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***God's Mission—My Mission***

**by: Global Mission Center Directors**

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9

**Quit Talking and Start Doing Something!**

1  
2  
3       Years ago, one of our Adventist magazines published a  
4 parable about a dreadful swamp. As people passed along the path  
5 going through it, they were often overcome and fell in. Their  
6 dying cries could be heard all through the nearby village. It  
7 was terrible.

8       The people held a village council. In fact, they held many  
9 village councils. Various theories and papers were presented  
10 analyzing the cause and sometimes even proposing solutions. But  
11 nothing was ever done except to continue meeting and talking.  
12 Over the years, the discussions continued. People wrote  
13 dissertations on the topic. Guest lecturers were brought in.  
14 Yard sales were held to raise money so that meals could be  
15 provided to those who sacrificed so many hours sitting in these  
16 meetings. Eventually, money was raised to build a sound-proof  
17 meeting room so that the cries of the lost and dying would not  
18 disrupt the ongoing discussions. But nobody did anything to help  
19 those who were in trouble. And nobody did anything to try to  
20 stop more people from being lost in the swamp. They just talked.

21       The church as a whole and your Sabbath School class in  
22 particular don't want to be like the people in that village.  
23 We love our time together to pray, think, share, and discuss.

**Introduction: *God's Mission—My Mission***

1 But we long to go beyond this and actually do something for and  
2 with those around us. We want to make a difference in our  
3 communities and around the world. We want the work to be  
4 finished, and we want Jesus to return.

5 This quarter's Sabbath School Adult Bible Study Guide is  
6 designed to focus attention on getting out there and doing  
7 something. We will examine many wonderful Bible stories. We will  
8 read about exciting experiences and illustrations. We will  
9 learn about available resources to assist us in reaching out  
10 to our neighbors (especially to those who have no Christian  
11 background). But those will just be ways of illustrating and  
12 motivating us. The real focus, the real heart of each lesson,  
13 is what will be shared on Thursday each week—a challenge to get  
14 out and, actually, do something.

15 We will share theological insights and provide tools and  
16 ideas for you to work with. And each Thursday's portion of the  
17 lesson will issue a careful progression of challenges. It will  
18 begin easy. And as the quarter goes along, there will be subtle  
19 (and not so subtle) increases in the challenge. The goal is for  
20 each of us to take the challenge, pray for the Holy Spirit to  
21 guide us, and then spend a few minutes in the next week  
22 discussing how it went. This isn't to be a time of boasting,  
23 but a time of sharing—both about what went well and what didn't.

**Introduction: *God's Mission—My Mission***

1 As we share, the group will generate ideas. Prayer lists will  
2 grow (personal and collective).

3 In the end, it is our desire that this quarter be remembered  
4 not for memorable thoughts, engaging stories, or deep  
5 theological concepts. These may be there—lots of them. But it  
6 is our desire that we will all look back on this quarter as the  
7 time when the Holy Spirit took our humble efforts and worked  
8 mission miracles for the honor and glory of His name.

9  
10 *The Global Mission Centers were first established by the General*  
11 *Conference in 1980. They operate under the direction of the*  
12 *General Conference Office of Adventist Mission. There are*  
13 *currently six centers. Their purpose is to help the church more*  
14 *effectively start new groups of believers among the major*  
15 *non-Christian people groups of the world.*

16  
17 *At the time of this writing, the directors of these centers*  
18 *(Petras Bahadur, Richard Elofer, Kleber Gonçalves, Clifmond*  
19 *Shameerudeen, Doug Venn, Amy Whitsett, and Greg Whitsett),*  
20 *assisted by Homer Trecartin (Global Mission Centers director)*  
21 *and Jeff Scoggins (Global Mission planning director),*  
22 *collectively authored this Adult Bible Study Guide. For more*  
23 *information, please go to [www.GlobalMissionCenters.org](http://www.GlobalMissionCenters.org).*

1 **TE-4Q-2023-01**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 The God of the Bible is a missionary God. His missionary nature  
6 and character is first rooted in His initiative to create  
7 humanity in His image and in His desire to be in relationship  
8 with them. God's pre-Fall relationship with Adam and Eve was  
9 characterized by daily fellowship in the Garden of Eden (*Gen.*  
10 *3:8*). Ellen G. White notes, "So long as they [Adam and Eve]  
11 remained loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to  
12 enjoy, and to love would continually increase. They would be  
13 constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering  
14 fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet  
15 clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unfailing love of  
16 God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 51. Unfortunately, sin  
17 disrupted that face-to-face interaction.

18 The Fall did not put an end to God's mission to humanity.  
19 The Fall shifted His mission to a new dimension. After the Fall,  
20 God's mission became rooted in His initiative to redeem fallen  
21 humanity. Because of His promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15,  
22 Scripture, as a whole, is the narrative of the various

1 missionary endeavors undertaken by God to rescue and restore  
2 sinful humanity to His original design for them. Because mission  
3 is an attribute of God (i.e., mission is rooted in His nature  
4 and character), God refuses to give up on us.

5

## 6 **Part II: Commentary**

7

### 8 ***Mission as an Attribute of God***

9 From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible has one unified message:  
10 God is determined to reverse the consequences of the Fall. If  
11 the Scripture, as a whole, is about God's unrelenting outreach  
12 to humanity, Genesis 3:9 could be considered the question that  
13 drives it. Genesis 3 is the narrative of the tragic attempt made  
14 by Adam and Eve, in a spirit of self-assertion and  
15 determination, to be independent of God. This chapter is also  
16 a reminder of the reality of sin and its consequences. The  
17 consequences of Adam and Eve's choice led them to hide  
18 themselves from God. God's first response to the plight of  
19 humanity came in the form of a question addressed to Adam: "Where  
20 are you?" Understanding the purpose of this question is  
21 essential to the understanding of the intent of the entire drive  
22 of Scripture.

1           To start with, “Where are you?” is not a theological  
2 question. It is a missiological one. This question reveals that,  
3 despite their wrong choice, God has not forsaken Adam and Eve.  
4 Human rebellion does not subtract anything from God’s desire  
5 to intimately relate with humans. God still loves and seeks His  
6 wandering children.

7           The question, “Where are you?”, the first one the Bible  
8 attributes to God, speaks more of a condition than a location.  
9 Thus, the question was not intended to find out where exactly  
10 Adam and Eve were hiding away from God. God never asks questions  
11 as a means of gathering information. His omniscience is a source  
12 of limitless knowledge, even knowledge of what does not yet  
13 exist. Being omniscient, God knew exactly where Adam and Eve’s  
14 hiding place was, what they had done, and the condition they  
15 were in.

16           Adam’s absence at his usual meeting place with God was  
17 clear evidence that something was wrong. Therefore, the  
18 question God asks Adam, in Genesis 3:9, is not “Where are you?”  
19 in reference to Adam’s geographical location. The question  
20 “Where are you?” was about relationship: “Where are you  
21 relationally?” With the first consequences of sin revealed in  
22 the previous verses, God’s question was primarily intended to  
23 make Adam and Eve think about their relationship with God. The

1 question was intended to make them think about the consequence  
2 of their disobedience to God. Adam and Eve were being given the  
3 opportunity to examine themselves and acknowledge their guilt.  
4 God's question is the equivalent of the following line of  
5 inquiry: "Why are you not at our usual rendezvous? What has  
6 happened to our relationship that you are attempting to keep  
7 a distance from me? What is the meaning of these fig leaves you  
8 are covering yourselves with?" Satan's false promise to Adam  
9 and Eve was that, through disobedience, they would become like  
10 gods. In other words, sin would improve their lives. We know  
11 how that turned out. Adam and Eve ended up naked instead of  
12 becoming like gods. Their solution to their new plight was to  
13 sew fig leaves to hide their nakedness. If this solution had  
14 solved their situation, they would not have sought to hide from  
15 the presence of God. Rather, they would have confronted God for  
16 not wanting their ultimate well-being.

17       Moreover, "Where are you?" was the earnest cry of a  
18 missionary God whose anguished inquiry betrays divine awareness  
19 of the gulf that had been created between Him and humans. The  
20 question was also His invitation for His lost children to return  
21 to a relationship of love and trust with Him. In light of the  
22 promise in Genesis 3:15, God's question bears a promise of hope.  
23 Although sin cast its shadow over the divine plan for humanity

1 on account of Adam and Eve's disobedience, God's plan has not  
2 been defeated. In the midst of judgment, the promise of a  
3 Redeemer is made.

4       Genesis 3 is not only a narrative about the reality of sin  
5 and its consequences. At its heart also lies a snapshot of God's  
6 saving mission. There were at least three options that were  
7 available to God when Adam and Eve willfully disobeyed Him.  
8 First, God could have simply discarded them; that is, God could  
9 have let them die as the result of their sin and then created  
10 new human beings. Second, God could have let Adam and Eve  
11 languish forever under the consequences of their bad choice.  
12 The third option, which God chose, was that of redemption: the  
13 relational gulf created by Adam and Eve's willful disobedience  
14 will be sacrificially bridged by Him. Though they may suffer  
15 the consequences of their sin, they will not live forever in  
16 their fallen condition. The redemption of humanity was not only  
17 promised in words; it was also seen in action: "for Adam and  
18 his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them"  
19 (*Gen. 3:21, NKJV*). This clothing is an expression of both God's  
20 justice and grace. Although sin, in any degree, is offensive  
21 to God, He graciously offers to cleanse us from all filthiness  
22 of the flesh and to cover our nakedness with His righteousness.  
23

**1    *The Incarnation as Mission***

2    Christ's incarnation was central to the fulfillment of God's  
3    mission. While in Genesis 3:21 the coming of the promised  
4    Redeemer was embodied by Adam and Eve, clothed in garments made  
5    from the skins of sacrificed animals, the promise was  
6    materialized in the New Testament in the birth of Jesus. Through  
7    the Incarnation, the transcendent Creator God became immanent  
8    to reveal Himself in the fullest possible way in human terms.  
9    In the person of Jesus, God identified fully with humankind for  
10   the express purpose of revealing not only God's love but also  
11   His salvific intent for humanity. God did not stay aloof from  
12   humanity in His effort to save them. Instead, He bridged the  
13   gap by taking human nature and by experiencing human sorrows  
14   and temptations. Through the different aspects of His ministry,  
15   Christ not only announced, with prophetic urgency, God's reign,  
16   He also embodied it by giving God's redemptive mission a face,  
17   a voice, and hands. By healing the sick, cleansing the lepers,  
18   giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead, Christ  
19   demonstrated God's power to fully reverse the curse of the Fall.  
20   By so doing, Christ reformulated the concept of God's love so  
21   that people could understand it, experience it, and be drawn  
22   to God. The substitutionary death of Christ was God's ultimate  
23   way of seeking to reconcile alienated humanity to Himself (*John*

1 3:16). Christ's ministry and sacrifice are mission *par*  
2 *excellence!*

3

#### 4 ***The Second Coming: God's Mission Accomplished***

5 The last words of Jesus in the Bible are " 'Yes, I am coming  
6 soon' " (*Rev. 22:20, NIV*). The Second Coming of Jesus will bring  
7 to a close God's post-Fall mission and open the New Earth phase  
8 of God's mission. Jesus' coming to claim the earth as His kingdom  
9 is the concretization of the Redeemer's promise in Genesis 3:15.

10       The New Earth phase of God's mission marks the complete  
11 reversal of the consequences of the Fall: God will be in the  
12 midst of His people again, suffering and death will be no more  
13 (*Rev. 21:3, 4*), and human beings will have access to the tree  
14 of life (*Rev. 22:2*).

15

#### 16 **Part III: Life Application**

17

18 God's primal question, "Where are you?" also is addressed to  
19 each of us today. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short  
20 of the glory of God" (*Rom. 3:23, NKJV*). Instead of trying to  
21 run away from God because of the guilt of our sins, as Adam and  
22 Eve unsuccessfully did, we need to objectively examine where  
23 we are in terms of our relationship with Him and confess to Him

1 whatever sin we have committed. The assurance is ours: "If  
2 we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive  
3 us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (*1 John*  
4 *1:9, NKJV*). Without this assurance, we truly would not be able  
5 to change course in our spiritual life. Every attempt to cover  
6 our own nakedness before God is just as unwise as Adam and Eve's  
7 attempt to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Every humanly  
8 designed solution to deal with sin and guilt are utterly  
9 inadequate and worthless. The fig leaves of our good works,  
10 reputation, and church titles do not suffice as spiritual  
11 coverings. Only God can supply us with the adequate spiritual  
12 covering. The only lasting solution is the covering He offers  
13 to us through Jesus. God does not cover our sin and guilt. He  
14 takes them away first and then covers us instead with Christ's  
15 righteousness.

16 Just as God went out seeking Adam and Eve, He also is out  
17 seeking us, not to punish us but to offer us reconciliation for  
18 the sake of saving us from the judgment our sins deserve.

1 **TE-4Q-2023-02**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 In a farewell speech before His ascension to heaven, Jesus  
6 commissioned His disciples, saying to them, " 'All authority  
7 in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and  
8 make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of  
9 the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them  
10 to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with  
11 you always, to the end of the age' " (*Matt. 28:18-20, ESV*). This  
12 directive has come to be known as the Great Commission. With  
13 the Great Commission, Jesus set the agenda for the church in  
14 all eras and contexts. Apart from clearly spelling out His  
15 disciples' responsibility to spread His teachings to all people  
16 groups of the world, Jesus also assured His followers that  
17 accomplishing this daunting task was possible because of His  
18 omnipotence and omnipresence, which He would exercise on their  
19 behalf.

20

21 **Part II: Commentary**

22

1 Although at the beginning there were intense disagreements over  
2 some aspects of the Great Commission (*Acts 15:1-29, Gal.*  
3 *2:11-14*), overall, the early church's understanding of its  
4 identity and mission centered around Christ's command to make  
5 disciples of all nations. The fact that each of the four Gospels  
6 ends with a version of the Great Commission is a strong witness  
7 to its centrality (*Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20, Luke*  
8 *24:45-49, John 20:21-23*). Since then, the Great Commission has  
9 been interpreted and applied differently over the centuries.

10

### 11 **Components of Discipleship**

12 A review of discipleship literature reveals three essential  
13 dimensions, or processes, of every effective approach to  
14 discipleship: the rational, relational, and missional  
15 dimensions.

16 The rational (learning) dimension of discipleship is the  
17 process in which a believer intentionally learns from Jesus.  
18 In its original context, "disciple" (*mathetes*) referred to  
19 someone who apprenticed with a teacher. That person would attach  
20 himself to a teacher for the purpose of acquiring both  
21 theoretical and practical knowledge. The rational dimension  
22 stresses the need for continuing metamorphosis and growth, even  
23 for those who have already become disciples. Because "teaching"

1 in Matthew 28:19 is an ongoing process, the rational dimension  
2 of discipleship is a lifelong process of learning and growing.  
3 However, the goal of this continual learning is not to impart  
4 knowledge only but to instill total commitment to Jesus.

5       The relational (community) dimension of discipleship  
6 develops in the context of a supportive community where  
7 accountability can take place. The New Testament portrays a very  
8 dynamic communal culture in the Early Church because of their  
9 understanding of disciple-making as a relational process.  
10 Because of its Old Testament roots, the Early Church continued  
11 to emphasize kinship as one of its core values. What was  
12 different about this new community was that kinship was no more  
13 defined in terms of blood lines and ethnicity but rather in terms  
14 of shared faith and fellowship in Christ. The church became an  
15 environment of inclusion and acceptance (*Gal. 3:28*). Membership  
16 was open to all on the basis of professing faith in Christ as  
17 Savior and the public demonstration, through water baptism, of  
18 complete allegiance to Christ (*Acts 2:37, 38*).

