

## 2. Every Member Ministry (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

**Biblical material:** Eph. 4:12, 2 Cor. 5:15-20, John 4:35–41, 1 Thess. 1:5-8, Acts 14:27, 1 Peter 2:9.

### Quotes

- Evangelism in the New Testament sense is the vocation of every believer and there is therefore something radically wrong when we imply that personal evangelism is the province of those who have the time and/or inclination to take special course and learn special techniques. *Roland Allen*
- Evangelism is the perpetual task of the whole church, and not the peculiar hobby of certain of its members. *E. Wilson Carlisle*
- When a Christian presents the good news about Jesus he is preaching treason in the devil's kingdom. *Doug Barnett*
- The gospel is for lifeboats not showboats, and a man must make up his mind which he is going to operate. *Vance Havner*
- Evangelism is not a spare-time activity. *Thomas Cosmades*
- Every single believer is a God-ordained agent of evangelism. *R. B. Kuiper*

### Questions

Why should we stress that everyone needs to be involved in witnessing? How can this be best presented? Is this an activity we engage in, or is it reflecting who we are? What happens if we are not all involved? Does “one size fit all” in evangelism? How are we part of the great controversy in what we say and do?

### Bible summary

God gives gifts to Christians “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Eph. 4:12 NIV). This includes all of us. God has reconciled us to himself (not the other way round!), and has given all of us this ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:15-20). The mutually-interdependent nature of sharing the truth about God is explained by Jesus in John 4:35-41, including the comment that we reap where others have sown. Paul writes to the believers in Thessalonika to commend them for all the work they are doing together (1 Thess. 1:5-8). The church is gathered *together* to learn and be instructed (Acts 14:27). We believe in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) and this means we are all involved in the process of sharing the glorious good news! The New Testament presents a picture of a vibrant, living community of believers who did not evangelize out of duty but out of love for the truth, wanting to share their experience of their loving Lord with all who would listen to what they had to say. The truth was in demonstration far more than in programs!

### Comment

*We are ambassadors for Christ—every last one of us who are Christians.* If this is so, what are we to do, and what are we to say? While we are very much in this world, how are we not “of” it? Does this mean some kind of haughty disengagement? Then what of the practical application—for the theory may seem clear, but in practice...

Some criticize our involvement in human organizations. But are we not called to witness for God and the truth wherever? Most importantly, how will those outside our community come to know the God we love and admire? It is not just a question of traditional evangelism—it is how we live our lives before the on-looking universe.

“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” 2 Cor. 5:19, 20 NIV. We are ambassadors for Christ because he has given us his message of reconciliation. So how do we explain what this message is, and how do we demonstrate it unless we become involved?

Yes, we all need to be involved. But this does not mean a cookie-cutter mentality, everyone forced to do things the same way. We are given creativity and individuality, and we need to be sharing the truth in our own unique ways. The problem with our evangelism is that all too often we have a stereotypical view on what should happen. Instead God gave us all our own special voices to speak his truth in the way that affects us most. Witnessing means a very personal approach, and while we all do need to be active in this, it is not for other to say how this should be done. We are witnesses of what God has done for us and what he means to us. Anything less is second-hand news.

It is my sincere conviction that we have not so much a duty but an amazing opportunity to share with all people at all levels the wonderful good news of God as He truly is, to reveal he is not as the Enemy has described him, and that he will save and heal us while at the same time revealing his nature to the universe, as his character is understood and appreciated by all his admiring children.

### **Ellen White Comments**

There are no drones in the household of God. Every member of the household of faith has his work appointed to him... If he is a learner in the school of Christ, he will learn how to give a testimony, how to pray, how to be a living witness for the Master. {TMK 62}

All that the apostles did, every church member today is to do. We are to work with as much more fervor, accompanied by the Holy Spirit in as much greater measure, as the increase of wickedness demands a more decided call to repentance. Every one on whom is shining the light of present truth, is to be stirred with compassion for those who are in darkness. From all believers, in clear, distinct rays, light is to be reflected... At this time, when the end of all things is at hand, should not the zeal of the church exceed even that of the early church? Zeal for the glory of God moved the disciples to bear witness to the truth with mighty power. Shall not this zeal fire our hearts with a longing to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and him crucified? Should not the power of God be more mightily revealed today than even in the time of the apostles? {BTS, January 1, 1911}

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator-- individuality, power to think and to do. {Ed 17}

But while you are to blend as one, neither of you is to lose his or her individuality in the other. God is the owner of your individuality. Of Him you are to ask: What is right? What is wrong? How may I best fulfill the purpose of my creation? {AH 103}