

A satellite is shown in orbit above the Earth's horizon. A bright, glowing light source, possibly the sun, is positioned behind the satellite, creating a lens flare effect. The background is a deep blue space filled with stars and a nebula. The satellite has a complex structure with various instruments and antennas.

DISCOVERING  
REVELATION

**EVANGELISM  
MANUAL**

## INTRODUCTION

What you are about to read is what would happen under *ideal* circumstances. Sometimes, you will get close to the ideal. Most of the time, you will not. Any seasoned evangelist will tell you that careful preparation is essential to success, but at the same time, you will always have to be ready to adapt your plans to unexpected circumstances.

I have often likened evangelistic preparation to planning for the birth of your first child. You can take all the classes on parenthood and childbirth you wish—and you will be glad you did—but there is no way classes can prepare you for everything that happens.

That, for me, is part of the excitement of public evangelism. If it were entirely predictable, it wouldn't be much fun. The inevitable “emergencies” that erupt in the last week before opening night remind me that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) It's *almost* come to the point when the only time I really worry is when nothing goes wrong.

Take advantage of the experience represented in the pages ahead. I wish I could claim that this manual represents my own wisdom, but that would be deceitful. It represents the collected wisdom of many front-line evangelists who, together, hold *centuries* of experience. I will forever be grateful for the conference president who, sensing my desire to learn public evangelism, sent me on the road with a number of seasoned soul-winners so that I could learn from them: Dan and Gloria Bentzinger, Ron and Carol Halvorsen, Richard and Mary Halversen, Leo and Tammy Schreven, Henry and Emma Feyerabend, and many more. These people taught me the key principles that can never be learned from a textbook.

The more you *do* this, the more fun it becomes. It is our prayer at the Voice of Prophecy that your church will experience the invigorating revival God intends when we engage in the only activity He actually asked our church to do.

Shawn Boonstra  
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## CHAPTER 1: HOW EVANGELISM WORKS

The idea of holding public evangelistic meetings scares the stuffing out of a lot of people. *What if I get all of my church members on board, then the meetings don't go as well as planned? What if I'm not convincing enough? What if it creates controversy in the community?*

If you're an introvert (at least one-third of us are), the prospect of presenting our unique message in front of a large group becomes even more daunting. It means mingling with crowds and creating many semi-close relationships with people you've just met—an introvert's nightmare. But if you answer to this description (I do), you should know that introversion also equips you powerfully for many key aspects of the task:

- The all-important tendency to listen to people carefully before you talk.
- Long hours of deep thought, which enable you to carefully craft evangelistic presentations that speak to broad groups of people.
- A dependency on teamwork, which helps avoid the crippling temptation to become a "star."

Fear of public evangelism is normal. Most of your fears can be conquered by simply understanding what evangelism is *not*: it is *not* converting people. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that you will never have the skill set required to bring people under conviction. That is the sole province of the Holy Spirit:

*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:10-14)*

Don't miss the essence of what Paul is saying. Human beings, in their natural sinful state, are *incapable* of receiving spiritual things.

Because of our understandable concern over the increasingly secular nature of Western society, we have often fallen into the trap of believing that our task as preachers is to make secularly-minded people interested in spiritual things. That approach has not produced much fruit in recent decades for a very good reason: we do not have what it takes to flip the spiritual switch in peoples' hearts so that they suddenly appreciate God.

Think back over your own conversion experience, and you will find something interesting. Long before you took your first Bible study or attended your first evangelistic meeting, you were slowly (or not-so-slowly) becoming interested in spiritual matters. God stirred your heart before He put you in contact with Christians who would help you finish your journey home.

It's not just *you* who experienced that. Every convert goes through the same process: God stirs the heart, and then puts them in contact with someone who will help them settle into His family. If you read the book of Acts carefully, you'll notice there are no "cold interests" to be found:

- On the day of Pentecost, when the disciples baptized three thousand new converts, the audience was already primed. They are described as "devout men, from every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5)
- The Ethiopian eunuch was already reading the book of Isaiah before God brought Philip into the picture. (Acts 8:27-29)
- Before Ananias was asked to work with Saul of Tarsus, God had already humbled Saul on the road to Damascus and had given him a vision of the man who would come to help him. (Acts 9:11, 12)
- The first Gentile convert, Cornelius, is described as a "devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always." (Acts 10:2)

In other words, *God always gets there first*. The heart is prepared before you enter the picture. Ellen White described this process beautifully in *The Desire of Ages*:

*The apostles were members of the family of Jesus, and they had accompanied Him as He traveled on foot through Galilee. They had shared with Him the toils and hardships that overtook them. They had listened to His discourses, they had walked and talked with the Son of God, and from His daily instruction they had learned how to work for the elevation of humanity. As Jesus ministered to the vast multitudes that gathered about Him, His disciples were in attendance, eager to do His bidding and to lighten His labor. They assisted in arranging the people, bringing the afflicted ones to the Saviour, and promoting the comfort of all. They watched for interested hearers, explained the Scriptures to them, and in various ways worked for their spiritual benefit. They taught what they had learned of Jesus, and were every day obtaining a rich experience. (The Desire of Ages, p. 349)*

Here are some important takeaways from that passage:

**1. The disciples were members of the family of Jesus.**

It is impossible to sell what you don't own. An evangelist cannot afford to cut back on personal time with Christ, no matter how busy they may get. There is more to do during an evangelistic meeting than any one person could possibly hope to achieve; but if you neglect "daily instruction" from the Master, you will accomplish even less. You will be surprised how often your morning prayer and study will prove essential that same evening.

**2. Jesus is the One who actually ministers to the crowd; we assist in *His* work.**

Here is where most modern evangelistic efforts fail. We seem to have adopted the idea that Jesus assigned us the Gospel Commission and then departed for heaven, leaving us to figure out how to accomplish what He asked.

Pay careful attention to the language of Revelation chapters 4 and 5. John is beyond distraught because nobody worthy can be found to open the scroll in God's hand. When the scroll is finally opened and the seals are loosed, the history of the church begins to unfold in chapter 6. If the scroll *cannot* be opened, the church on earth cannot commence its work.

What was the solution? A slain lamb—Jesus—takes the scroll. The slain lamb, of course, is a key part of the sanctuary service and, as with the rest of Revelation, this passage is saturated in sanctuary imagery. This scene, many believe, represents the installation of Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Just prior to reminding the disciples that they would carry the Gospel to the world, Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit:

*And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4, 5)*

Now notice how Peter explained what was happening when the Spirit descended on the disciples:

*"Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear." (Acts 2:33)*

We often say that the disciples received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but that is not entirely accurate. Peter told his audience that *Jesus* had just received the

promise of the Spirit, which He then poured on the church below. Compare this statement with David's description of the anointing of the High Priest in the second-to-last Psalm of Ascent:<sup>1</sup>

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brethren to dwell together in unity!  
It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
Running down on the beard,  
The beard of Aaron,  
Running down on the edge of his garments.  
It is like the dew of Hermon,  
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;  
For there the Lord commanded the blessing—  
Life forevermore. (Psalm 133:1-3)*

Oil, of course, is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and David describes the oil being poured over the High Priest's head in such quantity that it runs down his beard and off the hem of his garment. Peter essentially described the same thing to his audience at Pentecost: Jesus had just been anointed, and the oil of the Spirit had flowed over Him onto the church below. From that point forward, the church was blessed with the power of the Spirit and direct guidance from God.

The lesson for evangelism is simple—and potent. We have not been left alone to figure out how to fulfill the Gospel Commission. In fact, Jesus runs the whole program from heaven's sanctuary and involves us in the process for specific reasons.

You will notice in the book of Acts that God always gets to an interest first, stirring the heart and generating spiritual interest. Then He brings in a believer to help His convert understand what is happening and to invite that person into the church. God does *all the heavy lifting from heaven's sanctuary*, and we are mostly along for the ride.

We do not convert people. Rather, we are seeking those whom God is converting.

There's a radical difference, and once you grasp that you are not driving the process, you will find the work of evangelism much more rewarding—and far more productive.

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<sup>1</sup> The Psalms of Ascent were sung as the priests made their way up the steps into the Nicanor Gate into the courtyard of the Temple. There are fifteen such psalms, one for each step up toward the gate.

### 3. The disciples watched for interested hearers.

As we've already seen, we cannot make people interested. The first disciples weren't trying to make people interested in Jesus; the audience was already involved with Him. Their task was not to create interest, but to comb the audience looking for interested hearers.

This means that it becomes critically important to spend more time listening to people than talking. We often make the mistake of thinking that our primary task is to feed people enough information to generate interest, but as we have already seen Paul point out in 1 Corinthians 2, that is an impossible task.

Pray that God will show you where He's been speaking to the people you come in contact with through your Bible school and/or evangelistic meetings. Listen carefully to what they say, and be slow to react. You want to be sure you ascertain on which front God is dealing with their hearts. It might have to do with family or financial hardship, or it might be a growing conviction that the words of the Bible can be trusted. Without invading someone's privacy, your job is to listen long enough to be sure where their primary interests in God lie.

As the passage from *Desire of Ages* points out, we should go out of our way to arrange for the comfort of everyone who shows up. We must exercise our gifts of hospitality to the utmost. And then we must get to know the people who show up as friends, so that we can discern where their interest in spiritual matters began.

Here's the good news: almost everybody who comes through the door of your meetings (or enrolls in your Bible school) has *some* level of interest. The number of genuine secular atheists you will encounter is going to be low. There may be some who kick and fuss at the notion of God, but they wouldn't be at your event if there wasn't *some* level of interest and conviction.

### 4. The disciples explained the Scriptures to those who were interested.

This is one of your primary tasks during a public evangelistic meeting: explaining the Scriptures. An amazing picture emerges once you realize that God first wakes up the heart that you preach to: as you preach from the Bible, the audience is going to recognize the Voice that inspired it, because the Holy Spirit who guided the authors of Scripture has also been speaking to their hearts for some time.

We are present to help people connect the dots—to facilitate that moment when someone suddenly realizes, "Hey! I recognize that Voice!"

And then we *appeal* to those people to move forward with the One who called them to your meeting in the first place.



Once you see how the process actually works, it removes most of the fear from the process. You don't have to *make* people interested; that, for the most part, has already happened. You are building on the interest that already exists.

It will also change how you make appeals. Too often, we live in fear of altar calls because we think we have to be convincing enough to change peoples' minds. Quit worrying about that, because (as we've seen) it's not biblically possible to pull that off. You are not trying to convince people; you are appealing to those whom God is convincing to act on their conviction. It's an entirely different ballgame.

## 5. The disciples gained a rich experience.

Let's be honest: God doesn't really need us to win the world. Angels are far more capable than we are. In spite of our incapacity and imperfections, however, Jesus has asked *us* to do this.

Why? It's for our own good. In Eden, we chose to believe the words of a fallen angel over the words of our Creator, and we have struggled to trust God ever since. As a part of the solution, God has given us an utterly impossible assignment—making disciples of all nations—and then He invites us to trust that He will make our efforts bear fruit.

You'll remember how, when the children of Israel defeated Jericho, they never laid a hand on the city itself. Instead, Jesus Himself appeared to Joshua (Joshua 5), sword in hand, inviting His people to follow Him into battle. The Israelites were to march around the city for seven days, following the ark (the throne in the sanctuary), and then heaven did all the hard work.

It's the same with evangelism: God is trying to teach us to trust Him. And if you engage the one thing He's asked the church to do—to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:9, 10)—you will see God at work firsthand.

God could win the world without us, but He's trying to grow us into citizens of heaven, where everybody lives by faith. Don't forget: Lucifer was not allowed into the counsels of the Godhead, and we won't be invited, either. The key skill we need to develop to live in His presence is faith, and there is no better arena to acquire that skill than evangelism:

*If you will go to work as Christ designs that His disciples shall, and win souls for Him, you will feel the need of a deeper experience and a greater knowledge in divine things, and will hunger and thirst after righteousness. You will plead with God, and your faith will be strengthened, and your soul will drink deeper drafts at the well of salvation. Encountering opposition and trials will drive you to the Bible and prayer. You will grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and will develop a rich experience.*

*The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character, and brings peace and happiness to its possessor. The aspirations are elevated. There is no room for sloth or selfishness. Those who thus exercise the Christian graces will grow and will become strong to work for God. They will have clear spiritual perceptions, a steady, growing faith, and an increased power in prayer. The Spirit of God, moving upon their spirit, calls forth the sacred harmonies of the soul in answer to the divine touch. Those who thus devote themselves to unselfish effort for the good of others are most surely working out their own salvation.*

*The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has enjoined upon us—to engage, to the extent of our ability, in helping and blessing those who need the help we can give them. Strength comes by exercise; activity is the very condition of life. Those who endeavor to maintain Christian life by passively accepting the blessings that come through the means of grace, and doing nothing for Christ, are simply trying to live by eating without working. And in the spiritual as in the natural world, this always results in degeneration and decay. A man who would refuse to exercise his limbs would soon lose all power to use them. Thus the Christian who will not exercise his God-given powers not only fails to grow up into Christ, but he loses the strength that he already had. (Steps to Christ, pp. 80, 81)*

## CHAPTER 2: PLANNING YOUR MEETINGS

In the hyper-busy world of the 21st century, one of the first temptations people face when it comes to full-message public evangelism is to drastically reduce the considerable time investment required to share all of these presentations.

Fight that temptation. In the Discovery Center model, we have provided a number of shorter events—the Discover Seminars—to help generate interest in *Discovering Revelation*. There is very little superfluous material in this full-message series, and cutting presentations will only serve to confuse the audience. This series builds sequentially—and quite deliberately—subtly introducing new concepts every day in order to overcome cognitive dissonance in the audience. If you challenge someone’s worldview as a whole, you will meet much more resistance than if you carefully encourage people to consider smaller changes in their thinking over time.

Will an audience stick it out for a month? You’ll be surprised. Over the last 25 years, I’ve never had a meeting where we didn’t have a considerable core group that was hungry enough to devour the entire series of presentations. We live in strange times, and your neighbors know it. What seems mundane or unimportant to people who have lived in the Seventh-day Adventist movement for years is life-giving nourishment to people who have never heard it.

The other temptation people face when planning full-message evangelistic meetings is to run it one or two nights a week. It seems to make sense when people are busy, but it is nearly impossible to build any real momentum with your audience when you see them so infrequently. Personally, I would not consider fewer than four nights a week (and preferably five) when it comes to a series of presentations like this.

Key reasons to run your meetings four or more nights per week:

- It builds momentum and helps your appeals run more smoothly.
- People are more easily able to connect each new subject with the previous ones, and the big picture begins to loom much more impressively in their minds.
- Experience has shown that when people are more frequently engaged, they are quicker to make decisions and are more likely to stay with the church.
- Too few meetings each week gives ample space for the world to crowd out the message in the minds of your audience; there are simply too many opportunities to become distracted.
- It is far easier to get consistent volunteer commitments from church members for four or five weeks than it is for three or four months.