19       The Early Church expressed its values of corporate  
20 solidarity and kinship through the use of motifs, such as the  
21 body of Christ and family of God, to describe the  
22 interdependence between its members, and to convey the close  
23 bond that enabled them to treat one another as family members

1 (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Eph. 2:19, Ephesians 4, Gal. 6:10,  
2 1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Pet. 4:17). Such concern fostered the development  
3 of a lasting sense of interdependence, corporate solidarity,  
4 and accountability among church members. Their interdependence  
5 suggested that each member of the body had a unique role to play  
6 and yet was dependent upon all other members.

7 By demonstrating a new way of living, multitudes were  
8 attracted to this new community of faith (*Acts 2:46, 47*). In  
9 such a setting, being a disciple was not synonymous with simply  
10 accepting abstract propositional truths about Jesus. Being  
11 disciples of Christ was about learning from Jesus and modeling  
12 in life the knowledge of Him. This brand of discipleship was  
13 both what the Early Church did on behalf of Christ and how they  
14 represented Christ in the world. This communal culture of the  
15 New Testament, where believers were integrated members of  
16 supportive groups, became a fertile ground for the seed of the  
17 gospel to be sown and nurtured.

18 The missional (sharing of one's faith) dimension of  
19 discipleship is concerned with understanding the call to "make  
20 disciples" (*mathēteusate*), in Matthew 28:19, as essentially a  
21 call to engage in mission and duplicate one's self. This  
22 injunction is the primary command of the Great Commission, and  
23 it must remain the primary responsibility of the church in every

1 context. Believers of the New Testament linked together the  
2 notion of belonging to a community with the responsibility of  
3 sharing what that community stood for. Mission, in the context  
4 of the Great Commission, is more than a call to share the gospel  
5 with those who do not know Christ. Mission is both a call to  
6 share one's faith and to disciple interested recipients for the  
7 purpose of freeing them from the grasp of Satan, so that they  
8 may fully and continually devote themselves to the lordship of  
9 Jesus Christ.

10 Hence, the New Testament uses the word "disciple" to  
11 indicate a relationship with, and total commitment to, Christ  
12 that comes as a result of learning and internalizing His  
13 teaching, being changed by continual growth in the knowledge  
14 of Jesus Christ (*2 Pet. 3:18*), living a life of total submission  
15 to His lordship through the power of the Holy Spirit (*Phil. 3:8*),  
16 and helping others begin to experience, trust, and follow Jesus  
17 (*2 Tim. 2:2*). From this perspective, discipleship is not to be  
18 understood as a church program, because it is not an event in  
19 time. Discipleship is rather a lifelong process of growing in  
20 Christ that transforms believers' cognitive, affective, and  
21 evaluative perspectives on life.

22

23 **Some Perspectives on the Current State of Discipleship**

1 There is a consensus among Christian discipleship scholars  
2 today that, compared to the New Testament, the current practice  
3 of discipleship has, to a great extent, lost its primacy of focus  
4 among Christians. The making of disciples has largely been  
5 watered down to merely moving converts to Christianity into  
6 church membership. Current church growth is perceived as  
7 largely numerical and statistical growth *without much spiritual*  
8 *depth, unfortunately.* In other words, Christians are, generally  
9 speaking, much better at converting people than they are at  
10 helping converts become disciples of Christ. Sad to say, this  
11 phenomenon implies that one can become a Christian without  
12 necessarily having to become a disciple of Christ.

13

#### 14 **Making Disciples: Every Believer's Responsibility**

15 Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations was not  
16 addressed only to the original twelve disciples. This  
17 requirement is a responsibility incumbent upon every Christian.  
18 For Peter, that is the reason for which every believer exists:  
19 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy  
20 nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the  
21 praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous  
22 light" (1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV). Also note the following statements  
23 from the Spirit of Prophecy:

- 1 • "Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as  
2 a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes  
3 a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace  
4 of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert,  
5 welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready  
6 to perish eager to drink of the water of life."—Ellen G.  
7 White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.
- 8 • "God expects personal service from everyone to whom He has  
9 entrusted a knowledge of the truth for this time. Not all  
10 can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can be  
11 home missionaries in their families and  
12 neighborhoods."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the*  
13 *Church*, vol. 9, p. 30.
- 14 • "Not upon the ordained minister only rests the  
15 responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission.  
16 Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the  
17 salvation of his fellow men."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of*  
18 *the Apostles*, p. 110.
- 19 • "Wherever a church is established, all the members should  
20 engage actively in missionary work. They should visit  
21 every family in the neighborhood and know their spiritual  
22 condition."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,  
23 Vol. 6, p. 296.

1

2           Taking an active part in the fulfilment of the Great  
3 Commission is an ongoing mandatory requirement of being  
4 Christ's disciples.

5

### 6 **Part III: Life Application**

7

8 By virtue of the gospel commission, all Christians are called,  
9 in whatever capacity, to share their faith. Below are three ways  
10 believers can live up to Christ's missionary mandate in every  
11 area of life, including work:

12       1. All Christians need to make a strong work ethic a part of  
13 their Christian witness. Scripture enjoins Christians to  
14 maintain a God-honoring character in their professional lives  
15 as they put forth their best effort in what they do, as if they  
16 were working directly for God (*Col. 3:23, 24*). When believers  
17 view their jobs as part of God's calling on their lives, they  
18 add new meaning to Christian witness. Maintaining integrity,  
19 striving for excellence, being trustworthy and reliable, and  
20 treating others with respect in the workplace are qualities that  
21 can give Christians a platform to share their faith.

1        2. Through mission-minded mentors, churches can guide  
2 younger members in how to connect their professional dreams  
3 deeply with their faith in Christ and His missionary mandate.

4        3. With the right approach to discipleship and ongoing  
5 support, parents can enhance their children's missionary  
6 potentials. Churches should therefore invest in parents'  
7 discipling of their children, helping them reframe the  
8 responsibility of raising their children into a calling to make  
9 disciples of them.

10

1 **TE-4Q-2023-03**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 In the previous two lessons, we have seen that mission is, first  
6 and foremost, rooted in the work of God. God's mission is the  
7 impetus for all other forms of mission if they are to be  
8 successful. This week the focus moves from God's mission to  
9 humanity's call to partner with God in sharing His love with  
10 the broader world. While the focus is on the human aspect of  
11 mission, all that follows should be read in light of the previous  
12 two weeks, which focus on God's missiological initiative and  
13 intent.

14 Scripture has numerous stories and passages that  
15 illuminate God's active call to human beings as His partners  
16 to share in the blessings He desires all humanity to experience.  
17 This week, we will explore several such instances. All the  
18 examples found in this week's portion must be read in light of  
19 God's original Creation design found in Genesis 1 and 2,  
20 summarized most succinctly in Genesis 1:26-28. Even after the  
21 fall, God's original intentions for humanity remained the same,  
22 but His implementation of those intentions changed due to the

1 relational breakdowns that were a result of Adam and Eve's  
2 choice. Now, in addition to God's original desire, there was  
3 a need for a plan of redemption. This plan starts in the Old  
4 Testament; is fulfilled in Jesus' life, death, and  
5 resurrection; and is shared, throughout the rest of the New  
6 Testament, by the followers of Jesus.

7

## 8 **Part II: Commentary**

9

10 When God created the earth and placed humanity within the newly  
11 created world, God shared an original intention with Adam and  
12 Eve. They were called to watch over the earth, including all  
13 the living creatures, and to be fruitful and multiply (*Gen.*  
14 *1:26-28*). Implicit within this injunction, through the constant  
15 refrain of "good" during the creation week, is the notion that  
16 God placed humanity in a world surrounded by wonderful things.  
17 To learn about these things and live within this world would  
18 lead to flourishing and abundance. God was intimately involved  
19 in the ongoing life of earth; God's practice was to walk in the  
20 Garden of Eden periodically (*Gen. 3:8*). Humanity was given  
21 substantial freedom to live out their God-given functionalities  
22 in creative ways. This enterprise was the original mission call  
23 from God to humanity.

1           After the fall of humanity and the entrance of sin into  
2 the realities of this earth, things changed. But the changes  
3 did not negate the original call of God to humanity. Repeatedly,  
4 God reminds those willing to listen that they are to be fruitful  
5 and multiply and take care of the earth (*Gen. 9:1; Gen. 15:4,*  
6 *5; Gen. 22:17, 18; Gen. 35:11*). The Bible repeats this theme  
7 from beginning to end, culminating in a re-created earth found  
8 in Revelation 21-22.

9           Sin, however, ushered in the necessity of a salvific plan  
10 that would make it possible for humanity to be able to fully  
11 live the life God intended. Redemption was demonstrated to  
12 humankind through the ritual of sacrifice. As Adam and Eve  
13 shared this plan with succeeding generations, they included the  
14 sacrificial act as part of revealing the scope of what God would  
15 do to rescue fallen humans. While many probably struggled to  
16 grasp how redemption would work, some could see that God had  
17 a plan that brought hope. This plan would become part of the  
18 call of God for humanity to share with the world. God's plan  
19 would make it possible for humans to live the reality He  
20 originally intended for them in Eden.

21

22 ***The Call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3)***

1           This week's lesson highlights the call of God to Abraham,  
2 found in Genesis 12:1-3. The call has several vital elements  
3 that need to be understood if we are to fully grasp what the  
4 call of God for mission has been, currently is, and will continue  
5 to be. First off, the call is rooted in the Genesis 1:26-28  
6 narrative. This connection is most clearly articulated in  
7 Isaiah's reference to the call of Abraham and Sarah to share  
8 the joy of Eden with the world (*Isa. 51:1-3*). When God called  
9 Abraham to be a blessing to the nations, the divine call implied  
10 that the blessing entailed sharing a way of life, expressed  
11 through profound freedom and creativity, intended by God from  
12 the beginning. A quick read of Genesis 12:1-3 makes it difficult  
13 to fully grasp the blessing, but its meaning becomes clearer  
14 when read within the broader corpus of Scripture. Genesis 22  
15 adds additional detail to what Abraham was called to share,  
16 namely, the plan of God to provide a substitute for humanity  
17 through death and subsequent resurrection. This plan gave  
18 humanity hope that the effects of sin and death could be  
19 overcome. It also gave hope that the promises of Genesis 1:26-28  
20 could be fully realized again in the future.

21           Another element of the call to Abraham that is overlooked  
22 is found in Genesis 12:1-3. Abraham was called to bless the  
23 nations. We are called to do the same. We often fail to note

1 that the nations would also bless Abraham (*Gen. 12:3*). God's  
2 call to mission always implies a two-way blessing. Those who  
3 follow God must be prepared to receive a blessing from the  
4 broader world around them as well. The call to mission is always  
5 a call to bless and be blessed. Understanding this dynamic  
6 changes the called person's, or persons', attitude toward  
7 others and changes one's approach to sharing the good news. We  
8 will explore this theme more next week.

9       When we read Scripture, a noticeable trend flows  
10 throughout both Testaments. The trend is that God had to remind  
11 humanity periodically of the original call in Genesis. The need  
12 for a reminder resulted from two things: (1) often God's  
13 followers forgot what God called them to do, and (2) changing  
14 times required reinforcements of their calling. That is, the  
15 overall point to God's call needs to be contextualized, from  
16 time to time, but the call itself remains essentially the same.

17       Space does not allow for a full exploration of all the  
18 subsequent reminders of God's call to mission throughout the  
19 Bible, but a few can serve as examples. When God brought the  
20 Israelites out of Egypt into the wilderness, God explicitly  
21 reminded His people that, as a nation, they were called to serve  
22 all other nations as priests (*Exod. 19:4-6*); in other words,  
23 Israel was called to be a blessing to the nations around them

1 and to receive blessings from them. Solomon repeated the call  
2 in his dedicatory prayer for the newly built temple (*1 Kings*  
3 *8:41-43*). The prophets of both Israel and Judah repeated this  
4 call in various ways, as can be seen in *Isaiah 19:23-25* and *Micah*  
5 *4:2-5*. After Israel returned from exile, God again reminded them  
6 of this call through the prophet *Zechariah 8:20-23*.

7         Jesus lived out the call and demonstrated it, ultimately  
8 leading to the fulfillment of the plan of salvation through His  
9 life, death, and resurrection. After spending a few years with  
10 Jesus and witnessing His resurrection, the disciples were  
11 called in the same way that Abraham had been called, and then  
12 Israel, as we read in *Matthew 28:18-20*. Paul, the apostle, also  
13 recognized that his calling was rooted in the same call as that  
14 given to Abraham, as he states explicitly in his letter to the  
15 followers of Jesus in *Galatia (Gal. 3:8, 9, 14)*. The last time  
16 the call is given in Scripture is found in *Revelation 14:6*, which  
17 is not a new call but rather simply a reiteration of the call  
18 that started in *Genesis 1:26-28* and was carried forward  
19 throughout history. We believe that this final call is for those  
20 of us living during this time in the last days of earth's  
21 history.

22         Thus, the call to live and flourish, as God intended in  
23 the Garden of Eden, is our call today. We have hope that living

1 the calling and flourishing is possible because of what Jesus  
2 did on earth and does for us now in heaven. It is a privilege  
3 to partner with God in this calling and to go out intentionally  
4 into the wider world with a blessing to share, while also  
5 expecting to receive a blessing from those we meet.

6

### 7 **Part III: Life Application**

8

9 Often when people hear or preach on the call to mission, they  
10 reduce that call to sharing the good news as a form of  
11 information. There is no doubt that part of sharing the blessing  
12 first introduced to humanity in the Garden and carried forward  
13 through many conduits in history involves sharing information.  
14 But the call is so much more than that.

15       When we recognize that the call of God to us, as humans,  
16 is rooted in Genesis 1:26-28, this understanding can lead us,  
17 through our various talents and skills, to draw people toward  
18 the blessing of flourishing that God intends for us. Our witness  
19 to others should be combined with sharing the plan of salvation,  
20 but, ultimately, the life that salvation makes possible will  
21 give meaning to the call God has given us. Therefore, our call  
22 is to live out the blessings of God in such a way that people  
23 see and desire what we have in God. This idea means that your

1 workplace, your home, and your circle of friends are the primary  
2 locations where you live out the call of God. While preaching  
3 and handing out literature have their place, the primary  
4 fulfillment of the call to Abraham, and you also, includes how  
5 you live out your daily life in intentionality with others who  
6 have not surrendered to Jesus, or have not had the privilege  
7 yet of meeting Him. But remember that the call of God is a  
8 two-fold blessing. As you live out the call in your daily life,  
9 expect and look for blessings to come back toward you from people  
10 from whom you may not even expect them.

11

12

1 **TE-4Q-2023-04**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 Last week, the lesson focused on God's calling to human beings  
6 to partner with Him in the work of sharing His love with the  
7 world. This mission was rooted in Creation and reiterated  
8 throughout Scripture. The focus of this week's lesson is on  
9 sharing God's mission. It starts with a call, but it does not  
10 end there; without the action of sharing, the call would be of  
11 little use.

12 1 John 4:8 describes God as love. Within that same letter  
13 from John, it states that those who have been witness to the  
14 love of God will share that love with the broader world. If what  
15 people share is not a demonstration of love, then it is not part  
16 of God's mission and should not be shared. Below are several  
17 examples of sharing God's love that can serve as guides in what  
18 it means to share the love of God today with those around us  
19 who have not yet fully experienced His love in its fullness.

