

Ready to Work



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 4

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 24:1–12; Luke 24:36–49; Acts 1:12–26; Acts 2:1–41; Acts 2:41–47.

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus said to them, ‘Remember when I was with you before? I said that everything written about me must happen . . . everything written in the Law of Moses, the books of [written by] the prophets [God’s special messengers], and the Psalms’ ” (Luke 24:44, ERV).

We should preach the Good News and do God’s work because we love God and His truth.

PAUL wrote to the Christians in Philippi: “Some [people] preach about Christ [Jesus] because they are jealous and bitter [angry and unhappy]. But others [people] preach about Christ because they want to help. They preach because they have love, and they know that God gave me the work of defending the Good News. But others [people] preach about Christ because they are selfish. Their reason for preaching is wrong. They want to make trouble for me in prison. But I do not care if they make trouble for me. The important thing is that they are preaching about Christ. They should do it for the right reasons. But I am happy even if they do it for wrong reasons. And I will continue to be happy” (Philippians 1:15–18, ICB).

Powerful words! Paul cared only that people preached the Good News. At the same time, our reasons for preaching about Jesus are important. We should preach the Good News and do God’s work because we love God and His truth.

What are some of our reasons for preaching about Jesus? Also, what are some ways that we can get ready to preach the message? To help us answer these questions, we will look at some of the things that happened in the church during New Testament times.

TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS (Luke 24:1–12)

When some people heard that Jesus woke up from the dead, what did they do? Read Luke 24:1–12 for the answer.

Early Sunday morning, some women went to the grave where Jesus was buried after He died. The women had spices with them. The women were on their way to take care of Jesus' body now that the Sabbath was over. The women expected to find Jesus' grave shut. They were surprised to see His grave was empty. The women weren't sure what to do. Then they saw two men in shining clothes and felt afraid. The men had a message for them. The men told the women to remember Jesus' words about waking up from the dead. Jesus woke up as He said He would. The women were filled with joy at the news. They hurried back to the place where Jesus' other followers stayed. The women told Jesus' followers what they saw and heard. The women were so excited. They wanted to share with the men what they learned about Jesus.

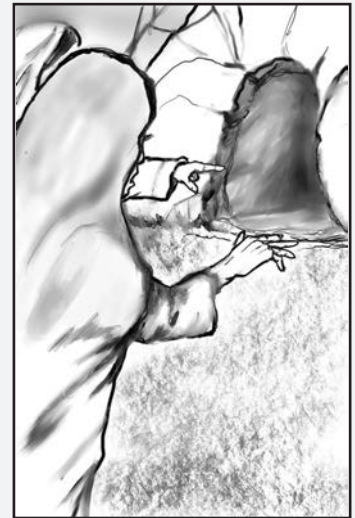
Can you imagine in your mind how the women felt? The women had a wonderful experience. But Jesus' followers said the women were making up stories. The men refused to believe the report. Peter doubted the women's story, too. He ran to Jesus' grave to see for himself what happened.

So many of us are the same as Peter. We have a hard time accepting something someone tells us until we go see for ourselves. Peter heard what the women said. But he couldn't share their joy until later. At first, all Peter saw was an empty grave. "Then he went away, surprised about what had happened" (Luke 24:12, NLV). His experience at the grave was not the same experience that the women had.

As soon as the women heard the news about Jesus, they wanted to share their joy and the wonderful news with other people. We also must let other people know what Jesus has done for us. What better reason do we have for doing God's work?

Of course, we need a personal experience with God before we can share the Good News about Jesus with other people. Our love for Jesus must be an important part of our work for God. In the end we can't share with other people what we don't have, right?

What are some experiences you have had with God and His love? Why are these times so precious to you? How do they help you share the Good News with other people?



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THE REASONS FOR OUR FAITH AND OUR WORK (Luke 24:36–49)

Read Luke 24:36–49. What happened in these verses? Why is this experience so important for Jesus' followers?

At first, Jesus' followers don't believe He is alive. When they see Jesus, they are filled with fear. They think Jesus is a ghost! Then, Jesus' followers see that He really is alive. Now they can't believe what they see because they're so happy (Luke 24:41)! Have you ever felt that something was too wonderful to be real? This feeling helps us understand what Jesus' followers felt in the upper room.

What if Jesus left His followers with only this experience of seeing Him? What would happen to their faith after He left them? Maybe their faith would die. Over time, experience can grow weak in our minds. Or maybe Jesus' followers would start to forget. Worse, maybe they would start to question what they really saw. So, Jesus did more than show His followers His scars and eat fish in front of them. Jesus gave His followers a Bible study. He showed His followers the Bible proof for His work on earth and for His future work in heaven. For sure, the followers had a powerful experience with Jesus. But Jesus wanted to give them reasons from the Bible for their faith.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Remember when I was with you before? I said that everything written about me must happen . . . everything written in the Law of Moses, the books of [written by] the prophets [God's special messengers], and the Psalms’ ” (Luke 24:44, ERV).

