person a Bible study guide and a card explaining how to sign up for the full series.] We hope you’ll consider visiting us again soon! [Offer to pray for the individual and family, if applicable, before leaving.]”

Prior Evangelistic Meeting Interests:

“Hello, my name is [state your name], and I’m from [name of church or ministry]. I understand that you attended the [name of seminar] presented by [name of speaker] held at [location] in [month and year]. Do you recall attending that seminar? Did you enjoy the presentations you attended? Well, we just wanted to stop by with a couple of

small gifts to thank you for attending and maybe to help you in your study. First, we have a book for you [hand the person a sharing book such as *The Great Controversy* or *The Desire of Ages*, offering a brief explanation of its theme and contents]. And then we also wanted you to have the first [Bible study guide or prophecy DVD] in a series that covers many similar topics related to the seminar you attended [hand the person the study guide or DVD, and explain how to sign up for the full series]. We hope you'll also consider visiting us for [upcoming event or special church service]! [Offer to pray for the individual and family, if applicable, before leaving.]”

Common Reactions

You can expect to meet a wide variety of reactions when visiting from house to house. Here are a few of the more common ones, with suggested ways to respond:

“What is a Seventh-day Adventist?” In some cases, if you go to the door representing a media or Bible study ministry, the question may be directed toward the ministry instead. Either way, you can respond by explaining that we believe in the Bible; in Jesus as the Son of God, who died for our sins; in keeping all of God’s commandments by faith; and in the soon coming of Jesus. Don’t feel the need to go into the specifics of our unique doctrines at this early stage: “In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, We are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non-immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach” (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 119, 120).

“I have my own religion/church.” This comment is usually a way of declining your offer. Rather than be deterred, you could respond, “That’s wonderful that you are a spiritual person! These study guides are designed for people of any background or persuasion. Why not try the first study guide, and if you decide you don’t like it, there’s certainly no obligation to continue.”

“I’m not interested!” One of our greatest fears when it comes to witnessing to others is the potential for rejection. The majority often just aren’t interested. But should the likelihood of being turned away discourage us? Consider the following inspired counsel: “ ‘But,’ says one, ‘suppose we cannot gain admittance to the homes of the people; and if we do, suppose they rise up against the truths that we present. Shall we not then feel excused from making further efforts for them?’ By no means. Even if they shut the door in your face, do not hasten away in indignation, and make no further effort to save them. Ask God in faith to give you access to those very souls. Cease not your efforts, but study and plan until you find some other means of reaching them” (*Evangelism*, p. 411).

On Heaven’s Errands

If you’ve ever felt anxious about house-to-house ministry, you’re not alone. It’s easy to forget that the work is God’s, and that we are *His* instruments. Joe and Johnny were church members who were not super-excited about the prospects of house-to-house ministry. To help with their nerves, they claimed the promise of Joshua 1:9: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” They also prayed that God would lead them to someone who was searching for light and truth. Yet as they went from house to house knocking

on doors, they found that many people weren't home or wouldn't answer. Several people didn't respond positively, and others cautiously accepted their literature. It was a day that was, by most measures, disappointing. As the sun was setting, Johnny was thankful that the door knocking was over and it was time to go home. But Joe wanted to go to one more house. Through some convincing, Johnny went along reluctantly.

At the last house, Johnny and Joe met Patricia. She was so excited to see the two young men! She invited them in and wanted all their literature. She also told them that she had been watching Adventist television programs for many years and came under conviction to follow the truths of God's Word. That very morning she had prayed that if God really wanted her to become a Seventh-day Adventist, He would send people to her home. Perhaps it's not a surprise that Patricia was soon baptized into a local Adventist church! And there are people in our communities just like Patricia, whom God wants to lead us to when we pray and labor in faith.

*Jesus has asked
you to search for
His lost sheep.*

As you go from house to house, remember that you're not visiting strangers for personal gain, but because Jesus has asked you to search for His lost sheep. You're going on His errands, not your own. So commit yourself to God in prayer, place yourself in His hands, and remember who it is that takes ultimate responsibility for your success: "When we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to cooperate with One who knows no failure" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 363).

Organizing Your Church for Outreach

Careful organization may seem tedious, but it's more important to the success of an outreach effort than many people realize. On far too many outreach days the members sit around waiting for matters to be organized that could have been completed much earlier. In other cases they're not given the necessary training and materials to succeed. Since many church members are reluctant to participate in outreach activities in the first place, this lack of organization can be all that is needed to discourage them from volunteering again. To help us avoid this sad scenario, we should take heed to the inspired counsel regarding the necessity of order and organization:

“It is essential to labor with order, following an organized plan and a definite object” (*Evangelism*, p. 94).