## Plan Early

We've spent a lot of time helping churches analyze what went wrong when their evangelistic outreach programs didn't go well, and one of the factors that consistently surfaces is a *lack of adequate planning*. Ellen White underscored how important careful planning is during the foundational years of our movement:

*God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. Success can only attend order and harmonious action. God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel. All who are working for Him are to labor intelligently, not in a careless, haphazard manner. He would have His work done with faith and exactness, that He may place the seal of His approval upon it. (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 376)*

*The work you are engaged in cannot be done except by forces which are the result of well-understood plans. ("Letter 14," 1887)*

*It is a sin to be heedless, purposeless, and indifferent in any work in which we may engage, but especially in the work of God. Every enterprise connected with His cause should be carried forward with order, forethought, and earnest prayer. (The Review and Herald, March 18, 1884)*

Back in the years of NET meetings, I came across one church that decided to participate in the event, but they called their first organizational meeting the *day before* opening night. A handful of church members met in the sanctuary on Thursday evening, and the meeting was over in 45 minutes. In other words, they spent half as much time organizing their campaign as they would spend on a single evening's presentation! They made one decision during that meeting: "We'd better get some Bibles to give to people." Someone headed to the church basement and collected a ragtag assortment of ancient tattered Bibles to give out as gifts.

When the guests arrived on opening night, the pastor started the projector and then disappeared into his office. Nobody took attendance. On decision nights, if they bothered to distribute decision cards, no one collected them. (One person actually *tried* to give a decision card to an usher, who wouldn't take it. The individual was instead encouraged to see if she could find the pastor somewhere in the building!)

When no one was baptized, they told us that "evangelism doesn't work."

Evangelism works just fine; the truth is that *they* didn't work.

Your meetings will typically bear fruit in direct proportion to the planning and effort that goes into them. It is no surprise that public outreach doesn't work for people who don't

believe it works: they don't plan, they don't try, and they fail to exercise faith. For those who *do* plan, try, and believe? It *always* works.

Ideally, you should start planning your full-message meetings **two years in advance**. I have seldom had that luxury, and it *is* possible to execute a wildly successful meeting in much less time.

If you *did* have two years, the general calendar would look something like this:

24 months out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start selling the vision from the platform every Sabbath as a major feature in the divine worship hour.</li> <li>• Secure the support of your church board and enlist the help of everyone in making the vision a reality. Underscore the concept that God will bless united effort prayerfully carried out by all those in leadership.</li> <li>• Start shopping for a public venue. These can be difficult to secure—and more expensive—if you wait too long.</li> <li>• Start (if you haven't) your <i>Discover Bible School</i>. Use your prayer meeting as a soul-winning hour; start meeting weekly with those responsible for giving Bible studies and coordinating the Bible school.</li> <li>• Develop a campaign budget and have it voted by the church board.</li> </ul>
12 months out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run a Discover Seminar and invite attendees to join Bible study small groups.</li> <li>• Mail <i>Discover Bible School</i> invitation cards to the zip/postal codes nearest your church to boost your enrollment.</li> </ul>
6 months out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run another Discover Seminar.</li> <li>• Fill your <i>Discovering Revelation</i> committee positions.</li> <li>• Mail a larger number of <i>Discover Bible School</i> invitation cards to the zip/postal codes nearest your church to boost your enrollment. Continue using your midweek prayer meeting to carefully coordinate the follow-up of your studies.</li> <li>• Begin planning your advertising campaign for the meetings.</li> </ul>
3 months out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize your advertising plans for the meetings; finalize door-to-door work, handbills, mailing dates, etc.</li> <li>• Continue following up your Bible studies; secure another mailing if you are experiencing a lag in the number of interests.</li> </ul>

2 months out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train your volunteers. Double-check that all committee positions are adequately staffed and make adjustments as necessary.</li> <li>• Double-check your contract with the hall. Confirm dates, terms, and prices.</li> <li>• Double-check that your advertising is running according to plan.</li> <li>• Plan a major prayer Sabbath dedicated to praying over the meetings.</li> </ul>
6 weeks out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch Operation Andrew in the church; it should run every Sabbath up through opening weekend.</li> <li>• Make sure your Bible school interests receive a personal letter of invitation to the meetings.</li> <li>• Be sure your materials/inventory for the meetings is on hand (or nearly so): Bibles, handouts, children’s meeting supplies, decision cards, registration materials, etc.</li> <li>• Make sure you have adequate plans for feeding volunteers who will spend many long evenings at the venue.</li> <li>• Continue training for volunteers.</li> </ul>
Week of opening night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out a dress rehearsal: gather all volunteers in the hall to review their responsibilities. Make sure everyone is familiar with their stations. Practice greeting, ushering, handout distribution, etc. Review the nightly run sheet so everyone knows <i>exactly</i> what to expect when they arrive on opening night.</li> </ul>
Opening night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have everyone arrive <i>very</i> early on opening night. On most nights, one hour ahead of the posted start time will be sufficient; on opening night, have everybody come at least 90 minutes ahead—there are always surprises, so be ready for them.</li> </ul>

If you only have a year (or even a little less) to prepare, then take all the items in the 24-month and 12-month sections and *do them now*. In the coming pages, we’ll break down each item in more detail.

## CHAPTER 3: SELLING THE VISION

A key part of evangelistic success derives from your efforts to enlist the help of your church members. Shortly after joining the church, I was a little surprised to learn how many church members actually grumbled about public evangelism—in spite of the fact that they had just witnessed more than 70 new members join the church! When I eventually moved on to other churches, I discovered a tragic fact: it is a very rare church where 100% of the congregation supports public evangelism.

A certain percentage of any given church will be happy if they see you're willing to wait until everyone is on board. They'll let you go on waiting forever.

Don't let *anybody* stall your plans to win souls. Find the people who *will* support your plans—no matter how small that group might seem in the beginning—and get started. Take the willing with you on evangelistic visits. Assign them to follow Bible study leads. On Sabbath morning, use the platform to share every little victory won by your willing assistants, and allow them to share their testimonies, no matter how small. If someone worked up the courage to talk to a neighbor about spiritual things, for example, bring that individual up front to share his or her experience. If someone handed out a copy of *Steps to Christ* for the first time in his/her life, let him/her talk about what happened.

You want to firmly establish the fact that you take the Gospel Commission seriously, and you are going to be a soul-winning church. After a number of weeks, it will be obvious to the congregation that your plans are real, and that evangelism is your highest priority. Ignore the naysayers; never give them a platform from which to throw cold water on your plans. Negativity on Christ's plans for His church should never be allowed to gain a foothold in a congregation.

At your church board meeting, consider making "evangelism" the number one item on the agenda each month. Put it ahead of everything else, including finances. Start with a worship thought (focused on soul-winning), pray, vote the minutes, and then begin to discuss and/or review your evangelistic plans. After a few months, it will be obvious to church board members that you expect them to contribute to those plans. In time, all of the traditional departmental reports—from Sabbath School to Pathfinders—will begin to revolve around your evangelistic strategy.

On Sabbath morning, make your sermons about soul-winning. Preach about Christ's ministry. Highlight His love and compassion for sinners. Underscore our God-given assignment as the remnant church.

In other words, eat, sleep, and breathe soul-winning. The congregation never will if *you* don't.

Be sure to over-communicate your plans to the congregation. Never ever assume that everyone understands what's happening. It is far better to over-inform than to assume that people understand. Here are a few suggestions for keeping your congregation well-informed and enthused about your plans:

- Share your plans with the church board, and review them every month.
- Visit key members in your congregation and share your plans with them personally.
- Communicate the plans and their progress in the church bulletin every week.
- Replace the announcement period in your worship service with a soul-winning feature.
- Start a regular email newsletter dedicated to the plans.
- Use your church's social media pages to generate excitement about your upcoming meetings.

### **Notes on Communicating**

One of the most important tasks you'll need to undertake as you prepare for your meetings is to constantly communicate your goals, your desires, and your needs to those around you. It's easy to think on a day-to-day basis that because *you* are so absorbed in this project that others around you are aware of what's happening. Over the years, I have seen this happen many times with my own family. I eat, sleep, and breathe a project every day for months, but fail to mention anything about it to my wife. Then, to her consternation, I'm amazed that she hasn't become informed by osmosis!

A good evangelistic project involves the whole body of believers. Take a look at chapters like 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, and God's plan for advancing His kingdom becomes clear: He has gathered believers together in order for them to accomplish the impossible through His power.

There are no "Lone Ranger" Christians in the global work of God's last-day church. Nobody has all of the skill sets necessary to pull off the task of public evangelism—or, for that matter, the time, the know-how, and the resources to finish the work on his or her own. Knowing our inherent strengths and weaknesses, God gathers us together in such a way that we simply *must* work together for the kingdom.

It is essential that those around you receive a relatively steady supply of information. Even those who have not directly volunteered to help with hands-on aspects of your project will still be involved in ways you may never see. They may be praying or donating quietly to support what's happening. But if they don't know what's happening, they won't know the needs of the project, and their help will be lost to you.



There are a number of ways you can keep information flowing:

**1. Bulletin announcements:** Use the bulletin every week to keep this campaign before the congregation.

**2. Phone calls:** Give participants an occasional phone call to keep them informed. These don't need to be long calls—in fact, long calls are usually counterproductive. If you often consume great swaths of a busy person's time, that person is often less likely to give you an audience in the future. Write down the key points you wish to convey before you make the call. Be friendly, convey enthusiasm, and BE BRIEF. Once your project is rolling, you'll want to make weekly calls to some of your key volunteers as well.

**3. Public announcements:** The occasional BRIEF announcement from the front of the church is a great way to demonstrate your enthusiasm for serving Christ. The most powerful use of this time is to convey one or two short success stories that have transpired in the past week. Did a number of people sign up for Bible studies? Did God answer your prayers this week and solve a sticky problem for you? Do you have an urgent need for volunteers? Share a success story or two and then make an appeal for help. Remember: success tends to breed more success. Dwell on the positive. Share good news. People will remember your electric smile, enthusiasm, and excitement long after they've forgotten what you've said.

**4. Newsletters:** Take the time—once a month in the beginning, and every couple of weeks toward the end of a project—to write a short letter to your volunteers and other church members to let them know what's happening. You might want to include a concise and clear calendar of events. Make a list of dates and events that fit on one page and put the title "A Matter for Prayer" at the top of the page, so it looks like something that should be posted on the fridge in people's homes.

Be creative in your communication; people remember originality. And remember: never assume that people already know. Those who do know won't mind if you repeat yourself once in a while. Those who don't know will be glad you did!

## CHAPTER 4: A HOUSE OF PRAYER

Prayed-for evangelistic meetings *always* run better than meetings that lack intentional prayer. In fact, years in the field have proven that *everything* that is deliberately prayed for in an evangelistic effort works better. Pray over your handbills before you mail them—expect better returns. Pray over the seats in your auditorium—expect more people to sit in them. We are participating in the Great Controversy, and heaven can point to the prayers of God’s people as evidence that this world would like God to intervene.

Here are some suggestions for developing an intentional prayer program leading up to your campaign:

- a. Plan at least two or three special prayer Sabbaths, perhaps 12 months, six months, and four weeks out from opening night.
- b. Preach on the importance of prayer at least once a quarter.
- c. When you’ve decided which zip codes you’ll be mailing your handbills to, organize church members on Sabbath afternoons to walk through those neighborhoods and quietly pray for the homes that will be receiving the invitations as they walk past them.
- d. Run an “Operation Andrew” program for the four Sabbaths before opening night:
  - i. On the first Sabbath, distribute Operation Andrew bookmarks to the congregation. (These will be made available for you to download from the [DiscoveryCenters.com](http://DiscoveryCenters.com) host website.) Explain that you’d like everyone to write down the names of one to 10 people they intend to invite to the meetings.
  - ii. Break into small groups of no more than 3-4 people and deliberately pray over those names. Explain that you are not simply praying that they will come, but that God will give you an opportunity to invite them. This should last about five minutes.
  - iii. On subsequent Sabbaths, break into small groups. Have people share how God has answered their prayers, and then pray again over the names.

The point of Operation Andrew is to behave as Andrew did in John 1:40-45. As soon as Andrew knew who Jesus was, he went and asked his brother Simon Peter to come and meet Him as well. We are praying for the same opportunity: to invite our friends to come and experience Jesus as we have!

## CHAPTER 5: THE CAMPAIGN BUDGET

It is very important to plan your evangelistic budget carefully. You'll want to work closely with the church board and treasurer. Wise financial planning is essential to any successful evangelistic endeavor:

*God's people are not to go forward blindly in the investment of means that they have not and know not where to obtain. We must show wisdom in the movements that we make. Christ has laid before us the plan upon which His work is to be conducted. Those who desire to build must first sit down and count the cost, to see whether they are able to carry the building to completion. Before they begin to carry out their plans, they must advise with wise counselors. If one worker, failing to reason from cause to effect, is in danger of making unwise moves, his fellow workers are to speak words of wisdom to him, showing him where he is in error. (Evangelism, p. 85)*

As you make your plans, it's essential to remember one important principle: you are not spending *your* money. It belongs to God!

Here are a couple of useful principles for building a solid evangelistic budget:

- 1. Overestimate and underspend.** It's tempting at times to present low figures when you're trying to secure a decision from the church to support an evangelistic project. You'll find this approach counterproductive in the long run, however, because as costs begin to exceed budget, you'll find your credibility slipping rapidly. It's much better to overestimate costs a little bit (you'll find that inevitable surprises will drive up your costs in spite of the most careful planning) and then keep your spending under budget. Congregations don't like surprises in expenditures any more than you do.
- 2. Do your homework.** While you might have to estimate some costs, don't rely on guesswork any more than you have to, and make it *educated* guesswork when you do. Take the time to make phone calls and research the actual costs of things. It will spare you a lot of embarrassment and/or hassle in the long run.

### Things to Remember When Developing Your Budget

#### 1. Prework Expenses:

*Discover Bible School materials*

*Discover Bible School invitation mailings*

*Discover Bible School operating costs: mailing, copying, etc.*

*Discover Seminar advertising*

*Discover Seminar materials*

## 2. Evangelistic Campaign Expenses:

Venue rental

Advertising:

Handbills

Newspaper

Radio

Television

Social Media

Banner(s) for hall

Gift Bibles—one per attendee

Copying: sermon outlines, Bible lessons

Decision cards

Registration tickets

Projector/screen rental (if necessary)

Sound system rental (if necessary)

Piano/keyboard rental (if necessary)

Attendance incentives—gifts for regular attendees

Childcare program: *Discovery Mountain* Child Evangelism Kit

Weekly update letters for guests: mailing costs

Miscellaneous (you'll need *something* here)

## 3. Evangelistic Campaign Income:

Funding from local church

Funding from conference<sup>2</sup>

Fundraising events (goal)<sup>3</sup>

Offerings<sup>4</sup>

Sales<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Contact the conference early. Some conferences offer funding for public outreach.

<sup>3</sup> It's hard to estimate this with certainty. It's better to be conservative in your goals and beat them than the other way around.

<sup>4</sup> Starting on the second weekend, we often call for an offering with a low-pressure appeal. "These meetings are absolutely free, and there is no obligation. If you want to help us keep this going, great—if not, that's OK, too." You can probably estimate \$1.00 per person. So 100 people in attendance will usually generate about \$100. The offering is often better than that.

