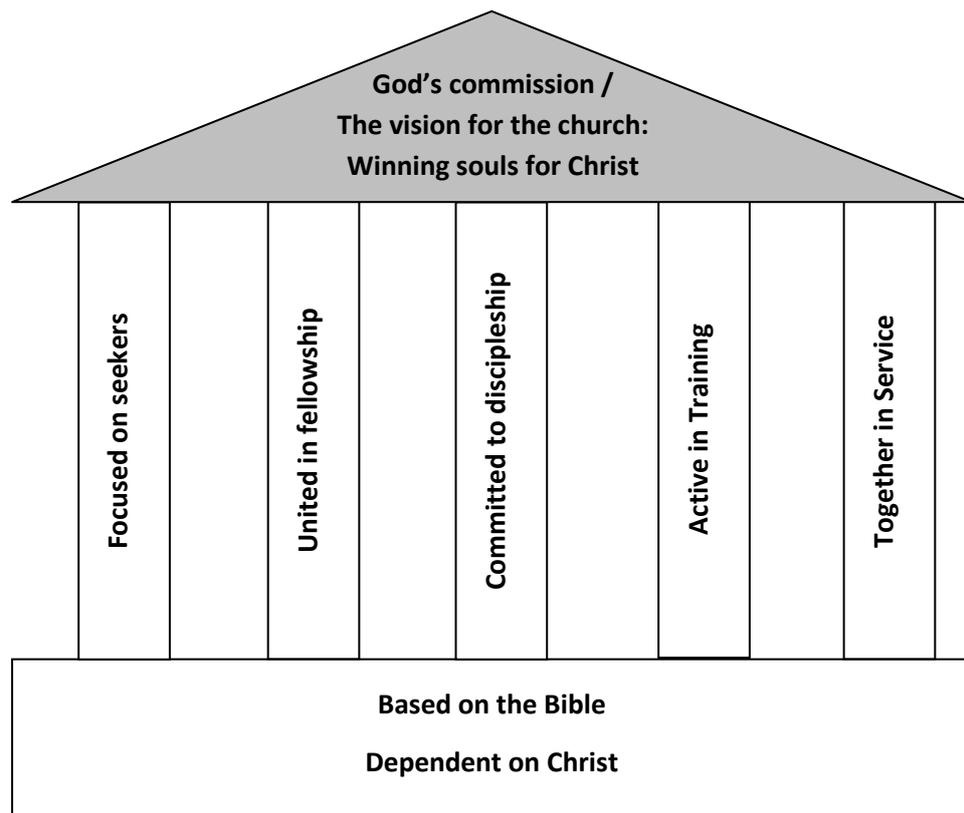


Lesson 3: When God calls and means you

Introduction

In lesson 1 of Module 3 we saw that God established the church in order to spread the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. This mission is the reason for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Every single local church is called to accept this mission as their vision. In the second lesson we discovered a mission concept that helps us to fulfil our mission in accordance to our values.



Today we want to look closer at God's vision for the Church. We can formulate this as follows:

"We exist in order to bring the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angel's message to the people of our community, to serve them, and thus to reveal the character of God to them. Our churches are a place in which people can meet God, grow in faith, and together fulfil God's commission."

Our commission as a church is clear and very plainly formulated. Now we must take the next step by asking, "Who is actually called?"

Is it the pastor, evangelist, bible worker, book evangelist, and teachers? Of course, they are called to carry out the commission. But when we look at the New Testament we see that **every** follower of Jesus is called to spread the Gospel. The mission concept that we discussed in our last lesson can only work when the members of the church are willing to put their heart into it and not just leave the work up to the pastor. The mission, the vision, and the values apply not only to the worldwide church, to unions, conferences, and local churches but also to families and individuals. We must always remember that God calls us individually! Every

follower of Jesus is called to pass on that which they themselves have received. This is a principle that is fundamental to the success of mission work. It is not biblical for the church members to lay back and let the leaders of the church do all of the work. A church where this happens cannot grow!

In short, the great commission can't succeed without YOU! God's vision for the church is God's vision for YOU! God wants to reach lost people through YOU! What a wonderful privilege! What a wonderful responsibility! Read how Ellen White describes this.

Quote #1 "Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195)

Quote #2 "The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822)

Quote #3 "It is God's plan that all who embrace it shall become missionaries. Not only men, but women and even children can engage in this work. None are excused. All have an influence, and that influence should be wholly for the Master. Jesus has bought the race with his blood. We are his; and we have no right to say, "I will not do this or that;" but we should inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and do it with a cheerful, willing heart. (*Historical Sketches*, p. 151)

Quote #4 "God expects personal service from every one to whom He has entrusted a knowledge of the truth for this time. Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can be home missionaries in their families and neighborhoods. (*Christian Service*, p. 9)

Quote #5 "No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. If we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit, we shall not be able to hold our peace." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 78)

Quote #6 "There are those who for a lifetime have professed to be acquainted with Christ, yet who have never made a personal effort to bring even one soul to the Saviour. They leave all the work for the minister. He may be well qualified for his calling, but he cannot do that which God has left for the members of the church." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 141)

Lay mission work The gospel commission is as clear; every believer is called to win others to Jesus. The Seventh-day Adventist Church started as a laymen's mission movement. We can observe everywhere where the church is growing that the members are actively working to spread the Gospel. They witness in everyday activities, give Bible studies, gather in small groups, and hold evangelism meetings. The pastors train, support, and motivate the church members to do the mission work.



