

Lesson 5: Winning Friends for Jesus (Part 2)

Introduction In the last lesson we reflected on the importance of personal relationships to fulfill the great commission. Each one of us has a network of relationships consisting of people that God has entrusted to us. This network is our best mission field. As we saw in our last lesson the first step of bringing those people to Christ is to simply write down the names of people we know who haven't accepted Jesus and/or the Adventist message yet. Making this list of names is very important! It helps us become more aware of who has been entrusted to us by God. When we review this list daily or at least 3 times a week, it helps keep the names fresh in our memory, draws us closer to them, and has a positive influence on our association with them.

What do we do with the names now? Of course, we start to pray for them. We can't pray intensively for all these people every day, but we can present these names to God and ask Him to bless these people. In addition, we can ask God to show us who especially needs intercession or help.

Nurturing Relationships The relationships in this network are like little plants in a garden. They have to be nurtured. And this is where many Adventists, who are enthusiastic about our message, make a mistake. They aim at convincing the intellect that a certain doctrine is correct. But we very seldom win a person this way. Before we can reach the intellect we must win the heart. Nurturing relationships is really the secret to successfully winning people for Jesus.

Quote #1 "Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse." (*Evangelism*, p. 483)

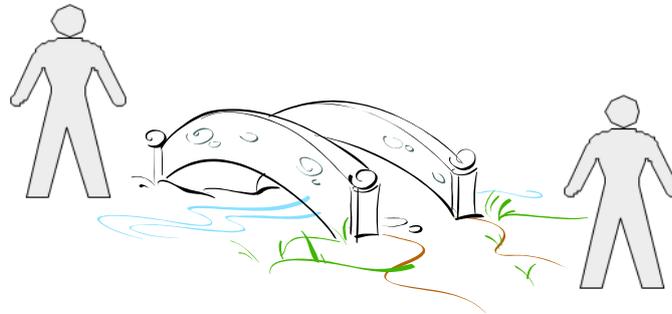
The best example of how we can win the hearts of people was given to us by Jesus Himself. Please read the following quotes and write down specifically what Jesus did to reach people's hearts!

Quote #2 "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." There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit." (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143)

Quote #3 "At the table of the publicans He sat as an honored guest, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty hearts His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and to these outcasts of society there opened the possibility of a new life. Though He was a Jew, Jesus mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices He accepted the hospitality of this despised

**Be a Bridge
Builder**

When we want to reach people for Jesus, we must first win their confidence, reach their hearts, and build a relationship with them. Thus a bridge is created between you and them on which the gospel can reach them.



Now how can we build this bridge to other people? Let's examine 10 principles!

Principle #1 Ask God to help you win the hearts of these people.

God intimately knows every single person in your network and knows the best approach for each person. Ask God to give you ideas of ways you can reach people's hearts.

Principle #2 Be sociable and mingle with other people.

Sometimes Adventists have the idea that they have to separate themselves from the world so they won't become defiled. Of course, there are things in the world which Christians should have nothing to do with. But how can we win people's hearts when we isolate ourselves from them? Jesus is our example here as well. We read how He mingled with people, accepted their hospitality and showed sympathy. And this is exactly our commission! Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth." (Matthew 5:13) What value does salt have when it stays in the saltshaker?

So don't wait for people to approach you. You go to them and establish contact with them. Be people and relationship oriented! Thereby you will nurture existing relationships and get to know new people.

There are so many possibilities to mingle with people. Here are a few ideas:

- Visit your neighbors.
- Join a club.
- Work as a volunteer in your city.
- Visit people who need help.
- Get involved in your child's school.
- Talk to people while you are shopping.
- Offer your help.
- Ask for help.
- Go hiking or walking with others.
- Exercise with others.
- Attend funerals
- Remember special occasions

What other ideas do you have for mingling with other people?

