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“The Least of These . . .”



Seventh-day Adventists are called to proclaim “the everlasting gospel” (*Rev. 14:6*) to all the world. By so doing, we are simply obeying Jesus’ words about making disciples, baptizing them, and “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (*Matt. 28:20, NKJV*). And among the things He commanded we are called upon to minister to the hurting, the downtrodden, the poor, the hungry, and the imprisoned.

After all, it was Jesus who, after telling the parable of the good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30–36*), then commanded His listeners: “‘Go and do likewise’” (*Luke 10:37, NKJV*). It was Jesus who, in depicting the time when He would divide the nations before Him as a “‘shepherd divides his sheep from the goats’” (*Matt. 25:32, NKJV*), talked about just how important helping the hungry, the sick, the naked, and the imprisoned really is. “‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’” (*Matt. 25:40, NKJV*).

In other words, along with proclaiming the great truths about salvation, the sanctuary, the state of the dead, and the perpetuity of the law, we are to minister to the needs of others. And what better way to reach people than by working in their behalf too? As Ellen G. White famously wrote: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

According to one count, Scripture contains 2,103 verses expressing God’s special concern for the poor and oppressed. Compared to many other aspects of faith, doctrine, and Christian living in general, the weight of references about ministering to those in need is overwhelming. We must get serious about working to relieve the pain and suffering that exist around us. This doesn’t take away from our work of spreading the gospel; on the contrary, it can become a powerful way of doing it.

Of course, it’s a good thing to help others, just for the sake of helping them. We should “do justly” (*see Mic. 6:8*) simply because it is both right and good to “do justice.” And yet, is it not even better when doing justice, when helping others in their immediate and temporal needs, also to point them to the “reason for the hope that is in you” (*1 Pet. 3:15, NKJV*), which is the promise of eternal life in Christ?

Jesus healed disease, gave sight to the blind, cured lepers, and even raised the dead. But all those to whom He ministered were going to die sooner or later anyway, right? So, in the long run, whatever good He did for them and their immediate needs, He also did more. Yes, He ministered to the hurting, but then He bade them, *Follow Me*. And that’s precisely why we, too, should minister to the hurting and then bid them, *Follow Him*.

No question, by seeking justice and goodness in the world, we are rehearsing the kingdom of God (*see Luke 4:18, 19*) in a way that is at least as faithful, valid, and perhaps as effective as preaching it. When we care for the poor and the oppressed, we are actually offering honor and worship to God (*see Isa. 58:6–10*). But if we fail to minister in behalf of the hurting, the suffering, and the broken, we misrepresent Him (*see Prov. 14:31*).

This quarter, then, we are going to see what the Word of God says (and it says a lot) about our duty to minister to the needs of those around us.

“Freely you have received, freely give” (*Matt. 10:8, NKJV*). That says it all.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

“The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. He constantly seeks higher attainments and better methods. His life is one of continual growth. In the work of such a teacher there is a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his [class].”

—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.

To be a Sabbath School teacher is both a privilege and a responsibility. A privilege because it offers the teacher the unique opportunity to lead and guide in the study and discussion of the week’s lesson so as to enable the class to have both a personal appreciation for God’s Word and a collective experience of spiritual fellowship with class members. When the class concludes, members should leave with a sense of having tasted the goodness of God’s Word and having been strengthened by its enduring power. The responsibility of teaching demands that the teacher is fully aware of the Scripture to be studied, the flow of the lesson through the week, the interlinking of the lessons to the theme of the quarter, and the lesson’s application to life and witness.

This guide is to help teachers to fulfill their responsibility adequately. It has three segments:

- 1. Overview** introduces the lesson topic, key texts, links with the previous lesson, and the lesson’s theme. This segment deals with such questions as Why is this lesson important? What does the Bible say about this subject? What are some major themes covered in the lesson? How does this subject affect my personal life?
- 2. Commentary** is the chief segment in the Teachers Edition. It may have two or more sections, each one dealing with the theme introduced in the Overview segment. The Commentary may include several in-depth discussions that enlarge the themes outlined in the Overview. The Commentary provides an in-depth study of the themes and offers scriptural, exegetic, illustrative discussion material that leads to a better understanding of the themes. The Commentary also may have scriptural word study or exegesis appropriate to the lesson. On a participatory mode, the Commentary segment may have discussion leads, illustrations appropriate to the study, and thought questions.
- 3. Life Application** is the final segment of the Teachers Edition for each lesson. This section leads the class to discuss what was presented in the Commentary segment as it impacts Christian life. The application may involve discussion, further probing of what the lesson under study is all about, or perhaps personal testimony on how one may feel the impact of the lesson on one’s life.

Final thought: What is mentioned above is only suggestive of the many possibilities available for presenting the lesson and is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive in its scope. Teaching should not become monotonous, repetitious, or speculative. Good Sabbath School teaching should be Bible-based, Christ-centered, faith-strengthening, and fellowship-building.