Is it clear that Jesus has called you?

What thoughts and feelings do you have when you think about this commission?

Why are we so inactive?

Unfortunately, the reality in most of our churches looks very different. Only a small minority of church members are actively working to win souls for Jesus. Of course, the reasons why church members are not involved in soul winning are quite diverse:

- They have not understood that God has called them individually to spread the Gospel and believe that the pastor is responsible for this.
- They would love to tell others about Jesus but no one has shown them how to do this.
- They are discouraged because they have not been successful thus far.
- They are afraid they will be embarrassed or be rejected if they talk about Jesus.
- They do not believe that there are people in their area that are honestly searching for God.
- They are afraid that they do not have all the answers, that they will make mistakes and thus stand in the way of someone searching for God.
- They are so overwhelmed by the challenges of life that they have no time or energy left over to do mission work.
- They are not sure of their salvation, which holds them back when it comes to joyfully telling others about Jesus.
- They are leading a worldly life and don't have a solid Christian, much less an Adventist identity.

These reasons and many more are what keep church members from being active missionaries. Is one of these reasons, or others, preventing you from actively working to spread the gospel by one of these or other reasons.

The question arises, why should we invest our time in winning people to Jesus, in getting them to accept the Adventist message? Can't God reach the people without our help? Does he really need us? These are good questions that need solid answers.

Let's look at 7 biblical reasons for evangelism. These will show us clearly why God uses weak, flawed people like us.

1st Reason

Evangelism is God's way of reaching lost people.

Jesus said about himself: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) The Bible says very clearly that people who do not have Jesus are lost and that their only hope is to accept him into their lives. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)



**Romans
10:13-17**

In order for people to be saved they must hear about what Jesus has done for them. But how should they hear about this? Read what Paul says!

Paul asks: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" How can people accept Jesus when no one preached the Gospel to them?

The answer is clear: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ". God has ordained the preaching of the gospel to be his tool for saving lost souls. Throughout the Bible God used people to bring others to know about Him so that He could save them.

Does this mean that if we don't tell people about Jesus that they will be lost? The answer to this question has two sides. On the one side God gives every person on this earth a fair chance to be saved. No one will be punished because he lived in the wrong place at the wrong time and met the wrong people. God does everything to reach his lost children. On the other side it definitely makes a difference if the church fulfils its mission or not. People's lives change when we pray for them, serve them, and tell them about the good news of Jesus' salvation. When we let Jesus use us in this way it increases the chance that people will decide to give their lives to Him. Evangelism makes a difference! The preaching of the gospel is God's way to save people!

Quote #7

“There are many who need the ministration of loving Christian hearts. Many have gone down to ruin who might have been saved if their neighbors, common men and women, had put forth personal effort for them. Many are waiting to be personally addressed. In the very family, the neighborhood, the town, where we live, there is work for us to do as missionaries for Christ. If we are Christians, this work will be our delight. No sooner is one converted than there is born within him a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus. The saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart.” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 141)

2nd Reason

Evangelism brings joy to the heart of God!

People who do not know Jesus weigh heavily on God’s heart because He holds His lost children close to His heart. Every person is special and He loves them with boundless love. How great is his joy, when one of His children returns to Him!



How does Jesus describe this joy?

Luke 15:7: _____

Luke 15:10: _____

Luke 15:20-24: _____

The salvation of God’s children is a weight upon His heart and more important to Him than anything else. With fervour He works for their return to Him. Those who do not share this fervour for evangelism and work for the same goal do not understand God. Is there a better way to show God our thankfulness for what He has done for us than to give Him the joy of bringing lost souls to Him?

This love for lost souls should be the drive behind our mission work. Like the words from Paul: “For the love of Christ compels us,...” (2. Corinthians 5:14). With His love of people in our hearts we will win souls for Jesus and provide God with the greatest joy.

3rd Reason

Evangelism lets us experience great experiences with God!

Before Jesus returned to heaven, he said to his disciples, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) The book of Acts describes very clearly how a believer can experience this power. As they worked for the salvation of others they experienced their own most beautiful experiences with God.

When we work full heartedly for the salvation of others, we are engaging in a work

that is extremely important to God. God is always speaking to the hearts of people and directing circumstances to reach out to them. When we decide to do missionary work, we are working together with God. We have the most beautiful experiences as we let Him use us as His helping hands. Many young people yearn to be involved in a cause that is challenging, that needs lots of talent, and that makes a real difference in the lives of other people. Nothing fits this profile better than evangelism!

