

Motivation *and* Preparation for Mission



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Luke 24:1–12; Luke 24:36–49; Acts 1:12–26; Heb. 10:24, 25; Acts 2:1–41; 1 Cor. 11:1.*

Memory Text: “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (*Luke 24:44, NKJV*).

Wrote Paul to the Philippians: “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice” (*Phil. 1:15–18, NKJV*).

Powerful words! Whether in “pretense or in truth,” Christ is preached—and that is what mattered to Paul. Ideally, though, our motives for preaching Christ, for mission, for reaching others with the good news, should be out of love, and out of truth—and not from selfish ambition, envy, or strife.

What, then, are some of the motivations for preaching Christ, and what are some of the ways that we can prepare for doing this?

This week we will look at some events in the early church that can give us guidance on these crucial parts of mission.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 11.

To Share the Good News

Read Luke 24:1–12. What was the response of those who heard about the risen Christ?

Early Sunday morning, after Jesus' death, Luke says that a number of women went to the tomb. They had spices with them; so, it is likely they were going to tend to Jesus' body now that the Sabbath was over. Expecting to find a still-sealed tomb, they were shocked to find the tomb empty. Unsure what to do, they were afraid when two men in shining clothing appeared. However, the men had a message for them. Reminding them of Jesus' words, they told the women that Jesus had indeed risen, as He had said He would. Overjoyed with the news, they quickly returned to where the disciples and many of Jesus' other followers were staying and told what they had seen and heard, because their excitement could not be contained. That is, they were sharing with others what they had learned of Christ.

Can you imagine how the women must have felt? They had just had an amazing experience, one that certainly filled them with awe, but the disciples called their experience "idle tales" and would not believe them. Thus, not sure whether to believe the women or not, Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself.

For Peter—and for many of us—there is a hesitancy to accept something simply because someone else said it. Though Peter listened to the women, he could not share in their experience until later. At first, all he experienced was an empty tomb, and that, Luke says, simply left him "marveling to himself" (*Luke 24:12, NKJV*). His experience at the tomb was not the same as that of the women.

Regardless of Peter's response, as soon as these women heard the news about Jesus, they wanted to share it with others. What greater motivation for mission could there be than to let others know about what Jesus has done for them? What greater motive than to spread the good news of salvation in Jesus, the only hope any of us have?

Of course, we need a personal experience with God ourselves before we can share it with others. Our desire to share with others what we love so much must be a crucial part of our motivation for mission. In the end, we can't share what we ourselves don't have, can we?

What are some of the experiences you have had with the reality of God and His love? Why are these times so precious to you, and how do they motivate you to reach out to others with the good news?

A Prophetic Foundation

Read Luke 24:36–49. What happened here, and why was this such a pivotal experience for the apostles?

It is interesting that at first the disciples did not believe out of fear. Then, after seeing Jesus and being assured that He was indeed alive, they did not believe *for joy* (Luke 24:41). Have you ever felt that something was too good to be true? This was the experience of the disciples and the others in the upper room.

If Jesus had left them only with this experience, however, then when He departed, their faith might not have lasted. Over time the power of the experience could have faded; they would forget, or start, perhaps, even to question it. So, Jesus didn't stop with showing them His scars and eating fish in front of them. Instead, He then took them into the Word and showed them the prophetic foundation for His work and ministry. That is, no matter how great the experience that they had with Him, Jesus still wanted their faith grounded in the Word of God.

“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me’ ” (Luke 24:44, NKJV).

Here, too, we find a powerful motivation for witness, for mission: the Word of God. Jesus knew that to solidify the disciples' experience, they needed to understand why He had to die and what His resurrection signified. They needed their worldview to be shifted from a political and earthly kingdom to the great solution to sin and the victory of Christ over death. The gospel was so much more than achieving political sovereignty for Israel. It revealed Christ's victory over Satan and guaranteed that one day all wickedness in the world would be destroyed, that the earth would be created anew, and that God would be among His people. He “opened their understanding” (Luke 24:45, NKJV) so they could comprehend these truths, which they were to share with the world.

Our experiences with Jesus cannot be sustained without the foundation of His Word, including the prophecies that point to the history and events leading up to, and including, the first and second advents of Christ. With these truths firmly understood, we can be ready and motivated for mission.