20

21 **Part II: Commentary**

22

1 The best place to start when studying the sharing of God's love  
2 is in the Gospels. When God incarnated to the earth in the form  
3 of Jesus, His Incarnation was a profound example of love. While  
4 none of us, obviously, can replicate the incarnation in its  
5 exactness, we are called to follow the example set by Jesus,  
6 especially in how He related to other people and demonstrated  
7 love. Even a cursory reading of the Gospels quickly reveals  
8 repeated themes described concerning Jesus. These themes help  
9 us evaluate how we share God's love.

10 Jesus had compassion, either toward individuals in need  
11 or toward whole crowds of people. Sometimes this compassion led  
12 Jesus to touch and heal a person (*Luke 5:12, 13*), sometimes it  
13 led Him to feed a crowd creatively (*John 6:1-14*), and sometimes  
14 it resulted in a kind word or story (*Matt. 19:14*). Compassion  
15 and sharing in God's mission are inseparable. If upon  
16 reflection, we don't find many moments of compassion in our  
17 lives or the activities of our churches, we must re-evaluate  
18 how, or even if, we are sharing in God's mission.

19 Jesus also sought out people who were open to receiving  
20 a blessing. When sharing in the mission of God, we should follow  
21 His example. It is our privilege to seek out those in our  
22 communities who are neglected and creatively share the love of  
23 God with them. This service would be following in the footsteps

1 of Jesus and fulfilling what He desires, as shown in Matthew  
2 25:31-46. Jesus was all about mending broken relationships and  
3 spent most of His time on earth restoring ruptured connections.  
4 While we all are faulty, those who have experienced the love  
5 and forgiveness of Jesus owe it to the rest of the world to  
6 demonstrate this love and forgiveness. This demonstration is  
7 part of what it means to share in God's mission.

8         Scholars have often debated whether or not Jesus' primary  
9 concern was working among the Jews or with the wider world. Some  
10 argue that because Jesus spent most of His time with the Jews  
11 and told His disciples to do the same, at least while He was  
12 with them, the Jews were His central focus (*Matt. 15:24*). There  
13 is some truth to this idea, but there are numerous instances  
14 in which Jesus demonstrated that His love was for more than just  
15 the Jews. Several times He quoted Old Testament narratives that  
16 highlighted the faith of non-Jewish people, such as the stories  
17 of the widow of Zarephath, Naaman, and the Queen of Sheba (*Luke*  
18 *4:24-27, Matt. 12:42*). Jesus spent time outside of Judea with  
19 non-Jews, including a few nights in a Samaritan town (*John 4:40*)  
20 and a visit to the region of Tyre and Sidon (*Mark 7:24*), not  
21 to mention the Decapolis, which Gentiles populated (*Mark*  
22 *7:31-36*).

1 Jesus lived out a mission and love that challenged the  
2 narrow thinking of many of His people during His time. By  
3 demonstrating this love and living His mission, Jesus set the  
4 stage for what would come after He died, rose again, and  
5 ascended. Jesus expected that those who had followed Him during  
6 His time on earth would experience His love in such a way that  
7 they would take that experience to the wider world. Within this  
8 context of a loving experience, Jesus made the well-known call  
9 of Matthew 28:18-20, charging His disciples to go out into the  
10 world. This commission was not simply a call to mission but a  
11 call to teach, to make disciples, and to share the love of God,  
12 which each disciple had experienced personally. We are not  
13 called to share God's mission until we first have had a chance  
14 to know God and experience His love. Only then do we have  
15 something worth sharing.

16 Another significant portion of Scripture that is helpful  
17 to read concerning sharing the God of love is the book of Acts.  
18 While our Bibles often title this book the Acts of the Apostles,  
19 it would be more accurate to title it Acts of the Holy Spirit.  
20 The book is full of partnering between the Holy Spirit and human  
21 agents. Much as in the Gospels, we find people who have had a  
22 wonderful experience with Jesus, who are unwilling to keep that

1 experience to themselves and are empowered by the Holy Spirit  
2 to share this love far and wide.

3 As mentioned in an earlier lesson, mission is always a  
4 two-way street where all those involved can learn something from  
5 one another. The book of Acts reminds us that we as humans do  
6 not take God's place. God, through the Spirit, goes everywhere  
7 ahead of us. This Bible truth offers a couple of implications  
8 that we would be wise to contemplate.

9 First, if the Spirit has gone out ahead of us, we should  
10 expect to see some manifestation of the Spirit once we arrive.  
11 Peter experienced this reality in his encounter with Cornelius  
12 (*Acts 10-11:1-18*). As a result, Peter realized that God was not  
13 only already there before he arrived but that he also had  
14 something to learn from Cornelius about God's love. In many  
15 ways, the story of Peter and Cornelius is about Peter's ongoing  
16 growth in understanding God, just as much as it is about  
17 Cornelius and his family. When we go out to share in God's  
18 mission, we should not go presumptuously, as if we have nothing  
19 to learn from those who come to us seeking enlightenment.  
20 Rather, we go out expecting to see the Spirit at work already  
21 in ways with which we can partner.

22 Second, we have something to share. While the Spirit is  
23 out ahead of us, He also partners with us. We each have a unique

1 story or testimony concerning our journey with Jesus. Our  
2 stories needs to be shared. In the process, through our stories,  
3 we may spark in someone's heart a new insight about God or prompt  
4 within him or her a new desire to follow the Savior. This  
5 prompting devolves from our demonstrating the love of God  
6 through words *and* deeds. Because healthy relationships are at  
7 the core of what God wants for us, He often waits, or limits  
8 His revelation, until a follower of His is present to share the  
9 good news. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to recognize this  
10 privilege, prayerfully attuned to the ones with whom God is  
11 already working, looking to share the story of God with them  
12 at every opportunity.

13

### 14 **Part III: Life Application**

15

16 While church leaders often attempt to motivate people for  
17 mission, it is crucial to recognize that there are a few simple  
18 things we can each do to evaluate ourselves and our local  
19 churches' ability to share in God's mission. These simple  
20 things, when done intentionally, can radically transform us  
21 toward inhabiting a stance of humility and toward making changes  
22 in the church that lead us to become more focused on the needs  
23 of the broader world.

1 Individually, we must periodically take time to  
2 self-reflect. This act requires an immense amount of  
3 self-honesty, which we all struggle with regularly. We each must  
4 ask ourselves, Have I experienced the love of God lately? If  
5 I have not, why not? If you have, then ask yourself the following  
6 question: Have I shared that love I am experiencing with the  
7 wider world? These simple questions, when asked genuinely, can  
8 be very revealing.

9 Corporately, the church can ask the same questions. Is the  
10 church a place where the community experiences God? And if God  
11 is experienced in the community, is the church sharing that  
12 reality with the broader society around them? Once the church  
13 takes stock of the situation, they can make follow-up plans to  
14 move toward either experiencing God in new ways or actively take  
15 what they have experienced and share it with the broader  
16 community.

17 Periodic reminders (through sermons, children's stories,  
18 books, and articles) of the needs of the world are essential.  
19 Much as Jesus did with His disciples, God does with us today.  
20 God wants us to be global citizens who think outside of our own  
21 needs. We should desire for God's love to be shared with all  
22 humanity, and we should be actively pursuing ways of making this  
23 possible. For some, this truth means diverting some of their

1 financial resources toward an intentional mission. For others,  
2 this truth means opening themselves up to a call from God that  
3 possibly involves moving to a new location, either in their same  
4 country or across the globe. Why? Because God has asked each  
5 of us to share our story and our talents with people who  
6 desperately need to see a demonstration of God's love. No matter  
7 what God is calling you to do, remember that you should remain  
8 open to being blessed as you share and that God is already there  
9 ahead of you.

10

1 **TE-4Q-2023-05**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 The past several weeks highlighted that mission is rooted in  
6 God's initiative, and that God calls us to mission. This week,  
7 the focus is on the reality that some who have experienced God  
8 avoid the call to mission and the privilege to share the loving  
9 experience they have had.

10 At some point, all people who have had an experience with  
11 God will face the temptation to avoid sharing this experience  
12 with others. It is best to humbly admit to this reality rather  
13 than assume such a temptation only happens to others. Once we  
14 recognize that we are confronted by this temptation at some  
15 point, it is easier to take intentional steps out of this zone  
16 of avoidance and into the healthier space of sharing God's love  
17 with others.

18 Ultimately, excuses to avoid mission are temptations of  
19 the devil who does not want anyone to hear or experience the  
20 goodness of God. Thus, avoiding mission is not simply a  
21 dereliction of duty; it is instead a missed opportunity to draw  
22 others into a deeper and more meaningful walk with God and toward

1 a life more abundant. The following commentary section  
2 describes two potential ways in which excuses are used to avoid  
3 mission. These excuses do not comprise the only ways that  
4 avoidance can happen, but they are two of the more prominent  
5 ways. The first example is demonstrated through the disciples'  
6 story in the Garden of Gethsemane. The second example will draw  
7 critical points from the story of Jonah.

8

## 9 **Part II: Commentary**

10

### 11 ***Gethsemane***

12 When Jesus was nearing His last hours of life on earth before  
13 his arrest, trial, and death, He took the disciples into the  
14 Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Jesus asked the three disciples  
15 who were closest to Him to pray with Him and stay awake while  
16 He prayed, because the weight of what was happening to Him was  
17 heavy. Jesus desperately needed the comfort of friends at this  
18 time (*Matt. 26:36-45*).

19       Unfortunately, the disciples, who genuinely loved Jesus  
20 and considered Him a dear Friend, could not fulfill the request  
21 and fell asleep. This negligence happened twice; the disciples  
22 grew complacent and allowed their sleepiness to keep them from  
23 sharing the Lord's burdens. Before they had a chance to make

1 it right, Jesus was arrested and taken from their midst (*Matt.*  
2 *26:47-56*). Thus, it became a missed opportunity for the  
3 disciples to serve the One whom they loved so much.

4 The problem in this situation was not that the disciples  
5 had never experienced Jesus' love. By this point, they had  
6 plenty of evidence demonstrating His love for them. It wasn't  
7 even that they had drifted far away from Jesus. After all, they  
8 were there with Him in the Garden. Nonetheless, a sense of  
9 complacency settled in. The disciples could not understand how  
10 critical staying awake and praying for Jesus was at that crucial  
11 time. The disciples missed the opportunity to share the Father's  
12 love with the One who had taught them so much about love.

13 Sad to say, we are often guilty of the same complacency  
14 and negligence today. We have beautiful experiences with Jesus.  
15 And we are openly followers of Jesus. But the reality, when we  
16 take a closer look, is that many of us have grown complacent  
17 in our faith. This complacency often happens subtly. When we  
18 reflect on our lives, we may realize that we do not love others  
19 in tangible ways. Much like the disciples, we know Jesus is good  
20 and that we want to be with Him, but we slide into a state of  
21 spiritual sleepiness, missing multiple opportunities to share  
22 the love of God with a desperate world. We need to remind each

1 other, respectfully, to stay awake and always be ready to share  
2 the love we have experienced with a suffering world.

3

#### 4 ***Jonah***

5 The second excuse we make to avoid mission is embodied in the  
6 form of missed opportunities in the narrative of Jonah. This  
7 form of excuse differs from the negligence and complacency shown  
8 by the disciples in Gethsemane. However, the second excuse, like  
9 the first, is also prevalent. The story of Jonah exemplifies  
10 the second excuse in several instances. While the story is  
11 multifaceted, the book of Jonah, in many ways, is, at its heart,  
12 as we have just asserted, a story of missed opportunities.

13         Jonah knew God and prophesied on God's behalf in Israel  
14 before getting the call to go to Nineveh (*2 Kings 14:25*). But  
15 his prior prophetic work had always been among Israelites and  
16 involved encouraging things on behalf of Israel. Jonah's work  
17 did *not* include prophesying among Israel's enemies. When you  
18 read the whole book of Jonah, you notice that Jonah struggled  
19 a great deal with loving people who came from a non-Jewish  
20 background.

21         There are two significant missed opportunities found in  
22 the book of Jonah. The first missed opportunity takes place on  
23 the ship that Jonah boarded to run away from God. During the

1 storm, Jonah was surrounded by sailors who worshipped other  
2 deities. Yet, during the storm the sailors begged Jonah to pray  
3 to his God in the hope that his intercession would make a  
4 difference (*Jon. 1:6*). Jonah never prayed. Jonah's solution was  
5 to commit assisted suicide (*Jon. 1:12*). At this stage in the  
6 story, Jonah did not know a fish would save his life, and so  
7 he asked the sailors to cast him overboard to his death.

8       The sailors, who had more compassionate hearts than did  
9 Jonah, refused, at first, until they had no other options (*Jon.*  
10 *1:13*). (Remember the previous lesson about being open to  
11 receiving a blessing from those whom you meet.) The storm  
12 stopped when Jonah was thrown overboard. As a result, the  
13 sailors had a newfound respect for Jonah's God. The problem was  
14 that Jonah missed the opportunity to pray to God rather than  
15 proposing a human solution. This opportunity would have given  
16 the sailors a more complete and better understanding of who God  
17 is.

18       The second missed opportunity came after Jonah preached  
19 in Nineveh. The people accepted Jonah's message and repented.  
20 But Jonah was nowhere to be found. Instead, he climbed a nearby  
21 hill, hoping to see the destruction of Nineveh (*Jon. 4:5*). When  
22 that failed to take place, Jonah got angry at God (*Jon. 4:1*).  
23 Jonah reveals the real reason for his excuses to avoid God's

1 mission. Jonah says to God that he knew that God was a loving  
2 and compassionate Being and, thus, would likely forgive the  
3 Ninevites (*Jon. 4:2*). Recognizing this Bible truth, Jonah  
4 didn't want to go out in mission to people he didn't like,  
5 because he didn't want them to experience the goodness of God.

6       The book of Jonah is the only book in the Bible that ends  
7 with a question (*Jon. 4:11*). The question is straightforward.  
8 God asks Jonah, "Why can't you love people the way I do?" Because  
9 Jonah refused to love his enemies, he was outside the city when  
10 he should have been inside, helping the people of Nineveh take  
11 the next steps in their relationship with God. Jonah's refusal  
12 turned into a missed opportunity.

13       The excuses of Jonah were wrapped up in what we today call  
14 ethnocentrism, prejudice, and racism. Jonah experienced the  
15 love of God in his life and knew God was compassionate. But Jonah  
16 couldn't get past his feelings of national pride. Because he  
17 believed that he was better than others, he was unwilling to  
18 go in mission the way that God desired. What a sad story. Yet,  
19 we can continue to learn from it today.

20       The question at the end of the book of Jonah is one for  
21 us to ask ourselves and our churches. Do we demonstrate a love  
22 for the communities around us, especially for its members who  
23 look different from us or come from other parts of the world?

1 All too often, I have heard conversations in church or in Sabbath  
2 School that reveal prejudices and harmful ethnocentric  
3 attitudes. These attitudes are often accompanied by excuses for  
4 why certain groups of people fall outside our mission. Such  
5 thinking is no different from the mindset of Jonah.

6       Jonah failed to grasp that when God shows love and  
7 compassion to others, His divine manifestation of mercy should  
8 serve as a reminder that God has done the same for us. When you  
9 go out in mission and share the love of God and watch as it  
10 transforms people's lives, such an experience can also enhance  
11 your journey with God. This experience also can draw you into  
12 new human relationships with people who may be very different  
13 from you but who share a relationship with Jesus. Jonah could  
14 have made new friends on the ship with whom to share his faith.  
15 The same goes for Nineveh. Unfortunately, those opportunities  
16 were missed because Jonah opted for excuses rooted in his  
17 selfish pride and ethnocentrism.