Luke 24:44 gives us a powerful reason for our work: the Bible. Jesus knew He must help His followers trust their experience with Him. His followers needed to understand why He died and what His waking up from the dead really meant. The followers also needed to understand that Jesus' kingdom was spiritual. They needed to understand that Jesus came to solve the sin problem and to die for us. The Good News about Jesus was about so much more than giving the Jews freedom from Roman control. The Good News showed Jesus' win against Satan. The Good News is a promise that all evil on this earth will be destroyed. Then God will make the earth new and will live with His people. Jesus “helped the followers understand” (Luke 24:45, ERV) the promises in the Bible about Him so they could share these Bible truths with other people. We can't have an experience with Jesus without understanding these promises, too.



Jesus did more than show His followers His scars and eat fish in front of them. Jesus gave His followers a Bible study.

WAITING AND WORKING FOR GOD (Acts 1:12–26)

Luke 24 ends with Jesus going up in the sky to heaven (Luke 24:50–53). But the story doesn't end there. Luke continues the story in the book of Acts. Right before Jesus goes to heaven, He gives His followers their work, a promise, and orders. Jesus tells His followers to wait in Jerusalem for God to keep His promise. God promised to pour the Holy Spirit on them (Luke 24:49; also read Acts 1:4–8). The Holy Spirit will help the followers to be powerful witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and other faraway places.

At this time, Jesus' followers included about 120 men and women. What were Jesus' followers doing while they waited? Read Acts 1:12–26 for the answer.

Jesus told His followers what He wanted them to do: they must be His witnesses and share the Good News about Him with everyone on earth. So, while the followers waited for the Holy Spirit, they got ready for their work in two ways. First, Luke says they asked God for help. They all understood the work Jesus gave them. Each one of them accepted the work. So, they joined together to pray. Luke doesn't tell us what they prayed about. We can be sure they prayed for wisdom, strength, and courage to do God's work together. They are a wonderful example for us to follow.

The second thing the followers did while they waited for the Holy Spirit was to get ready to do God's work. The followers didn't sit around doing nothing while they waited. They needed someone to replace Judas. Judas sold Jesus to His enemies, who killed Him. Then Judas killed himself. So, now there were only 11 followers and not 12. As the followers waited for the Holy Spirit, they asked God to help them choose the best person to replace Judas. The followers also planned the best way to start doing their work. Peter acted as their leader. None of the other followers questioned Peter's leadership. Everyone understood that God was leading Peter and them. They trusted God to work among them and help them.

We also wait for God to pour His Holy Spirit on us to finish His work on earth. Let us join together during this time to encourage and help each other (Hebrews 10:24, 25). Let us pray for God to send His Holy Spirit to us. Also, we should be doing everything we can to save lost sinners.



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THE MAN YOU NAILED TO THE CROSS! (Acts 2:1–41)

Acts 2 tells us about what happened at Pentecost. Pentecost was the time when God poured His Spirit on His followers after Jesus went back to heaven. While the followers prayed, flames from heaven rested on their heads. Then the followers knew that God gave them the Holy Spirit.

What happened to Jesus' followers after God poured the Holy Spirit on them at Pentecost? Read Acts 2:1–41 for the answer.

Jesus' followers started to speak in other languages.

“The Spirit gave them the ability [skill] to do this [speak languages they didn't know how to speak before]” (Acts 2:4, NIV). God gave each person skill and knowledge to help share the Good News with other people. God didn't give them these blessings to make them fit for heaven or to help them do business in a foreign language. God gave them these gifts to help them do His work. Today, God wants each of His followers to use their personal gifts to help Him do His work, too. The most important thing we can do with these gifts is use them to share Jesus with other people.

When God poured the Holy Spirit on His followers, many people confessed their sins. They said they were sorry for rejecting Jesus. The Jewish leaders were guilty of nailing Jesus to the cross. The people shared in their leaders' guilt because they did nothing to stop Jesus' death. Peter reminds the Jews in Jerusalem that they asked the Romans to nail Jesus to the cross. The people understand their guilt. “What Peter said cut the people's hearts when they heard it. They knew they had done wrong. They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles [leaders and teachers of the New Testament church], ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ ” (Acts 2:37, WE).

“Peter said to them, ‘Change your hearts and lives and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Then God will forgive your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (Acts 2:38, ERV).

Jesus' followers worked with the Holy Spirit and each other. Together, they preached the Good News that Jesus forgives sins and gives us strength to win the war against sinning. Today, God asks us to share this same message with lost sinners. We must not judge them. That's not our job. We must tell them about the saving power of Jesus.



As the followers prayed, flames from heaven rested on their heads. Then the followers knew that God gave them the Holy Spirit.

A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH IN BIBLE TIMES (Acts 2:41–47)

Read Acts 2:41–47. What picture do these verses show us of the New Testament church?

Acts 2 ends with a beautiful picture of life in the New Testament church. Acts 2:41, ICB, says: “Then those people who accepted what Peter said were baptized. About 3,000 people were added to the number of believers [followers] that day.” This verse doesn’t only tell us about the church’s membership and how much it grew. The words of this verse have a deeper and hidden meaning: the new members became full partners with Jesus’ followers.

