

Lesson 4: Winning Friends for Jesus (Part 1)

Introduction It is a fact that most people get to know Jesus and join the church through personal relationships. The single most effective method of evangelism is witnessing among our family members, relatives, colleagues, neighbors, and friends. Other methods such as media or public evangelism or felt needs programs definitely have their place and can be very effective, but only if they are embedded in personal evangelism. When we invite our friends to seminars that address their needs, it can become an important milestone in their spiritual growth. Many friends make their decisions for Jesus at public meetings, but personal relationship is the key to their conversion. This is why we need both personal and public evangelism. Both areas should be used mutually in correspondence to each other to win souls. Ellen White describes it this way:

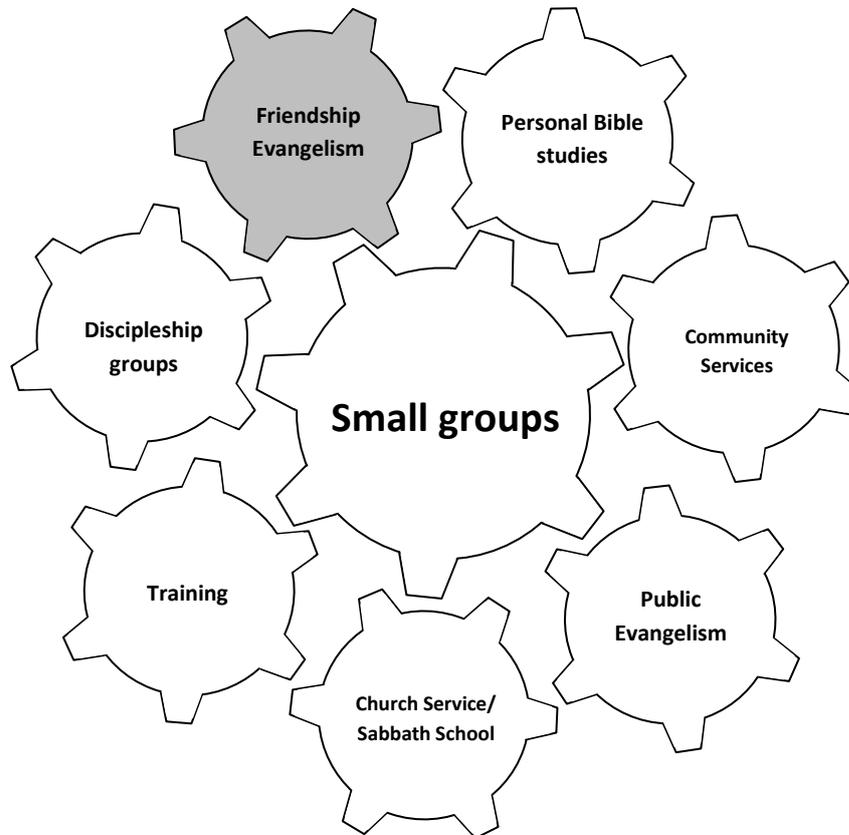
Quote #1 “One soul is of infinite value; for Calvary speaks its worth. One soul, won to the truth, will be instrumental in winning others, and there will be an ever-increasing result of blessing and salvation. Your work may accomplish more real good than the more extensive meetings, if they lack in personal effort. When both are combined, with the blessing of God, a more perfect and thorough work may be wrought; but if we can have but one part done, let it be the individual labor of opening the Scriptures in households, making personal appeals, and talking familiarly with the members of the family, not about things of little importance, but of the great themes of redemption. Let them see that your heart is burdened for the salvation of souls.” (*Christian Service*, p. 121)



Please write down in your own words the significance of this quote!

In the first lesson of Module 1 we looked at an integrated mission concept that connected the most important elements with each other. Friendship evangelism plays an important role in this integrated method. In the next 4 lessons we will look at why friendship evangelism (personal evangelism) is so important and how we can use it to win souls for Jesus.

**Integrated
Mission
Concept**



**The Key is
Relationship**

The key to leading people to Jesus is creating loving, authentic relationships with people in our everyday lives. It is in this type of relationship that people can get to know Jesus best. In fact, many people have to get to know Jesus through our lives before they are ready to listen to Him. It is not enough to just pass on the “Good News”! When we finally understand this point we will realize that evangelisation is not just an event or a mission project. It is a life to be lived.