<sup>5</sup> If you have the ability to record each night's presentation and sell the recordings at a modest price (low enough to encourage use), this can be a modest source of income to help offset the cost of the campaign. You won't sell everyone a recording every night—estimate

## Notes on Budgeting

1. If you need to rent a room for childcare at your venue, don't forget to include this amount in the hall rental price.
2. You can get handbill estimates by contacting SermonView. Check the population density in the zip codes surrounding your church and/or venue to see how many you may need. Don't neglect this item; the right handbill is one of the very best ways to reach the general public.
3. Many venues will want a 25% deposit (or more) in order to secure a contract. You may be asked to pay another 25% before opening night, and the final 50% as you begin your meetings. Pay careful attention to details as you speak to the hall manager. (See the section on hall rental.)
4. Work very carefully with your church treasurer. Ask him/her to create a special account for your meetings so that funds raised can be deposited there, and checks can be written by the treasurer for budget items as they come due.
5. Some conferences have funds available for local church evangelism. Speak to your conference officers about whether or not these exist and how you might apply for them.
6. Don't forget: the primary responsibility for fundraising lies with *you*.
7. Avoid the temptation to shortcut the budget. One of the key reasons that evangelism fails to be effective in local churches is because they did not invest enough in the effort. Don't worry: you will more than make the money back as (a) current church members become excited by the response, and (b) new church members swell the ranks—and help with church budget. Invest too little, and these "side effects" will be largely lost.

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20% of anticipated attendance purchasing a recording on a given night. If it's better than that, great!

## CHAPTER 6: SHOPPING FOR A VENUE

Your venue is a critical part of a public evangelistic campaign. While there will always be budgetary constraints on what sort of hall you can afford, you'll still want to get the very best you can. This is important because the very first message your guests receive will be conveyed by the venue. Pay careful attention to this counsel:

*In some places the work must begin in a small way, and advance slowly. This is all that the laborers can do. But in many cases a wider and more decided effort might be made at the outset, with good results. The work in \_\_\_\_\_ might now be much further advanced than it is if our brethren, at the beginning of the work there, had not tried to work in so cheap a way. If they had hired good halls, and carried forward the work as though we had great truths, which would surely be victorious, they would have had greater success. God would have the work started in such a way that the first impressions given shall be, as far as they go, the very best that can be made. (Evangelism, p. 76)*

The venue is often the most expensive item in your budget, but a good hall is worth every penny. You only get one chance to make a first impression with your audience, and a decrepit-looking venue sends a subliminal message that your message isn't worth much. Of course, you must balance this counsel to secure the best hall possible with the counsel to be careful with your budget, but as a rule, it's wise to make a good investment in a venue.

A great venue doesn't always have to be an expensive one. Sometimes, a meeting room in a local hotel will prove to be surprisingly affordable. If the hotel is decent, you'll instantly borrow their good reputation for your meetings. Additionally, a meeting held in a reputable rented venue puts your audience at ease—they consider it a neutral site. A meeting held in a church is often automatically assumed by the public to be aimed primarily at members of that church.

Sometimes, you *can* have a great meeting in your own church building, but this will require that your *Discover Bible School* be strong, and church members invite a lot of their friends. If *everyone* in church is committed to inviting guests, you'll have a great meeting. If not, you'll find that your handbills draw fewer people to the meetings simply because the meetings are not at a neutral site.

Here are some important things to consider when booking a hall:

1. Once you've settled on a venue, book it, being careful that you've reserved all the nights you'll need. Be sure that your reservation allows for time to set up and break down. Read the contract very carefully, paying attention to details and fine print. Once you're satisfied that the contract meets your needs, sign it and pay the deposit. Remember: you don't have a hall until you've paid your deposit!

2. Ensure that the hall advertises your meetings on its signs, etc., using the title of your series rather than the name of your church. For the same reason that a meeting in a church is often not perceived as inviting to people of all faiths, a sign posted in your venue that says something like “Seventh-day Adventist meetings” will convey a less-than-inviting message to people from other backgrounds.

3. Find out if your venue will allow you to store things there, and find out if you’ll have to move out of the hall on your nights off.

4. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you hunt for a hall:

- Can I afford this hall?
- Is this hall perceived by the public to be a neutral site? Would people from different religious traditions be comfortable coming here? (Examples of neutral halls: rooms in a public library, meeting rooms in hotels, an American Legion hall, etc.)
- Is this venue located in a decent part of town? (Nothing can hamper your meetings like the perception that your venue is located in a crime-ridden neighborhood.)
- Is the hall in a central location so it’s easily accessible from most of your city? Is it easily accessible even during rush hour? Is it close to the church where you expect your guests to start attending?
- Is there adequate parking for the guests? Will they have to pay for parking?
- Are there too many/too few seats in this venue? If seating is provided on loose chairs, you don’t have to worry too much, because you can arrange the seats exactly as you want them. If the seating is static (like in a theater or a stadium), you need to be cautious: you don’t want to seat 100 people in a hall with 1,000 seats. A lot of empty seats gives your guests the impression that the meetings aren’t important. It’s much better to have to scramble for a few more chairs or even have a few people standing at the back than to begin with your venue half-empty. As a rule, find a hall with enough seats for roughly the number of church members you have. That usually provides enough for your *active* members plus the guests. In a (very welcome) emergency, you can always add a second session each evening to handle an overflow crowd.

- Is there a place for childcare? (You'll want to be sure to include this in your budget if it's not included in the cost of the venue.)
- Is there room in the lobby for a registration table and for a greeter to welcome people?
- Does the venue have its own sound system, or will you have to bring your own?
- Are you going to have to pay for hall staff to be on duty when you're using the room? (Some halls insist that you use their employees for things like sound, security, etc.)
- Will the hall require you to purchase insurance? You might want to check that your church is insured for off-campus activities.
- Will you be charged extra for utilities?
- Does the venue have a projector and/or screen? If so, do you need to pay a rental fee for them? Do you need to bring your own?

If you'd like to use a public hall but can't afford it for the entire duration of your series, there is another option: move to the church partway through the meetings. Be sure you spend a decent amount of time in the venue, however. If I were doing 24 nights of meetings, for example, I'd move sometime after night 10, or later if possible.

Timing for a move is critical: be careful not to move one night after a big subject like the Sabbath or the state of the dead, because many of your guests will be struggling with new truths. A change in venue might be interpreted as an opportunity to stop attending. It also could create the impression of bait-and-switch: to some, it might seem manipulative that you present the Sabbath then move to the Seventh-day Adventist church the next day.

Moving from a hall to the church partway through your meetings might be an option that allows you to stay within your budget and still take advantage of the benefits that come from a public hall. At some point, you're going to have to move your guests to the church anyway. If funds are tight, discuss this option with your board.

A move to the church also gives you a chance to highlight your church. If you're planning to move from the public venue to the church, prepare the audience for the transition at least three to four nights in advance. Say: "I'm really glad that we had this wonderful facility available to us, but our time here is now coming to an end. We won't have it here after *(date)*. Fortunately, I pastor a church in town, and we can use the sanctuary to continue!" Have maps/directions available to hand out that night.



## CHAPTER 7: COMMITTEE POSITIONS/VOLUNTEERS

### Recruiting Volunteers

Recruiting help for a public evangelistic campaign is a critical part of your preparation. I've managed to pull off a lot of small campaigns with just one or two people, but obviously, the more help, the better. It is important that as many church members as possible become involved in your *Discovering Revelation* program, because campaigns are won or lost on the relationships people build with your church.

Be careful to assign people according to their giftedness. For example, if someone isn't naturally good with people, or is abrasive or timid, it's best not to use them as greeters.

You'll want to secure help in the following areas:

**1. Greeters:** A greeter needs to be a people person. Think back to your very best experiences in a restaurant or hotel. Think about the people who made the difference. *Those* are the people you want greeting the public. If someone is prone to conspiracy theories, or they're abrasive or disgruntled, this is not the place to use them.

The larger your auditorium, the more greeters you'll need. The general rule is that you should have one or two greeters stationed at every door that leads into the hall.

**2. Registration/Attendance:** Your meetings will rise or fall on the quality of your attendance data. This job is best suited to someone who loves detail and is proficient with data entry. Every night, the registration people will run the registration desk, and once the meeting starts, will be responsible for data entry. They will also provide you with regular reports so you can make intelligent decisions about visitation and the progress of your interests.

Resist the temptation to skip the registration process. Some people feel that registration is intrusive, and they become shy about doing it. Without data, however, you will never get a handle on (a) who's attending, and (b) what kind of progress they're making. Your outreach efforts will become uneducated guesswork and make decisions far less likely. Failure to register guests is one of the principal reasons evangelistic meetings fail.

I never *force* people to register; I simply practice positive expectation. I've found that 95% of people will register if you simply greet them with, "Good evening! Glad you could come! The registration desk is right over here."

It's that simple. If people *don't* want to register, I don't force it. As the meetings progress, however, and people realize the benefits of being registered, many of your abstainers will return to the desk and sign up.

**3. Childcare:** You need at least two people in this department. You don't want to place anyone in a situation where they're alone with other peoples' children. You can't play it too safe here. If the number of children becomes large, you'll need more people. It is also critical that your childcare people can pass a background check, as is required by most conferences. You will be watching other peoples' children—you can *never be careful enough*, and you never want to open your church up to liability.

**4. Treasurer:** You'll want to have someone help you with campaign finances. The most logical choice is the church treasurer.

**5. Hall Coordinator:** This isn't an absolute necessity, but if enough help is available, it's nice to have someone else worry about setting up the sound system, arranging the chairs, decorating the platform, etc.

**6. Ushers:** In a pinch, you can have your greeter(s) fill in here, but if you can at all manage it, have dedicated ushers. It's important to have the door and the hall covered simultaneously. The ushers will deliver decision cards to the audience, collect the cards when you need them, help take up the offering, distribute nightly materials at the door as guests exit, and make sure that people are comfortably seated.

**7. Visitation Team(s):** In most cases, this will be the pastoral team. But if your number of guests is formidable, you'll want to recruit key elders and Bible workers to help. It's important to be in contact with all of your guests every week: by phone, text message, and/or in person. If you have twenty or more guests, you're going to need help.

The visitation team will need careful training. Your most passionate and experienced soul-winning church members should be used here: the ones who habitually bring people to church, etc. You do *not* want people who habitually complain about the church, or have a tendency to read offshoot literature, etc.

**8. Campaign Secretary:** You don't have to fill this position, but if you can swing it, it will relieve you of a lot of work. This person orders materials and keeps track of inventory, copies handouts and other materials for your guests, organizes lessons, and takes care of any necessary mailings.

**9. Prayer Coordinator:** This person coordinates the prayer efforts of the church. A good evangelistic project is systematically bathed in prayer. Prayer over the meeting should happen *before* the meeting begins. When the meeting starts, your prayer warriors should be seated in the audience so they can quietly pray over what's happening in the hall. It not only fills the seats; it means that you're praying over specific people during appeals.

## Notes on Recruiting Volunteers

- People will be more likely to volunteer their time, energy, and resources if they understand your plan clearly and consistently see you demonstrate enthusiasm for soul-winning. If they see that you are determined and you are working hard, they will be more likely to help.
- People are more likely to help out if you assign them duties in bite-sized pieces. It's much better to ask someone to do one or two things for you and have them done well than it is to ask someone to take on three or four tasks and not have the time to do an adequate job at any of them.
- Always highlight the benefits of participating, and paint a visionary picture of what could happen if enough people banded together for God's cause.
- Communicate with your church a *lot*. Call for help from the front on a Sabbath morning, and do it more than once. Create sign-up sheets for people and pass them out in church. If you have an exciting story about soul-winning, share it as you call for help.
- Be in contact with your volunteers often so you can keep them abreast of their responsibilities and keep track of how well things are moving along.
- Don't ever assume anything. Don't assume that your volunteers are going to know what their responsibilities are. Don't assume that they know which nights they're on duty. Don't assume that you've communicated with everyone enough. Assuming can set you up for some nasty surprises.
- Be sure to constantly thank your volunteers and let them know how much you appreciate their efforts and how glad you are for their accomplishments.
- Remember: not everyone is suited to every task. Some people are better suited for working with the public than others, and there are some people who would be better suited doing behind-the-scenes work. A greeter, for example, should be a warm, kind, outgoing person—extremists, people with odd ideas, people with known empathy for offshoot movements, or people with poor social skills should not be working as greeters.
- As a rule, your volunteers should be members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in good standing. They should know and believe its doctrines, particularly if they're going to help run a Bible school or teach the beliefs of the church. It is usually okay to have enthusiastic interests who are studying and/or preparing for baptism working your campaign in non-authoritative positions (registration, ushering, greeting, etc.)—it often seals their own decisions. As a

rule, however, volunteers should be members in good standing and not associated with questionable ideas or offshoot groups. Strongly opinionated or judgmental people are often eager to volunteer, but don't usually make the best candidates for highly visible jobs.

- Remember: you can't ask people to put more effort into this campaign than you are willing to invest yourself. Very seldom will volunteers achieve more than their leader, so it's up to you to set the bar high and inspire people with your visible leadership.
- If someone volunteers to help, don't wait two weeks to contact them and take them up on the offer. As soon as possible, you should (1) thank them, and (2) explain what they'll be doing. The longer you wait to do this, the less likely they are to remain enthusiastic about helping. Remain in constant contact with your volunteers to encourage and motivate them.

## CHAPTER 8: ADVERTISING

### Getting a Crowd

How do you find an audience to listen to what you have to say? Here are some suggestions that have stood the test of time:

**1. Invite those who are involved in Bible study.** Your *Discover* Bible School is your first and best source of interests. Write a personal letter of invitation, explaining that you are offering an opportunity for enhanced study. Include a handbill and a number or email address where they can preregister and reserve seats. Let them know that if they need a ride, someone would be glad to provide that.

**2. Ask church members to invite their friends.** If you've set aside time each week in church to pray for the guests the church members will invite to the meetings (see the section on Operation Andrew), chances are that each member already has a list of people to invite to the meetings. Make an announcement in church and print a reminder in the bulletin for church members to invite someone to the meetings. Give everyone enough handbills to distribute to everyone on their prayer list, and ask members to preregister their friends.

**3. Handbill advertising.** Yes, that's right: handbills. While there are certainly some horrible handbills that have been printed along the course of modern Adventist history, the humble handbill is still one of your primary sources of good interests. The handbills we've designed for Discovery Centers are proven in the field. Your objective, of course, is to fill every seat in your auditorium *before* you send out handbills, and then pray that you will have to preach double sessions each night to hold all the people.

Handbills will draw members of the community you would not otherwise have known were interested. While it's tempting to skip handbill distribution for the sake of your budget, I have always found it essential to building my audience. It is still my number one source of guests.

Make sure you contact SermonView and order your handbills early. Decide how many you'll need, which zip codes you're mailing to, and what date you'd like them delivered to the home. (Remember to leave a little leeway; you will often be at the mercy of the postal system.) I have discovered that the best possible time to have handbills delivered to the home is at the beginning of the week before opening night. (If you open on Friday night, the ideal situation is for handbills to arrive in the homes the Monday or Tuesday of that week.) There are a couple of reasons you don't want them to arrive too early:

- (1) If the handbills are delivered too early, people who receive them tend to forget about your event.