18

### 19 **Part III: Life Application**

20

21 We should all be thankful for the beautiful experiences we have  
22 with Jesus. Over time, though, we often become complacent in  
23 our journey with God. With this complacency often comes a

1 tendency to make excuses for not sharing the love of God with  
2 others. Complacency can happen subtly, and before we know it,  
3 we are asleep when we should be awake. As individuals and as  
4 churches, we need to take an honest look at our daily lives and  
5 hold ourselves accountable. If we are not actively pursuing  
6 relationships with people who are suffering or need help in  
7 bearing their burdens, we have grown complacent. Accountability  
8 requires getting together with a small group of trusted friends  
9 from your local church who are willing to be open about their  
10 complacency and are ready to help each other come up with ways  
11 to rekindle experiences with God, by creatively sharing Him with  
12 the broader world around us.

13         For others, the reality is grimmer; they have developed  
14 excuses to avoid mission to specific groups of people, such as  
15 Muslims or Catholics, because they feel that these people are  
16 unworthy of God's love. Such excuses reveal that an attitude  
17 of superiority and ethnocentrism is at work among them, in which  
18 case, there is a need to ask God to help them love all people.  
19 We can achieve this goal by asking ourselves what we think about  
20 certain people. If we are afraid of certain groups or think they  
21 are not worth saving, then it is a sign something is wrong with  
22 us, not the group in question. Honest assessment takes a level  
23 of self-scrutiny and truthfulness that is hard to achieve, but

1 a church willing to grapple with these realities is a church  
2 the Holy Spirit can influence.  
3

1 **TE-4Q-2023-06**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 While motivation is the desire or reason a person has for doing  
6 something for someone, preparation involves an action to get  
7 ready so that things can be accomplished. Motivation has to do  
8 with something that causes or propels us to act. Preparation  
9 makes it possible for the plans to happen. While Jesus and what  
10 He has done for us provide our motivation for mission (*Rom. 5:8*),  
11 He also has entrusted us with His Spirit, thus enabling us to  
12 accomplish His will and mission mandate (*Matt. 28:18-20, John*  
13 *14:15-31, John 20:21, 22*).

14 "We love because he first loved us" (*1 John 4:19, NIV*)  
15 denotes cause and effect, the reason that motivates us to  
16 respond and to act. As we respond to God's love, we do so by  
17 proclaiming and living out in words and deeds the good news that  
18 Jesus is our Savior and Lord! Our sharing of the truth, as  
19 contained in His Word, will fall on receptive ears and will yield  
20 much fruit as the Spirit works. At the same time, we must be  
21 prepared for the rejection of the Word by many, causing yet  
22 others to lose hope.

23

1

**2 Part II: Commentary**

3

**4 *The Missionary God***

5 “The story of God’s mission to lost humanity is the greatest  
6 story ever told. The story begins in the [Old Testament]  
7 immediately after the Fall of Adam and Eve and continues through  
8 the patriarchal period and the history of Israel. The Gospels  
9 record the central event of God’s mission—Christ’s birth,  
10 ministry, atoning death, resurrection, and ascension. The  
11 biblical story continues in the book of Acts and the Epistles,  
12 with the launching of the Christian church, and ends with the  
13 apocalyptic climax of God’s mission in Revelation. God’s  
14 mission is the central narrative of the whole biblical canon,  
15 from Genesis to Revelation.”—Gorden R. Doss, *Introduction to*  
16 *Adventist Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World  
17 Mission, 2018), p. 1.

18       The “Bible’s grand metanarrative . . . shows God working  
19 on a comprehensive project to restore His Earth and His whole  
20 cosmos to its original, perfect state. The narratives of the  
21 Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, describe aspects of God’s  
22 cosmic mission project. The overall theme is that the sovereign,

1 gracious, loving Triune God initiated his mission and He will  
2 bring it to full completion.”—Page 22.

3 Thus, the story of redemption motivates us to both prepare and  
4 engage in God’s mission, in God’s story. As a missionary God,  
5 our Father cares and wants to bless others through us; therefore  
6 He has commanded us to go to all people, languages, tribes, and  
7 nations.

8         So, why does Christ command us to go and preach the Gospel?  
9 Why does God need you motivated for, and prepared to join Him  
10 in, mission? Some of these reasons can be found in the book  
11 *Passport to Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of World  
12 Mission, 2009), pp. 28-36. Here is an adapted summary:

13

14 *Jesus is the Unique Source of Life and Salvation, and People*  
15 *Need to Know About Him.*

16 • John 3:36: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but  
17 whoever rejects the Son will not see life” (NIV).

18 • Acts 4:12: “ ‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there  
19 is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must  
20 be saved’ ” (NIV).

21 • 1 John 5:12: “He who has the Son has life; he who does not  
22 have the Son of God does not have life” (NKJV).

23

1 ***Jesus is the Divine Son of God.***

2 Jesus does not claim to be only a good teacher (like other  
3 religious leaders) or a great leader (like Moses or David) or  
4 some kind of half-god or lesser god (as we find in other  
5 religions). No other major religion claims divinity for its  
6 founder.

7 • Jesus claims full divinity—that is, equality with God (*John*  
8 *8:58, 59; John 10:30-33*).

9 • Jesus' disciples also proclaimed His divinity fearlessly  
10 (*Matt. 16:14-16*). The proof that they gave for their claims was  
11 the resurrection (*1 Cor. 15:14-20*). If God raised Jesus, what  
12 Jesus said, therefore, must be true.

13

14 ***Jesus Offers a Unique Salvation—Salvation by Grace Through***  
15 ***Faith.***

16 • “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and  
17 this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works,  
18 so that no one can boast” (*Eph. 2:8, 9*).

19 No other world religion has such a salvation. Other religions  
20 indeed may set high standards, promote ethical behavior, tout  
21 health laws, extol a lofty philosophy, or produce nice people.  
22 But these religions also believe that people can save themselves

1 by what they do! The foundation of these non-Christian religions  
 2 is that salvation comes by works.

3

4 ***Jesus Offers a Universal Salvation—All-inclusive and***  
 5 ***Exclusive.***

6 • “ ‘For God so loved the world . . . that whoever believes in  
 7 him shall not perish but have eternal life’ ” (*John 3:16*).

8       The offer of salvation includes everyone in the world. The  
 9 truth is that God wants all people to hear the message—the Good  
 10 News that God offers a free salvation based on this unique Jesus.  
 11 In the Great Commission Jesus makes it clear that we can have  
 12 a part in sharing this Good News with others.

13       If someone were to ask you why you are a Seventh-day  
 14 Adventist, and what motivates you for mission, what would you  
 15 say? How does the uniqueness and singularity of the Seventh-day  
 16 Adventist message motivate us for mission to the world?

17       Though most of the individual beliefs of Seventh-day  
 18 Adventists are shared by some Christians, the full “package”  
 19 of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs is unique among Christian  
 20 groups. Here are three convictions that guide what we believe  
 21 and how we are motivated, prepared, and how we see our mission.

22       ***Conviction #1: Jesus is coming back a second time—this***  
 23 ***coming is visible, literal, and imminent (soon).*** Before

1 Adventism got started, most Christians either did not believe  
2 in a literal coming or de-emphasized it. Many of these  
3 Christians were postmillennialists. Postmillennialists  
4 believed that there would be a millennium, or 1,000 years, of  
5 peace and prosperity, and then Jesus would come. What people  
6 looked for and labored for was this millennium, not the Second  
7 Coming. Seventh-day Adventists believe, based on the Bible,  
8 that the real hope of the world is not an earthly millennium  
9 but the “blessed hope” (*Titus 2:13*) of Jesus’ Second Coming.

10 Below is a summary of our beliefs about the Second Coming:

- 11 • Seventh-day Adventists accept and proclaim the promises  
12 of the Second Coming (*John 14:1-3; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20*).
- 13 • This coming is literal (*Acts 1:11*).
- 14 • The Second Coming is portrayed as visible (*Matt. 24:30,*  
15 *Rev. 1:7*).
- 16 • All signs point to a near, soon, imminent coming. Jesus,  
17 over and over, used the word “soon” (*Rev. 22:7, 12, 20;*  
18 *Matt. 24:4-28; Luke 21:7-28*).
- 19 • God’s people will see Jesus (*John 14:3*) and will be with  
20 Him forever (*1 Thess. 4:17*).
- 21 • The dead will be raised (*1 Thess. 4:13-16*), and believers  
22 will receive immortality (*1 Cor. 15:53*).

- 1       • Tears, mourning, and death will be abolished (*Rev. 21:3,*  
2       4).

3       This message is important for our mission today, as many  
4       need to hear the Good News of the blessed hope. The biggest  
5       challenge we face, however, is the non-Christian world.  
6       Millions, if not billions, of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and  
7       adherents of traditional religions have never heard of this  
8       hope. We must tell them. Jesus wants them to hear about His  
9       coming.

10       ***Conviction #2:*** *God calls believers to loving obedience and*  
11       *serious discipleship.* In light of Jesus' coming, we need to make  
12       serious preparation. Faithful, obedient discipleship is  
13       important. Adventists always have believed that Jesus is our  
14       Savior. We have always emphasized that true faith is manifested  
15       in making Jesus also Lord. People saved by Jesus should gladly  
16       make Him Lord and in gratitude follow Him. We believe that both  
17       the gospel and God's law are vital and go together harmoniously  
18       like the two oars of a boat. The law leads us to Christ and serves  
19       as our standard. Jesus releases us from the law's condemnation,  
20       and His spirit writes the law on our hearts. For this reason,  
21       Adventists:

- 22       • Support the whole Ten Commandments, including the  
23       neglected Sabbath fourth commandment, believing that

1 Jesus gave it at Creation (*Gen. 2:2*), Jesus reiterated it  
2 in the Ten Commandments (*Exod. 20:8-11*), and Jesus  
3 reinforced it during His ministry (*Mark 2:27*).

- 4 • Believe the Sabbath is a powerful symbol of God's creating  
5 power (*Gen. 2:2, Exod. 20:8-11*), saving grace (*Exod. 20:2,*  
6 *Deut. 5:12-15*), and the final rest of redemption in heaven  
7 (*Heb. 4:1-11, especially verse 9*).
- 8 • Accept the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life,  
9 including marriage and family, dress, recreation, diet,  
10 etc. (*Eph. 5:21-6:4; Phil. 4:8, 9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 1 Tim.*  
11 *2:8-10*).

12 In a world where disregard for any standards of morality  
13 and decency abound, Adventist Christianity should promote a  
14 holy life. In a world where hurry and haste lead to high levels  
15 of stress, Christians under the lordship of Christ can find joy  
16 and rest in the Sabbath. They should demonstrate in their lives  
17 both the saving power and the lordship of Jesus.

18 **Conviction #3:** *God restores in believers the wholeness of*  
19 *life in Christ.* Christians do not go to heaven as disembodied  
20 souls. The Second Coming restores all of life. Believers should  
21 prepare for the Second Coming as whole people. God wants to  
22 restore us as whole people. Salvation involves every part of  
23 life and being. Jesus wants us to live full and complete lives.

1 In John 10:10, He says, " 'I have come that they may have life,  
2 and have it to the full' " (NIV). Our motivation and preparation  
3 for mission is more than ever needed in a world that is sick,  
4 addicted, and living in ignorance, a world desperately in need  
5 of the message of Jesus who cares for, and ministers to, all  
6 parts of our life. A dying world needs the hope of new life lived  
7 to its fullness by God's grace and power.

8

9

### 10 **Part III: Life Application**

11

12 As the believer awaits Jesus' Second Coming, he or she does so  
13 by studying God's Word and singing His praises in fellowship  
14 with the body of Christ (the church) while preparing for  
15 dedicated service to humanity. There should be no idleness, no  
16 time to spare, as every moment is used for preparation and  
17 engagement in God's mission. We press forward believing His  
18 promises. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in  
19 due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6:9,  
20 NKJV).

21 1. How would our lives look if we put into practice the  
22 thoughts of the paragraph above? Can we get motivated and

1 prepared by hearing God's Word? Explain. Does engaging in  
2 God's service prepare us for mission? Discuss.

3 2. Do you really believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God  
4 who offers us the blessing of wonderful salvation, which  
5 is a gift? If yes, why? Has this message motivated you and  
6 made a difference in your life? If so, how? How did this  
7 message affect the mission of the original disciples? How  
8 has it affected, and how should it affect, your mission?

9 3. Have we as a church always presented our unique message  
10 as it relates to Jesus in a way that motivates us to  
11 mission? Explain. What more can we do to prepare and  
12 improve in this area?

13

14

1 **TE-4Q-2023-07**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 Read the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25-37*) and  
6 ponder the following questions:

7 Luke 10:29: " 'And who is my neighbor?' " (*NKJV*). Does  
8 asking or answering this question from a personal perspective"  
9 ("who is *my* neighbor?") change the focus or the priority from  
10 the one who needs help to the one who provides it? Does such  
11 a shift in focus pose the risk of changing the message and  
12 principle that Jesus wants us to understand and practice?

13 Luke 10:36: " 'Which of these three do you think was a  
14 neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' " (*NIV*).  
15 Jesus' question focuses on the man who was robbed, his wounds,  
16 and his needs. Jesus fixes attention on the person who was robbed  
17 and mistreated and for whom help was provided. Jesus also  
18 contrasts the neighbors that had the opportunity to help but  
19 neglected to do so.

20 Luke 10:37: "The expert in the law replied, 'The one who  
21 had mercy on him.' Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise' " (*NIV*).  
22 As Jesus shows, answering the question right is not enough. In  
23 His instruction to the expert in the law, Jesus emphasizes the

1 importance of action, of putting the gospel into practice. That  
2 is, we must be the hands and feet of the body of Christ.

3

## 4 **Part II: Commentary**

5

### 6 **"Love Your Neighbor as Yourself"**

7 As we become part of God's community, we will see the problem  
8 of each of its members, and we will experience what it means  
9 to live with them and to suffer with them as well. We can hope  
10 that, as we suffer with the community, we also will provide for  
11 their needs. We must be neighbors to those in need. Many in the  
12 community are suffering and in need of help. Can we find out  
13 who will need our help as a neighbor? Is my church alleviating  
14 the suffering of those in need, or are we contributing to the  
15 suffering, either intentionally or through ignorance?

16 It is worth noting that Jesus' words, in Matthew 23, were  
17 severe, weighted with the truth regarding the situation, and  
18 content, of Israel's religiosity. Jesus' words were also aimed  
19 toward the restoration of His people so that His people could  
20 be compassionate neighbors. Jesus wanted His people to understand  
21 His law in a new way. He wanted Israel to focus on God and on  
22 their neighbor as well. Jesus' intention was that Israel should  
23 " ` "love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your

1 soul, and with all your mind" ' " (*Matt. 22:37, NKJV*). This precept  
2 is the first and greatest commandment. But the second commandment  
3 is an extension of the first: " 'love your neighbor as yourself'  
4 " (*Matt. 22:39, NKJV*). Fairness and justice, love and care, cannot  
5 be practiced by individuals only; they also need to be practiced  
6 and implemented by the Church, the body of Christ.