How well grounded are you in the prophecies that point to Christ, both His first and second comings? Especially in the last days, why must we be grounded in the Word of God, including the prophecies, and why is understanding them so crucial, especially for mission?

Waiting and Mission

Luke 24 ends with Jesus' ascension into heaven (*Luke 24:50–53*). But that is not the end of the story. The author, Luke, continues, writing the book of Acts. Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave the disciples a mission, a promise, and immediate instructions to wait in Jerusalem for “power from on high” (*Luke 24:49; see also Acts 1:4–8*).

Jesus instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until He fulfilled His promise to send the Promise of the Father (the Holy Spirit), who would empower them to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

Read Acts 1:12–26. What were the disciples, now numbering around 120 men and women, doing while they were waiting?

Jesus had given the disciples a clear mission: they were to be witnesses for Him to the world. So, while they waited, they prepared for their mission in two ways. First, Luke says they continued in united prayer and supplication. There was no question in any of their minds about what the mission was that Jesus had given them, and they had each accepted that mission. This inspired them to unite in prayer. Luke does not share what they were praying about, but it is most certain they were praying for wisdom, strength, and courage to fulfill the mission together. What an example for us.

The second thing they did while they waited was to prepare logistically for their mission. Judas had handed Jesus over for execution and then taken his own life. This had left a vacancy among the twelve. So, as they waited, the disciples sought God's guidance and selected a replacement. In effect, the disciples were organizing themselves and planning the start of their mission. In the making of these decisions, Peter played a leadership role. No one challenged his move; they all saw God's wisdom in it. There was an understanding and a trust that God was acting and working and moving in their midst. Their time of waiting was not idle but was filled with purpose and mission-driven action.

While we wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to help us complete the great mission of God, we must unite to encourage each other (*Heb. 10:24, 25*), praying for God's Holy Spirit. Also, we should be aligning ourselves and our church with God's priority—the saving of the lost.

How can you learn to wait upon the Lord and not lose faith in the meantime? Meanwhile, while waiting, how can you best use your time, as the disciples did here?

“Whom You Crucified”

Acts 2 records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. As the followers of Jesus were praying, tongues of fire rested upon their heads. They recognized that the promised power of the Holy Spirit had been given.

Read Acts 2:1–41. What happened to the disciples as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

The disciples began to speak in other languages “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (*Acts 2:4*). What’s crucial here is that God empowered each person for the benefit of unbelievers. The blessing wasn’t meant merely for their own good. It wasn’t a blessing to make them fit for heaven or a blessing to make it easier to do business in a foreign language. The blessing was given for fulfilling God’s mission to the lost. Today God calls on each of His followers to use their personal gifts for the good of His mission to unbelievers. We have been given gifts: What greater call to mission than to use what we have been given to reach others?

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulted in many of the people repenting of their rejection of the Messiah, for surely some of them were in Jerusalem when He died. Think of the power here: Peter accused some of them of having crucified the Christ. Obviously, they realized what they had done and, being convicted, cried out: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (*Acts 2:37*).

And yet, even they could receive forgiveness. Said Peter to them: “ ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Acts 2:38, NKJV*).

Working together, in harmony with the Holy Spirit and each other, these followers of Jesus preached repentance and the forgiveness of sins—even for those who could have been directly involved in crucifying Jesus! That’s the power of the gospel. If that message doesn’t motivate us to mission, what will? We are called to spread the gospel to the world, a sinful, fallen, corrupt world with sinful, fallen, and corrupt people. Our job is not to judge; our job is to witness to the saving power of Jesus.

Why should the idea that even some of those who were complicit in Christ’s death were offered salvation (1) encourage us for our own souls and (2) encourage us to witness to others, no matter how bad they may seem to be?

A Picture of the Early Church

Read Acts 2:41–47. What kind of picture of the early church is present here?

Acts 2 ends with a beautiful picture of what the early church was like. Acts 2:41 says that those who were baptized were “added to them” (*NKJV*). We could read this to say that someone did the math and added the number of new believers to the number of existing believers and established a new total membership for the group. But that is a shallow understanding. Hidden in the wording is the idea that these newly baptized believers became part of the group as equals.

