

# Following Up on Evangelism<sup>1</sup> and Witnessing



## SABBATH—APRIL 28

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 25:35–40; 1 Corinthians 3:1–3; 1 Peter 2:2; John 6:54–66; Luke 8:4–15.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The words I spoke to you were like milk, not like solid food. You weren’t [were not] ready for solid food yet” (1 Corinthians 3:2, NlrV).

**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** In all evangelism and witnessing, it is important that we first give the simple truth of the gospel.

**EVANGELISM IS A PLAN BASED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT PEOPLE WILL MOVE FROM ONE CHURCH PROGRAM TO ANOTHER.** The programs must be arranged in the right order. This has to be done correctly or else it can do more harm than good.

Our memory verse shows how Paul understood that we can undo by overdoing. We can give too much “deep” material and in the wrong order. Because of this, the receiver can fail to understand the deep meaning. Or he or she may not be willing to use personally what has been learned. A baby’s diet begins with milk and slowly comes to include solid food. In the same way, babes in Christ must receive spiritual food as “milk” so that their spiritual understanding can grow.

This week we will study how evangelistic and witnessing plans and programs work together. We will also learn how they build on, and support, one another throughout the church’s planned evangelistic year.

1. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

**SUNDAY—APRIL 29****PLANNED EVANGELISM AND  
NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY  
(Luke 9:11)**

From our study in earlier weeks, we learned of individual or community needs. With this knowledge we can better reach people. Then, as we understand their needs, we are better able to plan a series of programs that meets those basic needs.

**Read Luke 9:11. What does this verse show about Jesus' desire to heal both physically and spiritually? How can we try to do the same thing for those whom we are trying to reach in our area?**

No doubt many who came to Jesus were interested only in His ability to heal them physically. Jesus would help them physically, of course. But He would also meet a need that each person might not realize. That is, the need for spiritual healing.

God's people today are active in meeting people's personal or community needs. But they must follow Jesus' example and somehow help to turn minds to spiritual and eternal things too.

**Examine Matthew 25:35–40. What is the message here? How seriously do we really take these words? Or do we just see them as an example? In other words, if we really believed them, how differently would we act?**

Ministering (serving; helping) in any way to those whom Jesus loves, and for whom He gave His life, is an act of ministering to Jesus Himself too. This kind of work shows just how closely related Jesus is with His people. When any of His people are hurting, Jesus is concerned for them and sympathizes (shows mercy) with them. We must do the same. Matthew 25:35–40 shows that meeting the people's needs does not always have to be a part of a fixed church plan. When needs are discovered, we must try to take care of them. It does not matter what part of the plan a church is in. Many people may move along from program to program as their spiritual interests grow. But others will need spiritual support right away. A church does not need to drop its planned series of programs and events. But it must be able to act quickly to take care of any need by having around trained people who give help at all times.



**In serving others, we are serving Jesus Himself.**

**MONDAY—APRIL 30****MILK AND SOLID FOOD  
(1 Corinthians 3:1–3)**

**Read 1 Corinthians 3:1–3 and 1 Peter 2:2. What do you think Paul and Peter were talking about when they spoke of milk and solid food and the need to grow? In your mind, what is the difference between milk and solid food?**

Evidently the members of the church at Corinth had not grown very much spiritually after Paul established the group. So, Paul's message was to ask them to surrender themselves to God and to grow spiritually so that they could understand the deep truths of the gospel. Paul's preaching at this time would have been evangelistic<sup>2</sup> rather than giving encouragement. Paul would not preach on deeper themes as long as the people were not spiritually ready enough to understand and accept them.

As we reach out to people today, we must always remember Paul's plan. We must lead people to surrender to Christ before we expect them to accept the deep Bible truths.

When we speak of an evangelistic series, it can be long or short. Suppose people have gone through a series of programs to the point that they are open to God's call. Then they can be led through a full evangelistic series or begin a personal Bible study series. Whichever the program is, the principle (important rule) is still the same.

First the milk (simple gospel themes to begin a relationship) and then the solid food (deeper and more testing truths leading to a firm decision).