Quote #6

“The example of Christ in linking Himself with the interests of humanity should be followed by all who preach His word, and by all who have received the gospel of His grace. We are not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are. They will seldom seek us of their own accord. Not alone from the pulpit are the hearts of men touched by divine truth. There is another field of labor, humbler, it may be, but fully as promising. It is found in the home of the lowly, and in the mansion of the great; at the hospitable board, and in gatherings for innocent social enjoyment.”
(The Desire of Ages, p. 152)

Quote #7

“By personal labor reach those around you. Become acquainted with them. Preaching will not do the work that needs to be done. 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.” *(Christian Service, p. 117)*

Principle #3

Treat other people with acceptance, esteem and respect.

Jesus saw the value in every person and saw them as a candidate for God’s kingdom. It didn’t matter what circumstances they were in. Even if others despised them Jesus always treated them with dignity, esteem, and respect. And if He were to live as a human among us today He would approach people the same way. We are ambassadors for Christ. Jesus wants us to deal with people like He would if He were in our place. Every person has the need to be treated with acceptance, esteem, and respect. When you give that to a person you will win their hearts.

But exactly how can we show acceptance, esteem, and respect? In order to answer this question, first ask yourself how you know when you are accepted, valued, and respected. Note your thoughts here!

How we see people and what we think about them has the greatest influence on how we treat them. Acceptance, esteem, and respect start with us seeing people as valued and loved by God. We have to see what they can become through salvation. This view is essential for the way we treat them. All the practical things we could do to express acceptance, esteem, and respect build on this fundamental perspective.

What can we specifically do to show people that we accept, value, and respect them? Here are a few ideas!

- Be friendly and courteous.
- Greet people by name.
- Smile at them.
- Remember the names and concerns of their family. Ask how they are doing.
- Speak openly and freely with them.
- Be trustworthy.
- Trust them.
- Forgive quickly, don't hold a grudge. Let them see what grace is.
- Respect the religious beliefs of your friends, even though they are different from your own.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences.
- Give them praise and recognition.
- Encourage them when something has gone wrong or they are in the middle of a difficult challenge.
- Ask them for help.
- _____
- _____

Quote #8 "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." (*Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 189*)

Quote #9 "Now that Jesus has ascended to heaven, His disciples are His representatives among men, and one of the most effective ways of winning souls to Him is in exemplifying His character in our daily life. Our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are. Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world." (*The Desire of Ages, p. 141*)

Principle #5 **Look for opportunities to do something good for your friends.**

Jesus met people where there were. His eyes were open to their needs and He met them. Thus He won their trust and He could explain the gospel to them. They listened to Him because Jesus won their hearts .

Ellen White said that we should also get to know people's needs and help them. Read the following quotes!

Quote #10 "Go to your neighbors one by one, and come close to them till their hearts are warmed by your unselfish interest and love. Sympathize with them, pray with them, watch for opportunities to do them good, and as you can, gather a few together and open the Word of God to their darkened minds." (*Christian Service, p. 116*)

Quote #11 “Those who have been most successful in soul-winning were men and women who did not pride themselves on their ability, but who in humility and faith sought to help those about them. Jesus did this very work. He came close to those whom He desired to reach.” (*Christian Service, p. 117*)

Quote #12 “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. The true heart-expression of Christlike sympathy, given in simplicity, has power to open the door of hearts that need the simple, delicate touch of the Spirit of Christ.” (*Christian Service, p. 123*)

Ask God to open your eyes to the needs of your friends and to give you ideas how you can do something good for them and something that will please them. There is no limit to the possibilities for doing good and making someone happy. Here are a few ideas. Can you think of a few more?

- Congratulate your friends on their birthdays. If appropriate give them a small present.
- Remember occasions like weddings, birthdays, and tragedies in the family.
- Give them homemade bread, rolls, or cookies.
- Give them a calendar with Bible texts for the New Year.
- Write cards, emails, or text messages.
- _____
- _____
- _____

Principle #6 Be hospitable.

Jesus had no home to which He could invite people. But He often accepted people’s hospitality! Here is an important key: Invite people to your home and accept other people’s invitations. Use this time to get to know them better and tell them about yourself. Eating together connects people.

Principle #7 Show honest interest.

Jesus showed honest interest in what was important to the people, even if they were worldly things. If it was close to someone’s heart then it was reason enough for Jesus to be interested in it.