“If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in

grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization. All who desire the cooperation of the heavenly messengers must work in unison with them. Those who have the unction from on high will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and union of action, and then the angels of God can cooperate with them. But never, never will these heavenly messengers place their endorsement upon irregularity, disorganization, and disorder” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 649, 650).

“It is a sin to be heedless, purposeless, and indifferent in any work in which we may engage, but especially in the work of God. Every enterprise connected with His cause should be carried forward with order, forethought, and earnest prayer” (*Evangelism*, p. 94).

It is significant that the need for order and forethought are mentioned here in the same list as earnest prayer. Many people emphasize prayer to the exclusion of detailed plans and organization. Others focus on the mechanics of organization but fail to rely upon divine power. But there must be both prayer *and* organization. Genuine success in outreach always demands both.

Outreach Approach

One of the first steps in organizing an outreach effort is to determine what method or approach to take. Whether you choose from one of the common ideas given in the previous chapter or do something entirely different, knowing your approach is essential. It helps you determine the quantity and types of materials you need, the number of people to recruit, the size of the area for which you'll need maps, and many other details.

Toward the end of each year every church should develop an evangelistic calendar for the following year. Consider scheduling a full year of church outreach days on this calendar, and assigning a tentative approach to each one. These can be subject to change, but it is good to lay out the full year to be sure you are planning for a variety of approaches. The frequency of these outreach days may vary based on the size and circumstances of a church. Some churches will plan quarterly outreach days, while others may schedule them weekly over a two- to three-month period leading up to a large event. Another strategy is to schedule some form of afternoon outreach on the first Sabbath of every month, which the *Church Manual* calls Church Outreach Sabbath (see *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* [2016], p. 122). The following is an example of a monthly outreach schedule:

- **January**—Offer prayer
- **February**—Offer prayer
- **March**—Global Youth Day mass literature distribution
- **April**—Literature emphasis month; Impact Day mass distribution of Missionary Book of the Year
- **May**—Conduct surveys; invite to health program
- **June**—Invite to Vacation Bible School
- **July**—Offer Bible studies
- **August**—Offer Bible studies
- **September**—Invite to evangelistic meetings
- **October**—Visit evangelistic meeting interests
- **November**—Visit evangelistic meeting interests
- **December**—Ingathering; Christmas caroling

These group outreach efforts will help you to find and develop spiritual interests. Be sure to let the volunteers know if their commitment to help involves more than participating in the initial outreach day. If they're being asked to follow up

with interested individuals, which is generally the case, this could mean making weekly visits to drop off materials or give Bible studies.

Several weeks before each scheduled outreach, finalize the plans for your approach on that day. Answer the following

The goal should be to minister to every home in the territory.

questions: Will we be attempting to speak to people at their homes or simply leaving literature or other materials at their doors? Will we only be visiting homes, or also going to high-traffic locations, such as malls or parks? Is there an evangelistic event that has been added

to the calendar that we now want to advertise by distributing flyers on outreach day? Earnestly pray and thoughtfully evaluate before finalizing your approach.

Outreach Territory and Goals

It's important for local churches to identify or determine the territory for which they are responsible. The goal should be to minister to every home in the territory through prayer, event invitations, free literature, and offers for Bible study. In some cases the conference or mission where the church is located has already identified territory boundaries for its churches. In addition to the area around them, churches may also choose to adopt distant towns or neighborhoods where there is no Adventist church nearby. Clearly outline the boundaries of your territory on a physical or electronic map.

It can also be helpful for churches to study the demographics of their territories. This information might include age, gender, race, ethnicity, religious preference, education level,

income level, and more. While the goal is to minister to every individual and family, knowing demographic information about the people living in their territories can help churches adapt their strategies better. For instance, when making unsolicited visits to homes, lower-income areas generally yield more favorable responses. This should not deter us from visiting other homes, but it could be helpful in assigning outreach teams. We may assign first-time teams to areas with a higher probability of positive responses while assigning more experienced members to harder-to-reach areas.