4th Reason **Evangelism strengthens our spiritual lives and blesses us.**

When we work for the salvation of others our own faith is strengthened. We pray more earnestly and study the Bible more carefully. We look away from our own needs and look to that which will bring others to know Him better. Through this God changes us and gives us a much deeper spiritual experience. The more we love Jesus, the more we will tell others about Him and the more we talk about Him the more we will love Him. This is truly a spiral of blessing!

Quote #8 “And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 79*)

Quote #9 “God might have committed the message of the gospel, and all the work of loving ministry, to the heavenly angels. He might have employed other means for accomplishing His purpose. But in His infinite love He chose to make us co-workers with Himself, with Christ and the angels, that we might share the blessing, the joy, the spiritual uplifting, which results from this unselfish ministry.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 79*)

Quote #10 “God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ's, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy,—the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice,—we must participate in His labors for their redemption.” (*The Desire of Ages, p. 142*)

Quote #11 “Every effort made for Christ will react in blessing upon ourselves. If we use our means for His glory, He will give us more. As we seek to win others to Christ, bearing the burden of souls in our prayers, our own hearts will throb with the quickening influence of God's grace; our own affections will glow with more divine fervor; our whole Christian life will be more of a reality, more earnest, more prayerful.” (*Christ's Object Lesson, p. 354*)

Quote #12 “If you will go to work as Christ designs that His disciples shall, and win souls for Him, you will feel the need of a deeper experience and a greater knowledge in divine things, and will hunger and thirst after righteousness. You will plead with God, and your faith will be strengthened, and your soul will drink deeper drafts at the well of salvation. Encountering opposition and trials will drive you to the Bible and prayer. You will grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and will develop a rich experience.” (*Steps to Christ, p. 80*)

Quote #13 “He who begins with a little knowledge, in a humble way, and tells what he knows, while seeking diligently for further knowledge, will find the whole heavenly treasure awaiting his demand. The more he seeks to impart light, the more light he will receive. The more one tries to explain the word of God to others, with a love for

souls, the plainer it becomes to himself. The more we use our knowledge and exercise our powers, the more knowledge and power we shall have." (*Christ's Object Lessons, p. 354*)

5th Reason **Evangelism brings us into contact with people who are searching for God.**

There are people in our areas that are earnestly searching for God. God is working in their hearts, constantly drawing them to Himself. He wants to bring the church members who have dedicated their lives to evangelism together with these people. We can have a part and be amazed at how God leads them in this way. These people will become our sisters and brothers and grow close to our hearts. We will be the ones receiving a gift!

Quote #14 "There are many who are reading the Scriptures who cannot understand their true import. All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in." (*The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109*)

6th Reason **Evangelism unites the church!**

Many think that we have to be in perfect harmony as a church before we start to do evangelism. They believe that they have to solve the many problems in the church before they can begin to reach out to others. The problem is that we have been spinning around ourselves for far too long and have not come out of our religious vortex of spiritual lukewarmness. The answer is actually very simple though: When we take care of that which is closest to God's heart, the salvation of people, then He will take care of our problems. When the church looks away from itself and concentrates on its mission then it will be united. Many points of conflict will disappear because there will be no more time for fighting. It is mission work that unites us!

7. Reason **Evangelism is God's way to finish His work on this earth.**

Jesus will only come after every person has heard the Gospel. In Jesus' well known end-time speech He says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come". (Matthew 24:14)

There is so much pointless suffering that God sees every day in this world. God suffers with those who suffer. God, and the whole universe with Him, is longing to end the last chapter of this suffering earth's history. But God is waiting! What for? For people to hear the gospel and turn to Him. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) When we work to lead people to know Jesus we are helping Him to be able to come again soon.

Quote # 15 "Zeal for God and His cause moved the disciples to bear witness to the gospel with mighty power. Should not a like zeal fire our hearts with a determination to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour." (*The Acts of the Apostles, p. 600*)

God can and wants to use you.

God is good! He shows us not only that we have a commission to bring people the good news of salvation but also why He wants to use us. Any one of these reasons should be enough to convince us that we should get to work. Which of these reasons motivates you the most?

Your decision

Maybe you have never experienced how a person through your witness has learned about Jesus. You earnestly want to make leading others to Jesus, giving them Bible studies, and preparing them for baptism a part of your daily life. The good news is that God wants to make this possible! You only have to:

- Accept the great commission personally.
- Dedicate your whole heart to this commission and give him your time, talents, and energy.
- Be willing to be trained in evangelism.

If you do these things, you will experience how God reaches people through you and experience His blessing in such a way as He cannot give you in any other way. In the end you will see that it is not you giving to God, but that He is giving to you.

God invites you today, to personally accept his commission and to dedicate your life to this mission. What is your answer to God!
