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2020

COOL TOOLS FOR YOUR ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL

A resource digest for pastors,
Sabbath School superintendents,
officers, and teachers

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX



Center for Adventist Research
Andrews University
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**SIRI IN
SABBATH SCHOOL?
SEE PAGE 6**



**Sabbath School &
Personal Ministries**

Ellen G. White

NOTES

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Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth?

A story is told of a nineteenth-century American evangelist, John Vassar, who had grown up in his father's brewery in New York. When he became converted, feeling like the prodigal son, he gave up the beer-making business for sharing the gospel across the American West.

One day, Vassar visited a farm, where the wife was a faithful Christian but the husband, who was out in the field at work, was an unbeliever. When the woman begged for a Bible, Vassar gave her one and went on his way. But when her husband returned home and saw the Bible, he flew into a rage. Snatching the book up, he took it out to the woodshed, and hacked it in half with an axe. Throwing one half of the Bible into a corner, he returned the other to his wife, proclaiming, "In this marriage, we share everything equally. Here's your half of this book!"

Sometime later, though, in another disagreement with his wife during the cold, wet winter, the farmer stormed out of the house and, with nowhere else to go, retreated to the woodshed. There, after a time of cooling off, he noticed the forgotten half-Bible on the floor in the corner. When he picked it up, it opened to Jesus' parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He was drawn into the story, but it was only half there. The other half was in the house, and he wanted to see how the story ended. When he read it, his heart was touched, and he became a changed man.*

Whether this was an actual, historical incident, it could certainly be a parable in itself. And it could possibly bring new meaning to the apostle Paul's admonition to Timothy: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed,

rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, NKJV, emphasis supplied).

Of course, it would take even the most literal mind to interpret "dividing the word" as the act of physically tearing a copy of the Scriptures in two. Paul had something else, something more figurative, in mind. Other translations offer "accurately handling the word of truth" (NASB) and "rightly handling the word of truth" (ESV). These are expressed in figurative language as well. No one takes it to understand the physical halving of a Bible.

The NRSV brings a clearer meaning: "rightly explaining the word of truth." This suggests an understanding of the meaning of Scripture through study. And this could serve as an appropriate objective for one of the four primary goals at the very core of Sabbath School: Bible study.

"The Sabbath school," writes Ellen G. White, "affords to parents and children a precious opportunity for the study of God's word. But in order to gain that benefit which they should gain in the Sabbath school, both parents and children should devote time to the study of the lessons."—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 41.

The necessary tools of Bible study for Sabbath School, then, would not include an ax. "Rightly dividing the word of truth" in Sabbath School does, however, demand the tools of open heart, close attention, keen thought, and prayerfully sharp analysis of Scripture. 📖

*Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), May 15.

GARY B. SWANSON

is associate editor of *Sabbath School Toolbox*.

Where Did It Go?

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

? **Question: Someone in the class said that our Sabbath School has forgotten where it came from. What does that mean?**

Answer: Believe it or not, there is a fancy technical name for what they are talking about. It's called "loss of corporate memory." A problem every community faces is that the current generation doesn't remember (or care) what happened in the older generation. This is a problem for a Sabbath School because the content of the message the Sabbath School studies and passes on does not change, even if the way it is presented may change.

This new generation, even if it grew up in the church, probably doesn't remember a lot of things the older generation does. You will notice that the contemporary media talk about Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, as groups who want nothing to do with the so-called past.

For instance, one Sabbath School member said, "Not only are there a lot of youth that don't know the works of Paul, but there are a lot of older members that don't know the works of Paul as well." Recently a senior citizen remarked in Sabbath School, "I have been an Adventist all my life, and I have never understood the prophecies everybody talks about!" Something is wrong here!

One church did something unique to restore its corporate memory. At a church weekend retreat, they spread a roll of

paper across the floor of the auditorium. They wrote the years since the church was founded to the present across the paper. The members walked along the paper and wrote their names under the year they joined, the year they were baptized, some event they remembered; whatever they wanted to remember. Lots of young people followed along and read what was written. They began to ask questions, a lot of them with "I never knew . . ."

One writer noted: "The most serious threat to any community's future occurs when its education can no longer maintain its heritage into the present or renew its identity or vocation for its changing circumstances."* You may find that your church suffers from loss of corporate memory. At one time the members of your Sabbath School knew the stories in the Bible. They knew the stories about the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and your own congregation. There are probably a lot of young people in your church who recognize voices only on the other end of a cell phone. Since the apostle Paul didn't have a cell phone, they don't know anything about his history or writings.

Sabbath School is a key entity in your church where corporate memory can be remembered and restored. Dynamic teaching helps. Deliberate emphasis on the eternal value of what is being studied in the lessons is invaluable. 📖

*Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations*, (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 11.

Missionary Volunteers

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

Once, long ago, the entire youth ministry of the world Seventh-day Adventist Church was called “Missionary Volunteers.” Its motto was “Saved to Serve,” and its goal was “The Advent Message to All the World in this Generation.” Contemporary social realities have necessitated different wording and a different “badge,” but the emphasis of the church on missionary volunteers has not diminished.

The mission of the church remains the gospel and advent message to all the world, and volunteers form the backbone of the world outreach of the church. As Ellen G. White noted, “Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 102. This makes all of us volunteers.

Some members, however, are more “volunteers” than others. They do more than attend. They are actively involved. They serve as church officers, departmental leaders, Sabbath School teachers, etc. Deacons keep the church campus in working order and the Sabbath services running smoothly. The local church health ministry recruits medical personnel to offer periodic blood pressure readings, and, as one church reports, offer periodic eye testing and free reading glasses to the community.

PERSONAL MINISTRIES

One of the key volunteer outreach ministries of the local congregation is called personal ministries. This ministry is involved in direct contact with people with the aim of introducing them to Jesus and the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Volunteers involved in personal ministries give Bible studies, lead baptismal classes, distribute literature, run local church Bible correspondence schools, and figure out all kinds of ways to communicate the gospel to people.

Adventist News Network tells of a man in Finland who showed up at the local church community service facility and picked up some food, he informed them, for a friend. One of volunteers in the community services facility asked the man if he was a Christian. Turns out he was an atheist—collecting food for a couple whose business had failed, and they were in a tough financial situation.

The couple receiving the food invited him to stay for a meal. He asked if he could pray before they ate. Astonished, the lady of the house asked, “How is it that an atheist is praying?” Out of curiosity, she went with him to visit the church, so drunk she would barely stand up. The couple returned the next week, and then the next. After a while, the wife became interested in the music and spiritual message shared by church

members. She and her husband began to attend Sabbath worship services. Their former atheist friend passed away, but the couple became active at the church. The husband cooked in the church kitchen for people who came to the food pantry. Today the wife's own mother has begun to attend Sabbath worship services. In all, ten people have been baptized in the five years since church members opened the food pantry.

WORLD CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

The world church offers all kinds of possibilities to volunteer beyond the walls of the local church. The Adventist Mission office reports that more than 2,500 Global Mission pioneers are now working around the world. Since 1990 pioneers have established more than 11,000 new Seventh-day Adventist congregations.

The website <https://www.adventistvolunteers.org/> lists all kinds of available volunteer services. Short-term volunteers work on specific projects, from a day to a few weeks. These include medical/dental clinics, construction projects, English-language schools, etc. Long-term missionaries may serve in the same capacities as short-term missionaries.

An example of this type of missionary volunteering is the Guam-Micronesia Mission of the North American Division. This field sponsors a series of schools as primarily evangelistic outreach facilities. The teachers are almost all volunteers. A church in the United States might inform the General Conference mission office that they need a number of volunteers for three weeks for a project of some kind. The office will advertise this and,

in cooperation with the North American Division, put together a group.