(2) If you have people in the community who do not like what you are doing, they will take advantage of the time you give them the previous week-end to discourage their friends from attending.

**4. Newspaper/online advertising.** You can often find inexpensive (or even free) spots in the local newspapers (plus websites and apps) to announce free community events like yours. If you want to pay for newspaper advertising, SermonView can help you design an ad that matches your handbill.

**5. Radio/TV advertising.** Unless you have a large budget, this should not be your primary strategy for advertising. Effective radio/TV advertising requires a LOT of exposure, which quickly drives up the price. If you can afford it, it can be *very* effective. Shop around and see what's available.

**6. Offer incentives to people who bring their friends.** I have often given an award each evening (at least in the first couple of weeks) to the people who bring new guests. If budgets are tight, give an award to the person who brings the *most* new people. Good suggestions: a family Bible or a *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. If there is a tie, you can always give away more than one award, or give it to the person sitting closest to the front.

## Keeping a Crowd

Nothing will keep your audience like the message you preach. Seventh-day Adventists have something special to offer the world. If you preach our message with sincerity, conviction, enthusiasm, and joy, your audience will want more. Be sure to review each sermon several times before you preach it so that you *know* the content.

Even though I have been in public evangelism for quite a while, I still run through each sermon at least once on the day I deliver it. Usually, I find a quiet place where I can run through the sermon out loud, because I find that nothing helps me learn my material like actually preaching it. You might feel a little silly preaching to the wall or mirror (I do), but it really helps!

There are other things you can do to keep your crowd:

**1. Offer attendance incentives.** I usually tell my audience that they can keep the Bible that's been provided to them after 10 nights. I may offer other good-quality books for further attendance milestones like 15 or 20 nights.

**2. Send out weekly subject updates.** Once a week, I distribute the next 5-8 topics on a nicely formatted sheet of paper, featuring short descriptions of each subject—designed to raise interest without giving too much away. I give these out in the hall and/or mail them to attendees' homes. These can also be an excuse to

drop by a person's home: "We weren't sure everyone got this, so we just wanted to make sure *you* did!" Some have also found success sending out the *occasional* text message to their guests, particularly after a night off: "Hey—hope you're having a great day! Just a quick reminder, we're back on tomorrow night. See you there!"

**3. Visit people.** Nothing keeps your audience coming like the personal relationship you develop with them. Be sure you have a strong visitation program. Come early to the meeting and be the last person to leave. Before you preach, walk around the hall and meet people. Make yourself available afterwards to address concerns and answer questions.

**4. Smile a lot, be human, and relax.** Your face communicates more than your words! You can share your message with conviction, but if your audience never sees that you're human, they'll find it hard to relate to you. The message you're delivering will seem like it's only for others, not them. If you try to create the impression that you never make mistakes, no one will believe it. Authenticity and sincerity are the best way to win hearts and keep people coming.

**5. Childcare.** If you have a good childcare program, you'll find young couples sometimes keep coming to your meetings because their kids want to go! Of course, the very fact that you have a childcare program makes it possible for young parents to attend your meetings over the long haul.

While it's good to be wise and intentional about preserving your audience, you will always want to avoid the appearance of being gimmicky. Most people are tired of being worked over by someone with an obvious agenda—avoid this impression at all costs.

## CHAPTER 9: THE NIGHTLY MEETING

The following times are merely suggestions. In some regions of North America, a 7:30 p.m. start time works best. In *most* regions, 7:00 p.m. is better—it has your audience on their way home by 8:30 p.m., which is welcomed by both those with small children and those who get up early for work. You'll want to adjust your start time to suit the needs of your team and/or community.

**6:00 p.m.** Volunteers arrive at the venue to set up. If people need to come straight from work, it's a nice idea to have a light meal available: soup and rolls, etc.

**6:40 p.m.** Music begins playing softly in the background. You can use a pianist or recorded music, but make sure it's relatively peaceful! You'll want to be on hand to visit with guests as they arrive.

**7:00 p.m.** Welcome and Announcements. On the first few nights, you'll want to use this slot to give your guests an idea of what to expect. Explain things like the importance of registration, where to find childcare and restrooms, the next few nights' subjects, etc. Use this time to let your audience become acquainted with you, and help them relax.

**7:10 p.m.** Special Music.

**7:15 p.m.** Bible Answers. If you're using a question box, answer a few Bible questions in this time slot. Be sure to stick with short answers, and draw them straight from the text of the Bible. Never resort to sarcasm, even if it's a dumb question!

**7:25 p.m.** Special Music. If you have good singers who appeal to a broad audience (this is not the time for experimental music), this is a good place to use them to help you set the tone for your sermon.

**7:30 p.m.** Prayer and Sermon.

**8:25 p.m.** Appeal (Song) and Prayer.

**8:30 p.m.** Announce tomorrow night's (and possibly the following night's) subject. Go to the door to say "good night" to your guests. Linger to answer any questions.

### Helpful Hints

**Announcements.** Use this time to set your audience at ease. It's okay to be light-hearted and smile a lot. You might wish to include some of the following thoughts in your announcements:



“These meetings are brought to you by the Voice of Prophecy and local Christians who wanted to give us an opportunity to study Bible prophecy together.”

“These meetings are specifically designed for people from all walks of life and all religious (and even non-religious!) backgrounds. I know we’re all going to hold diverse viewpoints in a broad audience like this, and I want to be sure that everyone feels at home here.”

“I know that any time we discuss the subject of religion, people are bound to disagree on certain points. We probably won’t agree on every detail every time, and I’m good with that. We all learn when we disagree and talk about it, but it’s counterproductive when we get disagreeable!”

“I’ve put a question box at the registration table, and each night, I’ll try to answer as many questions as I can. And here’s my promise to you: I’m going to try and answer your questions from the Bible instead of giving you my opinion—and if I don’t know the answer, I’ll tell you.”

“On your way in, you probably noticed a registration table. If you haven’t registered, I’d really encourage you to do it. It’s important for a number of reasons: (1) We have a number of free resources that some generous people have donated, and I want to be responsible with their generosity—so the resources aren’t for anybody and everybody, just for people who have registered for this seminar and want to participate. (2) It’d be good for you to provide some way to contact you. I promise I won’t abuse it—it’s just in case there’s an important update or perhaps a change in the program. We won’t be selling your name to a mailing list or anything like that—it’s just so I have an idea of who’s participating in the seminar. You’ll also notice some personal questions: age, religious background, etc.—and that’s just for my own curiosity. You don’t have to fill those in if you don’t want to, but it really does help us know who’s interested in this kind of seminar and how people are hearing about it.”

**The question box.** I would strongly encourage you to use a question box (see p. 68 for more detail). It’s an excellent way to take the spiritual temperature of your audience. Are they sincerely seeking? Are they argumentative? Are they understanding what you’re saying?

It’s also an opportunity to address small issues and topics you wouldn’t want to spend an entire evening on.

If you *do* use a question box, explain from the front that you have too much material to present from the front to be able to stop and take questions—but you know people will want to ask questions, so you’ve provided a question box and you’ll answer a few each evening.

I always establish rules for the question box, saying something like this, with a big smile:

"There *are* some rules for the box. One: I'm only going to answer *Bible* questions; we're always tight on time, so we're going to stick with the subject at hand: the Bible. Two: Sometimes, when people realize that their question is going to be read aloud at the front of the room, they are tempted to use it as an opportunity to have me preach a sermon to someone else in the room *they* think needs to smarten up. I want everybody to be comfortable at this event, and so I'm not going to do that. That is *not* a Bible question!"

This announcement is important, because it avoids a number of things:

- Sadly, there are people who want you to preach on topics *they* think the guests should know about. They are usually motivated more by a sense of wanting to be right and/or superior than they are by a sense of compassion for the guests.
- People are going to try to force your hand on certain things, or try to embarrass you. "Are you trying to convince us to become Seventh-day Adventists?" is not a Bible question. It's a confrontation, and you are not obliged to read it from the front.
- Some of our own members will put questions in the box to show off how much they know. Contentious questions on the nature of Christ, obscure prophecies, questions about the internal doctrinal debates of the church, etc., often come in because of this.

**The musical program.** Nothing can prove quite as contentious or fraught with potential conflict as the subject of music in public evangelism. People's feelings are easily hurt. Some people try to take advantage of their moment on stage to preach a short message. Others exude pridefulness, making it obvious that they love a spotlight.

In spite of the potential headaches, however, good music will add a lot to your program. A talented appeal singer can work wonders when it comes to gaining decisions. Here are some general guidelines:

- As a general rule, *no* music is better than the *wrong* music. Never forget that you have a broad public audience, and you have no idea about their convictions, religious backgrounds, etc. It is much better for some of your audience to find your musical tastes a little boring than it is to offend guests who will never return.

- When it comes to appeal songs, a live accompanist is almost always better than using a track. Canned music will not allow for the speaker to continue the appeal between stanzas.
- Simple gospel songs are best for appeals: the simpler, the better, in fact. It is not the time to focus on someone's vocal talent, nor is it the time to dazzle the audience. You are trying to speak to hearts.
- Encourage your singers *not* to make speeches before they sing. You don't want a sermon before you get up to preach.
- Remind musicians to keep in mind that you are just getting to know your guests, and it's important to appeal to the broadest audience possible. These public meetings are not the time to try out experimental music. No one is offended by the old standbys, and they're your best bet. Stick with simple gospel songs.
- If you have limited availability of good musicians, schedule them for your appeal nights first. It's better to have something sung on a decision night and nothing other nights if you have to choose.

**Run on time.** If you promise the meetings will be finished by 8:30 p.m., make sure they are. There may be the odd evening when you'll run 10 minutes over because of an altar call, but for the most part, keep the meetings simple, on time, and short. If you add too many preliminaries and/or features, you will cause many of your guests to feel that your meetings are too much of a time commitment. It's better to have people wish it were longer than wish it were over.

**Always plug tomorrow night's meeting.** In fact, tell your audience about the next four or five meetings. *Briefly* tell them what they'll learn, but make each announcement a teaser or cliffhanger—tell them they'll have to come to find out more!

## Double Sessions

Occasionally, opening weekend crowds are much larger than expected, and your auditorium will not hold everybody. If it cannot be handled by your own volunteers and church members quietly and discreetly giving up their seats, you'll want to run a double session. In that case, you'll want to start one meeting around 5:00 p.m., which is generally amenable to retirees and students, and another at 7:00 or 7:30 p.m.

If your preregistration numbers show a possible overflow crowd on opening night, it's a good idea to have some information sheets that contain both an apology and the new start times for the next night. There's no predicting whether your crowd will actually be

over capacity, so you'll want to stick with your advertised times for opening night. Once the hall is full, start handing out your apology flyers:

*Dear Guest,*

*Thank you so much for coming to Discovering Revelation! Unfortunately, we were not able to hold reserved seats past 10 minutes before start time due to the popularity of tonight's program. We apologize for any inconvenience. To make room for everyone, we will be adding a bonus session tomorrow night at 5 p.m., in addition to the regular meeting that will take place at 7:30 p.m. Please bring this note back tomorrow for a free recording of the session you missed.*

## CHAPTER 10: EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

It is highly recommended that you run through each presentation, *out loud*, at least once before you deliver it publicly. See if the syntax and flow seem natural to your way of speaking; if they don't, adjust them accordingly. If you find a word, for example, that you wouldn't normally use, substitute one that you would.

Practicing out loud is an excellent way to commit most of the content to memory, so that you will only have to glance at the notes occasionally as you're preaching, which will enable you to maintain more frequent eye contact with the audience.

Never forget that *authenticity* sells. Your audience can tell in a heartbeat whether or not you believe what you're saying . . . and whether or not you *live* it. The audience will be quick to forgive the occasional mistake, but they will be slow to forgive insincerity. Never try to mimic your favorite evangelist; be *you*. Fight in the armor God gave you.

The presentations are given to you much the way I would present them. Run through each sermon once, paying attention to details. As you move through the topics, you'll notice that there aren't very many *unimportant* concepts; each presentation lays foundations for subjects that will come later, sometimes very subtly. These sermons are designed to eliminate as much friction as possible in advance, so that when your audience is faced with new and/or difficult truths, they will have already understood and accepted many of the underlying principles.

For example: many people have questioned why we deal with Revelation 6 and the seven seals so early in the series. (In fact, I have been tempted from time to time to drop it—but wise friends have urged me to leave it where it is.) It is a topic guaranteed to raise as many questions as it answers, but it establishes one important concept: the historical understanding of prophecy. For most of your audience, it will come as a surprise that the last 2,000 years of history answer nicely to the descriptions given by the seven seals, and it will be the first time they have seen a historical approach to the book of Revelation. It also ends in 1833 with the great star shower, which will make 1844 (which comes up in the next two presentations) seem like the natural next step in prophetic history. You could skip this topic, but it will make getting past bigger concepts much tougher as you move along.

Remember to smile as you preach. There is plenty of somber information in the Three Angels' Messages, but you will find that kindness and gentleness, coupled with a willingness to give your audience enough space to make their own decisions, work far better than frowning coupled with dogmatic assertions from the front. The very best fishermen understand that you have to put a little slack in the line once in a while, or the fish will break the line and escape. Good evangelistic preaching is not all business, all the time.

Good evangelistic preaching means developing an understanding of the emotions people experience as they come to Christ. You must be willing to laugh, cry, and pray with your audience, taking them by the hand and personally leading them through what—for many—will be something of a crisis. You will go much further posturing yourself as a fellow student than you will as a professor or lecturer. Bear in mind as you present that you are *also a sinner saved by grace*, and you are merely showing people the answers you've found in Christ.

Be willing to share personal experiences. Admit when you've had a rough day, or when you've done something wrong. Open up and invite your audience into your life; you'll find that they will be much more willing to open up and invite you into *theirs*. You will discover that it is far more important to be personable, vulnerable, and relatable than it is to merely be *right*.

## CHAPTER 11: A SUMMARY OF EACH SUBJECT

Most evangelistic sermons have just *one* point they are trying to convey. They are built around the decision you seek by the end of the presentation and progressively drive toward that decision.

### Meeting #1: A New World Order

Daniel 2 has stood the test of time as the best subject to present on your opening night. Even the most skeptical audience member will usually be at a loss for words by the time your presentation is finished. They still might not like you when you're done, but the topic will bother them well after they've left the auditorium. Those who come from a faith background *love* this topic because it affirms them; those who come from some other background find it intriguing—and reassuring, because most people quietly hope that God IS real, and that our existence means something.

This topic is aimed at the deepest need any human being has: to know that his or her life has meaning. If it can be demonstrated that world history has a purpose and direction, and that Someone is pushing it toward a logical conclusion, then it is a natural step for those listening to want to believe that *their* lives also have meaning and direction.

You are establishing just one key point in this presentation. It is found in Daniel's words to Nebuchadnezzar: "There is a God in heaven . . ." (Daniel 2:28)

### Meeting #2: Planet in Upheaval

For those who have a background in dispensational thinking, this is a critical topic. You will be gently dismantling their misconceptions about Matthew 24; many people believe that Jesus is speaking only to the Jews who will remain on earth after the church has been raptured. You won't be refuting that directly, of course, and there is little in this presentation that will ruffle the feathers of sincere dispensationalists.