The same principle applies to the number of newly baptized members who stay in the church and grow spiritually. Christian fellowship and authentic personal relationships create the best environment for spiritual growth. According to statistics, a newly baptized member becomes fully integrated into the church family when they have at least 6 to 7 good friends in the church. Without these friends they are most likely to leave the church sooner or later!

Why are relationships so important to winning people to Jesus? It is simple! People have an inner longing for authentic, deep friendships, respect, and acceptance. Things that have become extremely rare in the 21st century. While many people have superficial friendships, the reality is that casual friendships do not satisfy our greatest needs and usually leave us feeling lonely. A survey showed that only 20% of men and 53% of women have close friends who they are able to openly share their concerns and real feelings with as well as be able to count on in times of need.

A person’s level of loneliness is not the only thing that matters. Every person esteems genuine, deep relations. If we meet people with respect, openness, politeness, kindness, and helpfulness, then we will stand out and have more influence in their lives.

Jesus knew how important it is to personally speak with people and to build a

relationship with them. The 4 Gospels are full of examples of this method. List some that come to your mind!

How Jesus reached people

After his baptism and spending 40 days in the desert, Jesus did not immediately start preaching to crowds of people. He went back to the Jordan where two of John's disciples decided to follow him. (John 1:35) As they asked Jesus where He lived He said to them "Come and see!" not "Go and hear!" He invited them to come and see how He lived His life. He let them become a part of His life and invited them to come to His humble place of rest and spend time with Him. Andreas was convinced and instead of going to the marketplace to preach he went and found his brother – someone he knew - and shared the good news with him "and he led him to Jesus" (verse 42).

The next day Jesus found Phillip and personally invited him to "follow me". Phillip went to his friend Nathaniel and told him about Jesus. Nathaniel was skeptical at first and answered Phillip, "What good can come out of Nazareth?" But Phillip didn't start to argue with Nathaniel; he did just what Jesus had done and invited him to "come and see". In this way he led Nathaniel to Jesus. The gospel is filled with relationship networks.

Quote #2

"With the calling of John and Andrew and Simon, of Philip and Nathanael, began the foundation of the Christian church. John directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother, and called him to the Saviour. Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael. These examples should teach us the importance of personal effort, of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbors. 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*)

How Jesus reached people

During His entire time of ministry here on earth Jesus sought personal contact with the people to whom he wanted to minister. Ellen White describes this in a very impressive way. Please read the following quote and underline the parts that bring this out clearly.

Quote #3

"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 #4 “Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He carried His instruction into the household, bringing families in their own homes under the influence of His divine presence. His strong personal sympathy helped to win hearts. (*The Desire of Ages, p. 151*)

Quote #5 “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 #6 “In face of their prejudices He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables,--partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands,--taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy.” (*The Desire of Ages, p. 193*)



Before Jesus returned to heaven He gave the disciples a clear commission. What was it?
Acts 1:8: _____

Luke 24:47,48: _____

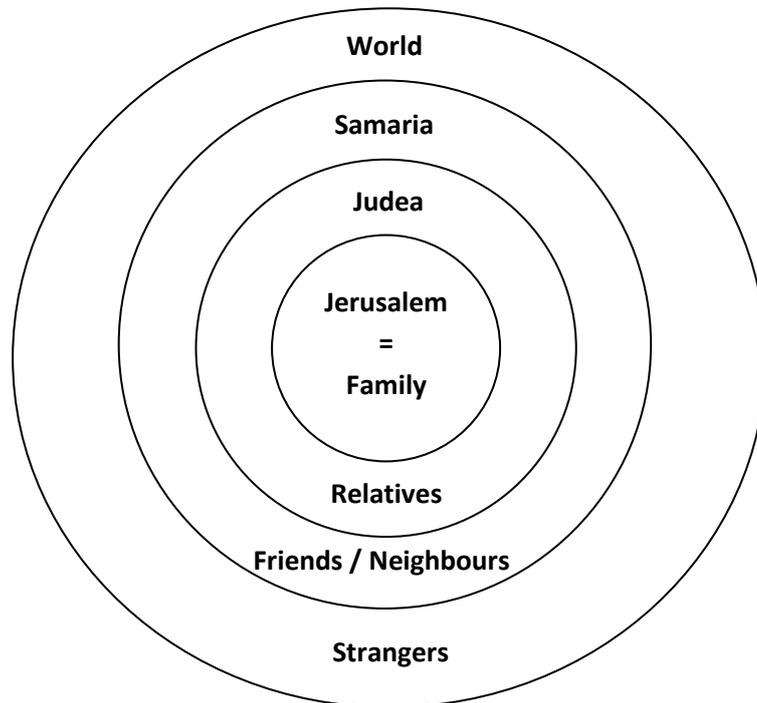
The first Christians took this commission very seriously and followed Jesus’ example. Of course, they preached openly whenever there was an opportunity to do so, but the basis of their evangelism was witnessing from person to person. They had real Christian fellowship in their homes, shared what they had, and took care of each other while preaching the message of Jesus Christ through personal relationships.