7

### 8 ***Old Testament Prophets as Defenders of the Neighbor***

9 The prophets of the Old Testament were quite outspoken regarding  
10 the laws and regulations dealing with one's neighbor or with those  
11 who needed healing and salvation. Such laws and regulations,  
12 spoken through the prophets, were God's way of communicating His  
13 will for Israel to witness to its neighbors, to be a light to  
14 the nations. The prophets were to serve as heralds of the gospel  
15 and to be spokesmen against all injustices and evil.

16 The prophets urged the people and their leaders to "seek  
17 justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless;  
18 plead the case of the widow," (*Isa. 1:17, NIV*) and forbade the  
19 oppression of "the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor"  
20 (*Zech. 7:10, NKJV*). The prophets also were fierce in their  
21 condemnation of all injustice. Elijah rebuked King Ahab for  
22 murdering Naboth and stealing his vineyard. Amos fulminated  
23 against the rulers of Israel because, in return for bribes, they

1 trampled on the heads of the poor, crushed the needy, and denied  
2 justice to the oppressed, instead of letting "justice roll on  
3 like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing  
4 stream."—John R. W. Stott. *Decisive Issues Facing Christians*  
5 *Today* (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990), p. 236.

6 The structure and society of Israel "exalted labor, denounced  
7 idleness, expected fathers to train their sons to acquire skills  
8 with their hands, furthered human reciprocity, and justice, and  
9 demonstrated an active concern for one's neighbors," and, notably,  
10 "it respected the dignity of both men and women, the bearers of  
11 the divine image."—Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom:  
12 The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker  
13 Academic, 2003), p. 88. Moreover, worship and obedience to God  
14 are directly related to justice and philanthropy. These sets go  
15 hand-in-hand, just as justice and mercy to one's neighbor are  
16 related to walking humbly before God. All instructions and  
17 regulations for the well-being and fair treatment of the poor,  
18 alien, orphan, widow, and vulnerable have their origins in God,  
19 the One who cares for His children and shows compassion and mercy  
20 to whomsoever needs Him. In an echo of the biblical message, one  
21 writer sums up in this way the gospel directive to care for the  
22 poor: "to speak about poverty is to touch the Heart of God."—William  
23 Robert Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God: The Social*

1 *Construction of Poverty among Biblical Peasants* (New York: T  
2 & T Clark, 2007), p. 8.

3 Oftentimes a question is asked: How can my neighbor, who  
4 is often the poor, the homeless, and the unemployed be helped  
5 to secure the blessings of God's providence and to live the life  
6 Jesus intended humans to live? Here is a statement from Ellen  
7 G. White that provides light on the subject:

8 "If men would give more heed to the teaching of God's  
9 word, they would find a solution of these problems that  
10 perplex them. Much might be learned from the Old Testament  
11 in regard to the labor question and the relief of the poor.

12 "In God's plan for Israel every family had a home on  
13 the land, with sufficient ground for tilling. Thus were  
14 provided both the means and the incentive for a useful,  
15 industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of  
16 men has ever improved upon that plan. To the world's departure  
17 from it is owing, to a large degree, the poverty and  
18 wretchedness that exist today."—Ellen G. White, *The*  
19 *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 183, 184.

20 The lessons and instructions of the Bible help us to  
21 understand the intention of God regarding the needy neighbor.  
22 God wants us to be in connection with His word so that we can  
23 be His instruments of mercy and love to those who are suffering

1 and in need of hope. Moreover, "it is God's purpose that the rich  
2 and the poor shall be closely bound together by the ties of sympathy  
3 and helpfulness."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 1905,  
4 p. 193. This togetherness will prove to be a blessing to both  
5 groups. It will help both the poor, as well as the rich, in  
6 understanding God's plan of salvation and will establish the fact  
7 that a life of benevolence will reveal spiritual truths than can  
8 be understood only amid distress and suffering.

9       Only by our love and service for our neighbor who needs help  
10 can we prove the genuineness of our love for Christ. True mission  
11 service comes from our true love for our Savior, a sentiment that  
12 reinforces the notion that *being* is oftentimes more important  
13 than *giving* or just *doing* good deeds for the needy or the poor.  
14 "The message of the Old Testament is a call to an ethical  
15 lifestyle modeled in what God has done for us in Christ. It has  
16 to do with following God's principles through living a life of  
17 witnessing to, helping, and loving the neighbor and those in  
18 need as yourself." —Jiří Moskala, "The Mission of God's People  
19 in the Old Testament," *Journal of the Adventist Theological*  
20 *Society*, 19/1-2 (2008) p. 58.

21

22 ***The Life and Mission of Jesus***

1 The ministry of compassion manifested in the life and ministry  
2 of Jesus was the best possible example provided for the disciples,  
3 apostles, followers, and new believers of the early apostolic  
4 church. Jesus (Immanuel) dwelt among men and women to restore  
5 and save, to heal and forgive, with a love that was even stronger  
6 than death itself. His special attention toward the neighbor,  
7 the other—which included the needy, the poor, the sick, the  
8 demon-possessed, the foreigner, and many others—caused the Son  
9 of God to devote a large portion of His time and energy to healing  
10 and caring for them all during His earthly ministry.

11 Jesus' teachings were always confirmed by His actions, and  
12 His ministry of healing (salvation) affirmed what He preached.  
13 His was a ministry of restoration, which made human beings  
14 wholesome in body, spirit, and mind. Jesus came to reveal God's  
15 character to the fallen human race, and by doing so, He made possible  
16 the restoration of the image of God in His creatures.

17 When the needs of both church members and non-members are  
18 met, when we become neighbors to the poor and attend to their  
19 needs, when we see the hungry and thirsty and feed them, when  
20 we cloth the naked and visit the imprisoned, then the members  
21 of the body of Christ have true fellowship with God and with one  
22 another. This fellowship demonstrates that we are no longer

1 selfish but can share together and live out a life that testifies  
2 to a true and pure religion and life, the life of Christ.

3 The apostle Paul encouraged mission to the neighbor by urging  
4 church members to do good to all people, especially to those who  
5 belong to the family of believers (*Gal. 6:10*). But Paul also had  
6 a broader view of this mission of compassion to the neighbor,  
7 who included even our enemies: " 'if your enemy is hungry, feed  
8 him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink' " (*Rom. 12:20, NKJV*).

9

### 10 **Part III: Life Application**

11

12 How can the whole gospel of Jesus Christ—a gospel that is able  
13 to heal and to save, to protect and to restore—transform our  
14 neighbors into heirs of God's kingdom? We believe that this  
15 transformation is work, or ministry, that must be done through  
16 the power of God's Spirit, in order that many persons might receive  
17 the graces of Christ's gospel and be transformed into His likeness  
18 for the benefit of families, communities, and nations for the  
19 glory of God. What a difference it would make if we would all  
20 be intentionally committed to this ministry.

21 Most important, who is Jesus Christ for us today? What does  
22 this question mean in practical terms?

1           “Real charity helps men to help themselves. If one comes  
2 to our door and asks for food, we should not turn him away  
3 hungry; his poverty may be the result of misfortune. But  
4 true beneficence means more than mere gifts. It means a  
5 genuine interest in the welfare of others. We should seek  
6 to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to  
7 give them the help that will benefit them most. To give thought  
8 and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to  
9 give money. But it is the truest charity.”—Ellen G. White,  
10 *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 195.

11

1 **TE-4Q-2023-08**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 We cannot deny that the Old Testament emphasizes the  
6 responsibility of God's people to help those in need. In fact,  
7 the Hebrew Bible has hundreds of references (and regulations  
8 or laws) that guarantee and safeguard the rights of widows,  
9 orphans, foreigners, the poor, etc.

10 Deuteronomy 15:4 states: "However, there need be no poor  
11 people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving  
12 you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you"  
13 (NIV). But a few verses later it says: "There will always be  
14 poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded  
15 toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your  
16 land" (Deut. 15:11, NIV).

17 How do we reconcile these two verses (Deut. 15:4 and Deut.  
18 15:11)? What is the problem here? How can we solve this apparent  
19 contradiction? In essence, the Bible is telling us that, because  
20 God can provide He wants to use us in helping those in need,  
21 as Jesus did. The biblical tradition, as a whole, does not regard  
22 poverty as a "normal" part of life but as an evil exception to

1 the divine plan. What is meant to be normal is the concern that  
2 moves people to show kindness to those in need. "God imparts  
3 His blessing to us that we may impart to others. When we ask  
4 Him for our daily bread, He looks into our hearts to see if we  
5 will share the same with those more needy than ourselves."—Ellen  
6 G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 283.

7

## 8 **Part II: Commentary**

9

10 " '***God has Come to Help His [Needy] People***' " (***Luke 7:16, NIV***)

11 In Luke 7, we read about a large crowd that recognizes what Jesus  
12 had just done. The crowd not only recognized Jesus as a Prophet,  
13 and a great One, but, filled with awe and praising God, they declared  
14 that God had come to help them. Jesus was the Prophet of benevolence  
15 and compassion, the One who came to proclaim the good news of  
16 God. Jesus also came to proclaim liberty to the captives and to  
17 announce that the kingdom of God was near (*Mark 1:14, 15; see*  
18 *also Luke 4:18, 19*). It was on behalf of the neediest and most  
19 neglected that Jesus spent most of His time and energy during  
20 His earthly ministry. His heart was constantly touched by the  
21 misery and suffering of the most poor, destitute, and deprived  
22 human beings.

1           Among the oppressed and destitute were many women, and for  
2 them, Jesus had special consideration. The women who were  
3 marginalized by society were graciously received by the Savior  
4 and cared for; thus, they were relieved from their distresses  
5 and maladies. The compassion and merciful acts of Jesus were  
6 constantly demonstrated toward these women.

7           Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well  
8 sets the example for all who labor in favor of women, wherever  
9 they are and whatever their condition, be they poor, outcasts,  
10 sinners, widows, mothers, prostitutes, or otherwise oppressed  
11 by the devil. Giving the Samaritan woman the water of life, Jesus  
12 relieved her of her oppression and guilt, empowering her to live  
13 a better life, as well as enabling her to become one of His witnesses  
14 (*John 4:1-26*). The Samaritan woman was thirsty, she was poor,  
15 she had to carry her own water, she was tired and needy, and Jesus  
16 met her physical, social, and spiritual needs.

17           The way Jesus handled the situation of the woman caught in  
18 adultery and the situations of many other women indicates His  
19 interest in relieving and restoring the dignity of women and  
20 demonstrates that His love has no preference toward any class  
21 of individuals. Jesus crossed cultural barriers and even went  
22 against strong religious traditions in order to heal, save, and  
23 develop the gifts and lives of women for His kingdom. Jesus' love

1 has no limits, no strings attached, and is bestowed upon all women  
2 in need. Look at the following examples of women who were recipients  
3 of the Savior's love: the Canaanite or Syrophenician woman  
4 (*Matt. 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30*); Jesus' mother (*John 19:25-27*);  
5 Martha and Mary whom Jesus encouraged (*John 11:17-37*); and the  
6 widow of Nain whose son Jesus raised from the dead (*Luke*  
7 *7:11-17*). Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman and forgave her  
8 sins (*John 12:1-11, Matt 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, Luke 7:36-50*);  
9 Jesus healed and dialogued with a sick woman (*Luke 8:43-48, Matt*  
10 *9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34*); women were cured from evil spirits and  
11 diseases by Jesus (*Luke 8:1-3*); Jesus healed a crippled woman  
12 (*Luke 13:10-13*); Jesus noticed the widow giving her offering  
13 (*Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4*); and Jesus appeared to Mary  
14 Magdalene (*John 20:10-18*).

15       According to the Gospels, Jesus' healing ministry toward  
16 all those who needed His help, relieving their suffering and  
17 setting them free from their maladies, indicates that "none who  
18 came to Him went away unhelped. From Him flowed a stream of healing  
19 power, and in body, and mind and soul men were made whole."—Ellen  
20 G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 17. We find Jesus healing  
21 the mother-in-law of Simon (Peter) from a high fever (*Matt. 8:14,*  
22 *15; Mark 1:29, 30; Luke 4:38, 39*); Jesus cured a man with leprosy  
23 by saying "be clean" (*Matt. 8:2-4, NIV; Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12,*

1 13); Jesus healed (forgave) a paralytic by saying, " 'Friend,  
2 your sins are forgiven' " (*Luke 5:20, NIV*) and by adding, "I tell  
3 you, get up, take your mat and go home" (*Luke 5:24, NIV, also*  
4 *see Matt. 9:2-8, Mark 2:3-12*).

5 Jesus found great faith in a centurion whose servant was  
6 sick and about to die, and rewarded the centurion's faith by healing  
7 his servant (*Luke 7:1-10, Matt 8:5-13*). It was also by such great  
8 faith that a woman who was suffering from a flow of blood for  
9 twelve years touched Jesus and was healed immediately by His power.  
10 Jesus confirmed her faith by saying, " 'Daughter, your faith has  
11 healed you. Go in peace' " (*Luke 8:48, NIV; see also Matt. 9:20-22,*  
12 *Mark 5:25-34*).

13 Jesus not only healed those who came, or were brought, to  
14 Him, but He often demonstrated His love when He saw a person in  
15 need. For example, Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on a Sabbath  
16 day where there happened to be a crippled woman who was bent over  
17 and could not straighten herself up. Jesus said to her, " 'Woman,  
18 you are set free from your infirmity' " (*Luke 13:12, NIV*). What  
19 a relief to be set free after being crippled by an evil spirit  
20 for eighteen years! The record says that Jesus put His hand on  
21 her, and she was immediately made straight and able to praise  
22 God in her newfound freedom.

1 Jesus' ministry of healing went far beyond what the Bible  
2 tells us, but it must suffice to mention here what the inspired  
3 writers of the Gospels recorded to us. Many other sick people  
4 with varied illnesses were healed by the great Physician. An  
5 official in Capernaum had a son who was sick, and he asked Jesus  
6 to heal him. Jesus graciously granted the official's request by  
7 saying, " 'You may go; your son will live' " (*John 4:50, NABRE*).

8 The apostle Paul wrote, "though He [Jesus] was rich, yet  
9 for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might  
10 become rich" (*2 Cor. 8:9, NKJV*). Christ's identification with  
11 the poor is clearly stated by the apostle. Jesus was rich but  
12 gave up His possessions and became poor in order that poor humanity  
13 could inherit the riches of temporal, as well as eternal,  
14 salvation.

15

### 16 ***True Fellowship in the Apostolic Church***

17 The early Christian community was characterized by true  
18 fellowship. This fellowship was the trademark of the apostles  
19 and new believers. They had decided to abide in unity with Christ  
20 and with one another, having everything in common (*Acts 2:42-44*)  
21 and being of one heart and mind. The desire of each one of them  
22 was to share the possessions they had in order that their goods  
23 might be distributed to those in need. It was because of this

1 practice that "there were no needy persons among them" (*Acts 4:34*,  
2 *NIV*), thus the act of sharing their possessions was what made  
3 it possible for the new believers to meet the needs of those who  
4 were in distress (*Acts 4:32-47*).

5 James rightly emphasized the integration of listening to  
6 the Word and practicing it, of love that manifests itself in words  
7 but also in actions. What, then, is true religion? "Religion that  
8 God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look  
9 after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself  
10 from being polluted by the world" (*James 1:27, NIV*). It seems  
11 that James is somewhat echoing these words of Jesus: " 'For I  
12 was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and  
13 you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited  
14 me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you  
15 looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me' " (*Matt.*  
16 *25:35, 36, NIV*). Needy orphans and widows suffer distress that  
17 touches the heart of the Father, so the one who lives a religion  
18 that is true will "take up the cause of the fatherless" and will  
19 "plead the case of the widow" (*Isa. 1:17, NIV*).