**What important point do we find in John 16:12? How can we learn to use this principle in dealing with others?**

A new Seventh-day Adventist was excited about the truth he had learned. So, he wanted to tell this truth to everyone. Often, the first thing he wanted to share with others was "the mark of the beast." He might have meant well, but this is a very good example of how truth needs to be given in careful steps.

**Think about some Bible truth that you struggled with at first. Over time, how did you slowly settle into that truth? What did you learn from this experience that could help you to be more sensitive in your outreach to others?**



**We need the milk of the gospel before we are ready for deeper truths.**

2. evangelistic—having to do with spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

**TUESDAY—MAY 1****TESTING TRUTHS<sup>3</sup> (John 6:54–66)**

A testing truth is a Bible teaching that challenges (asks) the person to make important changes in his or her personal beliefs or lifestyle. Some testing truths, such as seventh-day Sabbath keeping and avoiding unclean foods, influence both belief and lifestyle. This shows once again why it is important to lead people to accept Christ first before encouraging them to do things for Him.

**John 6:54–66 shows that some people turned away from Jesus when they faced a testing truth. Why did some who had followed Jesus finally turn away? What lesson is here for us personally? What “testing truths” still, perhaps, challenge (make you question) your decision to follow Jesus?**

Many witnessed and enjoyed the feast on the mountainside. The next day, they followed Jesus so that they could be fed again. But Jesus tried to turn their minds to spiritual things by using the example of His body and blood. Many then turned away. This does not mean that they could not understand the truth of salvation through Christ alone. Instead, they refused to accept it. It was a testing time for them. And when their personal wants were not satisfied, they chose to walk away.

**In what ways does John 14:15 show a “testing truth”?**

Here is a challenge (question) for those who claim to love Jesus. It asks them to think seriously about their faithfulness to Him. Sooner or later the time will come when a belief will be tested by the call to action. The real situation is that sometimes people turn away when faced with testing truths. But experience has shown that people accept a testing truth more easily when a love relationship with Jesus has already started. In other words, it is still true that the right plan brings the best results.

Jesus had many things that He wanted to tell the disciples. But He knew that they would not be ready to understand them (read John 16:12). Jesus’ promise that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:13) is a promise that continues today in our time.



**Jesus tried to turn their minds from the feast to the spiritual food of His body and blood.**

3. testing truths—truths that may challenge (ask) a person to make important changes in his or her beliefs or lifestyle. These truths include Sabbath keeping, not eating unclean food, etc.

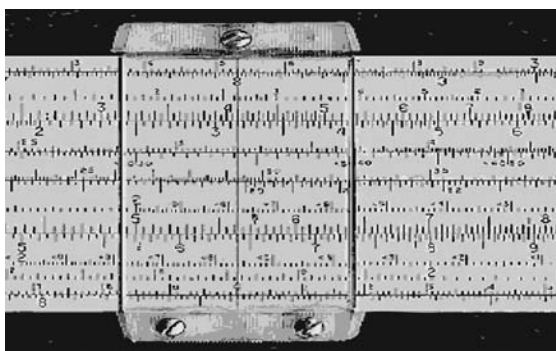
The gift of grace<sup>4</sup> is free. But the decision to accept that gift can be very costly. How can you help someone struggling with this cost? What have you learned about this cost that you could share with someone having the same challenge (struggle)?

### WEDNESDAY—MAY 2

#### MEASURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH (Matthew 16:13–15)

We may give biblical information through a public lecture (talk), seminar (class), or Bible study. But there is no promise that we have influenced those present in a spiritual way. Many people have gone to an evangelistic series, a Revelation seminar, a Bible study, or maybe all of the above. They might have gained a good understanding of Bible truth. But this does not mean that they have accepted these truths into their lives.

How, then, can we better know if people who hear what we have to say are being influenced by truth?



Asking questions is a good way to measure people's spiritual growth.

One important way in which we can measure people's spiritual growth is by asking questions. Asking questions is a good way to measure a person's spiritual understanding and growth. It is best to ask open-ended questions. These are questions that encourage an informative answer and that cannot be answered simply yes or no.

Some sample questions might be: What do you think these verses are saying to us today? How would you share this Bible truth with a friend? How do you feel about God's promise to you? What changes do you think these truths are leading you to make in your life? How do these truths help you love Jesus more? Of all the things you have been learning, what impresses you the most? What gives you the most hope? The most fear?