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

The world church has many members who have banded together to form cooperating volunteer ministries. They do everything from building churches, digging wells in places with limited water supplies, or working with disaster relief projects following natural disasters such as storms, fires, and floods.

Organizations such as Maranatha Volunteers International sponsor a \$10-Church system in which people contribute toward a fund for building churches around the world. Groups of volunteers with construction skills go to an area funded by the \$10-project and build a church, dig a well, or renovate old buildings. Access maranatha.org for some incredible stories of what these volunteers have accomplished.

Missionary Volunteers is still a great idea. It represents the essence of what Seventh-day Adventism is all about. Your Sabbath School can come up with some great ideas for volunteer activities. It can be anything from visiting local shut-ins to sponsoring a member to go on a mission project. 📧

IN A NUTSHELL

- › It is a valuable activity to sponsor a mission outreach project.
- › Sabbath School is a key provider for world mission projects.
- › Make your Sabbath School personally motivated about world mission.



Siri in Sabbath School?

GARY B. SWANSON

Siri, what is the capital of Uruguay?"
"The capital of Uruguay is
Montevideo."

"Siri, how many commandments are
there in the Bible?"

"There are ten commandments in the
Bible."

And there you have it. Right there in
the palm of your hand is the answer to
everything. It can instantly give you the
local weather forecast; the latest score of
your favorite baseball team; the time of
day in Paris, France (or Texas); the
recipe for ratatouille; or the full recitation
of the twenty-third psalm. It brings an
encyclopedic access to virtually every bit
of information there is to know.

Someone in a recent Sabbath School
said, trying to be funny, "If our teacher
doesn't turn up, I imagine we could have
Siri teach our Sabbath School lesson!"

SIRI IN SABBATH SCHOOL

The idea may not be quite as facetious
as it sounds at first. It certainly isn't
beyond the stretch of the possible to
imagine that the weekly Sabbath School
lesson, let's say an auditory recording of
it, could be played out in a class, maybe
even replace the need for a teacher.
A small-print note on the last page of
each *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study
Guide* indicates that the quarterly is
available, among other resources for those
with special needs, on audio CD and

downloadable online.

Could this not be, maybe, an answer
to the occasional paucity of those willing to
teach Sabbath School? With the utmost of
respect and support for the availability of
this resource for those with special needs,
the mere recording of a weekly lesson is
nothing more than a tool in the learning
process for which study as a group in
Sabbath School is intended. Yes, one
can learn from a reading or recording—a
close personal study—of the Bible Study
Guide. But what is to be learned in group
Sabbath School Bible study should be so
much more.

WHY WE NEED TEACHERS

This is where the role of the teacher,
as a facilitator of learning, exceeds the role
of the content that a Sabbath School class
is studying together. The intention is for
the class to take in *information*, to be sure,
but it is also hoped that there will be an
emphasis on *transformation*.

It should be noted that there are
occasional places in the Sabbath School
study materials in which effort is made
to encourage, in the reader, some kind
of application. After reading in a daily
segment of the lesson selections from
Scripture and the excellent explanation
and comment on them, often, at the
bottom of the page, there is some kind
of attempt at application, some effort
to transition the learning from the head

to the heart. A couple examples from a recent Sabbath School lesson: “If ancient Israel had reason to praise the Lord, how much more so do we, after the Cross, have reasons to praise Him?” or “How can we avoid the trap of thinking that having and knowing the truth is enough?”¹

Comparing these couple sample questions to an earlier question on one of the same pages shows a clear difference: “What are the motivations for worship and praising God given in these verses [Deut. 10:17–22; Ps. 101:1; 146:5–10; Isa. 5:16]?”² This question calls on the learner to interpret information. There may be some difference of opinion in one response or another, but there is no real application called for. It is calling for an informational response, a recitation of fact.

But, in many places, Scripture encourages a kind of learning that encourages application. As you might expect, coming in a book focused specifically on wisdom, Proverbs offers some pointed counsel: “I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw” (24:32). This suggests intentional effort, even on the individual reader in studying the Sabbath School lesson at home. “Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; *apply your heart* to what I teach” (22:17, emphasis supplied). In this there is the idea that there is a clear difference between mere head learning and the more intentional heart learning.



“Let the teachers enter,” writes Ellen G. White, “heart and soul, into the subject matter of the lesson. Let them lay plans to make a practical application of the lesson.”—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 113.

So, as the teacher prepares for the study of the week’s lesson in Sabbath School, he or she should be looking to offer so much more than mere information, whether it be by lecture or any other means of communication. “To know” something in Scripture means an experience that transcends the accumulation of plain facts. Biblical literacy, knowing so much about what is contained in Scripture, is the foundation. But there must be more.

“Even the demons believe!” (James 2:19, NKJV).

The simple—albeit authoritative—information that Siri may have to offer on that smartphone can never be enough. There is no heart in that. 📱

¹ *The Least of These: Ministering to Those in Need*, July–September 2019, pp. 74, 77.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Reaching and Winning Followers of the Occult*

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

Occultism, also known as spiritualism, has been around as long as humanity. News media report that more than one-fifth of adults in Western countries believe in astrology. An equal number practice some form of eastern meditation. Yoga, often presented as a valuable physical exercise routine, has behind it a lot of spiritistic beliefs. In the territory of the North American Division, occult ideas are also part of many of the practices of the New Age movement.

People often practice things, having no idea they are occult practices. They sometimes experience what seem to them miracles and positive helpful events in their personal lives. Some religious communities have occult practices as part other normal beliefs, such as the worship of saints. Some people attend churches that regularly attempt to “cast out demons” when they are really placing themselves on Satan’s ground and don’t realize it.

Spiritistic beliefs and practices go under various names such as voodoo. In Hispanic culture they are known as Santeria. Many of the practices relate to Eastern religions, especially Hinduism and forms of Buddhism.

You might run into people who depend on horoscope readings, believe in the power of crystals, palm reading, fortune telling, all kinds of theories about UFO’s, and people who have spirit masters who communicate with them, commonly known as “channeling.” Consulting a *Ouija* board

(seeking answers and conversations with the spirits who answer by pointing to letters and numbers on the board through a pendulum or glass) is a frequent activity.

Spiritualist practitioners are known as wizards, witches, soothsayers, oracles, etc. These practitioners claim to do all kinds of things: make things appear and disappear, do “magic” writing, hold seances communicating with the dead, manage “astral-projection” — sending people as disembodied spirits to faraway places, and even perform surgical operations without medical instruments.

The Bible, of course, classifies all this as the work of Satan and his angels. The Lord clearly warns us about these practices: “Don’t let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells or charms, and don’t let them consult the spirits of the dead. The Lord your God hates people who do these disgusting things” (Deut. 18:10–12, GNT).

DANGERS IN DEALING WITH THE OCCULT

Many of the occult practitioners you meet are only involved superficially because they enjoy things like using good luck amulets and reading horoscopes. Basic Bible studies will often open their eyes. If you encounter a deeper case of involvement, seek help from someone who knows how to deal with these situations. Working with believers in the occult can be dangerous because this is clearly Satan’s territory. Don’t try to face Satan

down yourself. Through prayer and fasting, let the Holy Spirit do that. (See Daniel 10.) Helping people understand the real power behind their occult practices is not the same as what is called “exorcism,” the practice of casting out demons.

WAYS TO APPROACH FOLLOWERS OF THE OCCULT

It is not easy to win followers of the occult. Here are a few things you can do:

1. Depend on the power of the gospel.

We should expect a heavenly power to accompany the preaching of the gospel. This power will triumph over the works of the occult no matter what form it takes. The Son of God came to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8). The power of the gospel overcomes the power of occult beliefs and practices. Trace the development of sin in studies you may have with people interested in the occult. They may never have heard this before. Show how Satan tries to take over in people's lives in mystical ways. Help them see that the power of Jesus is far stronger than anything Satan can do.