It is becoming more important in our global society to discover when there is a high concentration of people from different countries or who speak different languages living in the territories of our churches. When we minister to those living in our territories whose home of origin is another country, often they will go back and share the truth with those in their native lands. Thus, even our local churches can have a global impact. Ellen White affirms: “God, in His providence, has sent men to our very doors, and thrust them, as it were, into our arms, that they might learn the truth more perfectly, and be qualified to do a work we could not do in getting the light before men of other tongues. We have too often failed to discern God’s hand, and we have not received the very ones God had provided for us to work in union with, and act a part in sending the light to other nations” (*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 213). We must not overlook the special opportunities God has given us to witness to people of different nationalities.

To begin planning for a specific outreach effort, choose a portion of your territory in which to begin. It’s essential to create maps of the area where your members will be visiting homes. A separate map should be prepared for each pair of members

that will be sent out, with the specific roads or streets highlighted for which that team will be responsible. This helps the members know exactly where they're going and also provides a way for them to keep track of what streets they've covered. Because you may not know how many members will show up for outreach day, be sure to aim high when creating maps of street assignments. It is better to have too many than not enough.

If your church is doing a mass literature distribution project, you'll also want to set a distribution goal. To do this, add up the number of books and tracts the church plans to distribute to homes, friends and family, malls, markets, bus or train stations, city centers, sporting events, parks, or businesses. Establishing a distribution goal will guide your church in determining the quantities of materials that will be needed for the outreach project. The goal should be specific, aggressive, and yet realistically attainable.

Outreach Materials

In order to conduct an effective door-to-door ministry in your community, your members will need the right materials to assist them in this work. These will vary depending on the outreach approach you are using, but here is a list of some of the more common materials needed:

- Maps with street assignments highlighted
- Clipboards
- Clear door-hanger bags
- Highlighters and pens
- Scripts, surveys, letters, event flyers, street trackers, interest record sheets, etc.
- Literature and/or media—books, tracts, magazines, DVDs, USB drives, etc.

- Bible study guides and enrollment cards
- Church business or media ministry info cards
- Bags or backpacks to carry materials for mass distribution

Funds for materials will generally need to come out of your church's personal ministries budget and be approved by the church board. Large projects may also require a special fundraising effort. Plan adequate time to secure board approval, obtain the necessary funds, order or develop materials, and organize or assemble materials before any scheduled outreach. To provide for teams and families that may reach out to the community at other times than those scheduled for the whole church, consider maintaining an easily accessible inventory of the most common outreach materials.

Outreach Teams

A key step in organizing door-to-door outreach is the formation of outreach teams. "The work of the Lord's ambassadors is to organize a company of workers to hunt for the souls who need help; but hours are spent in preaching that had better be devoted to personal, house-to-house labor" (*Union Conference Record*, February 25, 1907). Here are several steps and helpful ideas to guide you when organizing members into teams for door-to-door outreach:

Pray First—Begin the process of assembling your volunteers with earnest prayer for wisdom and help. Jesus spent an entire night in prayer before He chose His 12 apostles (see Luke 6:12), setting an example that earnest prayer should precede the selection or organization of personnel for ministry.

Choose a Time When Members Are Available—In order to maximize member participation, choose a day and time for your outreach when members would likely be available. In most cases Sabbath afternoon works well for this reason. However, you may want to try something different from time to time. If you have members who are willing to go out on an evening during the week, for instance, you will find different people at home than you would on a weekend afternoon.

Promote and Recruit—Prior to any outreach event, significant efforts should be made to recruit members to get involved. Use the Sabbaths leading up to outreach day to inspire, challenge, and motivate. Share powerful outreach testimonies, challenging quotes from the Bible and Ellen White's writings, and clear plans that inspire confidence in the outreach leadership and organization. Personally encourage department leaders, especially of youth and young adult ministries, to support you in recruiting helpers to participate on outreach day. Remember that those you take time to recruit will often use their own influence to persuade friends and family to get involved. Thus personal appeals for help are multiplied, which results in greater participation and a better overall experience for everyone.

Dedicate Volunteers to God—Have a special prayer of dedication for the workers who will be volunteering on the day of the outreach. Ask God to use them, and the truth-filled materials they will be sharing, in a powerful way. If the outreach is happening on Sabbath, this prayer can occur immediately before or after a sermon that challenges and inspires those members who are still undecided about participating.

