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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 the ways in which 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 the Seventh-day Adventist Church exists. What better one could there be?

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Apply); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Create).

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in “The Lesson in Brief” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Apply: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Create: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (*James 1:22*). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.