When you talk with people put yourself in their position and ask questions. Remember that every person is unique! It is fascinating to discover this uniqueness. For some of us this is natural. Others have a hard time keeping up a conversation. It helps to remember a few questions, which you can ask people. Some of these questions are particularly good if we don’t know the people very well yet.

- Family
 - Are you from this area?
 - Where did you grow up?
 - How long have you lived here?
 - Do you have siblings? How many?
 - Do your parents and siblings live in the area?

- Job
 - Where do you work?
 - How long have you been working there?
 - Do you enjoy your job?

- Hobby
 - What do you do in your leisure time?
 - Are you a member of a club?
 - Do you play a musical instrument?

- Religion
 - Did you grow up in a Christian/religious family?
 - Did you go to church regularly as a child?
 - Do you regularly attend church now?
 - Which church do you attend?

When speaking with people it is important to keep the following things in mind:

- These questions are just the beginning. They should lead to a deeper discussion about opinions, values, and feelings.
- Not every question is suitable in every situation. We need tact and skill to see which questions are appropriate.
- How deep our questions can go depends on how much the other person trusts us. We need to know the boundaries and sense which questions are appropriate. Some questions are simply too personal, especially if the relationship isn't very deep yet.
- Don't give people the feeling that they are being systematically questioned. It is important that they feel comfortable giving us this information.
- When you get answers respond to them. Put yourself in their place and ask more questions!
- Keep your eyes open for things you have in common and emphasize them. Similarities build bridges!
- Ask questions about things which interest them and which they are enthusiastic about.
- Your questions should go from general to more personal (e.g. from politics, weather, and work to opinions and experiences.)
- When people express their opinion it is important to agree with them whenever you can do it honestly. And even if we have a different opinion it is important not to emphasize these differences. Otherwise there is the danger of creating a barrier between you and the other person.

Quote #13

"Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them so far as possible." (*Evangelism 140.3*)

Principle #8

Be a good listener.

Little else is so effective in winning a person's heart than attentive listening. But how can we be good listeners?

- Try to honestly understand what the other person really means.
- Give the other person your complete attention. Maintain eye contact.
- Pay special attention to the non-verbal communication (facial expressions, gestures, voice) and try to sense what the other person is feeling as he is talking.
- React to what is said. You can do this with a nod of your head, by asking for more clarification or with short statements like, “I understand what you mean.”
- Mirror back what you understood.
- Don’t try to formulate your answer in your thoughts while you are listening.

Principle #9 Be open, authentic, and natural.

Be open and tell about yourself. Allow them to take part in your life, your history, your thoughts. In so doing we shouldn’t pretend that as Christians we are perfect or superhuman. People appreciate it when we are open and authentic. It is not a shame to admit that as Christians we also have challenges. As Christians we aren’t better than other people, but we are better off.

Sometimes people have the preconception that we are strange because we are Adventists. We have to refute this prejudice. People have to see that we are completely normal people. When people think we are worldly, ignorant, and detached, then they won’t accept anything from us. But when they notice that we are normal, sensible people standing with both feet on the ground, then they will listen to us. Also a healthy portion of humor is helpful. It’s good when we can laugh together.

Principle #10 Give them your confidence.

When somebody trusts us, it motivates us to not to break this trust and to trust the other person. Be aware that it is the same for your friends. When you give them trust you encourage them to trust you.

A good possibility to show trust is when we ask people for something. Jesus also did this when He asked the woman at the well for water. Thus He built a bridge to her and could ultimately share the gospel with her. When we ask others for help, then we express the fact that we think they are willing and capable to help us. Of course, these requests should be appropriate. The other person has to feel comfortable in fulfilling this request. Think about what you could ask your friends for!

Remember! Remember! The key to winning a person for Jesus is by reaching their heart and winning their trust. These 10 principles were not flushed out exhaustively. But they are essential and make a big difference. Think about these principles, internalize them, and use them! You will experience how people give you their trust. In the next lesson we will go a step further and think about how we can help our friends to

open up spiritually.