Organize Into Teams of Two—Jesus gave us an example when He sent out His disciples in teams of two (see Luke 10:1):

“Calling the twelve about Him, Jesus bade them go out two and two through the towns and villages. None were sent forth alone, but brother was associated with brother, friend with friend. Thus they could help and encourage each other, counseling and praying together, each one’s strength supplementing the other’s weakness. . . . It was the Savior’s purpose that the messengers of the gospel should be associated in this way. In our own time evangelistic work would be far more successful if this example were more closely followed” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 350). Whether done ahead of time or on the day of the scheduled outreach, organize your volunteers into pairs. While teams of two are ideal, teams of three (not including small children) may at times be acceptable for reasons of safety or convenience.

Form Teams Wisely—Many members will pair up with their spouses or friends when forming outreach teams, but leaders should still provide guidance in pairing members together. Wisdom and discretion should be used when forming teams, taking into consideration appropriateness of age and gender, safety, experience, and supervision. Church members who have more outreach experience should be paired with less-experienced members and children. With proper supervision and mentoring, involving children in outreach is a good thing. And the children can be very effective at reaching the hearts of people.

Inspire and Train—After you have formed teams, take time for inspiration and training. “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. 109). Here’s a sample training outline:

1. Share a brief but inspiring outreach testimony.
2. Go over the applicable instruction given in the previous chapter.
3. Provide everyone with a sample canvass and explain the specific outreach approach the members will use. Utilize role play to demonstrate a typical experience at the door.
4. Give the teams time to practice. They may not memorize the script, but it will serve as a helpful guide.
5. Ensure that each team has the materials they need.
6. Instruct the teams on how you would like them to record the outcomes of their visits and to follow up with those who show an interest.
7. Announce when and where the teams should return for a post-outreach meeting. In most cases, allowing one hour for actual door-to-door labor is sufficient.

Pray for God to Prepare the Way—Once you are organized and prepared to visit the homes in your territory, pray earnestly that the Lord will prepare the hearts of those you will visit. God and angels will go with you in answer to these prayers.

Return for the Post-Outreach Meeting—After the time allotted for outreach, everyone should gather together at a specific time and place. Here you will ask for testimonies to be shared, collect outreach forms and records, gather leftover materials, and offer a prayer of thanks and continued blessing for the people who were visited.

Assign Ongoing Teams to Outreach Zones—While the teams you organize are often one-time pairings of those who volunteer for a churchwide outreach project, they may also be part of ongoing teams organized to minister to different outreach “zones” in your church’s territory. This is accomplished by first

dividing the map of your church territory into several different zones and assigning a number to each one. Next, ask Sabbath School classes or other small groups to “adopt” a particular zone to minister to the people there on a continuing basis. When the zones within your church territory are thus assigned, it can make your outreach projects more efficient. If flyers or literature need to be distributed, or interests followed up, these groups already know they’re responsible for those within their respective zones.

See sample territory maps at grow.adventist.org.

Outreach groups can also be assigned to new territories with no Adventist presence. Ellen White saw the need for church members who would commit to this kind of work: “We see the great need of missionary work to carry the truth not only to foreign countries, but to those who are near us. Close around us are cities and towns in which no efforts are made to save souls” (*Christian Service*, p. 180). “Let families that are well grounded in the truth enter, one or two families in a place, to work as missionaries. They should feel a love for souls, a burden of labor for them, and should make it a study how to bring them into the truth. They can distribute our publications, hold meetings in their homes, become acquainted with their neighbors, and invite them to come to these meetings. Thus they can let their light shine in good works” (*ibid.*, pp. 178, 179).

Outreach Time Line

Waiting until the last minute to begin your preparations can prevent your outreach day from being a success. Avoid this pitfall by following a time line that includes all the necessary steps to prepare for an effective outreach day. Here’s a sample time line you could use:

Fourth Quarter of Previous Year

- Pray earnestly for wisdom.
- Schedule outreach days and approaches for the following year.
- Develop budget for outreach days, and secure approval.
- Begin fundraising if needed.

Six Weeks Before Outreach Day

- Make final decision regarding your outreach approach.
- Determine portion of territory to be worked on outreach day.
- Set measurable goals.
- Assign personnel to handle outreach responsibilities.
- Purchase literature and other materials as needed.
- Speak to department leaders about how they can be involved.

Four Weeks Before Outreach Day

- Begin promoting outreach in church announcements.
- Inspire, challenge, and recruit members to participate.

Two Weeks Before Outreach Day

- Highlight maps that outreach teams will use on outreach day.
- Prepare and assemble literature and other materials as needed.