One of the most important jobs of the church was to make new followers for Jesus. Jesus’ followers taught new members in three ways. First, Jesus’ followers continued to teach them Bible truth and to fellowship with them. The word “fellowship” in Acts 2:42 (ERV) means full partnership. So, Jesus’ followers worked together fully with new church members to serve God. Jesus’ twelve followers helped to correct false beliefs and helped new members understand their experiences. The new members learned how to live Bible truth because they saw how Jesus’ followers lived their lives.

We should not preach to people about what to do if we don’t also tell them how to do it. The best “sermon” is the way we live our lives. When we see how Jesus’ loyal followers live, we learn how to live for Jesus, too. Paul understood this important rule. So, he told his followers to copy him in the same way that he copied Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1). When other people see your real experience in Jesus, their lives will be changed for the better.

Task #1: Think of someone in your life who doesn’t know Jesus or His love. Pray every day for this person to have a personal experience with Jesus.

Task #2: Are you sharing Jesus with someone in your life? Look for ways to invite this person to fellowship with other Christians.



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Thank Jesus for all He does for you. Fill your mind with Bible truth and let it change your life.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Our work for God must come from our deep love for Him and for other people. We cannot work for Him for any other reason. Thank Jesus for all He does for you. Fill your mind with Bible truth and let it change your life. Then you will have success when you share your faith.

“Our life must be connected with the life of Jesus. We must get our strength from Him every moment of our lives. Jesus is the Bread that came down from heaven. He is the same as a fresh fountain of water that is always giving us many treasures. We must drink this water. If we keep the Lord in our hearts always, we shall have a new experience in our spiritual life. We must praise Him and give Him thanks. Our prayers will become the same as a conversation with God. We will talk with Him the same as with a Friend. God will tell us His secrets. Often, we will feel that Jesus is with us. Our hearts will feel joy when He comes to talk with us as He did with Enoch. When this experience is ours, we will have no pride in our hearts. Everyone will see that we have been with Jesus and learned from Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 129, 130.

“A selfish heart can’t grow in spiritual strength or wisdom. Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior? Then stop pleasing yourself and live for Jesus. Help other people. Talk about Jesus’ love. Tell other people that He died for them. . . . The Spirit of Jesus is a Spirit of unselfish love. As you work to help other people, you will grow and your heart will fill with Jesus’ love. . . . Your faith will grow strong. So will your beliefs. God will make perfect your love for Him and for other people.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 67, 68, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How do you understand Paul’s words in Philippians 1:15–18? Paul says that some people preach about Jesus with jealous, angry, or selfish feelings in their hearts. How can we make sure we are not guilty of doing the same thing?
- ② What is your personal experience with God and His love? If you had to share your story about God’s love with other people, what would your story be?
- ③ What has been your experience in waiting for the Lord and trusting in His promises? What has your experience taught you about faith?

THE BLESSING THAT IS OURS WHEN WE GIVE

A woman in the U.S. state of North Carolina invited her two church pastors to her house. She wanted to talk to them about a special offering named the Yearly Sacrifice Offering. A sacrifice offering is money you save so that you can give it to God to help support His work. The woman told the pastors that the Seventh-day Adventist Church started the Yearly Sacrifice Offering in 1922 to help support church workers overseas who didn't have enough money to finish their work. The woman said that people gave sacrifice offerings to help the workers at the time. Today, the sacrifice offering continues to support church workers all over the earth.

The pastors decided to start collecting the Yearly Sacrifice Offering. One pastor preached nine sermons on giving gifts of money to support God's work. The pastor preached his nine sermons before the church collected the Yearly Sacrifice Offering. What happened after that? The 700-member church in Hendersonville, North Carolina, collected \$24,119.00 that year for the Yearly Sacrifice Offering, in 2016. (The year before that, in 2015, the church collected only \$1,400.00.) During the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2021, the church gave a surprising \$37,545.00 to the Yearly Sacrifice Offering.

Pastor David Wright (see picture) said, "We were so surprised and happy. Praise the Lord!"

Pastor Wright gave God and His mercy all the glory for what happened. "This offering will help church workers bring Bible truth to areas where people don't know God. We are so blessed as a church family to be part of this work. As Paul wrote, 'We must remember what the Lord Jesus said, "We are more happy when we give than when we receive [get]"' " (Acts 20:35, NLV).

Adventist Mission manager Gary Krause agrees. Krause shares this quote from Ellen G. White, who writes, "The success of the work in our local churches depends a lot on the work we do for God in countries far away."—*Testimonies to the Church*, volume 6, page 27, adapted. David Trim, an expert in research for the church, gives proof that Ellen White's words are correct.

Having a giving spirit is part of who we are as Adventists. Ted N. C. Wilson, the President of the General Conference says, "The people who started our church had giving spirits. They gave things up to help support God's work. We will finish God's work with the same spirit of giving. Each of us has a special part to help support God's work with the money God gives us."

Thank you for giving to the 2023 Yearly Sacrifice Offering. For more online information, visit bit.ly/annual-sacrifice-offering. Also visit gm.adventistmission.org, bit.ly/1922-offering, and bit.ly/EGW-reflex.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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