2. The entire structure of the occult is built on the idea of an immortal soul that inhabits a person's body and then floats off somewhere when the person dies. The doctrine of conditionalism, the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of what happens when a person dies, is a key to winning people who follow the occult.

3. Avoid extremes. Some people may not believe that there is such a thing as supernatural occult forces and look to the observable world of science as their guide. At some point they may experience something related to the occult that they cannot explain, and occult ideas begin to fascinate them. Some people who do believe in occult


powers make the mistake of thinking about it too much. They talk about the devil and magnify his power and forget that whatever holds our attention can get a hold on us.

4. Intercessory prayer and fasting. It is not wise to go it alone in dealing with occult powers. Nor should a novice be quick to get involved, nor anyone who is practicing deliberate sin. There are dangers to be faced when attempting to help. Jesus recommended prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:21).

5. Point people to Jesus. We should warn the occultist of the danger they are in and urge them to come to Christ. If people are really suffering from occult oppression, they will get little help from a psychiatrist or a psychologist. Nor is there help in yoga or meditation. Only Jesus can help (Acts 4:12).

6. Destroy occult objects. Follow the example set by the apostle Paul in Ephesus. The followers of the occult there destroyed all their occult paraphernalia (Acts 19). These include things like amulets, fetishes, letters, lucky charms, figures of gods and saints, and other cultic objects.

7. Break all ties with the occult. Do not try to help or pray for someone who shows no willingness to become free from the occult forces. They should break all contacts and friendships with mediums. In some cases of devil possession, they may even need to move out of a house that Satan has managed to control with his demons.

Occult forces are strong, but Jesus is stronger. He is the power that ultimately wins followers of the occult to his side. 

* For more complete information see Graeme S. Bradford, *Reaching & Winning Followers of the Occult* (Adventsource.org). This manual contains useful information about all aspects of dealing with people who believe in the occult.

Making Friends for God - Points of Emphasis, Theological Issues, Lifestyle Imperatives

JIM ZACKRISON

This is a series of lessons designed to explain why witnessing is important and to motivate church members to witness. The series emphasizes that the process of saving human beings is initiated by the Trinity. Jesus is the sacrifice who makes it possible. He came “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). The Holy Spirit is the agent that makes it effective, and God the Father is the origin of the entire system of salvation. We human beings cannot save anyone. We are witnesses, not saviors. As the Introduction states: “The idea that mission is God’s work is clarified throughout Scripture. Solomon states it this way; ‘He [God] has put eternity in their hearts’ (Ecclesiastes. 3:11). When an individual is born into this world, God places a desire for eternity deep within the fabric of that person’s being.”

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

This series of lessons specifically points out only two soul-winning methodologies: personal testimony (two lessons) and small groups. The overall approach is on spiritual preparation and resulting lifestyle and mannerisms that produce effective witnessing. The series is divided into five general sections:

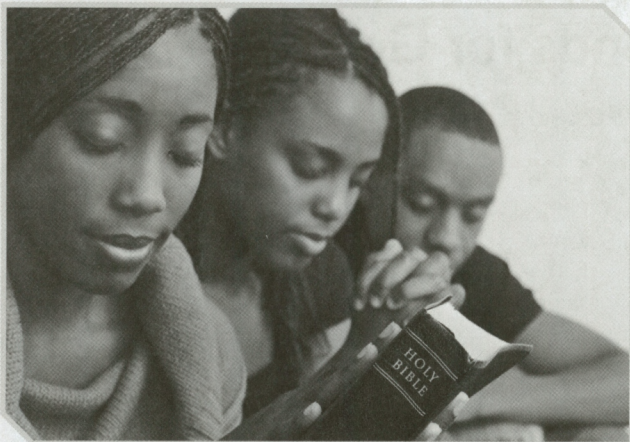
- › Lessons 1–3 Basic principles of witnessing
- › Lessons 4–7 The spiritual engine that empowers witnessing
- › Lessons 8, 9 Attitudes that make witnessing effective
- › Lessons 10, 11 Two specific witnessing methodologies
- › Lessons 12, 13 An appeal to include Seventh-day Adventist teachings and to become an active witness

The focus of the lessons is on witnessing by church members in their everyday environments. The key word that describes the believer’s role is “cooperation” with the Lord. The two most common phrases used to describe that cooperation are “witness” and “discipleship.” The key proposition of the series is: “The art of effective soul winning is the art of building positive caring relationships” (Lesson 3, Tuesday).

The first three lessons deal with specific witnessing methodologies. Lessons 2 and 11 emphasize the importance of a personal testimony. This point is mentioned throughout the series as a key method of witnessing. Lesson 10 outlines the value of small groups as a witnessing methodology.

Lessons 4–7 outline the four primary spiritual components of witnessing: intercessory prayer, the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and Bible teachings.

Lessons 8, 9 focus on the attitudes necessary for effective witnessing. Lesson 8 outlines Jesus’ attitudes as a model; Lesson



9 outlines the type of Christian personality a witness should have.

Lesson 12 outlines the role of what we call “present truth” or “the advent message” as an integral part of Seventh-day Adventist witnessing.

Lesson 13 is an evangelistic call to respond to what has been studied throughout the quarter.

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

A principle theological understanding underlies this series of lessons. This understanding is taken for granted by most Seventh-day Adventists, but there may be people in your Sabbath School class or baptismal class sponsored by your Sabbath School who have a different understanding. While we do not often use the phrase, Seventh-day Adventists believe in what is called “prevenient grace.” That means that when a person is born, the Lord, in His own way, places a desire for righteousness in the person’s heart. As noted, the Introduction references Ecclesiastes 3:11—“He has planted eternity in the human heart” (NLT). The active agent in stimulating this provision of grace is the Holy Spirit.

The most common phrase used among Seventh-day Adventists is “free will.” We can choose to accept or not accept the grace God makes available.

Lesson 7 points out that all teaching/witnessing that we do has its basis and authority in the Bible. As witnesses we do not teach personal opinion or some particular viewpoint that we may be interested in.

Lesson 12 emphasizes that in our witnessing as Seventh-day Adventists we include the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As noted, the lesson uses familiar Seventh-day Adventist vocabulary: “present truth” and “end-time message.”

LIFESTYLE IMPERATIVES

Lesson 3 presents a vital principle: Jesus saw people’s God-given potential and viewed them through salvation’s eyes (Introduction). Ellen G. White writes about Jesus: “In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God.’ Psalm 90:17.”—*Education*, p. 80.

Lesson 9 is a brief survey of spiritual gifts and their role in witnessing. The important point is that no matter what gift or gifts one is assigned by the Holy Spirit, the Lord expects every Christian to be a witness.

Witnessing is not an add-on to the Christian experience and lifestyle. It should be an integral element in all believers’ lives. It is imperative for all of us to learn the basic ways to integrate it into our daily experience. 📖

Making Friends for God

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

There is nothing new about appeals for active witnessing in Seventh-day Adventist churches. This series of lessons outlines a witnessing lifestyle that one author calls “gentle persuasion.”* The following hot buttons are examples of common issues that arise when witnessing is discussed in Sabbath School class.

Hot Button No. 1: Some Sabbath School members have been through the experience of having professional evangelistic teams come to their church and tell them that they only need their money, not their help. This issue may arise. This approach is not relevant to the topics studied in this series. The lessons focus on the role of every member as a witness.

Hot Button No. 2: Some church members feel that the church is interested only in baptisms and “numbers,” not in caring for the needs of the members themselves. This issue arises often when there is an emphasis on evangelism. This attitude originates because Adventist publications and internet resources regularly report statistical results of large public campaigns led by well-known Adventist evangelists. Everyone knows that evangelism and caring for members should go hand in hand.

Hot Button No. 3: “I am scared to death to say anything to anyone.” This is a common problem. All too many church members have no training or background in witnessing. This series is an opportunity to help class members learn how to do “gentle persuasion.”