One Week Before Outreach Day

- Share final plans and instructions about next week's outreach.
- Make final appeal to the congregation to participate.
- Set up banner or literature display for outreach day, if applicable.

If your outreach day is planned for a Sabbath afternoon, it's best to offer a fellowship meal to prevent people from having to go home and come back. Here's a sample schedule for a typical Sabbath outreach day:

- 9:30 a.m.** Sabbath School and Church Service—Have special prayer to dedicate workers and materials to God and a sermon that inspires and challenges members to get involved in the outreach day.
- 12:30 p.m.** Fellowship Meal—This could be for the entire church or just the group participating in the outreach activities.
- 2:00 p.m.** Outreach Training—Organize volunteers into teams of two (or three) plus children, provide teams with maps and materials, train teams, allow time for role play and practice, and pray for the Holy Spirit and angels to bless the outreach.
- 3:00 p.m.** Outreach Activity—Go into the territory with your specific outreach approach. The time allotted is an estimate that assumes 15 minutes to get to the territory assignment and 15 minutes to get back, leaving one hour for actual outreach.
- 4:30 p.m.** Post-Outreach Meeting—Gather together again to share stories, report results, gather materials, and pray.
- 5:30 p.m.** Conclusion—Members depart for home.

The time needed for training and actual outreach will vary. For instance, you may need 1.5 hours for training if it's been a long time since your church has conducted house-to-house outreach, or only 30 minutes if you've been doing so on

a consistent basis. Similarly, if your outreach activity is a mass distribution project in which you're dropping off literature or flyers but not speaking to people at the doors, training might take only 30 minutes, and you could choose to spend two or more hours in distribution to reach an aggressive goal.

Follow-up

Anyone in the community who expresses interest during an outreach day will need to be properly followed up. This will likely involve regular visits to the home to drop off Bible studies or other resources, or to check in on the status of prayer requests. It may also include invitations to attend church events and services. In addition to personal visits, obtaining other forms of contact information enables the church to include the interest in regular email, text, and social media notifications and announcements. Many people require multiple contacts and invitations before responding favorably. A good follow-up plan is often the secret to experiencing fruit from your soul-winning labors.

Final Encouragement

When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He concluded by saying, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We often speak of this verse in the generic sense that God will not leave us because of His great love for us. While this is true, the context of the verse is more specific than this. Jesus is here promising that when we choose to "go . . . and make disciples," then especially will He be with us.

The church is never closer to the heart of God than when it is sacrificing personal time and convenience to labor for the salvation of the lost. God will draw especially close when we

engage in this important labor: “Angels of God attend you to the dwellings of those you visit. This work cannot be done by proxy. Money lent or given will not accomplish it. Sermons will not do it. By visiting the people, talking, praying, sympathizing with them, you will win hearts. This is the highest missionary work that you can do. To do it, you will need resolute, persevering faith, unwearied patience, and a deep love for souls” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 41).

Conclusion

Never has the world needed the life-giving power of the Word of God as it does today. The invisible powers of darkness are stirring up the carnal hearts of humanity to create a scenario that is growing more like the days of Noah with every passing day (see Matthew 24:37). It seems that nothing is sufficient to stem the evil tide, to arrest the attention, or to capture the consciences of men and women, boys and girls.

But God has hope for the hopeless and a remedy for sin-sick souls. The Bible, God's creative Word, will not return to Him void. It will accomplish His purpose in the hearts of humanity (see Isaiah 55:11). The world may not know it and the church may forget it, but the power for spiritual life, for renewal, for revival, and for victory can be found only in the truth of God's Word applied to the heart by the Spirit of God.

Herein lies the desperate need for God's people to be sowers of the seed—through conversations, testimonies, invitations, literature, and media, and from house to house. Bring people into the soul-saving, life-giving light of God's Word (see 1 Peter 1:23; John 6:63). In an age when the darkness of sin and evil covers the earth, God calls upon His people to "arise, shine; for your light has come!" (Isaiah 60:1). The light of truth must shine upon the masses. The seed of God's Word must be planted in the hearts of humanity. The written Word must be spread so that the living Word, Jesus Christ, can be lifted up.

Yes, God needs laborers to work in His harvest field. He needs you. Wherever you are in your walk with Christ, you can become an active sower of the seed. Don't think you have to do everything at once. Start with one idea from this book and put it into practice. The Lord Jesus loves you, and He will use you in His cause. May God bless you and give you fruit from your labors as you spread the Word.

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