20 It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first  
21 called Christians (*Acts 11:26*). The text reads: "The disciples,  
22 as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers  
23 and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift

1 to the elders by Barnabas and Saul" (*Acts 11:29, 30, NIV*). To  
2 provide help (*eis diakonian*) in this context can mean to provide  
3 resources (money, gifts) to be used for needy individuals living  
4 in distress.

5

### 6 **Part III: Life Application**

7

8 The poor and needy have a special place in the ministry of Jesus,  
9 because it is to them that the gospel (the good news, the kingdom  
10 of God) is preached (*Matt. 11:5, Luke 4:18*). Other biblical  
11 passages confirm that the poor are not only poor in the spiritual  
12 sense but also in the material sense (*Matt. 5:3, Luke 6:20*). The  
13 story of the poor widow's offering illustrates this point well.

14 As He looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into  
15 the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very  
16 small copper coins. " 'Truly I tell you,' he said, 'this poor  
17 widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave  
18 their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put  
19 in all she had to live on' " (*Luke 21:3, 4, NIV; see also Mark*  
20 *12:41-44, and 2 Cor. 8:9, 12*).

21 The story does not tell us that the woman had any relatives  
22 to care for her; instead, it mentions that she was a poor widow  
23 and gave all she had to live on. Jesus' reference to this poor

1 widow is interesting because, again, His attention is focused  
2 on the poorest of the poor, not only in a spiritual sense but  
3 very much in the material sense: " 'she, out of her poverty, put  
4 in everything—all she had to live on' " (*Mark 12:44, NIV*).

5       When needy people, such as the poor widow, look at you or  
6 your church, in what ways do they see the embodiment of Jesus  
7 Christ and the comprehensive healing and help that He imparts  
8 through His church?

9

1 **TE-4Q-2023-09**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 This week's memory text is part of Jesus' discourse on the cost  
6 of being His disciple. In His teaching on discipleship, Jesus  
7 regularly mentioned the need to count the cost of following Him,  
8 which could be high. Matthew 16:24-28, Luke 14:25-33 are two  
9 of the key texts in understanding Jesus' teaching on what it  
10 means for a person to follow Him (*see also Mark 8:34-37, Luke*  
11 *9:23-25*). It is important to note that in His teachings on  
12 discipleship, Jesus does not speak about the evilness of money  
13 or the damnation of those who are rich. He simply warns us  
14 against letting our possessions stand in the way of our pursuit  
15 of eternity with Him. None of the things that money can afford  
16 us—pleasures, power, renown—will do us any ultimate good if,  
17 because of them, we forfeit eternity.

18 While the Bible does not condemn riches, it does warn  
19 about the potential danger. According to Paul, the love of  
20 money, not money itself, is evil (*1 Tim. 6:10*). Rich and  
21 powerful people, as well as poor and weak people, are *equally*  
22 welcome into God's kingdom. As Peter realized in Cornelius'

1 house, " 'God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever  
2 fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him' " (*Acts*  
3 *10:34, 35, NKJV*). God is as concerned about the salvation of  
4 the rich and the powerful as He is for the poor and the weak.  
5

## 6 **Part II: Commentary**

7

### 8 ***The Cost of Being a Disciple of Jesus***

9 In Matthew 16:24, Jesus uses extreme language to highlight the  
10 non-negotiable nature of the cost of following Him: " 'Whoever  
11 wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their  
12 cross and follow me' " (*NIV; see also Luke 14:26, 27*). Jesus  
13 did not want a followership driven only by desire to benefit  
14 from the various miracles He performed. Following Him for the  
15 gratification of our desires would amount to an opportunistic  
16 relationship with Him. Instead, Jesus wants His followers to  
17 die daily to self-interest, selfish desires, and any ambitions  
18 that would hinder their relationship with Him. His call to count  
19 the cost of following Him was His invitation to His hearers to,  
20 first and foremost, understand and consent to the terms of  
21 following Him.

22 Jesus also demands of His followers a devotion that  
23 surpasses their instinct to preserve their own lives. Disciples

1 must prioritize their devotion to Jesus over life itself. As  
2 a symbol of an unavoidable and most excruciating death, taking  
3 one's cross to follow Jesus epitomizes a commitment to the  
4 highest possible cost of being His disciple. Just as carrying  
5 a literal cross was an act of submitting to the Romans, taking  
6 one's cross to follow Jesus refers to Jesus' call for His  
7 disciples' total submission to Him. Discipleship is not having  
8 Jesus at our beck and call. Rather, discipleship is about  
9 transferring to Jesus the ownership of everything pertaining  
10 to us. Jesus is upfront because He does not want anyone to sign  
11 up for discipleship with Him and then later on be surprised by  
12 the high cost for doing so. Jesus does not want His disciples  
13 to be possessed by anything or any person but Him.

14       In Luke 14, two absolutes are mentioned in connection with  
15 the cost of being Jesus' disciple. The first absolute is  
16 "anyone," in verse 26, and "whoever," in verse 27. Rather than  
17 pertaining to a select few, the pronouns "anyone" and "whoever"  
18 mean that the cost of being Jesus' disciple applies to every  
19 individual desiring to follow Him, no matter their social  
20 standing. The second absolute is "renouncing all" that one has  
21 (verse 33). Renouncing all for the sake of following Jesus not  
22 only means physically giving up something but also letting go  
23 emotionally of what has been physically given up so that an

1 individual is in no way possessed by that thing. Jesus was  
2 basically challenging those who contemplated following Him to  
3 set aside their own agenda and embrace His agenda. This absolute  
4 emphasizes the fact that a disciple must not allow anything to  
5 stand in the way of his or her total surrender to Christ. Jesus'  
6 expectation is that every person who desires to follow Him must  
7 be absolutely willing, at any time, to give up all  
8 relationships, all possessions, and even life itself. Jesus  
9 requires from every individual desiring to follow Him a change  
10 of attitude, leading to a daily commitment to be His at any cost.  
11 This divine expectation is a warning to every person, desiring  
12 to be His disciple, to refrain from trying to make Him a means  
13 to his or her own ends. Jesus expects His disciples to exchange  
14 their will for His will and to fully surrender the control of  
15 their destiny to Him.

16

17 ***God Has a Heart for the Rich and Powerful.***

18 God is as concerned about the salvation of the rich and the  
19 powerful as He is about the weak and the needy. Christ died for  
20 all people, regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender,  
21 or social status. His blood has sufficient merit for the  
22 redemption of every human being from the perdition of their sin.  
23 Consequently, every person has access to His free offer of

1 forgiveness and acceptance with God. Simply stated, the scope  
2 of Christ's atonement is unlimited; it is universally  
3 accessible to the poor, just as it is to the rich (*John 3:16*,  
4 *2 Cor. 5:15*, *1 Tim. 2:3-6*). Although an online search for "God's  
5 heart for the rich and powerful" generates a negligible number  
6 of hits compared to a search for "God's heart for the poor,"  
7 it should be emphasized that God has a heart for every single  
8 human being on the account of their creation in His image and  
9 Christ's substitutionary death for them. While everyone will  
10 not be saved, every person who ever lived, or is now living,  
11 had or has access to God, either through general revelation  
12 (nature), particular revelation (God's providential work among  
13 the unconverted), or special revelation (Jesus Christ and  
14 Scripture). Acts 14:17 says that God has not left Himself  
15 without witnesses among humans. In heaven, there will be people  
16 who were billionaires in their earthly life, as well as people  
17 who lived in utter poverty. Among the redeemed there also will  
18 be people who were considered great minds on earth, as well as  
19 people who never learned to read or write.

20 Scripture makes mention of rich and powerful individuals  
21 who loved and feared God. Old Testament examples include  
22 Abraham, Isaac, Job, and David. New Testament examples include  
23 Matthew (*Matt. 9:9*), Zacchaeus the chief tax collector (*Luke*

1 19:1, 2), the apostle Paul (*Acts 9*), the Ethiopian Eunuch (*Acts*  
2 *8:26-40*), and Cornelius the Roman centurion (*Acts 10*). What made  
3 these individuals distinctive was not so much what they  
4 possessed but their committed relationship with God, in spite  
5 of their wealth.

6 Besides the above examples of rich and powerful  
7 individuals who did not let wealth and power hinder their  
8 relationship with God, there is also the example of those who  
9 let their riches keep them from surrendering their lives to  
10 Jesus. A well-known example is the rich young man who rejected  
11 Jesus' invitation to follow Him after he inquired about what  
12 he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Despite the rich young  
13 ruler's rejection of Jesus' invitation, Mark 10:21 says that  
14 Jesus still loved him. Just because Jesus asked him to sell all  
15 his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor before  
16 following Him does not mean that rich people cannot be His  
17 disciples. In this particular case, the problem was that this  
18 wealthy young man's riches were an obstacle to the surrender  
19 of his heart to God. The young man's heart was so captivated  
20 by his great wealth that it became the object of his fundamental  
21 allegiance.

22

23 ***The Timing of Our Message Matters***

1 After his healing from leprosy, Naaman made two requests that  
2 would completely sound out of place today: (1) he requested to  
3 take two mule-loads of earth from Israel back to Syria as a sign  
4 of his commitment to worship no other god but the living God,  
5 the one Israel worshiped (*2 Kings 5:17*); and (2) he asked for  
6 permission to bow down with his king in Rimmon's shrine, not  
7 as an act of worship but as part of his job description. He was,  
8 after all, the king's right hand man and needed to be at his  
9 side wherever he went (*2 Kings 5:18*).

10 If these two requests were not strange enough, Elisha's  
11 response to Naaman's request will be troubling in many  
12 missionary circles today: "Go in peace" (*2 Kings 5:19*). Elisha's  
13 astonishing response was not an encouragement for Naaman to  
14 continue idolatrous practices. Elisha most probably trusted  
15 that God would continue to work in Naaman's life. By his  
16 confession, Naaman had made a huge step forward in his spiritual  
17 journey. God Himself had orchestrated his encounter with  
18 Elisha. Elisha saluted that progress and probably thought it  
19 wise not to proceed too quickly to other faith matters that  
20 Naaman was not yet ready to accept.

21 The same teaching principle is found in John 16:12, where,  
22 after three and half years of mentoring His disciples, Jesus  
23 tells them that He still has many things to reveal to them but

1 that He is not going to do so because they are not yet ready  
2 to grasp them. Jesus knew their capacity for understanding new  
3 truth. He chose to reveal to them only what He thought was  
4 essential for them at the moment, leaving the rest to the  
5 ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Ellen G. White  
6 advises, "While the teacher of truth should be faithful in  
7 presenting the gospel, let him never pour out a mass of matter  
8 which the people cannot comprehend because it is new to them  
9 and hard to understand."—*Evangelism*, p. 202.

10

### 11 **Part III: Life Application**

12

13 A significant portion of human existence revolves around money:  
14 earning it, spending it, saving part of our earnings, and giving  
15 some, first and foremost, as tithes and offerings. Money, and  
16 especially how we relate to it, should not be taken lightly.  
17 Rich people are not the only ones faced with the danger of  
18 becoming mesmerized by earthly possessions. Poor people also  
19 can become slaves to the little they have or to the desire to  
20 acquire more to the point where they may be in danger of losing  
21 sight of eternity.

22 As Christians, it is important that the way we relate to  
23 money and all that it can afford does not hinder our relationship

1 with God. Here are two things we need to keep in mind in relation  
2 to money: (1) the fragility of earthly investments: all the  
3 acquisition the world has to offer (pleasure, security, power,  
4 etc.) is fleeting; and (2) on the day we appear before God and  
5 render an account of our lives, we will be evaluated by the  
6 health of our souls rather than by the wealth of our estates.

7       Because God is no respecter of persons, He still longs for  
8 rich and powerful people to become Christ's disciples. What  
9 God cares about most is not what is in a person's hand, but what  
10 is in his or her heart. Bible examples of rich and powerful  
11 people teach us that this category of people can also be  
12 receptive to the gospel. It is the responsibility of committed  
13 believers both to pray that God will directly intervene in the  
14 witnessing process in order to reach powerful unbelievers and  
15 also to avail themselves to the Holy Spirit to become bridges  
16 to reach them.

1 **TE-4Q-2023-10**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 In His farewell speech before ascending to heaven, Jesus  
6 commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses among people of  
7 every nation of the world (*Matt. 28:19*). "Nations" in Matthew  
8 28:19 refers not to nation states but to "people groups." A  
9 people group refers to a group of individuals that have a common  
10 sense of history, language, beliefs, and identity. There is no  
11 human society on earth where the gospel of Jesus should not be  
12 presented and where disciples should not be made for Him.  
13 Frontline mission agencies, such as Global Frontier Missions  
14 and the Joshua Project, estimate that there are about 17,446  
15 people groups in the world, with more than 7,400 of them  
16 considered to be unreached by the gospel. In other words, 42%  
17 of the world's people groups lack indigenous communities of  
18 Christians who are able to evangelize, without an external  
19 witness, the rest of the people groups. Ninety-five of the least  
20 reached people groups by the gospel are spread across the 10/40  
21 window, an area mostly populated by tribal people, Hindus,  
22 Muslims, Buddhists, and the non-religious. Some of these people

1 groups have little or no access to the gospel. People not yet  
2 reached by the gospel also exist in Western nations, due to the  
3 widening impact of secularism.

4

## 5 **Part II: Commentary**

6

### 7 ***Paul: A Versatile Missionary***

8 This week's study introduces us to witnessing to people who have  
9 nothing, or very little, in common with Christians in terms of  
10 religious beliefs and values. People of diverse ethnic origins  
11 and many dissimilar religious commitments live and share public  
12 life together. Because of their unique set of worldview  
13 assumptions, these people have different spiritual needs and  
14 aspirations. It is within this multireligious world that we are  
15 called to share our faith and make disciples for Christ. At first  
16 sight, this task is daunting. It necessitates venturing out of  
17 our religious comfort zones, with their jargons and codes;  
18 reevaluating our attitudes (stereotypes and biases) toward  
19 people with perspectives other than our own; and learning new  
20 evangelistic approaches. As if that were not enough, many  
21 non-Christians do not view Christianity favorably.  
22 Fortunately, we have in the Bible precedents of missionary  
23 endeavors to reach such people.

1           After his conversion to Christianity, Paul demonstrated  
2 untiring commitment to the propagation of the gospel to all  
3 nations. However, Paul approached his audiences differently,  
4 depending on whether they were Jews or Gentiles. In comparing  
5 what he said to the Jews at a synagogue in Antioch (*Acts*  
6 *13:13-43*) with his presentation of the gospel to a Gentile  
7 audience at the Areopagus in Athens (*Acts 17:16-33*), we see that  
8 Paul showed a great deal of sensitivity to his given situation,  
9 as well as to his audience. In Antioch, Paul quotes Scripture  
10 to build his case that Old Testament prophecies find their  
11 fulfillment in Jesus. In Athens, Paul begins with what his  
12 Gentile audience was the most familiar with: the altar to the  
13 unknown God and sayings of their own poets, instead of a series  
14 of Bible passages. Paul uses what his audience knows to speak  
15 to them about “the Lord of heaven and earth” who created  
16 everything. Without condoning the Athenians’ beliefs, Paul  
17 commends them for being religious. This positive statement  
18 about his audience might have been intended to secure their  
19 interest in the rest of his speech. Although he was deeply  
20 disturbed by the multiplicity of their idols, Paul was  
21 restrained in his behavior. Any display of anger and accusations  
22 against these people who had no knowledge of God’s special  
23 revelation would have deprived him of a precious opportunity

1 to present the gospel to them. It is important to note that  
2 Paul's sensitivity to the Athenians' life situations did not  
3 prevent him from calling them to repentance.