This presentation builds on Daniel 2. You have already established that Christ is coming; now you are pointing out that His coming is close. This starts to heighten the sense of anticipation in the audience, building toward your first major altar call.

It is a good idea, as time moves along, to include some of your own "signs of the times" in this presentation so that it remains current. If there's been a recent large natural disaster, insert it so that this is always up to date. As time moves along, your list of signs may become too long to present in one hour; you'll have to turn slides on and off to suit your current situation.

### **Meeting #3: Armageddon**

This is another “safe” dismantling of futurism and dispensationalism. In this presentation, you will be demonstrating how the interpretation of Bible prophecy works by leading your audience through the Old Testament passages that correspond to Revelation 16. Most people will be intrigued, even excited, to see things in prophecy they’ve never seen before. Most will also subconsciously begin abandoning long-held preconceptions about last-day events that they picked up from media like the *Left Behind* series.

This is an important meeting; it helps your audience understand your methodology when it comes to interpreting more difficult passages of prophecy, and it prepares them to see the powerful logic behind the historical method and our understanding of the Three Angels’ Messages.

### **Meeting #4: The Man of Revelation**

This is your first gospel presentation. Even if your audience has a large number of churchgoing Christians, you *must* slow down and make sure everybody understands the essence of salvation. This meeting will help establish that Revelation is not truly about the antichrist or a last-day crisis, but is a revelation of Christ Himself.

You will be making an appeal at the end of this meeting, and you will notice that it is a very broad appeal. In the beginning of this series, you do not want to single out a narrow group of people, but rather give most of the people in the room a reason and an opportunity to respond to a call. By this point, conviction will have been growing in many hearts, and if you do not give most people an opportunity to *do* something with their conviction, you will be training them to do nothing.

You will begin with a decision card that has many options on it—including a request for baptism. Don’t be afraid to highlight this by saying, “Some of you might be curious about baptism. There is no obligation here, but if you’d like to talk to someone or ask some questions, check that box.” Many will not understand what baptism is at this point. Others will assume they *have* been baptized, even though they were sprinkled as an infant. Don’t worry about the level of understanding at this point: what you want is to have people start *thinking* about baptism. You will start visiting them over the course of several weeks, until their understanding is much clearer and they are ready for it.

Then you will collect the cards and move to a prayer appeal.

In this appeal, I often say, “I want to pray with you, and if you have something you’d like to pray about, I’d like to invite you to come down to the front and join me. Maybe you’ve just understood the cross for the first time, and you’d like to say,



'Jesus did that for me! I'd like to pray with you if that's true—so come down and join me. Maybe you've got something really painful going on in your life, and you'd like to present *that* to Jesus, and ask for His help. Come down here and pray with me. Maybe you *used* to follow Jesus, but that was a long time ago—and now you're sensing that you'd like to come back. Let me pray with you," etc.

You want to broaden this group as much as possible. If it's too narrow, many people will be afraid to walk forward because they'll feel every eye in the room is on them. Give most of the people a chance to respond.

You will notice deep emotion coming from a lot of your guests. Many of them have been hurting for a long time, and this is your chance to minister to them in a meaningful way. Once you've had a group prayer that addresses all of the needs you mentioned in your appeal, invite people to stay afterwards for individual prayer.

Have your visitation team join you at the front, and identify them as your "prayer team." Invite people to approach them for prayer after the meeting is over. Dismiss the rest of the room, wish them a good night (and remind them to come back for the next meeting!), and ask that they quietly leave in order to keep the atmosphere of prayer intact.

Stay until the last of your guests have been prayed with. Make sure you ask for each person's name and pray for them *by name*. This not only recognizes them as individuals, but it introduces you to many of the people you will be working with in the weeks to come. Once you have prayed with someone, you have become a friend, and they will be more than willing to discuss matters with you later on.

Make sure that prayers offered by your prayer team are short and sweet, and directed straight at the needs being expressed. Instruct your team not to run ahead of you doctrinally or disagree with people who state things we do not believe. (So, for example, if someone says, "I know my husband is in heaven, and I'm so lonely," *do not disagree with them*. Say something along the lines of, "Aren't you glad that we can trust God in these things?" and then address their pain in your prayer.)

You will usually find this to be a huge breakthrough night when it comes to establishing rapport with your audience. At the next meeting, make an effort to greet those you prayed with by name. You are no longer strangers, and that is important.

### **Meeting #5: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse**

You might be tempted to dispense with this subject because you do not have enough time to drive home the meaning of each seal in detail. Fight that temptation; this is an important evening for establishing a historical understanding of prophecy and undermining confidence in dispensationalism. Your audience will

not even know that their flawed understanding of prophecy is crumbling as you present, because Revelation 6 is a chapter few people have studied in detail.

What this presentation helps you establish is an all-important pattern in both Daniel and Revelation: time prophecies generally begin in the day of the prophet (Daniel or John) and extend to some key last-day event like the judgment or the Second Coming.

Your audience will have many questions when you are done; reassure them that as you move along through other subjects, it will all begin to make sense. What you have done is given them a bird's-eye view of prophecy so that they can see how Revelation is structured; the details coming in future presentations will help them dig deeper for themselves.

Here's one of the most important things you're going to establish: the last of the seals is completed by 1833. In your next two presentations, you'll be unfolding the 2,300 days, which end in 1844. Once they've been through the four horsemen and the seven seals, 1844 will seem like a perfectly logical time for something big to occur.

### **Meeting #6: The Time of the End, Part 1**

You will be presenting Daniel 8 in this meeting, but you will be presenting it as a mystery or puzzle to be solved, because it is far better for the audience to start coming to their own conclusions as you go. You will be comparing Daniel 8 with Daniel 2 so that the audience remembers how time prophecies are structured: they begin in the day of the prophet and move forward to some big last-day event.

The first three symbols will be easy to understand: Persia, Greece, and Rome (the little horn). You want to be cautious in explaining the little horn, however: it is too soon to identify the papal system in this meeting. Many of your guests will figure it out on their own, but for now, you are going to present the little horn as Rome in its "united" and "divided" phases. The audience will remember (or you can remind them) that the legs of iron continued into the feet of clay in Daniel 2, also showing a united and divided Rome.

As you go through the verses describing the little horn, you can always stop occasionally and say, "If *only* we had time to look at this more carefully! It would *blow your mind!* But we'll have time to study this more carefully later on; we've got to keep pushing on for now."

You're going to tackle the 2,300 days as a mystery that needs solving and encourage your audience to look for clues throughout the Bible. The end of this presentation is one of the most fun in the series—you're going to leave them hanging. They'll have to come back tomorrow to hear the rest!

## Meeting #7: The Time of the End, Part 2

It is a sad trend that most people in America—churchgoers included—are becoming biblically illiterate. But that is to the advantage of the Adventist evangelist, because there are fewer bad habits to unlearn and fewer biblical misconceptions to correct.

However, for those who *are* familiar with Bible prophecy, an exposition of Daniel 9 will prove exceptionally important. The dispensational understanding of prophecy is largely rooted in the 70-week prophecy. Dispensationalists believe that the first 69 weeks of Daniel 9 ended at the cross, at which point God paused His prophetic clock, because Old Testament prophets *could not see the Christian church*. In other words, according to dispensationalists, there is nothing in the book of Daniel that pertains to Christians. Once the church has been raptured out of the world, God will restart the prophetic clock for seven final years, during which time the Jews will have to deal with the antichrist, who first establishes a covenant with them, but then breaks it after three and a half years when he sits in the rebuilt Jerusalem temple, declaring himself to be God.

Without the need to be combative or contrary, you have already covered enough prophecy with your audience to establish that Old Testament prophets did indeed see the Christian era: Daniel 2 stretches well past the cross to include the collapse and division of the Western Roman Empire. Those who are versed in dispensational thought will have already accepted that premise without feeling as if they were being told they were wrong.

The groundwork you have already laid will pave the way for your dispensationalists to grapple with a more biblically sound way of reading Daniel 9. The rest of your audience will enjoy coming along for the ride, astounded by how much detail this chapter lays out regarding the identity of the Messiah.

This will be one of the first times you openly challenge another school of thought, and your careful work thus far will pay dividends. You will begin with a simple exposition of the seventy weeks, and then ask some questions as you get toward the end—questions about what dispensationalists call “The Great Parenthesis,” a hypothetical gap of 2,000 between the 69th and 70th weeks of this prophecy.

You will also spend quite a bit of time reviewing the material from the previous presentation, underlining the importance of the sanctuary as a key motif in Bible prophecy. It may seem redundant to you, but the amount of information you are requiring your audience to absorb warrants repetition.

By the end, you will be encouraging your audience to finish the detective work they began last night. They will understand that judgment *must* be complete be-

fore Jesus can return—because He brings His rewards with Him. They will also understand that at some point, the world can know that the judgment has begun, and that we are now living in that moment.

This is the key point of the presentation: Bible prophecy is completely accurate, including the declaration that the world can know when the judgment hour has begun. It is not necessary for the audience to be able to diagram 1844 from memory, nor is it necessary to narrow the prophecy down to a specific day (October 22). It is important for your audience to understand that (a) the judgment is real, and that (b) we have a High Priest whose greatest desire is to see them in the kingdom.

Your appeal is *not* to accept a date, but to accept the work of our High Priest and the representation of our Advocate, Jesus Christ.

### **Meeting #8: The Appearing**

This is a key meeting.

It is important to establish that most Christians disagree on a lot of Bible prophecy. This gives them permission to disagree with you and sets them at ease. It also gives you a reason to set aside popular theories and just establish what the Bible says for sure. Most everybody in the audience will agree that this approach is fair.

By the time you list the five certainties about Christ's return, however, it will be time to ask questions about the secret rapture theory. As you begin to question it, you want to be as charitable as possible and find every point of agreement you can. This is what we have been counseled to do:

*Brethren, you who go forth to labor for those who are bound in chains of prejudice and ignorance, need to exercise the same divine wisdom that Paul manifested. When you are laboring in a place where souls are just beginning to get the scales from their eyes, and to see men as trees walking, be very careful not to present the truth in such a way as to arouse prejudice, and to close the door of the heart to the truth. Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them so far as possible. If the love of Christ is revealed in all your efforts, you will be able to sow the seed of truth in some hearts; God will water the seed sown, and the truth will spring up and bear fruit to His glory. (Evangelism, p. 140)*

This is why you will be giving the dispensationalists every benefit of the doubt, underlining the parts of their theory you can appreciate. But then the presentation turns to valid questions their fellow evangelicals have raised over the last century.

Do not push or insist—just raise questions. You will be ending with an appeal to not take *your* word for it, but to study the matter for themselves from the Bible. It is a conclusion that few could argue with, and you are keeping the door open for those who *do* disagree to feel comfortable continuing.

In other words, the decision you're going for is this: a commitment to study the Bible honestly and openly and accept what it says.

Please note: If someone asks afterwards if you do not believe in the "rapture," assure them that you *do*. The word *rapture* is not to be found in the Bible, but the basic concept most certainly is. *Rapture* comes from the Latin word *rapiemur*, which is how the Vulgate translates the Greek *harpazo* in 2 Thessalonians 4:17. *Harpazo* simply means to be "snatched up" or "caught up." So in the strictest sense, there IS a rapture, because we ARE caught up to be with Jesus. You can agree that "of course" there is a rapture, but what you are questioning is whether or not it is secret and invisible. Encourage the questioner to go back and study the Bible to see what he/she finds.

### **Meeting #9: The Anatomy of Evil**

This presentation is your audience's introduction to the Great Controversy theme: the origin of sin, the reasons God has permitted it, etc. It is, of course, a critical presentation, since it helps your interests understand the all-important issue of the character of God.

This would be another great meeting to end with a prayer session at the front of the auditorium, similar to the one you conducted after your fourth meeting (*The Man of Revelation*). This presentation ends with the story of Job, and encourages your audience to trust God in spite of what has happened in their lives. Many people carry old hurts and grudges against God, and at this point, you will find many people ready to surrender their pain and choose to submit to God.

That is the decision you are aiming for.

### **Meeting #10: The Ultimate Mind Game**

This is the meeting where you will introduce the concept of sanctification and godly living—in a way that doesn't make it sound as if you are condemning your audience. If they can smile about how foolish sin is—with you—then you will have conquered a lot of territory during this evening. It is important for the audience to understand that *you* need this message as much as anyone, and that it is a reminder to us *all* to trust Jesus more completely.

Your demeanor is all-important as you preach this topic. If you come across as severe and judging, you will lose most of your audience. If you can keep a smile on

your face and have *fun* with this topic, you will find most of your audience coming along for the ride, because they understand that you have their best interests at heart.

The decision at the end of this meeting is *not* to behave better for fear of being lost. It is to recognize that running our own lives hasn't gone all that well, but trusting a loving God will make life far more rewarding.

After preaching this subject, you will find many people longing to be free from destructive/sinful habits—and many of them will have come to trust you enough to ask for your help and prayers. It is critical to be on a first-name basis with all of your interests by this point.

### **Meeting #11: Coming of the Lawless One**

This presentation is designed to tap into the general anxiety that people have about public unrest and the decline of Western civilization. It begins with a point of agreement (for most people): moral relativity is not helpful to the situation we face.

Then you will present the Ten Commandments, not primarily as a set of rules that must be followed "or else," but as God's plan for happier, more secure living. Your audience will also discover that the sermons they have heard disparaging the Ten Commandments as "Jewish" are rooted in a bad interpretation of prophecy—the same dispensational thought that gave them the secret rapture and the gap in Daniel 9. (This is why those topics are presented first; it creates an "aha!" moment for a lot of your audience during this presentation.)

The decision you seek: to recognize that there is greater freedom in cooperating with God than in rebelling against Him. Even His rules are an act of love designed for our happiness.

### **Meeting #12: The Sign**

Much of your audience will already be anticipating the Sabbath this evening; the more thoughtful ones will have gone home to read the Ten Commandments, and some will have noticed that the fourth one mentions the seventh day. Many others, however, will still be caught by surprise because they (a) have never thought about this subject, or (b) assume that Sunday *is* the seventh day.

You will not want to *insist* on much during this presentation, since *pushing* an idea is more likely to create resistance. You will, as always, be encouraging your audience to ask intelligent questions and you will be helping them find answers. As with the manner of Christ's coming, you want to urge people *not to take your word for it*, but to search the Scriptures for themselves to see if this is true.

It is helpful to mention that you will be spending a second evening on this topic *before moving on to something else*. For those who find themselves uncomfortable with the topic, knowing that you will be moving on to something else will be reassuring. For others, knowing that you will go into a little more detail will make them patient with questions they might have as they leave the auditorium: they know you will likely answer them.

The decision you seek: to study the Bible to see if this is true.

This is deliberately presented on a Saturday night. In the morning, many of your audience members will be attending a Sunday-keeping church, and they will likely share what they have learned with their friends or ask some penetrating questions of their pastor. Some will come back the next night with Colossians 2 or Romans 14 in mind, certain that you are wrong. During the next presentation—given on a Sunday night—you will help them understand and overcome common objections, and it will then be nearly a full week before they visit their own church again.

