

## 7. Corporate Evangelism and Witnessing (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

**Biblical material:** Eccles. 4:9-12; Psalm 37; Phil. 1:5-18; Eph. 4:15, 16; Col. 1:28, 29, 2 Timothy 2:2.

### Quotes

- The church is not a yachting club but a fleet of fishing boats *Anon*
- We must consider it an honor that the gospel of salvation has been committed to the church. *Shuichi Matsumura*
- Witnessing is the whole word of the whole church for the whole age. *A.T. Pierson*
- Missionary zeal does not grow out of intellectual beliefs, nor out of theological arguments, but out of love. *Roland Allen*
- The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. *C. S. Lewis*
- The greatest hindrances to the evangelization of the world are those within the church. *John R. Mott*

### Questions

Is the term “corporate” the best one to use in conjunction with evangelism? In our “corporate mission,” what are the positives and negatives? In all our church programs, what must we never fail to emphasize? How do we see ourselves as part of a larger body? Can the organization really “do” evangelism? How can leaders help/hinder evangelism?

### Bible summary

Eccles. 4:9-12 reminds us that “two are better than one.” Psalm 37 is quoted to show us that God is the source of our success, and that we should trust in him rather than fret about what the wicked do. Paul writes to encourage the church at Philippi (Phil. 1:5-18), reminding them that they are in partnership together and all that matters is that Jesus Christ is preached. We are to build and link together in the same way the different parts of the body do (Eph. 4:15, 16). We are to work together to proclaim Jesus (Col. 1:28, 29), and to delegate work to those who can be trusted (2 Timothy 2:2).

### Comment

Early Adventists (post-1844) had the challenge of re-ordering their mission. The concept of the ‘shut door’ meant that little else could be done in terms of evangelism, since there was effectively no time left. The Church’s global outreach program was only possible through the recognition of ‘occupying the time’ until the Lord returned.

Similarly, in strategic planning, while the future advent of Christ remains the Adventist focus, over-stressing its imminence as an ‘any moment’ event means future planning is essentially irrelevant. Consequently in reviewing the future, it is absolutely important to plan for the future, and that the Church continues to fulfill the divine commission until the very end, whose timing remains in the hands of our loving and soon-returning Lord.

However the term “corporate” often has negative associations, and even though we have termed our structure a corporation (General Conference Corporation is the legal name we have chosen for our highest organization) we need to make sure that we still operate according to Christ’s principles and demonstrate that we are truly a Christian church.

The gospel has been defined as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. A pretty good definition. Keeps the one preaching humble, and point out that the source is not in ourselves. Yet the Structures of the Church, the Committees and Commissions and Councils and Congregations and Conferences and Congresses rather say otherwise, arrogating in a subtle way the responsibility for salvation to ourselves.

Jesus greatest condemnation was for leaders who told everyone they were right and Jesus was wrong. Blind guides, he called them. So above all else, we must not become blind to reality of the gospel, and its compelling demand to share God’s truth, and not our own version of truth, our Galatian “other gospel.”

But “we do not preach ourselves,” Paul reminds us, “but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake...” (2 Cor. 4:5 NIV). Servants. Well, slaves, actually... Slaves for the gospel. Not the most comfortable of images, but Biblical, at least!

Slaves do not look for the credit. Slaves do not seek high position. Slaves do not want adulation or praise or glory. They just do the Lord’s will. Which is what? Not defining it as what *we* would prefer to do. But taking what Jesus said seriously. Giving, compassionate, caring, loving, healing.

Understanding that the way we live our lives does say what we believe, or what we don’t. Practice is the measure, not our preaching. For it’s so easy to convince ourselves that what we want is what we need...

For the “cognitive dissonance” (nice term for ‘not making any sense’) between what we say and what we do leads to so much rejection of the gospel. Like Gandhi saying he’d become a Christian if he ever met one who truly followed Christ’s teachings.

But getting personal, when was the last time I did something other than for personal interest? What have I done to spread the gospel?

### **Ellen White Comments**

God has ordained that the representatives of his church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority. The error that some are in danger of committing is in giving to the mind and judgment of one man, or of a small group of men, the full measure of authority and influence that God has vested in his church, in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of his work. {PC 422}

My spirit was pained within me, for I had lost confidence in that which I had ever presented before the people as the voice of God to His children. It has not been the voice of God. There has been a lording power exercised over God’s heritage in decisions which were not dictated by the Spirit of God... We cannot therefore present before the people that the voice of the General Conference in its decisions must move and control them; for its propositions and decisions cannot be accepted. They are not in the right line of progress. God is cropped out of their counsels. {17MR 221-2}