4       The above point is best illustrated by Mark Allan Powell's  
5 2004 publication of the results of his research on the impact  
6 of people's daily realities on their reading and interpretation  
7 of Scripture (see Allan Powell, "The Forgotten Famine: Personal  
8 Responsibility in Luke's Parable of the 'Prodigal Son'" in  
9 *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God*, Sharon H. Ringe and  
10 H. C. Paul Kim, eds. [New York: T & T Clark, 2004]). In the first  
11 phase of this research, Powell surveyed two groups of seminary  
12 students, one in the United States and the other in St.  
13 Petersburg, Russia. The experiment consisted of asking the  
14 students to read the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32,  
15 close their Bibles, and then recount it from memory as  
16 accurately as possible to one another in their respective  
17 groups. Powell discovered two major differences in the oral  
18 recounting of this parable. On one hand, while only six percent  
19 of the American students remembered the famine mentioned in  
20 verse 14, 84 percent of the students in St. Petersburg referred  
21 to it. On the other hand, 100 percent of the American students  
22 emphasized the prodigal son's squandering of his inheritance,  
23 whereas only 34 percent of the Russian students remembered this

1 detail. For the American students, the mention of the famine  
2 seems to be an extra detail that adds nothing fundamental to  
3 the story. Because they had no recent recollection of famine,  
4 they all emphasized the squandering of wealth as irresponsible  
5 behavior. However, for the Russian students, who lived and  
6 interacted with some of the survivors of the 900-day Nazi army  
7 siege to the city of St. Petersburg, in 1941, which triggered  
8 a famine that killed up to 670,000 people, the mention of the  
9 famine was a significant detail that added a lot to the story.  
10 This experiment is a good illustration of the need to adapt our  
11 message to our audience, both in style and content, just as Paul  
12 did with the Athenians.

13

#### 14 ***Need for Innovation in Mission Praxis***

15 Compared to his contemporaries, Paul was unconventional in his  
16 approach to ministry, especially in Athens. He could even be  
17 described as avant-garde when it came to the need to be versatile  
18 and adaptive in mission. His unique missionary qualities are  
19 desperately needed today. The modern-day Areopagus exists in  
20 different parts and forms in many urban centers. It could be  
21 a city square, a park, a street corner, a shopping center, a  
22 university amphitheater, or a café. The church needs members  
23 with corresponding gifts, talents, personalities, and

1 creativity, empowered and released for ministry in such  
2 centers. Members who are equipped to enter into nontraditional  
3 spheres, as well as engaged non-Christians, should be entrusted  
4 with the latitude to explore new ways of sharing the gospel,  
5 even if these ways appear at first to be unorthodox.

6 God's asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the son through  
7 whom God promised to make him the father of many nations, was  
8 unconventional (*Genesis 22*). Elisha's telling Naaman to "Go in  
9 peace" after Naaman made his two strange requests (*2 Kings 5*)  
10 was very unsettling at best (see last week's lesson). God's  
11 telling Isaiah to roam the streets of the city naked for three  
12 years, declaring a message of doom for Judah's allies, was  
13 really bizarre (*Isa. 20:2-4*). Think about the embarrassment  
14 Micah might have felt when God asked him not only to walk around  
15 naked, but to howl like a jackal and moan like an owl (*Micah*  
16 *1:8*)! In light of these biblical precedents, "When read in its  
17 context, the Bible offers many statements and examples that show  
18 God's approval for methods of mission that may go against the  
19 grain of our comfortable practices. Broad reading and the clear  
20 texts of the Bible . . . suggest that God is more open and  
21 creative than we are. If that is the case, we should not be quick  
22 to condemn that which is different or uncomfortable."—Jon  
23 Paulien, "The Unpredictable God: Creative Mission and the

1 Biblical Testimony," in *A Man of Passionate Reflection*, Bruce  
2 L. Bauer, ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission,  
3 Andrews University, 2011), p. 85. Instead of continuing to plow  
4 the mission fields with traditional methods, we need to be  
5 flexible, resourceful, and openminded in regard to new, and even  
6 unfamiliar, approaches to God's mission. Mission originated  
7 with God and remains His provenance. We therefore need to be  
8 dependent on Him. As King Jehoshaphat did, let us always turn  
9 to God, saying, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are  
10 upon you" (*2 Chron. 20:12, NIV*). If we are sincere, God will  
11 reveal His will to us. Maybe His way will not be conventional  
12 to us just as Jehoshaphat was instructed to send his army to  
13 war with singing. But one thing is sure: doing mission and  
14 ministry God's way, and with God's power, will accomplish His  
15 salvific purposes of reaching all segments of society.

16

### 17 **Part III: Life Application**

18

19 All humans are influenced, and limited, by the assumptions of  
20 their cultures and their worldviews. That important fact should  
21 be taken into consideration in our presentation of the gospel.  
22 Paul's ministry offers us a good example of outreach to

1 non-Christians. Below are a few basic principles meaningful to  
2 our mission to those who have not been exposed to the gospel:

- 3 1. People's cultures, with their deep-seated worldview  
4 assumptions, are their only frame of reference. People  
5 cannot be confronted with things that are beyond their  
6 frame of reference and be expected to respond positively  
7 to them. It is, therefore, essential to always be sensitive  
8 to the daily realities of the people to whom we witness.
- 9 2. We need to act with restraint and respect in our attitude  
10 toward non-Christians. We can get significant insights  
11 about non-Christians by studying their belief systems and  
12 talking to them for the sake of finding common ground that  
13 could be used as points of contact for presenting the  
14 gospel.
- 15 3. We should also focus on our audience's felt needs and  
16 aspirations and show them how Christ answers them. We  
17 should not allow our own cultural perspectives to get in  
18 the way of how God wants to introduce Himself to  
19 non-Christians through us. It is important that, in  
20 presenting the gospel, we refrain from assuming that our  
21 audience knows what we know about God, cares about values  
22 we care about, understands the concept of sin as we do,  
23 and feels guilty and in need of God's forgiveness.

1       4. Finally, we need to guard ourselves against watering down  
2           our message in the process of adapting it to our audience.  
3           The gospel is meant to challenge aspects of all worldview  
4           assumptions that are not in line with Scripture.

1 **TE-4Q-2023-11**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 Although the Gospel according to Matthew was written  
6 specifically for a Jewish audience, the presence of Gentiles  
7 near Jesus is a recurring theme in its narrative, sometimes in  
8 contrast to the devotion of Israelites. For example, while the  
9 Magi (Persian astrologers) come a long way to honor Israel's  
10 true king, the chief priests and scribes (Herod's wisemen) make  
11 no effort to do so. A Roman centurion's faith is praised by Jesus  
12 as greater than that of Israelites (*Matt. 8:10*). The Gentile  
13 execution squad is the first to confess Jesus' divine Sonship  
14 after His crucifixion (*Matt. 27:54*). In this distinctive way,  
15 Matthew highlights three things: (1) God's redemptive plan has  
16 always included all the nations on the earth; (2) Gentiles are  
17 not insensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit; and (3) laying  
18 aside ethnic, cultural, and religious prejudice to love and  
19 serve others, as Christ did, is a prerequisite to effective  
20 cross-cultural ministry. Thus, apart from being a call to global  
21 mission, Matthew's Gospel is also a message of ethnic  
22 reconciliation in Christ.

1           The other Gospel writers also highlight notable  
2 interactions of Jesus with Gentiles: He extended His outreach  
3 to the Gentile region of the Gadarenes (*Mark 5:1*), He healed  
4 a Roman centurion's servant (*Luke 7:1-10*), and He ministered  
5 to a Samaritan city (*John 4*). Jesus' interactions with  
6 foreigners revealed that the Kingdom of God is for all nations,  
7 Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus demonstrated in practical ways  
8 that God has always been concerned with extending His love and  
9 forgiveness to all nations.

10

## 11 **Part II: Commentary**

12

### 13 ***God's Missionary Heart for the Nations During Old Testament*** 14 ***Times***

15 God has always desired a covenant relationship with all human  
16 societies. He was concerned, not only with saving Israelites,  
17 but, through Abraham, God wanted His redemptive grace to be  
18 extended to every nation (*Gen. 12:1-3*). The calling of Abraham  
19 to be a blessing to all nations singularly indicates that the  
20 inclusion of these nations in God's redemptive plan was not an  
21 afterthought. Said differently, God's desire for the Gentiles  
22 (the nations of the world) to experience His salvation was not  
23 His Plan B. Centuries later, after the call of Abraham, God

1 extended the same call to Abraham's biological descendants  
2 (Israel) to be a nation of priests to all nations (*Exod. 19:6*).  
3 On numerous occasions God reminded Israel that they were chosen  
4 not because they were the best among the nations (e.g.,  
5 *Deuteronomy 7*) but because God loved them. Israel was chosen  
6 to be the vehicle through which other nations would come to know  
7 and worship God. Israel was to be a light to the rest of the  
8 nations. In *Jeremiah 2:3*, Israel is referred to as the first  
9 fruit of God's harvest, meaning there was a larger harvest  
10 outside of Israel. Right from the time that God called Abraham  
11 to be His flag bearer, His plan was to bring salvation to both  
12 Jews and Gentiles alike. Israel, as a nation, was, therefore,  
13 not chosen by God to the exclusion of every other nation. The  
14 account of the Old Testament is punctuated with stories of  
15 Gentiles who embraced the God of Israel as their God. Examples  
16 include Rahab, Ruth, Uriah the Hittite, and the Queen of Sheba.

17       Although God chose Israel as a nation to be His  
18 representative, He did not leave the mediation of His redemptive  
19 plan only to them. In many other ways, God unrelentingly  
20 revealed Himself to people of other nations. Ellen G. White  
21 makes the following important observation: "Outside of the  
22 Jewish nation there were men who foretold the appearance of a  
23 divine instructor. These men were seeking for truth, and to them

1 the Spirit of Inspiration was imparted. One after another, like  
2 stars in the darkened heavens, such teachers had arisen. Their  
3 words of prophecy had kindled hope in the hearts of thousands  
4 of the Gentile world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 33.

5 Melchizedek, a Canaanite priest-king, is one such  
6 non-Israelite to whom God reached out without the intermediary  
7 of other humans. Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High (El  
8 Elyon). The account of Melchizedek’s encounter with Abraham in  
9 Genesis 14:14-24 is very instructive. Abraham identifies his  
10 God, Yahweh, with El Elyon in three ways. First, he conjoined  
11 the two divine names—Yahweh and El Elyon—in a gesture that  
12 suggests they point to the same God (*Gen. 14:22*). Second,  
13 Abraham gave Melchizedek’s description of El Elyon to Yahweh:  
14 Maker of heaven and earth (*Gen. 14:22*). Third, Abraham’s  
15 acceptance of Melchizedek’s blessings and his gift of his tithe  
16 to the Canaanite priest suggest that Abraham legitimized  
17 Melchizedek’s priesthood (*Gen. 14:19, 20*). God had chosen  
18 Melchizedek “to be His representative among the people of that  
19 time, although he belonged to the Canaanite Community.”—Jacques  
20 B. Doukhan, *Genesis*, Seventh-day Adventist International Bible  
21 Commentary, 2016, page 214.

22 It is important to note that God’s unrelenting missionary  
23 outreach to His creatures in various ways does not make

1 believers' involvement in mission irrelevant. Matthew 28:18-20  
2 and 1 Peter 2:9 point out that making disciples for Christ is  
3 our fundamental reason for existence both as a church and as  
4 individual believers. It is a privilege for us to be co-laborers  
5 with God in what He could accomplish perfectly well without our  
6 participation. Also, knowing that God is ahead of us, preparing  
7 the ground for the sowing of the gospel seed, is another  
8 incentive to accept the privilege He graciously extends to us  
9 to be part of His team.

10

### 11 ***God's Missionary Heart for the Nations in the New Testament***

12 As noted above, although most of Jesus' public ministry was  
13 conducted in Jewish territory, the number of His personal  
14 encounters with Gentiles recorded in the Gospels is remarkable.  
15 Jesus goes as far as stating that He has other sheep outside  
16 of the Jewish community (*John 10:16*). Through the life and  
17 ministry of Jesus and His commissioning of His followers to make  
18 disciples of all nations (*Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8*), the early  
19 Christians gradually understood that God's covenant promise to  
20 welcome not just the descendants of Abraham, but people of all  
21 other nations as His heirs, would be enacted through the witness  
22 of the Church. With the conversion of Cornelius's household  
23 (*Acts 10*), something new broke into the life of the nascent

1 Christian community. That event and the subsequent lengthy  
2 deliberation on the meaning of this new thing that God was doing  
3 (*Acts 15*) convinced the early church that the admission of the  
4 Gentiles into the commonwealth of believers, as full  
5 beneficiaries of God's redemptive work in Christ, was ordained  
6 by God. As such, there was nothing they could do to invalidate  
7 this divine decree. Rather, it was now their responsibility not  
8 to overlook anybody in the sharing of the gospel.

9       As the inclusive people of God, called out of every nation  
10 to constitute one spiritual entity (*1 Pet. 2:9*), the Church was  
11 called, enabled by the Holy Spirit, and commissioned to execute  
12 the missionary task of being the light of the nations, which  
13 Israel as a nation had failed to become. 1 Peter 2:9 therefore  
14 makes clear that the entire Christian community is God's  
15 particular possession from among all the peoples of the earth.  
16 This verse combines the assertion of the identity of believers  
17 as God's elect and holy covenant people with their  
18 responsibility of proclaiming the wonderful acts of God to all  
19 who have not yet surrendered their lives to the lordship of Jesus  
20 Christ.

21       Convinced of his apostleship to the Gentiles (*Rom. 11:13*,  
22 *Rom. 15:16*, *Gal. 2:7*) and boosted by the proceedings of the  
23 Jerusalem Council (*Acts 15*), Paul dedicated the bulk of his

1 ministry to the Gentiles. His unfailing commitment to this  
2 mission propelled the gospel outside the borders of the nation.  
3 God's aim for commissioning Paul to the unreached Gentiles was  
4 to show that His offer of salvation is for all people.

5

### 6 **Part III: Life Application**

7       Knowing God's intention for every people group to  
8 experience His salvation, we are called to take up His mission.  
9 Just as Israel, as a nation, was mandated to be a light to the  
10 Gentiles, we as Christians—or spiritual Israel—are also  
11 commanded to be God's ambassadors to people who have not yet  
12 accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior (*Matt. 28:18-20, 2 Cor.*  
13 *5:20*). Clearly, Christ's disciples have an obligation to the  
14 unreached. The good news is that we do not necessarily have to  
15 go to the ends of the earth to find the unreached. There are,  
16 in every context of life, people who have not yet responded to  
17 the gospel. They may be our next-door neighbors, our colleagues,  
18 our classmates, our customers, our patients, or our students.  
19 We may encounter them as immigrants, refugees, international  
20 students, diplomats, or international businesspeople. Whatever  
21 the social, cultural, and religious background of the unreached  
22 people we encounter and minister to, we need to acknowledge that  
23 we cannot effectively minister to any group of people without

1 first freeing ourselves from stereotypes, prejudice, and  
2 discrimination toward them. We, therefore, need to pray that  
3 God will liberate us from any such prejudice.