### **Meeting #13: Revelation's Forgotten History**

You will be reviewing the key Sabbath texts in the Bible this evening, which is useful: when faced with a new truth, most people will need to see the biblical logic behind it more than once. Because many of your interests may have attended church in the morning, some will have key questions; you will systematically go through *all* of the first-day texts in the New Testament, as well as Colossians 2 and Romans 14.

You will be using a decision card this evening, but you don't want to push too hard. It is suggested that you describe the card as an opportunity to give you some feedback. "I want to know if this has been clear or makes sense—I want to hear back from you."

Don't be discouraged if some people write fierce objections on their cards; this is normal. The fact that they are a little upset is actually a good signal—if they were 100% convinced that the Sabbath isn't truth, they wouldn't be worked up! They are struggling with cognitive dissonance and conviction. Let them blow off steam. Be kind and gentle in your responses, and never pushy.

Also don't be discouraged if you do not receive a *lot* of positive decisions at this point. They have *just* heard about the Sabbath; many will need more time to settle into it. Strong positive responses on this card are not typical.

## Meeting #14: A River Runs Through It

This meeting deliberately focuses on key salvation themes. After being faced with the Sabbath, some of your interests might be concerned that they've become involved in a cult. (Their friends will insist that this is so.) Presenting a basic salvation message will put their minds at ease: Seventh-day Adventists really ARE Christians.

You will, however, be underlining a key thought that will reinforce the Sabbath: God's symbols are important to Him.

You will be using a decision card again this evening, which will reinforce the idea that you aren't interested in solely the Sabbath as a subject, but you cover a wide range of topics to which people are invited to respond. This card is important: you will find many people who are practically ready to join the church at this point.

## Meeting #15: Babylon Rising

This meeting is planned for midweek on purpose: only your strongest interests are likely to attend, and they are the *most* ready for the subject of the little horn power. The careful groundwork you have laid up to this point is about to pay off: many people have already guessed who the beast power is; many others will come to the correct conclusion themselves as you are presenting.

You will notice one key difference between this presentation and many others you have heard on this subject: the beast power is identified as "we" and "us" by the end of the presentation. This is an important concept, based on Daniel's opening prayer in Daniel chapter 9:

*Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, **we** have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments." (Daniel 9:3-5)*

Daniel wasn't *personally* responsible for the sins that led God's people into captivity, and yet he understands the concept of corporate responsibility. He is one of God's people, and as such claims his place among the fallen.

In years past, I used to come out swinging against the little horn and mostly got away with it. I did, however, lose a few good interests because I was too pointed, and they felt personally attacked. When I shifted to Daniel's method, however, very few people were personally offended. *This approach is an indictment of Christianity as a whole.*



Remember: there were no Seventh-day Adventists during the 1,260 days; we did not exist as an organized group until 1863. Unless your ancestors were card-carrying Waldenses, there's a good chance your family was also involved in the apostasy of the Dark Ages.

This approach works far better than the traditional "we're talking about a system and not individual people" approach. No matter how hard you try to distinguish between the Catholic Church and individual Catholics, you cannot avoid the reality that most Catholics identify so deeply with their church that they will still feel personally slighted.

By claiming corporate responsibility—by figuratively getting down off the platform and standing at the foot of the cross with your audience, as one of them—you will find people far more willing to accept what they've heard. I've often said, "You know who this is describing, don't you? This is US! This is organized Christianity during the Dark Ages, when we did some pretty horrible things—and the whole world *knows* we did them. There's no question we burned people at the stake and persecuted people just for owning a Bible—and Jesus never asked us to do any of those things. Maybe it's high time that we owned what we did, repented of it, and went back to following Christ."

In light of the very public scandals of the Catholic Church, you will find most of your audience more than ready to accept what you have just suggested.

Don't worry: your audience isn't stupid. They know that what you have just described answers most closely to the Roman Catholic Church, and those who haven't quite figured it out will have no doubt when you circle back to this subject in a few nights.

The decision you're after: to reject human traditions and follow Christ instead.

### **Meeting #16: Revelation's Keys of Death**

In most cities, this will be the most difficult subject you have to address, because it is easily the most emotionally laden. That is why this subject begins with an appeal to that reality and asks people to ignore their emotions long enough to take an objective look at the Bible's understanding of death.

Many people in your audience are going to struggle with this. Some have relied heavily on the thought that a loved one is already in heaven. Others may have experienced supernatural "visitation" from someone who has died. (I have had at least one such person in every meeting I've ever conducted.)

You will need to exercise the utmost in patience and compassion when presenting this subject—and afterwards. Allow people to vent. Do not argue with people. Allow them time for the subject to sink in. The phrases “I understand” and “I can certainly see why you’d feel that way” will go a long way toward dispelling anxiety.

There are two subjects that have traditionally been the hardest to present since the inception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: the Sabbath and the state of the dead. Of the two, the state of the dead is harder. Most modern audiences adopt the notion of the Sabbath quite readily; acceptance of our position on the state of the dead is certainly on the rise, but you will still find some people who find it difficult. Do not insist; encourage them to trust God. Encourage those who clung to believing that their loved ones were safe with Jesus by saying they are right: they might be sleeping, but they *are* safe with Jesus, and death does not have to be the end.

It is useful for others to think of it in terms of timing. To their traditional way of understanding, the next thing we know after death is the presence of Christ. You can agree with them: when you die, it’s as if you blink, and then Jesus comes to get you.

The decision you seek: to trust that even in the worst of circumstances, God has a plan of love for us.

### **Meeting #17: Secrets of Answered Prayer (Sabbath Morning)**

This is the first Sabbath that many of your interests will observe, so we’ve provided a topic that many will find intriguing. Your objective here is quite simple: you want the audience to enjoy their first Sabbath morning experience.

To that end, do what you can to keep surprises to a minimum for your audience. As you promote this meeting during the prior week, emphasize that this will be *just like the other meetings* they’ve attended. We have found it useful to promote this meeting as follows, beginning *even before you present the Sabbath topic*:

“We’re getting to the final topics of this seminar, and so we’re going to slip in a couple of extra meetings to cover everything. So this coming Saturday morning at 10:30 a.m., we’ll be looking at how to have all of your prayers answered, all the time. And this is no gimmick: there really IS a key in the Bible that ensures that ALL of your prayers get answered. How many of you would be interested in knowing *that?*” (Or something to that effect.)

You’ll want to promote it quite heavily. The sooner people experience the Sabbath after hearing about it, the better.

It might irritate some of the saints a little, but make this a seminar morning:

- Hold the meeting in your rented auditorium if at all possible. Stick to the seminar schedule—with one exception: you can easily slip in a well-known hymn at the beginning of the meeting by saying, “Well, it *is* the Sabbath, so maybe it would be a good idea to express our love for God by singing something!” We recommend something so well known that *everyone* will recognize the tune. “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” fits the bill nicely: everybody knows the melody, and it is a fitting song for adoring the Creator.
- It is not recommended that you invite your guests to Sabbath School: there is no predicting what an overzealous saint might choose to say in order to “better inform” the guests. The possibility for those church members in particular who have not attended the meetings to say something out of place is far too high to risk it.
- End at noon sharp and release people on time, just as if it were a regular seminar.
- Remember that some denominations (especially Catholics) are not permitted to attend the “worship service” of another denomination. If this is a seminar, they don’t have to worry about going to confession to tell the priest they worshipped with Protestants.

Your aim is simply to make people glad they came out on a Saturday morning.

It would be especially useful if you inserted some of your own personal “answered prayer” stories in this one. It’s a wee bit shorter than others in order to give you space to do that—this is a great subject for personal testimonies.

It is also a great subject for an appeal; it covers the fact that living in harmony with God is essential to a vibrant prayer life and reinforces some of the principles they’ve been learning. It is designed to remind the audience of things they’ve already learned.

Given that the topic is prayer, it would also be a great idea to end with a group prayer. Invite people to come to the front and bring their petitions to God, and even have a silent moment so people can offer their own prayers. Model what they’ve just learned. Minister to their needs. It will make a lot of your guests hungry to visit your church again.

## Meeting #18: God's Strange Act

This meeting picks up where "Revelation's Keys of Death" left off. It begins with a lighthearted story designed to break any leftover tension that people might feel after the disorientation they might have felt after learning about the state of the dead.

Your goal in this meeting is simple: to expose the true character of God, and paint the stories of the medieval period as a disservice we did to God. Most modern audiences find this subject a relief; some of your older attendees might be loath to abandon the idea of an eternally burning hell.

Pay special attention to the illustrations in this presentation: they are designed to encourage feelings of compassion, which are then easy to project onto God. It will pay huge dividends to express your own appreciation for God's love, and your own love for Him, before the end of the meeting.

## Meeting #19: A Desolate Planet

This meeting provides a wonderful opportunity for an appeal. While the first half is quite technical, the last half dwells on heaven and our eternal reward. The passages describing the nature of the new earth are powerful; many people will be ready for an appeal to *trust God with the future*.

Watch the people as you preach about heaven. You will see some of them leaning forward in their seats with anticipation. Others will have tears in their eyes from time to time. Do not miss the opportunity to invite people to *want to be in the kingdom with Jesus*.

As always, you'll want to keep the appeal as broad as possible. Everyone in the audience is dealing with *something*. They can choose to trust that God will keep His word and wipe away their tears. They can choose to want something *better*—to look forward to a world that no longer has the pain and challenges of this one. You can appeal to practically everyone in the audience on *some* front.

This meeting is designed to provide a release mechanism for the feelings experienced by many people wrestling with a new perspective on death. An appeal on this night will help people move past their cognitive dissonance struggles.

## Meeting #20: How to Postpone Your Funeral

Have fun with this topic. A broad smile and a sense of humor will accomplish much with your audience. If you seem relaxed, your audience will relax. If you *push* the topic and treat it as if God will punish those who don't comply, you will lose people.

While Seventh-day Adventists *used* to catch a lot of flak for this subject, in recent years, our views on unclean foods and alcohol have gotten far more mainstream. This subject will not be as much of a surprise to the audience as it used to be.

Your aim in this meeting is to create a sense of gratitude in the audience: God loves them, not just in the great hereafter, but *now*.

### **Meeting #21: Return of the Woman**

This meeting is done in the middle of the week for two reasons:

- (1) Generally speaking, the midweek meeting has the highest proportion of strong interests, and these people are more open to joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- (2) While some speakers have waited until the last night before they present the concept of the remnant church, that approach does not give them an opportunity to visit interests before the meetings come to a close.

After this presentation, you have covered all of the essential doctrines necessary for someone to make an informed decision to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church—with the exception of the Spirit of Prophecy. (It is possible to cover the essence of this concept quickly in a baptismal class, however.)<sup>6</sup> We have often used the next evening for a baptismal class, because anyone who has attended regularly through most of the meetings will, at this point, be ready to examine and sign the 13 baptismal vows.

It is important to present the Adventist Church as a global *movement* of Christians from a wide variety of backgrounds, instead of speaking of choosing a denomination. Denominationalism has become a negative concept in most of the Western world. Giving *up* denominationalism to join a worldwide movement, however, is *exciting*. Truth be told, we were always *meant* to be a movement that prepares the world for Jesus to return.

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<sup>6</sup> This presentation mentions the gift of prophecy as one of the marks of the remnant church. You can cover this doctrine quickly and simply in a baptismal class with a short 10-minute class on spiritual gifts. Study what the gifts are from passages like Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4, and then emphasize that the New Testament also promises the gift of prophecy in the last days. (You could expand by adding Joel 2.) Tell the class that Seventh-day Adventists accept what the Bible says on this matter, but we believe that all gifts, including the gift of prophecy, must be tested carefully by the Bible. Give examples of tests from Deuteronomy 18:2 and Deuteronomy 13:2, and then let your students know that you will be covering it in more detail on Sabbath morning. Those who are comfortable with what you present can be ready to baptize Sabbath afternoon or night!

Many people will be excited that God has drawn *them* into His final work for the planet. This message has the potential to give people a profound sense of meaning. They are not being asked to attend church on Saturday; they are being asked to take their place in God's final push at the end of time. You are recruiting volunteers—not merely signing up church members.

### **Meeting #22: The Mark of the Beast**

This meeting will likely have the most solemn tone of all of your presentations. Your audience has heard all of the major doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at this point, with the exception of more detail on the gift of prophecy. This is an important decision night, and it is important to provide an opportunity for decision.

Have the audience fill out decision cards, and at the end of the meeting, collect them and pray over them. After the prayer, you can say, "You know, we've been together for a few weeks, and we've gone through a lot of Bible truths together. As I've met each of you, it's been obvious that God is doing something in your hearts, and you're hearing Him, maybe like you've never heard Him before. Some of you are sensing that God has called you here on purpose, and that you need to respond to that call. I want to pray just a little bit more before we close the meeting—I want to pray for *you* as you tell God what you're thinking about and what you're planning to do with the way He's acted in your life over the last few weeks. So why not come down to the front and join me? Just bring your decision to the foot of the cross. Let God know that *your* banner is clear, and that you belong among His remnant people." (Or something to that effect. Remember: it is far more effective to appeal to someone to act on the conviction they already have than to try to generate conviction—which is biblically impossible.)

### **Meeting #23: The Testimony of Jesus (Sabbath Morning)**

This is your second Sabbath morning presentation, and it is highly recommended that you follow the same format you used last Sabbath. Run the meeting exactly like you would one of the evening seminars, with the exception of adding a well-known hymn for people to sing. (Make sure the lyrics are available on the screen.)

One of the biggest mistakes you can make with this presentation is to *insist* that people accept Ellen White's prophetic gift. The first half of this presentation covers the prophetic gift as the Bible presents it and emphasizes that we *should* expect to find it among God's people in the moments leading up to the Second Coming. It is okay to acknowledge the discomfort many people feel when considering this topic. (Charismatic Christians will not likely struggle with it, but many Catholics and mainline Protestants will.) I have often stated, "I have to admit—this subject makes me really uncomfortable, because there are so many charlatans at work in the world of religion, and I don't want to be one of those people who ends up joining

some weird cult. So it makes me squirm, and yet I *have* to accept that it's possible, because there it is in the Bible!"

Then, in the second half, you will be presenting Ellen White as a "case study," as someone who *may* have had the gift. Of course, you're convinced that she *did*, but remember: your audience is not. If you insist, you will meet with resistance. If you present her as something to consider, most everyone in the audience will be fine with it, because you have given them the space to choose for themselves.

Most audience members will have their interest piqued and will be reassured by your insistence (this is where you *insist* on something) that the Bible stands as the only rule of faith and the final court of arbitration for what Christians believe.

At the end, you will be giving people a copy of *Steps to Christ*. "In the end, you always need to check these things out for yourself, against the clear words of the Bible, so I've got a little gift for you—this is a book that Ellen White wrote on having a saving relationship with Christ, and I've got enough that everyone can have one.<sup>7</sup> Take it home, read it, and if it's a blessing, add it to your Christian library. But if you find that it contradicts the Scriptures, you know what you should do with it, right? *Throw it out.*"

I know that kind of talk seems alarming to Adventists who cherish the writings of Ellen White, but again: giving people latitude to come to their own conclusions is very important in this presentation. Once they've read it, they won't be throwing it out.