**Start in
Jerusalem!**

Jesus told them specifically to start in Jerusalem, where they were known and where they already had friendships. From here they were to step by step widen their efforts to Judea, Samaria, and unto the end of the world. In this Jesus made one thing very clear: **The gospel commission is first fulfilled where we are, with the people we know!**

When we apply this text to ourselves, Jesus isn’t telling us to get in the next airplane to fly to Jerusalem to start our missionary work. The message is clear. Start with the people that you know in the smallest circle. Jerusalem is your family, Judea is your extended family, Samaria is your friends, neighbors, work colleagues, etc. and the world represents strangers.

**The network
of
relationships**



**Start in
Jerusalem**

Our first mission field is our own family. Jesus said, "Start in Jerusalem!" It is really important that we authentically, honestly, and practically live our faith in our own families. Sometimes living out our faith in our family can be the hardest. How often do we say and do things in front of our family that we would never do in front of others? Many find it easier to witness to persons outside of their families than to be a blessing to their own family members. But living the Christian life within our own families is the springboard for successful mission work in the outer circles.

Quote #7

"The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 32)

Quote #8

"In the home the foundation is laid for the prosperity of the church. The influences that rule in the home life are carried into the church life; therefore church duties should first begin in the home." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 318)

Quote #9

"That family, properly conducted, is a favorable argument to the truth, and the head of such a family will carry out the very same kind of work in the church as is revealed in the family. Wherever severity, harshness, and want of affection and love are exhibited in the sacred circle of the home, there will most assuredly be a failure in the plans and management in the church. Unity in the home, unity in the church, reveals Christ's manner and grace more than sermons and arguments." (*Evangelism*, p. 342)

All of us live in a network of relationships. Day by day we are in contact with different people. An average person has at least 200 friends, relatives, and acquaintances. These relationships are entrusted to us by God. You might be the only person in someone's life that can tell them about Jesus and demonstrate both Jesus' love and what being a true Christian is all about. Most people don't decide to become Christians because of the information they have been given. They decide to follow Jesus because their friends or

acquaintances have lived out true Christianity and have shown them how a life with Christ is.

The world is full of people who have a deep spiritual hunger. They want to believe that there is a God that knows them personally, loves them, and has a positive future planned for them; a God whom they can trust. They want to believe that their lives are purposeful and that there is more to life than just being born, living a few decades, and then dying. You have people like this in your circle of influence! You will only discover them though, when you take the time to win their trust and build true relationships with them.

The problem is that many Adventists barely have any non-Adventist friends. Often we are so involved in our own circles within the church that we forget what it takes to build up relationships with non-Adventists and to point them tactfully towards Jesus. How are we to reach out to people outside of our church circle? Read the Ellen White Quote #5 again. As it says, Jesus did not distance himself from the people He wanted to reach but took part in their lives and won their trust. We are to do the same!

The people in your network are your mission field. Your network is the most effective area for you to do your mission work. You are in a much better position to lead them to Jesus than a pastor or evangelist. They know you and like you and they are more willing to listen to you. You can invite them to know Jesus much more effectively than a stranger can. You meet them on a different level of trust, which we could call a warm level.