Meanwhile, a core function of the early Christian church was discipleship. As new members were added, they were discipled in three ways. First, they continued to be taught by the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship. The words “doctrine” and “fellowship” in this text literally mean “instruction” and “partnership.” The apostles’ preaching confronted incorrect beliefs and offered new explanations for what people were seeing and experiencing. But it didn’t teach them how to live out that new truth in their lives. Rather, the application of truth to one’s life happened in relationship as part of the group. New believers were carefully and intentionally discipled through direct teaching, as well as through participation in the daily lives of the other believers, all under the supervision and leadership of the spiritually mature and grounded apostles.

It is poor preaching that tells people what to do but not how to do it. However, even if one reads how-to books or listens to sermons that explain how to do things, there is no substitute for seeing people doing it and then imitating them. Paul knew this and instructed his followers to imitate him as he had imitated Jesus (*1 Cor. 11:1*). When others can see you and the reality of your experience with Christ, it will impact them, as well.

Challenge: Think of someone in your life who you wish was a believer. Pray every day for him or her to have a personal experience with Jesus.

Challenge Up: Whom are you discipling and leading into a relationship with Jesus? Look for ways to bring him or her into fellowship with other believers.

Further Thought: Our mission work must come from deep love and thankfulness for what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives. Any other motivation is misguided. Keeping immersed in the Word and in tune with the Word is the key to successful outreach and evangelism.

“Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 129, 130.

“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 [others of His self-sacrificing death in their behalf]. . . . As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. . . . Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 67, 68.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How do you understand Paul’s words in *Philippians* about Christ’s being preached out of envy, strife, or selfish ambition? How can we make sure that we ourselves are not guilty of doing just that?
- 2 What has been your own personal experience with the reality of God and God’s love? That is, based on your own experiences, could you preach to others with sincerity and honesty about the goodness and love of God? What would your testimony be?
- 3 What has been your experience in waiting upon the Lord, and what has it taught you about trusting in Him and about faith in general?

“Blessing Is Greater to Us”

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

A woman in the US state of North Carolina invited her two church pastors to her house to talk about something weighing heavily on her heart: the Annual Sacrifice Offering. She described how the Seventh-day Adventist Church had established the offering in a last-ditch effort to avoid calling missionaries home because of a lack of funds in 1922. She spoke about how people gave then and how the offering still supports missionaries today.

The pastors took her appeal to heart. One even preached a nine-part series on sacrifice ahead of the annual offering, which is collected in most parts of the world on the second Sabbath of November. As a result, the Annual Sacrifice Offering at the 700-member Hendersonville Seventh-day Adventist Church soared from \$1,400 the previous year to \$24,119 that year in 2016. The growth was only the beginning. During the COVID-19 pandemic when the world church again faced a budget crunch, members gave an astonishing \$37,545 to the 2021 Annual Sacrifice Offering.

“We were happily surprised,” said pastor David Wright (pictured). “Praise the Lord!”

He credited God’s grace for members’ sacrificial giving. “It is true this will bring much-needed light into dark areas of the 10/40 Window,” he said. “But consider the blessing that is ours as a church family. I have to believe the blessing is greater to us because Jesus Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

Adventist Mission director Gary Krause agreed, noting that Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White called such a blessing the “reflex influence.” She said church members’ generosity toward foreign fields promoted success in their home field. For example, when some church leaders questioned the wisdom of sending funds abroad in 1900, White declared, “The prosperity of the home work depends largely . . . upon the reflex influence of the . . . work done in countries afar off” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 27). The Adventist Church’s top statistician, David Trim, has statistically verified White’s assertion.

A sacrificial spirit has permeated the church since its origins, world church leader Ted N. C. Wilson said. “We are told that God’s Advent movement was started in sacrifice and it will end in sacrifice,” he said. “What a privilege for each of us to sacrificially share what God has given to us.”



*Thank you for considering a generous donation to the 2023 Annual Sacrifice Offering. For online information, visit bit.ly/annual-sacrifice-offering. See also *Global Mission* (gm.adventistmission.org); the 1922 Annual Sacrifice Offering (bit.ly/1922-offering); and Ellen White’s “reflex influence” (bit.ly/EGW-reflex).*

Part I: Overview

While motivation is the desire or reason a person has for doing something for someone, preparation involves an action to get ready so that things can be accomplished. Motivation has to do with something that causes or propels us to act. Preparation makes it possible for the plans to happen. While Jesus and what He has done for us provide our motivation for mission (*Rom 5:8*), He also has entrusted us with His Spirit, thus enabling us to accomplish His will and mission mandate (*Matt. 28:18–20; John 14:15–31; John 20:21, 22*).