### **Meeting #24: The Last Night on Earth (Your Testimony)**

There is no slide presentation or prophetic topic for this evening . . . by design. Your job is to make this meeting deeply personal and try to bring people to a point where they make a decision about what they've been learning.

It is time to present your testimony.

Your testimony might not be dramatic, but *you have one*. At some point, you chose—for yourself—to believe that the Scriptures are true. At some point, you surrendered your will to Christ. At some point, you chose to go into ministry. At some point, you've heard God speak to you clearly.

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<sup>7</sup> If budget is an issue, offer one book per family. Or tell the audience that if they don't already own a copy, they can have one—which will stop many of the saints from taking a book they already own!

I often begin the meeting with a few verses about the Second Coming and the joy that we will experience when we are finally safe in the kingdom. The slides are editable; it is easy to find a few passages that are meaningful to you and drop them into 5-10 slides that you lift from other presentations.

Or begin with a short review—remind them that the meetings began with evidence that Christ is coming soon, and they both saw that evidence for themselves and felt God tapping on their heart's door, calling them to something bigger. Remind them that they have been studying the *whole* Bible, and they have not seen a God trying to destroy the world, but a God who gave everything to ensure they could make it into His kingdom.

Review the fact that God loves them so deeply that He has provided for their needs. He has given them the rest of the Sabbath, instructions on how to take care of themselves physically, and even given them the comfort of knowing that we can trust Him with those we've lost.

But then *do* get into a personal testimony. This is important. Good evangelists slip personal details about themselves into *every* meeting so that the audience will recognize them not as *experts* but as *fallible human beings* who have found hope in Christ. Now it is time to share *more* intimately.

Think back over your life and recognize the moments God nudged you in His direction, even long before you made a decision to follow Him. This is an important concept: it builds to an appeal that recognizes that God has been working with people long before they met *you*. As you share how God got to *you* before you took a Bible study or attended a meeting, members of the audience will start to recognize the same thing in *their* lives.

Many will recognize that God started working to get them to your meeting months, or even *years*, before they received a handbill or a personal invitation. End by asking the audience, "Can you not see how eager God has been to bring you here? Many of you have been asking God to show Himself to you, to prove that He exists, and now He's done it. You've heard His voice, and you've seen Him act on your behalf. He's been following you since the moment you were born, eagerly waiting for *this* moment, right now. It all comes down to this . . . so I'm going to ask you to *do* something about it. If tonight you are going to show the angels in heaven that you have accepted God's call in your life, then I want you to come down and pray with me—let's celebrate that together."

It can be ideal to start the audience singing a simple chorus like "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" as you step off the platform to welcome people to the front.

You will be faced with the temptation to treat the evening like a grand finale, but that can have negative consequences. Some people will assume that because the



meetings have drawn to a close, there is nothing more for them to do—especially if you have not yet made personal contact with them. It is far better to end the meeting by announcing the next thing they can attend: a Wednesday Bible study or Bible marking class at the church, for example.

You want to plan at least three activities a week for your interests to attend; they have been coming out five nights a week, so less than three activities per week will seem discouraging to many as they now try to build on their newfound faith.

The three activities could include: (1) a Tuesday night Bible marking class, (2) a Friday evening witnessing class, and (3) a pastor's Bible class on Sabbath morning. There are more suggestions in the "Follow-Up" section of this manual.

### **A Few Words on Subject Order**

The subject order in *Discovering Revelation* is intentional and carefully planned. Before altering it, try preaching through the series as it is designed—to gain an understanding of how the flow works. Each presentation is designed to establish groundwork that will be important for grasping later subjects, but more than that, the subject order also follows the inspired counsel we've been given.

Perhaps you've noticed that successful evangelists have used essentially the same rough subject order for generations. This is not by accident. When you give Bible studies to a single individual, it is relatively easy to gauge that person's interests and spiritual development. With a general audience, that task becomes much more daunting, which is why it is best to stick with the subject order that has been recommended to us.

What is the best subject order? The one God used to bring a general audience into the Seventh-day Adventist movement in the first place. Notice how Ellen White describes the development of our message:

*I was shown three steps—the first, second, and third angels' messages. Said my accompanying angel, "Woe to him who shall move a block or stir a pin of these messages. The true understanding of these messages is of vital importance. The destiny of souls hangs upon the manner in which they are received." I was again brought down through these messages, and saw how dearly the people of God had purchased their experience. It had been obtained through much suffering and severe conflict. God had led them along step by step, until He had placed them upon a solid, immovable platform. I saw individuals approach the platform and examine the foundation. Some with rejoicing immediately stepped upon it. Others commenced to find fault with the foundation. They wished improvements made, and then the platform would be more perfect, and the people much happier. Some stepped off the platform to examine it and declared it to be laid wrong. But I saw that nearly all stood firm upon the platform and exhorted those who had stepped off to cease their complaints; for God was the Master Builder, and they were fighting against Him. (Early Writings, p. 258)*

*Many who embraced the third message had not had an experience in the two former messages. Satan understood this, and his evil eye was upon them to overthrow them; but the third angel was pointing them to the most holy place, and those who had had an experience in the past messages were pointing them the way to the heavenly sanctuary. Many saw the perfect chain of truth in the angels' messages, and gladly received them in their order, and followed Jesus by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. These messages were represented to me as an anchor to the people of God. Those who understand and receive them will be kept from being swept away by the many delusions of Satan. (Early Writings, p. 256)*

Ellen White suggests that there was a definite order of topics through which the movement passed as it was taking shape: "in their order," "perfect chain of truth," etc. Those who came into the movement later on and did not have the foundation of the first two angels' messages were much more easily discouraged and displaced by the enemy.

The best subject order to use when dealing with a general audience made up of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives follows the way God taught us the message in the first place. Begin by preaching the soon return of Christ (as Miller did), and then *take people through the Three Angels' Messages in order.*

This is roughly the subject order that has been used by successful evangelists for many generations. It may not make instinctive sense to you in the beginning, but choose to believe that God did not get it wrong and see if your evangelistic results don't improve.

The subject order in *Discovering Revelation* has been more or less shaped by this counsel. (Although in the early years, it wasn't, and—while effective—it became *much more* effective when molded according to the pattern Ellen White suggests.) Notice how the subjects flow *roughly* in the same order as the Three Angels' Messages:

Meeting	Title	Subject
1	A New World Order	Daniel 2 - soon coming of Christ (cf. William Miller)
2	Planet in Upheaval	Matthew 24 - soon coming of Christ (cf. William Miller)
3	Armageddon	Revelation 16 - soon coming of Christ (cf. William Miller)
4	The Man of Revelation	Gospel presentation - first angel - "everlasting gospel" - Revelation 14

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Subject</b>
5	The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse	Revelation 6 - historical approach - soon coming of Christ (cf. William Miller)
6	The Time of the End, Part 1	Daniel 8 & 9: first angel - "the hour of His judgment has come" - Revelation 14
7	The Time of the End, Part 2	Daniel 8 & 9: first angel - "the hour of His judgment has come" - Revelation 14
8	The Appearing	Second Coming - manner of - historical approach to prophecy, demonstrates importance of understanding Daniel 8 & 9 correctly - soon coming of Christ (cf. William Miller)
9	The Anatomy of Evil	Origin of sin - Great Controversy theme - unpacks Revelation 12 in order to make issues of Revelation 14 clearer - introduces Babylon in preparation for "Babylon is fallen"
10	The Ultimate Mind Game	First angel - Christian living - follow up on "everlasting gospel" - Revelation 14:6
11	Coming of the Lawless One	First angel - the validity of the moral law - preparation for "worship Him who made" - Sabbath issue - Revelation 14:6
12	The Sign	First angel - "worship Him who made" - Revelation 14:6
13	Revelation's Forgotten History	First angel - "worship Him who made" - Revelation 14:6
14	A River Runs Through It	First angel - baptism - "everlasting gospel"

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Subject</b>
15	Babylon Rising	Second angel - little horn power - "Babylon is fallen" - Revelation 14:7
16	Revelation's Keys of Death	State of the dead - Revelation 14:13
17	Secrets of Answered Prayer	Christian living - follow up on Gospel presentation
18	God's Strange Act	Punishment of the wicked - state of the dead - Revelation 14:13
19	A Desolate Planet	Millennium and heaven - follow up state of the dead & Second Coming
20	How to Postpone Your Funeral	Health message
21	Return of the Woman	Remnant church - Revelation 14:12
22	The Mark of the Beast	Third angel - decision on Sabbath - Revelation 14:9-11
23	The Testimony of Jesus	Third angel - Spirit of Prophecy - Revelation 14:12; Revelation 12:17
24	The Last Night on Earth (Your Testimony)	Decision meeting

## CHAPTER 12: BAPTISMS AND THE BAPTISMAL CLASS

You will notice that the provided decision cards include an option for baptism well before many—or even most—of your audience members truly understand what baptism is. This is by design. It is never too soon to start people thinking about a decision for Christ and the possibility of baptism. As you read through each decision card with your audience, and you come to the line about baptism, simply say, “I know that some of you have been thinking about this possibility, so if you’re curious, or you’d like to ask questions, or you’d like to talk to someone about getting baptized, then go ahead and check that box.”

You’ll usually be surprised at how many early indications you receive.

If someone checks for baptism in the first week, contact them within a day or two to schedule a time to talk. Plan it for the *next* week, however, unless it’s someone you know has completed a set of Bible studies or has been attending your church for a while. If you do not really know the person, you don’t want to work ahead too fast.

When you meet, bring along the first five baptismal vows. (“Baptismal Vows A” in your online supplemental material.) These cover the basics of Christianity—accepting Christ, establishing a prayer and Bible study life, etc. Explain that pastors have been reviewing the essential teachings of Christianity before baptism takes place for the last 2,000 years, and you’re excited about their interest and want to get started right away. Give them the sheet with the first five vows, explaining that these are the first five pillars of the Christian faith, and you thought it might be helpful/fun to review them together. Also explain that you’ll come back again with more of them.

The next week, you might be ready to review the next three vows. And the week after, another two or so. This “installment” method allows you to make regular contact with someone and provides time for prayer and discussion. By the time you come to the final week of your meetings, you will likely be able to clear this person for baptism in 15 minutes or less! (Alternatively, you could wait until the end and present all 13 vows at once, but this is far more cumbersome and, for some people, seems like too big of a decision to be making at once.)

Ideally, you would baptize your first candidate on the night you present the subject of baptism. This is possible if your *Discover* Bible School has been a key element in your pre-work; someone will likely be ready! Tell the audience in advance that there will be a special surprise that night, but don’t tell them what it is. At the end of your presentation, tell people, “We’ve studied this from the Bible, but now, how many of you would like to see it? I’ve got a surprise for you!”

Of course, if you’re in a rented hall, you’ll need to set up a portable baptistry (making sure that the venue owner is okay with it, and that you’ve purchased insurance, just in case!)

From that night forward, it is ideal to baptize one person every night. This is more powerful than saving all the decisions for the end of the meetings; if people witness a baptism every evening, it keeps them thinking about the decision they need to make. On nights when you plan an appeal, feature the baptism before you speak so that you can easily move from your sermon into the call. (Or, conversely, start the call, pause for a baptism, and then continue the call. You will need a pastor who is *not* preaching to be able to arrange this.)

### **The Baptismal Class**

Plan a baptismal class for one of the “off” nights during your final week; ideally the *last* free evening. Begin to announce it a week in advance, telling people that it is for those who have shown an interest in baptism. You should try to hold the class in the same place you are holding the meetings; moving to another location could mean losing some people.

Hand out a sheet with the 13 vows on it. (See Appendix.) Say something like this:

“Tonight, you’re here because you’ve expressed an interest in baptism. We’ve been studying a *lot* of material over the last few weeks, and I know that sometimes, people have questions. So what I thought we’d do tonight is review a summary of *everything* we’ve studied and *everything* the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches and believes. Let’s run through it.”

Review all of them in order, giving two or three Bible texts per vow, and ask the audience, “Is that clear? Does that make sense?” after each one.

When you’ve completed it, tell people, “Well, that’s it! So if you find yourself agreeing with those statements—if they make sense to you—go ahead and put your name at the bottom of that sheet, and we’ll start planning for your baptism! If anybody still has questions, I’ll stick around after class and answer them.”

Collect the sheets, and start making calls/visits to establish baptismal dates right away. It’s a good idea to have extra sheets so people can take one with them if they wish, since they will have turned in their signed set of vows.

Send word out to church members early on that baptismal classes are *only* for guests, or for church members who *brought* guests to the meetings. Do not announce this from the front; it creates an undesirable “us-and-them” environment. The reason you restrict the class to church members who brought someone is because those people will be far less likely to add controversial opinions to the discussion or attempt to cover topics that they thought you didn’t cover thoroughly enough. Nothing throws a bucket of cold water on a baptismal class like a judgmental saint or an offshoot-type with a doctrinal burden.

If a troublemaker *does* show up, it’s a good idea to have some of your volunteers ready to pull them aside into a private discussion . . . and keep them busy until the guests have left. There are more details on clearing people for baptism in the section on visitation.

## Baptizing People “Into Jesus” vs. Having People Join the Church

Seventh-day Adventists are somewhat unique among Christians in that we understand that we have been commissioned to deliver a very specific message to the world. From the inception of our church, we have agreed on the essentials of what it means to *live* that message. In recent years, however, there has been a trend to simply baptize people into Christ and then allow them to choose church membership at some later date.

This is unfortunate thinking for a number of reasons:

- a. To be baptized “into Christ” means accepting what He teaches. If someone told you they had become a Hindu, you would assume that they had adopted the teachings and practices of Hinduism. To accept Christ but not accept His teachings is paradoxical.
- b. To know the teachings of Christ and the doctrines of the Bible but reject them is a refutation of the new birth implied by baptism.
- c. The apostles were not merely baptizing “into Christ” as if it were a “catch and release” program. The 3,000 baptized on the day of Pentecost “gladly received [Peter’s] word,” and they “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship” and were “added to the church.” (Acts 2:41, 42, 47)
- d. As someone prepares for baptism, there is generally a deep level of conviction and a desire to make things right with God. If we baptize people ahead of decisions to obey Christ, it becomes much more difficult to seek those decisions later.
- e. Baptizing someone who is not choosing to live up to the light they have will create conflicted feelings in many people’s minds. They will come up out of the water of baptism *knowing* that they have not truly surrendered everything.

None of this is to imply that perfection is required for baptism. Baptism is not the finish line; it is the beginning. But it *is* the beginning of a life spent in community with other believers and the beginning of using your gifts in connection with Christ’s church. We do not become disciples of Christ to merely occupy a pew on Sabbath morning; we become disciples to join in the Gospel Commission along with others.

**A word of warning:** in some cultures, there is a tendency to refuse baptism to interests for a year or two to see if the new member is really going to “stick.” (This is quite common in cultures that have suffered under systematic oppression. Those living under communism, for example, wanted to make sure that the new people were actually converts, rather than government plants or spies.)

