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**Sabbath
School
Personal
Ministries**

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of the Sabbath School Publications Board, a subcommittee of the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM), publisher of the Bible study guides. The published guide reflects the input of worldwide evaluation committees and the approval of the Sabbath School Publications Board and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).



WHY OUR CHURCH?

Although experts disagree on the exact number, one thing is certain: many Protestant denominations exist today. Hundreds, even thousands.

Which leads to such questions as, Why the Seventh-day Adventist Church? What's our purpose? What relevance do we have?

The answer is simple: God raised up this church to proclaim “present truth,” the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6–12.

Yes, a number of churches exist, and many with aggressive outreach and evangelism programs too. But, at last count, only one church is specifically proclaiming the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. That church is ours—and that’s why we’re here. Period.

Thus, whatever else our church is doing, first and foremost, we should purposefully attempt to lead as many people as we can into God’s eternal kingdom. Whether we call it “spreading the gospel,” “evangelizing the world,” or preaching “present truth,” our core business is to tell the Jesus story with the intention that people will accept Him as Lord and Savior and become disciples and even disciple makers.

Although most local churches are involved in many activities, and (ideally) all of those activities are good and useful—our challenge must be to make all that we do as a church relate to the core business of reaching the lost with the “everlasting gospel” (*Rev. 14:6*) and all that it entails.

Of course, even with the benefits of modern technology, the task is huge. And when all is said and done, the task falls upon millions of volunteers motivated by a love for God and for lost humanity—a love for those whose sins Jesus bore on the cross just as much as He bore ours.

While evangelism and witnessing are the personal responsibility of each believer, the whole body of Seventh-day Adventist believers (the church) has a corporate responsibility, as well. As each member contributes to the evangelistic goals and strategies of his or her local church, precious people are won to Christ. And here's a point that can't be overemphasized: if it's not done at the local church level, it just won't get done.

In the context of outreach, understanding spiritual gifts also is important. It is vital, however, to not only encourage members to discover how they are spiritually gifted but to also present them with opportunities to exercise those gifts. Fundamental belief number 17 says in part: "God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts, which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions."—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), p. 237. An understanding of the gospel story coupled with a personal connection to Jesus Christ will enable people to work with the right motivation for saving souls. Evangelism and witnessing should be motivated by a love response, not by fear or guilt.

As with any study, this quarter's lessons will help to increase a person's store of biblical knowledge. That's fine, but the goal is not just to gain knowledge, no matter how wonderful the knowledge. The goal is for us to use that knowledge for good, and in this context the greatest good is to give those who face eternal destruction the opportunity for eternal life.

That's the reason that the Seventh-day Adventist Church exists. What better one could there be?

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