“We love because he first loved us” (*1 John 4:19, NIV*) denotes cause and effect, the reason that motivates us to respond and to act. As we respond to God’s love, we do so by proclaiming and living out in words and deeds the good news that Jesus is our Savior and Lord! Our sharing of the truth, as contained in His Word, will fall on receptive ears and will yield much fruit as the Spirit works. At the same time, we must be prepared for the rejection of the Word by many, causing yet others to lose hope.

Part II: Commentary

The Missionary God

“The story of God’s mission to lost humanity is the greatest story ever told. The story begins in the Old Testament immediately after the Fall of Adam and Eve and continues through the patriarchal period and the history of Israel. The Gospels record the central event of God’s mission—Christ’s birth, ministry, atoning death, resurrection, and ascension. The biblical story continues in the book of Acts and the Epistles, with the launching of the Christian church, and ends with the apocalyptic climax of God’s mission in Revelation. God’s mission is the central narrative of the whole biblical canon, from Genesis to Revelation.”—Gorden R. Doss, *Introduction to Adventist Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, 2018), p. 1.

The “Bible’s grand metanarrative . . . shows God working on a comprehensive project to restore His Earth and His whole cosmos to its original, perfect state. The narratives of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, describe aspects of God’s cosmic mission project. The overall theme is that the sovereign, gracious, loving Triune God initiated his mission and He will bring it to full completion.”—Page 22.

Thus, the story of redemption motivates us to both prepare and engage in God’s mission, in God’s story. As a missionary God, our Father cares and wants to bless others through us; therefore, He has commanded us to

go to all people, languages, tribes, and nations.

So, why does Christ command us to go and preach the gospel? Why does God need you motivated for, and prepared to join Him in, mission? Some of these reasons can be found in the book *Passport to Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of World Mission, 2009), pp. 28–36. Here is an adapted summary:

Jesus Is the Unique Source of Life and Salvation, and People Need to Know About Him.

- John 3:36: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life” (*NIV*).
- Acts 4:12: “ ‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved’ ” (*NIV*).
- 1 John 5:12: “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (*NKJV*).

Jesus Is the Divine Son of God.

Jesus does not claim to be only a good teacher (like other religious leaders) or a great leader (like Moses or David) or some kind of half-god or lesser god (as we find in other religions). No other major religion claims divinity for its founder.

- Jesus claims full divinity—that is, equality with God (*John 8:58, 59; John 10:30–33*).
- Jesus’ disciples also proclaimed His divinity fearlessly (*Matt. 16:14–16*). The proof that they gave for their claims was the Resurrection (*1 Cor. 15:14–20*). If God raised Jesus, what Jesus said, therefore, must be true.

Jesus Offers a Unique Salvation—Salvation by Grace Through Faith.

- “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (*Eph. 2:8, 9, NIV*).

No other world religion has such a salvation. Other religions indeed may set high standards, promote ethical behavior, tout health laws, extol a lofty philosophy, or produce nice people. But these religions also believe that people can save themselves by what they do! The foundation of these non-Christian religions is that salvation comes by works.

Jesus Offers a Universal Salvation—All-Inclusive and Exclusive.

- “ ‘For God so loved the world . . . that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life’ ” (*John 3:16, NIV*).

The offer of salvation includes everyone in the world. The truth is that God wants all people to hear the message—the good news that God offers

a free salvation based on this unique Jesus. In the Great Commission, Jesus makes it clear that we can have a part in sharing this good news with others.

If someone were to ask you why you are a Seventh-day Adventist and what motivates you for mission, what would you say? How does the uniqueness and singularity of the Seventh-day Adventist message motivate us for mission to the world?

Though most of the individual beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists are shared by some Christians, the full “package” of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs is unique among Christian groups. Here are three convictions that guide what we believe and how we are motivated, are prepared, and see our mission.

Conviction 1: *Jesus is coming back a second time—this coming is visible, literal, and imminent (soon).* Before Adventism got started, most Christians either did not believe in a literal coming or de-emphasized it. Many of these Christians were postmillennialists. Postmillennialists believed that there would be a millennium, or 1,000 years, of peace and prosperity, and then Jesus would come. What people looked for and labored for was this millennium, not the Second Coming. Seventh-day Adventists believe, based on the Bible, that the real hope of the world is not an earthly millennium but the “blessed hope” (*Titus 2:13*) of Jesus’ second coming.