Hot Button No. 4: Personal testimony. It would be a good activity in your class for each member to develop, write out, and share personal testimonies. A personal testimony just says “I used to . . . , but the Lord rescued me from all that. He can do the same for you.” A personal testimony is not a sermon or a Bible study. It is something that comes from the heart that can be verbalized in any environment, occasion, or situation.

Hot Button No. 5: Lesson 9 deals with attitudes. This is a key hot-button issue. How one presents oneself is just as important, and maybe more so, than what he or she actually says. Some people feel they have to “preach” a “straight message” no matter what the environment or situation. This is the opposite end of the spectrum from people who are “scared” to say anything.

Hot Button No. 6: Lesson 12 may raise several issues. Some people feel that the “Advent message,” our understanding of Bible prophecy and the importance of the Sabbath and the Second Coming, is irrelevant in our North American Division environment and that we need to focus on something else. Others feel that you have to introduce immediately things like the “mark of the beast” or you have not “witnessed.” This is an opportunity to discuss these matters and develop some principles about how to present the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. 📖

*Joseph C. Aldrich, *Gentle Persuasion: Creative Ways to Introduce Your Friends to Christ* (Portland, Ore: Multnomah Press, 1989).



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The Extension Division

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

An effective Sabbath School requires careful organization. Sabbath School has always had an excellent organizational arrangement.

A LESSER-KNOWN MINISTRY

One of the lesser-known functions of the adult Sabbath School is the extension division. The ministry of the extension division is to take Sabbath School to members who for some reason cannot regularly attend. They may be senior citizens unable to get to church, members without regular transportation, people disabled from normal mobility, people who live in areas with road conditions that may sometimes be impassable, or other circumstances that inhibit regular Sabbath School attendance. All who are thus prevented from enjoying regular attendance at a fully organized Sabbath School are eligible for membership in the extension division. Upon their desire to do so, they may be enrolled and are then counted as members of the Sabbath School, the same as members of any other division.

Some Sabbath School members serve in public safety, military, or medical assignments, and cannot get to Sabbath School on a regular basis. Anyone in such circumstances can be a member of the Sabbath School extension division. For instance, members in the military serving overseas can receive their extension

division materials by mail. Members with special needs are often overlooked simply because they are “invisible.” The extension division is a way of making them visible.

A major function of the leadership is to maintain regular contact with members of the extension division. This may be done in a number of ways: by visits, letter, telephone, or email.

EXTENSION-DIVISION RESOURCES

Quarterly supplies are sent—or preferably delivered personally—to the members of the extension division. If the membership is small, the Sabbath School secretary or an assistant may care for them. A Sabbath School class may become the sponsors of the extension division as a class project.

Available resources include Sabbath School Bible Study Guides, children’s papers if needed, world mission reports, individual offering envelopes, record cards, and other Sabbath School supplies.

You can download a pamphlet titled: “Keys to the Extension Division” at *sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org*. This website makes available many valuable Sabbath School and Personal Ministries resources.

You can order an extension division supply kit from your conference. All necessary supplies are conveniently kept together in the kit. You can

arrange for the kits to arrive with your regular Sabbath School supplies.

THE EXTENSION-DIVISION SABBATH SCHOOL FORMAT

When an extension division team visits a member or a family, they might use a format something like this: (1) opening song, 4 min.; (2) prayer, 2 min.; (3) world mission report, 12 min.; (4) mission offering and attendance records, 5 min.; (6) lesson study, 30 min.; (7) and closing song and prayer, 3 min.

Sometimes an extension division member lives in a retirement facility, and a Sabbath School team can also function as a visitation team providing music, etc. for those who wish to participate. These groups used to be called "Sunshine Bands," and people in these retirement centers appreciate their presentations.

MORE EXTENSION-DIVISION ACTIVITIES

Another function of the extension division is to cooperate with the church elders' team and help take communion to the members on communion Sabbath.

Some members of the extension division might be able to attend Sabbath School, at least occasionally, if they were provided with transportation. Someone in your Sabbath School might enjoy taking on this responsibility as a personal ministry.

Sometimes it is possible to organize a Branch Sabbath School near an isolated or shut-in member. In some places a single isolated member has developed a Branch Sabbath School that eventually grew into a church.

HOW TO ORGANIZE AN EXTENSION DIVISION

Where there are no more than three members in the extension division, the Sabbath School secretary may care for them. If the membership exceeds three, an extension division leader should be elected. If the number exceeds 10, one assistant leader should be elected to care for approximately each additional 10 members. The leader is also responsible for reporting membership and offering statistics to the Sabbath School secretary who needs this information for the report sent to the local conference. The time commitment is two to three hours per week for visits, phone calls, and correspondence with isolated members, about 20 hours a month. The amount of time spent depends on the individual leader and how often they visit or speak with their assigned members.

The membership of the extension division is recorded on the last Sabbath of each quarter and should be reported to the secretary of the parent Sabbath School.

Every Sabbath School should have an active extension division, even if the membership consists of only one person. The extension division represents both mission and fellowship outreach and is an important part of Sabbath School. ☐

IN A NUTSHELL

- › The extension division is very important.
- › Some of your Sabbath School members might take this on as a personal ministry.

Asking Deeper Discussion Questions

GARY B. SWANSON

An old educational maxim goes like this: “We teach the way we were taught.” Because most of us have been overexposed to lecture as a means of teaching, that is too often the only the way we teach. Even those who have been engaged in discussion as a means of learning are most comfortable with those who deal in literal questions (When did Nicodemus meet with Jesus?) as opposed to critical-thinking questions (Why do you think Nicodemus met with Jesus at night?).

Probably 80 to 90 percent of typical discussion questions prompt the mere recall of information. Research indicates, however, that as learners grow through adolescence and into adulthood, they experience an increasing need for higher-level questions. In 1956 a team of psychologists led by Benjamin Bloom classified learning into six levels of complexity.¹ Beginning with the basic and progressing through the highest order, these levels are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

This model has been helpful in improving teaching methods, and especially in the development of discussion questions. It offers a clear, systematic way to enhance the quality of questions as a teacher seeks to

develop deeper critical thinking in a Sabbath School class.

In crafting discussion questions, use more verbs associated with higher-order thinking. Move beyond the idea of learners as merely consumers and users of information. Lower level questions still retain their value, but greater emphasis must be placed on questions that call on the higher—deeper—levels of learning. This is because deeper questions expect more than mere intellectual response. They *involve* the learner.

Benjamin Bloom’s levels of learning begin with the simple and proceed to the profound:

Knowledge. This level focuses on previously learned facts, terms, and basic concepts. It usually results in short answers.

Examples: What tribe of Israel was assigned the role of priesthood? How many pieces of silver did Judas receive for his betrayal of Jesus? How did Nathan confront David over his sin with Bathsheba? This level of question may be useful as a way of introducing a topic of study, but it should not be utilized as an end in itself.

Comprehension. This order calls for comparing information, interpreting facts, and stating main ideas. It is asking the learner to read between the lines.

Examples: How were the ministries of Elijah and Elisha alike and different? In a single sentence, how would you summarize the Beatitudes? Why did Jesus repeat three times His question to Peter, "Do you love me?"?

Application. This category encourages the solving of problems by applying previously learned facts, techniques, and rules in a different way. It examines new, unfamiliar situations through old lenses.

Examples: What does the early life of Joseph, growing up as one of Jacob's 12 sons, suggest about parenting skills? What biblical facts would you select to show that sexuality is a God-given gift? How does Esther's story relate to today's issues of ethnicity?

Analysis. This level examines and breaks information into parts by identifying motives or causes, and it seeks evidence to support generalizations. It asks why things are the way they are.

