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*The Role of the Church in the Community*

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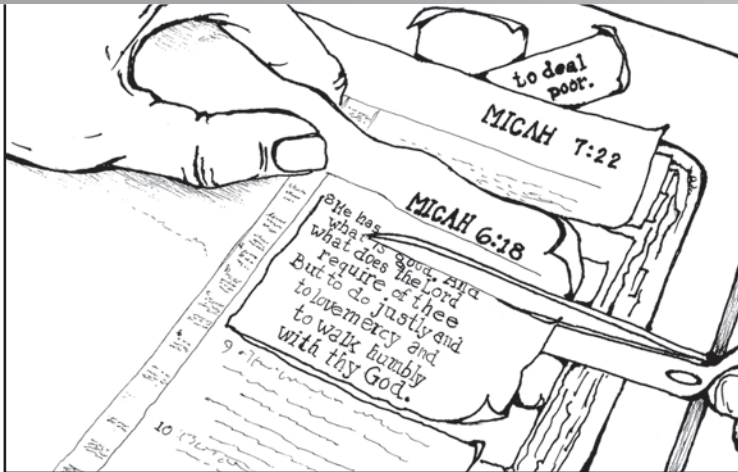


**Sabbath School  
Personal  
Ministries**

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## Introduction



## The Whole Gospel

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A pastor held up his Bible in front of his church. The Bible was torn and ragged. In college he and some classmates had gone through his Bible and underlined verses about justice, poverty, wealth, and unfairness. Then, with a pair of scissors, they cut out every verse dealing with those topics. When they had finished, his Bible was full of holes. These themes are so important to the Bible that there is a lot missing from the Bible when they are removed. The torn and ragged Bible speaks powerfully and loudly about the things that God cares about.

What should this story say to us as Seventh-day Adventists? It should say a lot. Research shows that approximately 30 percent of Seventh-day Adventists are involved in meeting the needs of the community outside the church. What about the remaining 70 percent? Jesus calls His entire end-time church to preach and live the whole “everlasting gospel” (Revelation 14:6).

What is the *whole* gospel? Jesus’ mission and ministry (work done for God) are shown in Luke 4:16–21. These verses picture the whole gospel as more than preaching the truth of salvation by faith. The gospel must be at the heart of all that we do. Jesus teaches that preaching the gospel also means showing love and mercy for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the brokenhearted, the suffering, the outcast, and the imprisoned. Living the gospel is about justice and undoing what the devil has done as we wait for Jesus to come.

This quarter we will explore this wholistic (complete) version of the “everlasting gospel.” We will examine the work of the church in influencing its communities with this gospel. We define the “church” as a group of people who, together, do not live for themselves. Instead, they are called out to live and to preach the everlasting gospel accord-

ing to Jesus' work. This calling means not just preaching but also living the gospel. We live out the gospel by serving the needs of those in our local communities.

How does your local church as a group serve those in need? All ministries of the church (for example, health, family, youth, Sabbath School, deacons/deaconesses, and so on) work together to serve the community. In addition, many churches work through centers known as Adventist Community Services (ACS). Adventist Community Services lives out the principles (important rules) of the gospel and prepares the way for hearing the Word of God (the Bible). In some parts of the world ACS is called Dorcas, Adventist Men, or by some other name. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is another good example. It does not operate from the local church, but it is another important part of reaching those in need.

How do you personally show your appreciation (high value) for what God has done for you in Christ? One church member put it this way:

On the street I saw a small girl,  
She was cold, shivering in a thin dress,  
with little hope of a decent meal.  
I became angry and said to God:  
“Why did You let this happen?  
Why don't You do something about it?”  
For a while God said nothing.  
Then that night He answered quite suddenly:  
“I certainly did something about it.

I made you.”—Adapted from Dwight Nelson, *Pursuing the Passion of Jesus* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), page 78.

***The torn and ragged Bible speaks powerfully and loudly about the things that God cares about.***

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