Below is a summary of our beliefs about the Second Coming:

- Seventh-day Adventists accept and proclaim the promises of the Second Coming (*John 14:1–3; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20*).
- This coming is literal (*Acts 1:11*).
- The Second Coming is portrayed as visible (*Matt. 24:30, Rev. 1:7*).
- All signs point to a near, soon, imminent coming. Jesus, again and again, used the word “soon” (*Rev. 22:7, 12, 20; Matt. 24:4–28; Luke 21:7–28*).
- God’s people will see Jesus (*John 14:3*) and will be with Him forever (*1 Thess. 4:17*).
- The dead will be raised (*1 Thess. 4:13–16*), and believers will receive immortality (*1 Cor. 15:53*).
- Tears, mourning, and death will be abolished (*Rev. 21:3, 4*).

This message is important for our mission today, as many need to hear the good news of the blessed hope. The biggest challenge we face, however, is the non-Christian world. Millions, if not billions, of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of traditional religions have never heard of this hope. We must tell them. Jesus wants them to hear about His coming.

Conviction 2: *God calls believers to loving obedience and serious discipleship.* In light of Jesus’ coming, we need to make serious preparation.

Faithful, obedient discipleship is important. Adventists always have believed that Jesus is our Savior. We have always emphasized that true faith is manifested in making Jesus also Lord. People saved by Jesus should gladly make Him Lord and in gratitude follow Him. We believe that both the gospel and God's law are vital and go together harmoniously like the two oars of a boat. The law leads us to Christ and serves as our standard. Jesus releases us from the law's condemnation, and His Spirit writes the law on our hearts. For this reason, Adventists:

- Support the whole Ten Commandments, including the neglected Sabbath fourth commandment, believing that Jesus gave it at Creation (*Gen. 2:2*), reiterated it in the Ten Commandments (*Exod. 20:8–11*), and reinforced it during His ministry (*Mark 2:27*).
- Believe the Sabbath is a powerful symbol of God's creating power (*Gen. 2:2, Exod. 20:8–11*), saving grace (*Exod. 20:2, Deut. 5:12–15*), and the final rest of redemption in heaven (*Heb. 4:1–11, especially verse 9*).
- Accept the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life, including marriage and family, dress, recreation, diet, and so on (*Eph. 5:21–6:4; Phil. 4:8, 9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 1 Tim. 2:8–10*).

In a world where disregard for any standards of morality and decency abound, Adventist Christianity should promote a holy life. In a world where hurry and haste lead to high levels of stress, Christians under the Lordship of Christ can find joy and rest in the Sabbath. They should demonstrate in their lives both the saving power and the Lordship of Jesus.

Conviction 3: *God restores in believers the wholeness of life in Christ.* Christians do not go to heaven as disembodied souls. The Second Coming restores all of life. Believers should prepare for the Second Coming as whole people. God wants to restore us as whole people. Salvation involves every part of life and being. Jesus wants us to live full and complete lives. In John 10:10, He says, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (NIV). Our motivation and preparation for mission is needed more than ever in a world that is sick, addicted, and living in ignorance, a world desperately in need of the message of Jesus who cares for, and ministers to, all parts of our life. A dying world needs the hope of new life lived to its fullness by God's grace and power.

Part III: Life Application

As the believer awaits Jesus' second coming, he or she does so by studying God's Word and singing His praises in fellowship with the body of Christ (the church) while preparing for dedicated service to fellow humanity.

There should be no idleness, no time to spare, as every moment is used for preparation and engagement in God's mission. We press forward believing His promises. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (*Gal. 6:9, NKJV*).

- 1. How would our lives look if we put into practice the thoughts of the paragraph above? Can we get motivated and prepared by hearing God's Word? Explain. Does engaging in God's service prepare us for mission? Discuss.**

- 2. Do you really believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God who offers us the blessing of wonderful salvation, which is a gift? If yes, why? Has this message motivated you and made a difference in your life? If so, how? How did this message affect the mission of the original disciples? How has it affected, and how should it affect, your mission?**

- 3. Have we as a church always presented our unique message as it relates to Jesus in a way that motivates us to mission? Explain. What more can we do to prepare and improve in this area?**