Examples: What is the theme of the book of Job? What conclusions can you draw from the death of Lot's wife? What is the relationship, if any, between sin and illness in a person's life?

Synthesis. This order combines elements of information in a pattern that did not exist before. It can also propose alternative solutions.

Examples: What would your ideal local church be like? What principles of parenting does the Bible suggest? What would happen if the apostle Paul were called before a Grand Jury today?

Evaluation. This category seeks to formulate opinions by making judgments about information. It may

also estimate the validity of ideas based on a set of criteria.

Examples: How would you rate Joseph as a world leader? Which is more important, faith or works? For you, what is the most disturbing incident in the New Testament?

The predominant emphasis of research into Bloom's levels of learning have focused on its intellectual aspects—on head knowledge versus heart knowledge. Most of the example questions above appeal to head knowledge because a discussion is largely an exercise of the intellect. The real challenge for a Sabbath School teacher, however, is to provide an atmosphere in which head knowledge becomes heart knowledge.

"The Christian message," writes William Barclay, "is not something exclusively for the calm of the study, for the dissection of the lecture room, for the mental acrobatics of the discussion group. It is something which has to be lived out in day-to-day living."² Discussion questions should be the initial basis on which the teacher introduces other activities and approaches to move the group from information to transformation, from knowledge to wisdom. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). ☐

¹ Though Bloom's Taxonomy appears in a wide variety of forms and formats, the one that has become the standard in educational research appears in Norman E. Gronlund, *Stating Behavioral Objectives for Classroom Instruction* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1970), pp. 21, 22.

² William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 182.

Learning from *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* – Page 89

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

Editorial note: *Much of what Ellen G. White wrote in Counsels on Sabbath School Work is focused on Sabbath School for youth and children, but the principles stated apply equally to adult Sabbath School.*


THE HIGHEST OF ALL SCIENCES

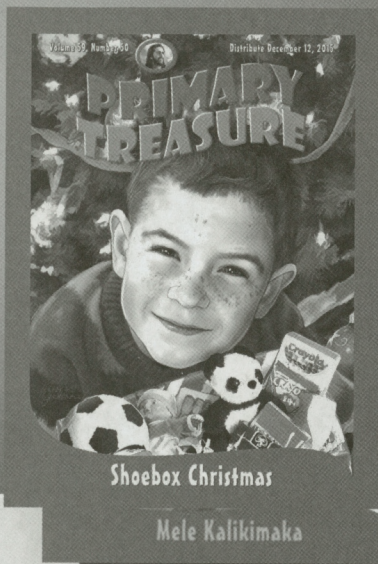
“It means so much more than finite minds can comprehend, to present in every missionary effort Jesus Christ and Him crucified. . . . This is to be the burden of our work. If any one thinks he is capable of teaching in the Sabbath school or in the day school the science of education, he needs first to learn the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, that he may teach this the highest of all sciences.”

SELECTION OF TEACHERS

“The instruction given youth and children should not be of a superficial character. The teachers should do all in their power, as those standing in defense of the truth, to raise the standard high. There cannot be a worse thing done for your Sabbath school than to place as workers young men and young women who have shown great defects in their religious experience. . . . Do not lower the standard in your Sabbath schools. Your children must have as their teachers those whose example and influence will be a blessing rather than a curse. They

must have constantly before them a high sense of the virtue, purity, and holiness which characterize the Christian life. Their ideas upon this point must not become confused; let none move unwisely or ignorantly in these matters. Give not, by voice or pen, encouragement to men or women who have not moral worth, whose past life shows a want of conscience and integrity. They may be sharp, witty, and intelligent; but if the heart is not imbued with the Spirit of God, and if they have not integrity of character, their influence points earthward, not heavenward, and will be detrimental.

“We are in great need of men and women who sense sin and hate iniquity; who have spiritual eyesight to discern the wants of the cause of God, and to work with a devoted, unselfish interest, keeping self ever hid in Jesus. We want young men of whom God can approve, who have practical godliness, who have consciences quick to feel and sense danger; men and women who will not exalt themselves, and will not seek to hide the deformity of the soul under a cloak of godliness; those who feel their weakness and imperfections of character, and who will hang their helpless souls upon Jesus Christ. Those who are self-confident, and think their way is above criticism, will show very imperfect work. Said the apostle, ‘When I am weak, then am I strong.’ While sensing his weakness, he by faith laid hold of Jesus Christ and His grace.” 

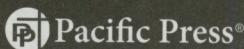


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Early Adventist Song Writers

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

Editorial note: You can use these stories as Quick Starts for Sabbath School programs.

Music has always been an integral part of Adventist worship services. Early Adventist worship services most often copied Methodist worship styles. It is reported that James White as a Millerite evangelist began his meeting by dramatically marching down the center aisle beating time on his Bible and singing, “You will see your Lord a-coming, You will see your Lord a-coming, You will see your Lord a-coming, in a few more days.”*

The first Adventist song book was an adaptation of a Millerite song book. The Adventist hymn book was titled *Hymns for God’s Peculiar People, That Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*.

One of the contributors was Annie Smith, Uriah Smith’s sister. Three of her songs are in the current *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*: “How Far From Home?” (439), “I Saw One Weary” (441), and “Long Upon the Mountains” (447).

The most well-known of the early Seventh-day Adventist song writers was Frank Belden, Ellen G. White’s nephew. He wrote hundreds of Sabbath School songs and hymns, in most cases both words and music. The present *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* includes 16 of his tunes and a dozen of his lyrics.

Frank Belden wrote some of the earliest Seventh-day Adventist songs exalting the name of Jesus. For example

Hymn 183 is titled “I Will Sing of Jesus Love,” containing the familiar words “Jesus’ love endless praise my heart shall give.” Hymn 253, “There’s No Other Name Like Jesus,” says “There is no other name like Jesus, ‘Tis the sweetest name we know, ‘Tis the angels joy in heaven, ‘Tis the Christian’s joy below.”

Many of his compositions reflect the experiences of the early Adventist church about the second coming of Jesus. Hymn 596 “Look for the Waymarks,” based on Daniel 2, emphasizes the urgency of knowing and understanding the prophecies pointing to the Second Coming: “Look for the waymarks, the great prophetic waymarks, Down through the ages, past the kingdoms four. Look for the waymarks, the great prophetic waymarks; the journey is almost o’er.”

Hymn 416, “The Judgment Has Set,” presents in music the doctrine of the sanctuary, the high priestly ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, and the pre-advent judgment. “The judgment has set, the books have been opened; How shall we stand in that great day?”

Some of his musical contributions focus on Christian experience and the need for repentance and conversion. Hymn 308, “Wholly Thine,” preaches a dedication sermon: “I would do thy will, O Lord, not mine. Wholly Thine, this is my vow.”

We can thank the Lord for these early Adventists who gave us hymns we still sing today. 📖

*www.iamonline.com › worshipmusic › sda hymnodychronology

Program Overview

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

Editorial Note: *This program page can serve as your guide for program planning. Keep a file of these Program Quick Start ideas. Some programs are geared to national or international special days or holidays, and with some creative modification can be used as Program Quick Starts from year to year. Some of the articles in other sections of Sabbath School Toolbox can also be developed as programs.*

PROGRAM QUICK STARTS

Program: International CleanUp Day.

National CleanUp Day in September in the United States promotes both organized and individual cleanup events and volunteering to keep the outdoors clean. You can organize volunteers from your Sabbath School to participate in roadside cleanups, etc. It also includes a spiritual application to “clean up” our own spiritual lives and lifestyles as needed.

Program: Musicians in the Bible. This is an audience-participation Program Quick Start. It includes suggestions for program formats. For example, you can interview some biblical musicians. You can have some children listen and ask questions as “biblical musicians” tell about what they did with music. You can use a speech choir to read the lyrics of hymns to reach other.