Bible studies, as well as other evangelistic lectures, should be given step by step. For example, the more simple and easy-to-understand studies are given first. Harder studies may be given later in the series when the student's understanding has grown. It is important that searching questions be asked throughout each study to measure spiritual understanding and growth.

**Read Genesis 3:9, 13; Matthew 16:13–15; Matthew 22:41–46; Mark 9:33; and Luke 2:46. Then think about why a God who knows everything would ask such questions. What does this tell us about how asking questions can be a power-**

4. grace—God's gift of mercy that He gives us to take away our sins.

ful tool for helping people to grow in God's grace?

### THURSDAY—MAY 3

#### PREPARING A HARVEST (John 16:7, 8, 13)

Leading a person along in his or her spiritual journey is the same as preparing for a harvest. Anyone who has worked a vegetable garden knows that there is a series of steps to follow if there is to be a good harvest. We must dig in the soil, remove the weeds, plant the seeds, and water the garden. It is also necessary to create the right place for the plants. Some may require full sunlight. Others may need some shade. Also, it is necessary to protect the plants from birds and other garden pests. In other words, plants in a garden must be cared for from seeds until they are fully grown and fruitful plants. For people on the spiritual journey, almost the same method begins before they are baptized. And it must continue afterward too. A person must be supported along until he or she is ready to start supporting others. This truth again shows how important it is to make careful plans with the right time frames, the right steps, and the best place for encouraging spiritual growth.

**Read the parable<sup>5</sup> of the sower and Jesus' explanation in Luke 8:4–15. What challenges (questions) does this parable bring to us about caring for the seed that**

**falls on good ground? Read also John 16:7, 8, 13.**

Jesus' explanation of the parable shows some interesting facts. Verse 12 suggests that some people began to believe but were led away by the devil before their beliefs became stronger. Verse 13 describes some who received the Word with joy. They believed for a while. But, when tempted, they chose another direction. Verse 14 shows another group who heard the Word but did not go on to full Christian growth. So, most of the people started on the journey toward Christ and His kingdom. But things happened at different times along the way that prevented them from having full growth.

Simply planting the seed is not always enough to bring about a good harvest. Our challenge as a church, and as individuals, is to spread the gospel seed and then, step by step, help new believers reach full Christian growth.

**What part of the parable best describes your own spiritual experience? What choices can you make that can improve your situation?**

### FRIDAY—MAY 4

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Finding a Target Audience

By now you will have discovered that the evangelism plan we are

5. parable—a brief (short) story that teaches a spiritual truth or lesson.

following week to week will take longer than one quarter to complete. For example, we would not expect that the total evangelistic training and work would be done in just one week. You may be thinking about training and where your ministry will fit into your church's total plan for evangelism. But it is also important that you think about the new believers you may work with.

So, the following points are worth thinking about:

❶ While working with your pastor, elders, and evangelistic leaders, decide upon your witnessing and evangelistic programs and whom you want them to reach. Thinking about the group you want to reach will help you to pay careful attention to all parts of the series. For example, with a children's program, it would be better to advertise in schools and in neighborhoods that have young families. Other groups may be the retired, the unemployed, students, and so on.

❷ Thinking about the different groups of people you want to reach will help you to choose the best workers, locations, times, and follow-up plans. It will also help in measuring the success of your program and in knowing what to pray for.

❸ You may not have to look fur-

ther than your church to choose the group you wish to reach. For example, you may wish to reach the people who attend church but are not baptized. Or you may wish to reach the church's unbaptized young people or people who regularly attend special church or church-school programs.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ "One truth received into the heart will lead to still another truth."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, page 449. In what order should the truths be given so that they work best in our outreach? Why should Christ's death as our Substitute always be the most important subject of all that we teach?

❷ "Christ drew the hearts of His hearers to Him by the example of His love. Then, little by little, as they were able to accept it, Jesus showed them the great truths of the kingdom. We also must learn to fit our labors in with the condition of the people. We need to meet men where they are."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, page 57. How should love influence the way we present Bible truth? Why is it important to be very careful in the way that we share new truths from the Bible that go against a person's beliefs?