4

1 **TE-4Q-2023-12**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 The book of Esther is unique for several reasons. One of those  
6 reasons is the lack of an explicit reference to God. Nowhere  
7 is God mentioned in the entire narrative's sequence—not by the  
8 Jewish characters, the story's heroes, or by the non-Jewish  
9 characters. And yet, despite this oddity, the book contains  
10 valuable wisdom for those who follow Jesus and desire to share  
11 their experience with God in a world where many are not open  
12 to explicit expressions of faith.

13       Often when people in the church think about, or discuss,  
14 mission, they focus on explicit faith-oriented actions, whether  
15 evangelistic meetings, distribution of faith-based literature,  
16 giving Bible studies, or other forms of outreach. These things  
17 require a certain level of freedom and connection to a community  
18 to foster any meaningful transformation. But what about places  
19 where government doesn't allow faith-based activities? What  
20 about areas where people are entirely uninterested in such  
21 activities? Often the church ignores such settings. But places  
22 that fit this description make up a substantial portion of the

1 world's population. This week, through the lens of Esther and  
2 Mordecai, we will see that God desires us to be creative in our  
3 witness, even in places and spaces that are not open to overt  
4 mission work.

5

## 6 **Part II: Commentary**

7

8 The story of Esther and Mordecai, much like the stories of Daniel  
9 and Joseph, is a reminder to the followers of God that they do  
10 not need to be pastors or religious leaders to serve the mission  
11 of God. These stories are in Scripture to demonstrate that,  
12 through public service, government officials, and other  
13 government agencies, the people of God can serve and impact  
14 society in such a way that they draw people toward the love of  
15 God.

16 In the case of Esther and Mordecai, they were able to save  
17 the lives of thousands of people by being faithful to the values  
18 and wisdom passed on to them through their Jewish ancestors.  
19 Often when we read biblical stories, we gloss over the details,  
20 not always recognizing the intensity presented in some of the  
21 situations, as in the case of Esther and Mordecai. What Esther  
22 and Mordecai faced was an extraordinarily stressful and  
23 precarious situation. For them, preaching sermons or involving

1 themselves in direct missional activity would not have served  
2 the larger mission of God, which was to draw people into loving  
3 relationships. What was needed was the courage to stand for life  
4 in the face of death. They took this stand in a context in which  
5 they were part of a minority group, under-appreciated in the  
6 empire. Yet, through God's influence and the willingness of  
7 Esther and Mordecai to make wise decisions in connection with  
8 God's overall plan for humanity, the queen and her adoptive  
9 father were able to be a blessing to people and to be part of  
10 a moment in history that was passed down via the pages of the  
11 Bible and the practice of the festival of Purim (*Esther*  
12 *9:18-32*).

13 Many, reading this Bible study guide, are living in places  
14 where they have significant religious freedom and do not have  
15 to worry about their lives being threatened if they reveal their  
16 faith. Others around the world do not have this luxury. Numerous  
17 followers of Jesus currently live in situations where an open  
18 adherence to God would land them in prison or endanger their  
19 lives and the lives of their families. Despite this danger, some  
20 of these people actively work in places of influence. God calls  
21 them to live out their faith in ways that may not seem like  
22 mission to many of us. It's possible that the best way for these  
23 people to serve God is to avoid openly expressing their faith.

1 Instead, their quiet work in the background impacts how people  
2 are treated, helping them to flourish. This work is no less  
3 important than the explicit gospel presentations that others  
4 make in situations in which they have more freedom. The courage  
5 required to stay faithful in situations in which you cannot do  
6 so openly is often demonstrably remarkable. Only in the New  
7 Earth will we know the impact that such people have had on  
8 countless lives worldwide.

9       There is another missional lesson to be learned from the  
10 story of Esther and Mordecai. Neither Esther nor Mordecai were  
11 trained theologians or trained pastors. They were regular  
12 people who had come to be in positions that were significant  
13 within the empire of the day (*Esther 2:7*). Little did they know  
14 how vital their roles would be. What is clear from the story  
15 is that both Esther and Mordecai worked and lived with a sense  
16 of integrity (*Esther 2:19-23; Esther 4:15, 16*). Despite the  
17 challenges that life threw at them, they remained dedicated  
18 workers for God and developed reputations for their diligence  
19 and honesty (*Esther 6*). As a result, when the activities of  
20 people around them (specifically Haman and his minions)  
21 conspired against them, their reputations became crucial to  
22 their survival.

1           If either Esther or Mordecai had not habitually been  
2 responsible people who served those around them with integrity,  
3 the story would have been very different. Their integrity gave  
4 them the platform from which to ask for favors and speak openly  
5 when it was a matter of life and death (*Esther 5:8; Esther 7:3,*  
6 *4*). And they were not only heard at that moment, but they were  
7 listened to (*Esther 8*).

8           Herein lies the lesson for us today. Most followers of  
9 Jesus are not employees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.  
10 Even fewer occupy positions such as a pastor, teacher, or  
11 chaplain. Yet, according to the story of Esther and Mordecai,  
12 it is often not the official workers who have the most  
13 significant amount of influence in a community. Usually, the  
14 average church member, who may work in secular businesses or  
15 for a civil service entity, has the greatest missional  
16 potential. We must never underestimate the role our  
17 relationships with people may have in the long run. The history  
18 of the mission of God is full of stories, many untold, that  
19 resemble Esther and Mordecai's. While most followers of Jesus  
20 may not be in such high-profile positions as Esther and Mordecai  
21 were, they are still in places and spaces to which pastors and  
22 other people employed by the church have no access.

1           In those spaces and places, a person's reputation for  
2 maintaining a high level of integrity and carefulness on the  
3 job will draw people to him or her in relationships of respect  
4 that create the possibilities for numerous influential  
5 opportunities. Sometimes explicit references to God are not  
6 what is needed to draw people toward the life that God desires  
7 for all humanity. It is essential to remind ourselves of this  
8 reality and remind the people around us, as well.

9           If a person were to tally up all the stories in the Bible  
10 about faithful followers of God, they would be surprised at how  
11 many of the stories are about everyday people living out their  
12 faith in everyday settings. The Bible demonstrates that God's  
13 mission is for all people and that any person can be a  
14 participant in that mission. It does not necessarily require  
15 that a person leave behind his or her career in a field other  
16 than church work. In fact, in most cases, what is needed is for  
17 more people to see their existing places of work as their mission  
18 field. This understanding does not always require that they  
19 explicitly evangelize their co-workers. It often means that  
20 they work with honesty and integrity, allowing the  
21 relationships that come from such an approach to blossom  
22 naturally. There is a high chance that the people who implement  
23 such an approach will periodically find themselves in

1 situations that require courage and decisions that have an  
2 impact far beyond themselves. Living in a relationship with God  
3 will prepare them for such situations.

4

### 5 **Part III: Life Application**

6

7 The church must pray regularly for those who live in places where  
8 an open adherence to their faith is dangerous. The church should  
9 pray that God will give those in such places the courage to live  
10 out their faith through appropriate expressions in their given  
11 settings. The church should regularly intercede at the throne  
12 of grace for those who are in situations without freedom,  
13 praying that somehow, through their influence, they may get a  
14 glimpse of the love of God and the life God wants for all  
15 humanity. Setting aside a week each month in the church for more  
16 intentional prayer along these lines would be very valuable.

17       Together we need to creatively encourage all followers of  
18 God who are not official church employees. We need to recognize  
19 their service through the different avenues of influence they  
20 have. The church should also invest in training that focuses  
21 on helping church members see how their work can be missional  
22 without necessarily requiring explicit witnessing. The General

1 Conference has resources and personnel who have thought  
2 explicitly about, and practiced, “tentmaking” approaches in  
3 mission, who may serve as contact persons for such training.  
4 Prayerfully considering in more intentional ways how the  
5 members, in their regular jobs, can be mission-oriented would  
6 drastically change how the gospel would spread around the world.  
7

1 **TE-4Q-2023-13**

2

3 **Part I: Overview**

4

5 The Second Coming of Jesus, which leads to the re-creation of  
6 this earth, is the culmination of the biblical story. Revelation  
7 21 and 22 could be described as the ultimate “happy” ending.  
8 And in some sense, this is an accurate interpretation. From this  
9 perspective, the Second Coming and the new earth are the end  
10 of God's mission. The end is an eternal life of happiness and  
11 joy with God. In another sense, this ending is not the “end”  
12 but the beginning, or continuation, of what God intended for  
13 humanity and for the earth, a beginning in which the redeemed  
14 deepen their understanding of God and His character throughout  
15 eternity.

16 It may be helpful to think of God's revelation of Himself  
17 in three phases, with each phase requiring different  
18 definitions of “mission.” (1) The first phase comprises the  
19 world's creation and God's interaction with His created beings  
20 in Eden. Even in Eden, God's mission was to reveal, through  
21 loving relationships, who He was. But sin altered this reality,  
22 leading to the world we dwell in, a world full of misery, pain,  
23 suffering, and death. (2) This great change required God's

1 mission to take on new elements, most specifically the need for  
2 the Incarnation, leading to the life, death, and resurrection  
3 of Jesus. The Incarnation makes possible the future reality of  
4 the new earth. (3) The final phase of God's mission reaches its  
5 climax at the Second Coming.

6 But the Second Coming is not the end of humanity or God's  
7 story. Eternal life would be meaningless if the Second Coming  
8 heralded only the end of this earth's history. Instead, eternity  
9 is a new beginning of infinite possibilities.

10

## 11 **Part II: Commentary**

12

13 As Seventh-day *Adventists*, we rightfully emphasize the Second  
14 Coming in our churches and in our evangelism. The world  
15 desperately needs the message of hope that the Second Coming  
16 provides. Equally important is the biblical description of the  
17 new earth, which is not some heavenly realm in the clouds but  
18 rather a re-created earth that in many ways resembles our  
19 current world. The significant difference between the new earth  
20 and this earth is that there are no longer problems from sin  
21 and death.

22 From the time Adam and Eve chose to follow a path contrary  
23 to the loving way shown by God, humanity and the earth, as a

1 whole, have faced suffering and death. Such a fate was not what  
2 God intended for humanity, but it was a possibility in a world  
3 of free will, which is required in order for love to exist. For  
4 us in the world today, we currently find ourselves in this phase  
5 of God's mission. God's mission has included revealing Himself  
6 in numerous ways to the people of the earth throughout history,  
7 as the Bible attests. The ultimate manifestation took place in  
8 the Incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God, on earth (*John 1:1-14*).  
9 A crucial part of God's mission was completed during the  
10 Incarnation, namely the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus,  
11 which make eternal life possible for humanity.

12         Despite Jesus' extraordinary act of love and redemption  
13 about 2,000 years ago, we still find ourselves mired in the  
14 horror of this world. God's mission to lead us into eternal life  
15 in a re-created world is still in the future. The fulfillment  
16 of what God did through the Incarnation will find its most  
17 profound actualization in the resurrection of the faithful, who  
18 will be translated, along with the those who are living in  
19 relationship with God, when Jesus comes again (*1 Cor. 15:12-34*).  
20 Even this outcome is not the final fulfillment of God's  
21 redemption. That event occurs when the earth is re-created, as  
22 described in Revelation 21-22.

1           God's mission is relationally centered, and it is in  
2 Revelation 21 and 22 that we, as readers, get a glimpse of God's  
3 relational desire to be with us in a more tangible form for  
4 eternity. Revelation 21 and 22 speak about God dwelling with  
5 humans face-to-face on earth (*Rev. 21:3, Rev. 22:4*). This  
6 cohabitation of the divine with humanity is the end goal of God's  
7 current mission related to us. It is beyond our imagination to  
8 feel and understand what living with God face-to-face will be  
9 like, but from the description in the Bible, it is something  
10 beautiful that should inspire those who read it to want a  
11 relationship with God now.

12           From this perspective, it could be argued that God's  
13 mission is completed in the new earth. Indeed, the plan of  
14 Redemption has played itself out at this stage. And yet, at some  
15 level, it seems God's mission continues beyond what we as humans  
16 can even fathom. Is the new earth the end or the beginning? In  
17 short, it is both.

18           As humans, we must keep in mind that we are created beings.  
19 As a result, we can never claim to be all-knowing as God is.  
20 Such a realization entails that humans will be eternal learners,  
21 constantly growing in understanding who God is and who we are  
22 in relation to God, one another, and the earth. Therefore, if  
23 we define the mission of God as being God's desire to reveal

1 His love to humanity and have that love creatively replicated,  
2 then God's mission would have no end, but is, rather, an eternal,  
3 ongoing reality.

4 This understanding fits the biblical description of God  
5 more accurately, rather than claiming the new earth to be the  
6 end of His mission. Instead, the new earth is a new beginning  
7 that builds on what has come before, but eternally changes  
8 toward deeper and more meaningful relational love. In this  
9 sense, God's mission is an eternal activity in which we have  
10 the privilege of participating. Thus, the end of a particular  
11 phase of God's mission occurs at the Second Coming. But this  
12 ending leads into the next phase of God's mission. So, the new  
13 earth is not simply a completion, but rather a continuation.

14 The new earth phase of God's mission also is a time of  
15 abundance and joy, fulfilling what John 10:10 claims is God's  
16 purpose for humanity. The description of the new earth is one  
17 of diversity, with people from all different cultural  
18 backgrounds making up the population (*Rev. 21:24*). Under divine  
19 inspiration, John the Revelator describes the redeemed joyfully  
20 eating and drinking together, partaking of the fruits of the  
21 tree of life and of the living water flowing from God's throne  
22 (*Rev. 21:6, Rev. 22:2*). The new earth is a place that gives the  
23 impression of creativity beyond our wildest imagination. God

1 will be there among humanity, interacting with us, creating new  
2 ideas, and showing love in new ways alongside us. No wonder,  
3 then, that John's reaction was an urgent plea for God to come  
4 quickly (*Rev. 22:20*). The same desire inspires us today to share  
5 with others the good news of God's plans for the redeemed in  
6 eternity.

7

### 8 **Part III: Life Application**

9

10 Seventh-day Adventists pride themselves in having the message  
11 of the Second Coming front and center in their identity. This  
12 message is something for which we should be thankful and share  
13 with the broader world around us. There is no doubt that this  
14 message is one that the world desperately needs to hear.

15 But the truth about the Second Coming goes beyond sharing  
16 a message. Humanity also needs to see what it means to live in  
17 the present with the hope of the Second Coming and of the new  
18 earth. Believing in the biblical description should lead to more  
19 than evangelistic sermons but to a radically different way of  
20 living in the present. Those who read Revelation 21 and 22 and  
21 understand the relational beauty it portrays should be drawn  
22 into this kind of life now. There are limits due to the impact

1 of sin and death, but these constraints don't preclude the  
2 possibility of sharing glimpses of the new earth. For those who  
3 have experienced the love of God firsthand and believe in the  
4 promises of Scripture, eternal life begins now.

5       When the hope of the Second Coming and the reality of the  
6 new earth become part of our way of living, we as believers will  
7 experience daily life from a perspective of hope in the midst  
8 of a world that can seem hopeless. This perspective can aid the  
9 believer in experiencing and sharing joy and peace, which will  
10 be manifested in kindness, patience, and gentleness toward  
11 others. Such a perspective also can inspire humanity to use  
12 their talents and gifts to creatively live out God's love, as  
13 He intended for humanity from the beginning. Living such a life  
14 of love now demonstrates recognition on the part of the faithful  
15 follower of God that His way is a path toward abundant life.  
16 Moreover, this choice indicates that God's followers would  
17 enjoy the experience of the new earth to its fullest.

18