Program: Gentle Persuasion. This program follows the theme of the lessons for this quarter. You can develop some short skits illustrating various ways to witness. You can illustrate both correct

ways and wrong ways. For example, you can have some Sabbath School members read or show how to use the personal testimonies they have prepared.

Program: What's on Your Calendar?

This interactive Sabbath School program attempts to explore ways in which the Christian may actively, intentionally, search for ways to respond individually to the daily grace of God. Useful resources will include a large, fresh garlic, and a reproduced monthly calendar page.

Program: Peace, Be Still! Everyone desires peace in their lives. This program emphasizes some ways to attain that peace. Prepare two or three people in your congregation to share how they have managed their stresses and anxieties and found peace in times of turbulence and tragedy. Choose people who will have different perspectives on peacefulness. Include a professional, such as a psychologist or counselor; and, if possible, an artist or photographer who can show visual images of peacefulness during turmoil. 📷

IN A NUTSHELL

- Keeping a file of Program Quick Start ideas is a good idea.
- Emphasize the importance of the program that deals with the lesson theme for the quarter.
- Participation-type programs are always appreciated by Sabbath School members.

National CleanUp Day

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

PREPARATION

National CleanUp Day is celebrated annually in the United States in September. It promotes both organized and individual cleanup events and volunteering to keep the outdoors clean. You can organize volunteers from your Sabbath School to participate in roadside cleanups, etc.

There is also a spiritual application to “clean up” our own spiritual lives and lifestyles as needed. This fits the Revival and Reformation emphasis of the world Seventh-day Adventist Church. You can present some ideas and plan some activities for both “cleanup” perspectives.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Welcome: Good morning and welcome to Sabbath School. The calendar lists a national cleanup day. “Cleaning up” can have both a physical and spiritual application. We will look at some ideas today in Sabbath School.

Suggested Opening Song: *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 309, “I Surrender All.”

Morning Scripture Reading:
Nehemiah 9:6.

Mission Emphasis

Program Theme: “Cleaning Up”

in Sabbath School

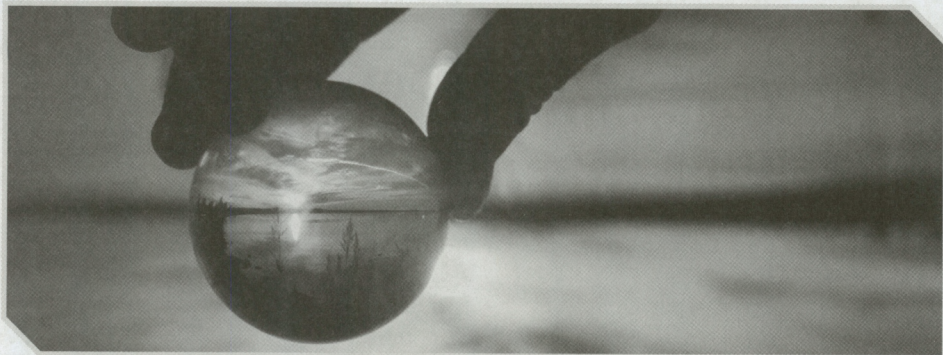
National CleanUp Day is celebrated annually in the United States in September. It promotes both organized and individual

cleanup events and volunteering to keep the environment clean. In 2018 more than 1,500,000 volunteers organized a time to figure out how to participate in a “clean up.” It might be along the roadway near the church or in cooperation with some other group doing cleanup. It might be a cooperative event with Community Services, or with ADRA if they have something going on in your area.

What the Bible says about healthful cleanup. In the Bible, cleanup is both a physical activity and a spiritual activity. The social organization system of the Israelites during their time in the desert included carefully outlined hygienic, health, and general “clean up” instructions. When the Israelites followed these instructions, they would not suffer “any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you” (Exod 15:26).

The Book of Leviticus has some detailed instructions:

1. Diet. Leviticus 11 outlines the difference between clean and unclean foods.
2. Hygienic procedures. Leviticus 12, 15 outline ceremonial cleanup procedures that may seem somewhat strange to us, but they had both physical hygienic and deep spiritual meaning to the people at that time.
3. Infectious diseases. Leviticus 13 outlines procedures for dealing with



various types of skin diseases. Leviticus 14 outlines the cleanup procedures for dealing with these skin diseases. It is interesting that current TV ads sell products to deal with these same kinds of diseases.

4. Mildew. Mildew problems are no mystery to anyone who has a house with a basement. Leviticus 13 outlines some excellent instructions on how to deal with mildew in clothing, leather, and linen materials. Leviticus 14 outlines how to deal with mildew in homes of the times.

Spiritual cleaning up. The Bible is filled with events and stories of individuals who needed a spiritual cleanup. The prophet Nathan let David know “You are that man” when David got into moral trouble with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12). David’s response was “Have mercy on me, O God, . . . blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 51:1). That is a true spiritual cleanup.

The world church currently has a “Revival and Reformation” emphasis. “We invite you to pray ‘in your closet.’ We invite you to pray with your local church family. And we invite you to the global Revival and Reformation initiative of prayer and fasting. Perhaps you will not choose to fast totally from food. Perhaps you will fast from desserts or

social media or eat sparingly of plant-based food for a time.” As Ellen G. White noted: “Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wide-awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer.”—*Review and Herald*, Feb. 11, 1904).

The apostle Paul wrote: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

In an article in the *Adventist Review*, the author writes, “At the age of 20 God had performed surgery on my ‘spiritual’ heart. I had met a young Adventist and had discovered Scripture. In due course I was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as a sign of the forgiveness of my sins and my personal commitment to my Savior and His commandments. Scripture clearly calls us to practice ‘heart’ religion and not just talk about it.”*

Your Sabbath School can be involved in physical cleanup activities and spiritual revival and reformation cleanup attitudes and lifestyle adjustments. Ask for volunteers for both types of cleanups. 📧

*Raúl Quiroga, “Heart Religion,” *Adventist Review*, August 2014.



Musicians in the Bible

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

PREPARATION

This is an audience participation program. You can choose between several formats. You can interview some playing a role as biblical musicians. You can use your church choir. You can use members of a children's department to sing. You can have some children listen and ask questions as biblical musicians tell about what they did with music. You can use a speech choir to read the lyrics of hymns to reach other.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Welcome: Good morning and welcome to Sabbath School. Singing and praise have always been part of Sabbath School. As Ellen G. White tells us, "Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 594. This morning let's look at some of the musicians in the Bible.

Suggested Opening Song: *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 34, "Wake the Song."

Morning Scripture Reading:
Nehemiah 12:27.

Mission Emphasis

Program Theme: Musicians in the Bible

Moderator: The Bible tells us many things about music and musicians. We are going to look at some of that information this morning. Music is both enjoyable and an integral part of worship.

The Bible tells us that music will be part of our activities in heaven. The apostle John heard "the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne" in heaven. (Rev. 14:2, 3, KJV).

Format 1: Have some children listen to a man tell a story. "My name is Asaph. I wrote some of the Psalms in the Bible. (Look up Psalm 50). When King David moved the ark to Jerusalem, he made me the choir leader. I also played cymbals, an important instrument in those days (1 Chron. 16:5). Hymn no. 10 in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* alludes to Psalm 50."

Format 2. Interview with Jubal, the first musician mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 4:21). "So, you invented music?"

"No, I didn't invent it. I learned about music because the angels sing all the time. In fact, when Satan was still Lucifer in heaven, he was the choir director. As someone wrote: 'Satan had led the heavenly choir. He had raised the first note; then all the angelic host had united with him, and glorious strains of music had resounded through heaven.'—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 25. I invented these two instruments (show a stringed instrument and point to the organ).

Format 3: Prepare a program of questions and answers. One or two people ask the questions from the front, and the audience reads the response in unison. A progression of questions could take you



through a whole Sabbath School program.