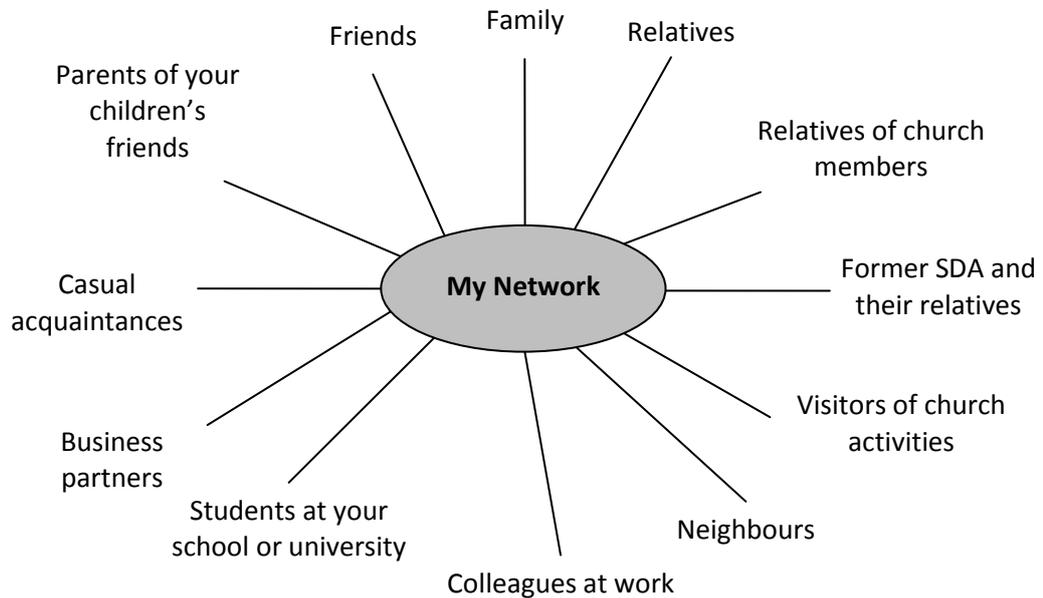
We meet strangers on a cold level. The ice must first be broken and the water warmed. It is much harder to reach strangers. This does not mean that we are to ignore them. The gospel commission definitely includes strangers, but we have to learn how to prepare the soil of their hearts by warming them up with relationships based on trust and care. If we rely on people coming out of the cold level and into the church through seminars and evangelisation we will be very disappointed. We have to concentrate our mission work on the persons with whom we have warm level relationships.

Quote #10 “Let those who desire to work for God begin at home, in their own household, in their own neighborhood, among their own friends. Here they will find a favorable missionary field. This home missionary work is a test, revealing their ability or inability for service in a wider field. ... One of the most effective ways in which light can be communicated is by private, personal effort. In the home circle, at your neighbor's fireside, at the bedside of the sick, in a quiet way you may read the Scriptures and speak a word for Jesus and the truth. Thus you may sow precious seed that will spring up and bring forth fruit.”
(Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 428)

Quote #11 “As such workers endeavor to win souls to Jesus, they will find that many who never could have been reached in any other way are ready to respond to intelligent personal effort.” *(The Acts of the Apostles, p. 158)*

Discover your network! The first step is to define your network, and you can start right away. In the following lessons we will look at how we can nurture these relationships. So let's start with the first step now!

Think about the people in your network, who have not yet accepted Jesus and/or the Adventist message. Write down their names. It doesn't matter if they live very far away or not because you can cultivate this kind of relationship over a long distance and still provide spiritual guidance. Go through the following groups of people in your network.



Write down the names!

Now it's your turn! Take an empty piece of paper, or even better a notebook, and write down the names of the people who come to mind. It is important to write these names down to make yourself aware of how many people you know and to help you remember their names. You can use the terms that you find above in the diagram to help you organize your list. How many names did you write down?

These people are the people who God has trusted into your care. Go through these names on a daily basis. In this way you see these people's names over and over and will start to identify with them. This alone will change how you notice them and relate to them. Begin to pray for them! You might not be able to pray for each one intensively but you can ask God to bless them and you can pray that God will show you which ones you should intensively pray for. When you meet the people from your network or they come to mind, pray for them.

In the next lessons we will take a look at how we should care for and lead spiritually in these relationships. There is a very interesting field of missionary work to be discovered in front of you.