Example: What kinds of instruments did they use in Bible times? (You can project pictures of the instruments using PowerPoint®). Answer: The Bible mentions several instruments, some we still use today: harps, organs (probably what is called a “pan flute” today), stringed instruments, timbrels (a type of drum), a psaltery (a type of harp sometimes called a “zither”), cymbals, trumpets, as well as choirs. King David had 4,000 musicians who praised the Lord with these instruments and assorted singing groups.

Moderator: The Psalms are really the Israelite hymnal. They were both read and put to music. Today we listen to “praise songs” that are modern renditions of the Psalms put to music. Let’s try something. In Bible times groups of people would face each other and repeat the Psalms—what we call today a “voice choir.” It is something like the responsive readings in our hymnal.

Many of the psalms were written for alternating choirs to sing. One verse is often a repetition of the same idea, but in different words. Try working out your favorite psalms for use with the audience.

Half could say one verse and half the next verse. Some verses, especially those verses that repeat themselves like a refrain, could be for both sides together.

Find a hymn that fits your theme but may be difficult to sing. Divide your audience into parts. Let them alternate lines of the poem and all speak the chorus in unison.

Have several speakers talk for about a minute each about one specific thing for which they are thankful, such as parents, Christian schools, angels, God’s protection, health and strength, beauty of nature, and a job. As each one finishes, the audience speaks together as one choir a line or two of thanksgiving that you have printed in the bulletin or project onto a screen. Example: “Thank You, Lord, for our parents. We praise You for Your goodness to us.” Change the underlined word each time to the respective topic of the speaker who has just finished. End with a Psalm of thankfulness.

This is an interesting program that can include various Sabbath School groups. Make sure that you include participation activities. Use some creativity and watch interest in Sabbath School grow. 📺



Gentle Persuasion

SABBATH SCHOOL TOOLBOX

PREPARATION

This program follows the theme of the lessons for this quarter. You can develop some short skits illustrating various ways to witness. You can illustrate both correct ways and wrong ways. You might have someone in your Sabbath School who can relate a witnessing experience. You can have some Sabbath School members read or show how to use the personal testimonies that they have prepared.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Welcome: Good morning and welcome to Sabbath School. We are learning this quarter how to witness. Let's look at some ideas this morning.

Suggested Opening Song: *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 369, "Bringing in the Sheaves."

Morning Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Mission Emphasis

Program Theme: Gentle Persuasion

Moderator: Someone has said that effective witness is when you love someone until they ask why! How does that work?

Skit: Have you ever heard of someone continuing to do thoughtful things to a persona until they finally ask, "Why are you so nice to me?" That is the moment when they can give a personal testimony: "I was . . . and someone (did whatever) that led me to the Lord. I hope you will think about the

advantages of following the Lord also." Witnessing involves describing such things as:

- › How Christ changed your marriage.
- › How Christ altered your vocabulary.
- › How peace has become a reality in your life.
- › How God's forgiveness brings joy.
- › How a new sense of purpose and meaning fills your life.
- › How you are increasingly being delivered from frustrating and sometimes destructive habits.

Moderator: Does the Lord really need the church to witness? Why is that important? Let's take a look at some of the ways the Bible describes the church.

Skit: Have participants read and comment on the following titles for the church in each text. Each title shows an aspect of the Lord's regard for the church and His assignments to its members. You can project the texts on a screen.

1. A living epistle, read by all (2 Cor. 3:2, 3). This imagery presupposes regular, close contact with non-Christians.

2. A shining star (1 Cor. 15:4). A star-studded sky, like a community salted with Christians, presents the beauty of the gospel and the Christian personality. Our appeal is not simply intellectual or theological.

3. A fragrant aroma (2 Cor. 2:15). The redemptive neighbor is winsome. She or he has a distinctive, attractive



fragrance that stands out from the aromas of this world.

4. A wise fisherman (Matt. 4:19). Effective witnesses know how to measure the audience. They know how to relate to the environment—what vocabulary to use—when they witness.

4. A beautiful bride (Eph. 5:25–33). This imagery highlights the neighborhood image of local church/district. Churches must qualify for the blessing of God.

5. A patient farmer (Matt. 13:1–43). A person once said to a friend who grew impatient at his lack of response, “Why did you give up so soon?” The farmers in Jesus’ stories recorded in Matthew persisted until the crops eventually produced a harvest.

Moderator: What kind of people are we supposed to witness to?

Participant: The most obvious are friends and work associates—the people closest to us. Congregations usually have some nonmember spouses who attend. These are ready-made subjects for various types of witnessing. What they need is a lot of tender, loving attention and care from the congregation.

Participant: People show up at church often “out of nowhere.” Every Sabbath School should have some people trained as greeters to make sure these guests feel welcome and at home. It takes people less than one minute to decide if they feel welcome or not.

Participant: I have read that there are as many as 2 million non-attending Seventh-day Adventists in the North American Division territory. That’s a lot of people to witness to. The majority of these people left the church because of personality clashes with other church members. The people who left may well be the ones with the bad personalities, but we still need to witness to them and try to encourage them back into fellowship.

Participant: I learned that many in the public are not enemies of religion; they are just indifferent. Many of them don’t know anything about it at all. That’s where gentle persuasion comes in.

Moderator: Witnessing is part of a Christian lifestyle. This morning we have learned something about how to do it. Let’s put it into practice in our Sabbath School. 🗨️

What's on Your Calendar?

GARY B. SWANSON

PREPARATION

To some degree, when someone accepts Jesus in his or her life, it is a way of surrendering each day to His leading, whatever may come. But this does not mean, in any way, simply to rise each morning without any intentional thought of finding ways to draw prayerfully ever closer to His leading and to express that in behavior and act among those around us. Life is still very much a deliberate effort to do this through the errands, appointments, and responsibilities of the everyday. This interactive Sabbath School program attempts to explore ways in which the Christian may actively, intentionally, search for ways to respond individually to the daily grace of God.

Resources that will be useful in this activity-oriented program will include a large, fresh garlic, and a reproduced monthly calendar page.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Welcome: Good morning, and welcome to Sabbath School. We are pleased that you are each here with us this morning and look forward to learning something about growing closer, each day, to our Savior.

Suggested Opening Song: *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 306, "Draw Me Nearer."

Morning Scripture Reading: Mark 12:30.

Mission Emphasis

Program Theme: What's on Your Calendar?

Bring to Sabbath School class a fresh garlic. Show it to the class, and introduce the lesson topic in the following way:

Garlic: you either love it or you hate it. Believe it or not, there is actually a garlic fan club, called the Lovers of the Stinking Rose. It's a fanatical group that believes that you shouldn't have to apologize for garlic breath and that taking garlic pills for your health is hypocritical.

It's odd what people will commit themselves to, almost as if there is a natural human desire to be devoted to something but they're not sure exactly what it should be. So we have baseball fans and alumni associations and skydiving enthusiasts and procrastinators' clubs. As if any of these things were really important!

But there isn't really anything wrong with most of these organizations we belong to, as long as we keep them in perspective. This is what Jesus meant when He spoke of Pharisees who "strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Matt. 23:24). It's all about priorities.

Give each class member a photocopy or computer printout of

the calendar page for the month in which you present this program. (Or, if it is near the end of a month, provide a calendar page for the coming month.) Allow about five minutes for them to write down some of the appointments and plans they have for the month. These may include such things as birthday celebrations, holidays, medical/dental appointments, social plans, work appointments, etc.

Then have them evaluate their coming calendar as it relates to these questions: In what way does Christ fit into these plans?

Have volunteers read aloud the following scriptural passages. After the reading of each passage have the class discuss the following question: How does this reference help us understand the claims Jesus has in our lives? Genesis 1:1; Exodus 19:5; Isaiah 45:18; Psalm 24:1; 50:10, 11; Colossians 1:16.

Read aloud the following quotation: "So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 208.

Have the class brainstorm a list of biblical characters whose personal plans did not coincide with God's plans. In discussion, consider to what degree these were situations that are similar to today's situations.

Discuss the following:

1. What do you think Jesus meant

when He told us that a faithful disciple would "hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters" (Luke 14:26).

2. In what specific details of Jesus' life did He demonstrate His commitment to following His heavenly Father's will?

3. How can it be possible to serve both God and our own interests at the same time?

4. In literal, everyday terms, what does it mean to make Christ first in your life?

5. How literally should we expect to follow Jesus' example described in *The Desire of Ages*: "He made no plans for Himself"?—p. 208.

6. How does Mark 12:28–30 contribute to your understanding of priorities?

Give each class member another blank photocopy or computer printout of the calendar page for the current or coming month. This time ask the class to, individually, write down on the calendar at least six things they can do in that time period to make God's will more central to their plans.

Read aloud the following quotation: "Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

Close the study by asking the class to bow their heads as you read aloud Jesus' prayer for the appropriate priority in His life as He expressed it in Luke 22:42. 🙏

Peace, Be Still!

KAREN HOLFORD

PREPARATION

Prepare two or three people in your congregation to share how they have managed their stresses and anxieties and found peace in times of turbulence and tragedy. Choose people who will have different perspectives on peacefulness. Include a professional, such as a psychologist or counsellor; and, if possible, an artist or photographer, who can show visual images of peacefulness in the midst of turmoil.

Alternatively, ask people to bring an object, picture, printed Bible verse, or other item that illustrates being calm in a stressful or anxiety-provoking situation.

Provide pens and one sheet of copy paper per person for hand prayers.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Welcome: Good morning, and welcome to Sabbath School. Without expecting a show of hands, may I ask the following questions for you to consider to yourself: How has your week been? Are you feeling peaceful this morning?

Suggested Opening Song: *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 461, "Be Still, My Soul."

Morning Scripture Reading: John 14:1-3; 25-27; 16:21, 22, 33.

Mission Emphasis

Program Theme: Peace, Be Still!

We live in a world of stress and anxiety. News reports are filled with the latest horrors and disasters in the world.

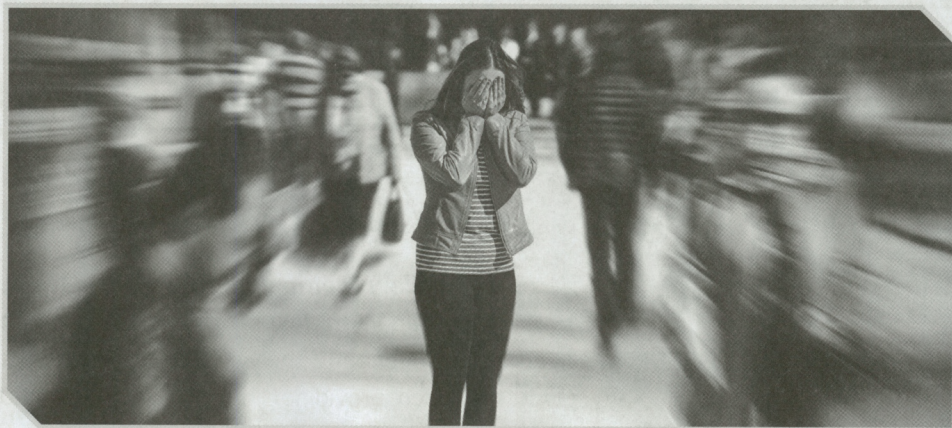
There are stresses in our families, in our communities, in our churches, and at work. We also know from the Scriptures that many situations in the world will become even more out of control as Jesus' return becomes closer. How do we, as Christians, relate to the distresses we encounter every day? How do we protect ourselves from being overwhelmed? How can we find peace in the eye of the storm?

Invite people to reflect on the past week and to identify a concern or anxiety that they faced. How did they respond to a horrific news story? Or a more personal experience of distress or challenge?

Encourage them to focus on what they did to manage their anxiety, and to share in pairs how they managed their worries. Allow 3 minutes for a short time of sharing. Invite two or three people to feedback some of the different, creative, and positive ways that they deal with the constant exposure to disturbing news stories or personal challenges.

Introduce the two or three prepared speakers to share briefly how they manage their anxiety in difficult situations. If time allows, invite others to share what they find helpful too. If you invited people to bring items that illustrate finding peace, ask them to form small groups, to show what they brought, and to talk about why they chose that specific item. Ask those who did not bring a tangible item to describe what they would have brought.

Organize the group into smaller groups



of 3 to 5 people and give each small group one of the following verses. Ask them to focus on this verse and to think about one word or phrase at a time as they explore what it means. For example: focus on each phrase:

- › “Be still/and know/that I am/God” (Ps. 46:10).
- › “Cast/all your anxiety/on him/because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7)
- › “Peace I leave with you/my peace I give you. . . /Do not let your hearts be troubled/and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

After 5–10 minutes invite people to share with the larger group what they learned by focusing on the words in a deeper way, and slow-studying their allocated verses.

Discuss how these verses, and similar Bible verses, can help to calm our thoughts when we face stresses.

Give each person a sheet of paper and a pen.

Say: “What are the things that are troubling you at the moment? Maybe there are world, national, or environmental issues that keep you

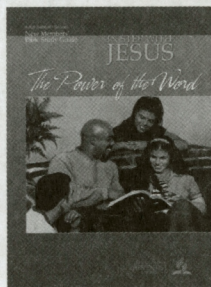
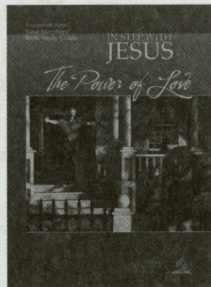
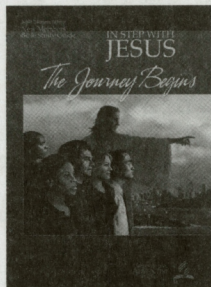
awake at night. Maybe you have worries about your work, your family members, or your finances. Draw around your hand on this sheet of paper. On the palm of the drawn hand, write a brief description of your concern or draw a symbol to represent your worry. Look at the hand you have created and imagine it is the hand of God and you have just given Him all your worries because He cares for you. (“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). What does it mean to you that you can give God all your worries and concerns? How easy is this to do? What, if anything, holds you back from giving your worries and anxieties to God?

Invite people to find a partner and to pray a short prayer for their partner's concerns.

To close, encourage people to hold their hands out in front of them, face down, as you pray, asking for peace and tranquility for the coming week. 📖

KAREN HOLFORD, M.A., M.SC.,
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Division.

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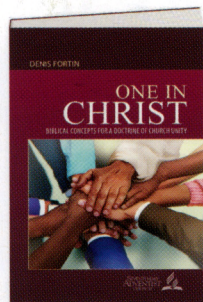
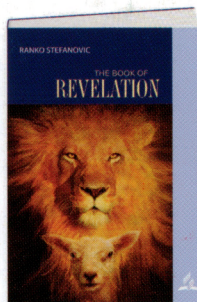
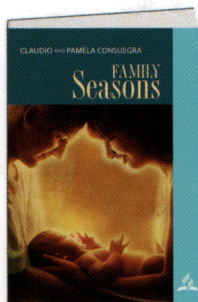
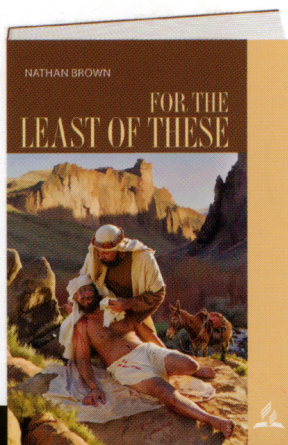


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