Read the New Testament carefully: all of the decisions were quick ones. If someone (1) understands what it means to follow Christ and belong to the church, (2) is able to sign the

vows, (3) has expressed repentance for sin and shows a willingness to trust Christ with the future, (4) shows a desire to keep growing in Christ, and (5) has no valid reason (i.e., moral issue) that would prevent them from baptism . . . then *move ahead*.

Experience has shown that those who put off baptism for a long period of time are far less likely to make a decision, or stick around, than those who are decisive about following Christ.

### **Baptism: When Is Someone Ready?**

In the minds of many church members, baptisms are the point of an evangelistic meeting, and there is a temptation to see them as the finish line: once the people are baptized, members consider them to be “in the church,” and the project is complete.

Baptism is a *starting* line, not the finish line. It is the beginning of an individual’s committed relationship with Christ and the beginning of his or her involvement in the life of Christ’s church. When someone joins the church through baptism, the work the church members must do for them has only begun.

Once someone has indicated an interest in baptism, either on a decision card or verbally, it is of the utmost importance to pay attention to that desire, regardless of their current level of preparedness. When someone asks for baptism, the answer is always *yes*. If they are not in a position to understand what church membership entails, or if there is a moral issue, the answer should still be affirmative—you will begin preparing for that right away:

“Mike, I was looking at this card you filled in last night, and I’ve just got to say, I’m really excited by what God is doing in your life. I thought I’d swing by so we could start preparing as soon as possible.”

If you discover Mike is *not* ready for some reason, you continue to prepare and pray together, and continue visiting until he *is* ready. That might be a few days, or a few months at most. Seldom does it take longer than that to sort things out.

If your church practices the custom of having the church board vote prospective new members, have your board *vote all of the new members before the meetings begin*. Once you are busy, you will not have the time to convene a church board for each new person. Promise the church board that *everyone* getting baptized will have affirmed the baptismal vows before they are baptized.

It is also wise not to vote baptismal candidates into church membership at your public meetings; when you call for the vote, many in the audience will be confused and join the vote. It is better to vote them into membership the next Sabbath morning in church . . . and present them with a gift.

Some churches practice the custom of having a baptismal candidate affirm each of the vows aloud at the front of the congregation before they are baptized. This is not a wise



practice when baptizing people in an evangelistic campaign, where the members of the audience will be from the general public and will have varying levels of understanding regarding the essential doctrines of the church. The first baptisms will often happen halfway through the campaign, before you have covered a number of important doctrines, and if you read all the vows in front of a general audience, you will run the risk of prejudicing people against those doctrines before you have had a chance to present them from the Bible.

We have traditionally demonstrated our first baptism on the night we present the subject. As mentioned earlier, after teaching the concept from the Bible, we surprise the audience with a baptism at the close of the message by saying something like, "Well, we've just studied that from the Bible. How many of you would be interested in actually *seeing* it?"

From that evening forward, we strive to baptize one or two candidates every night. If you are planning to have an appeal, sometimes you can have the baptism and then move into your appeal, if it suits the topic and your presentation style. If a baptism at the close of the meeting might disrupt a seamless flow from the topic to the appeal, it is wise to place the baptism at the beginning of your meeting instead. (Another alternative: call people forward, and once they've come, pause for a baptism before you pray and/or continue your appeal.)

### **When Is Someone Ready for Baptism?**

There are two ditches into which we can fall when assessing a person's readiness for baptism: either we move too quickly, or we move too slowly. The principle for determining readiness is simple. Baptize people *as soon as they're ready*. There are a number of signals you should look for that indicate readiness:

- 1. Conviction of sin and a desire to turn away from it.** Some of your guests will come from a background in which baptism is viewed as a bit of a good-luck charm. Baptism is understood to be a legal arrangement that buys you a spot in heaven, regardless of personal choice. Baptism, however, is a symbol of the new birth and regeneration in Christ, so you should see a desire to follow Christ and begin a new life with Him.

*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (Romans 6:5, 6)*

*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:11)*

2. **Simple faith in Christ.** At baptism, we are choosing to die to self and live for and with Christ, which is why Paul describes it as a death, burial, and resurrection in Romans 6. Someone who is ready for baptism indicates a desire to trust God with their future.
3. **A basic understanding of what it means to become part of a church.** In the New Testament model, those who were baptized were added to the church:

*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. . . . praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:41, 42, 47)*

4. **An inclination toward prayer and Bible study.** The baptismal vows already cover this (in #5), and it is rare for people to ask for baptism and *not* wish to have a daily relationship with Christ. Charles Spurgeon once pointed out something poignant from the story of Paul's conversion in Acts 9:11:

*Faith is the great gospel grace, but we must not forget that true faith always prays. When a man professes faith in the Lord Jesus and doesn't cry to the Lord daily, we dare not believe in his faith or conversion. The Holy Spirit's evidence by which He convinced Ananias of Paul's conversion was not, "Behold, he talks loudly of his joys and feelings," but, "Behold, he prays." (Acts 9:11) And that prayer was earnest, heartbroken confession and supplication. Oh, to see this sure evidence in all who profess to be our converts.<sup>8</sup>*

Enthusiasm alone is not necessarily an indication that people are ready to move forward; established Christians understand that enthusiasm wanes and waxes with differing circumstances. A desire to seek God is a stronger indication.

A word of caution: it is possible to over-scrutinize a candidate and inappropriately deem him or her unworthy. We must be careful not to require sinless perfection. While a willful continuation in sin would certainly disqualify someone, perfection is not the requirement for church membership. Few of us, regardless of our years in the church, would stand up to the scrutiny of angels should they choose to evaluate our experience with Christ. In assessing someone's preparedness for baptism, you are looking for general trends and willingness, and your goal should be to be as generous with them as God has been with you.

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<sup>8</sup> Spurgeon, Charles H. *The Soul-Winner: How to Lead Sinners to the Saviour*. Aneko Press. Kindle Edition, p. 20.

You will notice that most of the baptismal decisions mentioned in the New Testament were quick. Over the years, we have observed that (generally speaking) the longer someone takes to make a decision, the less stable that decision tends to be. Those who understand the truth and immediately seize hold of it tend to be much stronger in the long run. Among those who made quick decisions in the New Testament, we tend to find a number of reasons they were ready:

- **Evidence of previous instruction.** You will notice that those baptized on the day of Pentecost were described as having already been “devout.” Cornelius, likewise, was described as having been devout in advance of his decision. These people had a strong understanding of the decision they were making.
- **A deep desire and conviction.** Consider the example of the Ethiopian eunuch, whose primary question, after being instructed from the Scriptures, was “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36)
- Occasionally, there would be **supernatural occurrences** that brought on sudden conviction and hastened the decision-making process. Cornelius had a dream leading him to Peter, for example, and Peter had a dream preparing him to receive Cornelius’ delegates. The Philippian jailer witnessed a massive earthquake. Saul was stopped short on the road to Damascus. (It is important to make sure we do not publicly overemphasize such occurrences to the point where those who might *not* have experienced something they perceive to be miraculous begin to doubt their own experience.)

Readiness for baptism can be boiled down to three things: conversion, understanding, and evidence of the practice of a relationship with Christ.

## CHAPTER 13: THE QUESTION BOX

A question submission box placed in the lobby can prove to be an exceptionally powerful evangelistic tool. It will help you:

- Gauge how well your audience is understanding the presentations.
- Give you an opportunity to review and affirm key points.
- Discover issues that people in the audience may need help with.
- Cover doctrinal issues and topics that do not require an entire evening to present.

We usually introduce the question box on opening night by saying something like this:

“We’re going to cover a *lot* of material in the coming nights, and inevitably, people have questions. Because we have to cover so much each evening, I simply don’t have time to stop and answer questions. But I want to make sure that you have an opportunity to ask, so here’s what we’ve done: we’ve placed a question box in the foyer, where you can ask any Bible question you want—and starting a couple of nights from now, I’ll begin answering the questions for a few minutes before we start the evening’s presentation.”

You really *don’t* want to take questions from the floor. Occasionally, you’ll see someone put his or her hand up as you’re speaking. It is best to simply ignore it—or to quickly say, “I’m sorry, but we just don’t have time to stop for questions. Please put it in the question box outside.” If you stop for questions, you will *never* get through your material, plus you may find yourself giving a public platform to members of offshoots, disgruntled Adventists, or people who have started attending because their friends are coming and they want an opportunity to contradict you publicly. You *will* regret an open Q&A session in the general meeting.

When introducing the question box, we usually lay out a few ground rules:

“You can ask any Bible question you want! But there *are* a few guidelines I’m going to ask you to abide by. Rule number one: it’s got to be a *Bible* question. We don’t really have time for personal questions, and those would really only be of interest to one or two people. So please: make it a *Bible* question. And if we get a lot of those, I’m going to prioritize the questions that are directly related to the subjects I’m presenting.

“The second rule is this: we have a lot of people who come from a variety of backgrounds, and I’d like for everybody to feel perfectly welcome and comfortable. Unfortunately, sometimes people see the question box as an opportunity to score a point against somebody else in the room that they disagree with. For example, someone might ask, ‘Why do some people do such-and-such when the Bible says not to?’ That’s not really a Bible question, because you already know the answer, and you’re just trying to preach to someone else in the room. So if those come in, I’m simply not going to answer those, because this seminar hall is supposed to feel like home for everybody.

“There’s also a third principle I operate by. If the question is going to require a lengthy or detailed answer, and it’s something we’re going to cover anyway, I’ll likely just defer my answer to the night when we’ll deal with that subject.”

If you’ve provided guidelines, you are perfectly able to ignore questions submitted by troublemakers or people who are trying to start a public argument. The most delicate questions are best handled in person, rather than in front of an audience for whom the question might become an unnecessary point of contention.

If *really* sensitive questions come in early and answering them publicly might alienate some of your guests, you can always say, “A really personal and sensitive question has come in regarding (*the most general and vague reference you can make to the topic*). I’d really like to answer that, so if you’re the one who asked the question, come and tap me on the shoulder later and let me know.” This is an escape hatch from answering sensitive questions that you’d rather address after building rapport and establishing trust with your audience. These might include current social issues.

The question box also provides a good opportunity for you to address shorter subjects that can be handled in five minutes. A good example would be the matter of *tithing*. Sometimes, if you spend an hour on the subject of tithing, it leaves the public feeling as if you had earned their trust, but now want their money. Less is more on this subject.

We often put a question in the box ourselves, saying, “Here’s an interesting question that was in the box.” It’s absolutely true: *you* put it in, but it *was* in the box. “Is tithing something that Christians still do, or was that just for the Old Testament?”

The beauty of using this approach is that it can be handled as an interesting question instead of seeming like an appeal for funds. Answer it with two or three key texts, and then give a short personal testimony like this: “And here’s what I’ve discovered. When God says ‘prove Him’ in this matter, He really does keep His promises. My family has been tithing for years now, and I’ve got to say: God has really taken care of us.”

Now tithing seems like a good idea instead of an imperative. (It *is* an imperative, of course, but that is not always the best way to share biblical principles. Remember that God always gives people the room to make their own decisions, and you’ll find that most people will

do the right thing when provided with information in a non-threatening way and given the opportunity to decide for themselves.)

Adornment is another good topic to handle from the question box. The matter of personal adornment can be tricky and sensitive. Some people will feel personally attacked if you preach it from the front or bring it up for the first time in the home. We have sometimes handled the matter by submitting a question after the public baptisms begin:

“I’ve noticed that the people getting baptized aren’t wearing any jewelry. Is there a biblical reason for this?”

It’s virtually guaranteed that someone will have noticed. Our answer:

“That’s a great question—and someone here is very observant! Yes, there *is* a biblical reason for that. You’ll find that during moments of special repentance and consecration, people in the Bible removed their jewelry. For example, when Jacob was making things right with God in Genesis 35, he got rid of the false gods in his family’s life and they also removed their jewelry. Similarly, in Exodus 33, when God was calling Israel to repentance, He asked them to take off their jewelry.

“It’s a way of demonstrating that we bring nothing to the equation. God forgives us not because we can earn it or because of something we’ve done, but because He loves us. So in the waters of baptism, where people are being born again, we start our new spiritual life with nothing, just like we started our physical life with nothing.”

The beauty of this approach is that you aren’t taking jewelry away forever—at least not yet. You are opening the door to understanding the principle of simplicity and allowing people to make an easier decision first: the jewelry comes off for their baptism. We then finish answering the question with this statement, because by the time the first baptism has taken place, you have already covered the subject of 1844 and the judgment:

“Now, many Christians—when they realize that our world has moved into the time of judgment ever since 1844, and we are now living in the actual Day of Atonement—choose to treat this whole time in sacred history as a moment of consecration, and they make the decision to keep their jewelry off until the day Jesus comes and puts it back on. That’s personally what my family has done, and it’s something you might want to consider for yourself as well.”

Notice that you’re not *pushing* or *insisting*. By opening the door to the right idea and giving people the space to choose, you will eventually find most of them making the right decision. In many churches, your new members are going to discover Adventists who continue to wear jewelry, and this approach gives them the space to make the right decision without becoming confused or contentious about the behavior of others.

Smoking and other addictions can also be addressed from the question box:

"I really struggle with smoking, and I'd like to quit. Does the Bible offer any advice or help?"

Use this question to build your addictions class. A good answer:

"That's a great question. The answer is *yes*—in fact, here's what we'll do: starting on \_\_\_\_\_ night, right after the meeting, we'll just meet down here in the first few rows, and I'll *show* you an incredible plan from the Bible to find victory over *any* destructive habit."

## CHAPTER 14: RUNNING AN ADDICTIONS CLASS

The question box can be an invaluable tool for discovering who might be struggling with habits that would prevent church membership. Simply stuff a question in the box *yourself*, such as, “Is there any advice in the Bible for someone who’s trying to quit smoking?”

The answer, of course, would be *yes*: “That’s a great question—and the answer is *yes*. Most of us have struggled with an addition to *something* at some point, and we’ve all discovered that quitting that habit can seem nearly impossible. So here’s the good news: the Bible has a few easy principles that can set you free from any habit—quickly. So here’s what I’m going to do. Starting on \_\_\_\_\_ night, I’m going to have a quick 10-minute class right here in the auditorium, right after the meeting. I’ll show you some amazing biblical principles, and I promise you: you can experience complete freedom.”

When the people gather for your meeting, have them sign in to the class, providing their name and contact information. Keep your word and keep the meeting *short*. Hand out the “Addictions Class” supplement (available online) and run through the principles. At the end of the meeting, ask people to come back the next evening with a brown paper bag—and in the bag, they are to place their addiction: alcohol, cigarettes, whatever.

You’ll be surprised at what people turn in.

The final principle is to “make not provision for the lusts of the flesh” (Romans 13:14), which means to exercise faith and get rid of those things which tempt us. They will be bringing the bags as an act of faith. Remind them that exercising faith means getting rid of *everything*: the cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays . . . *everything*.

When they return with the bags the next evening, have them bring them to the front and leave them there. Pray with the group, but *pray positively*. “Lord, I am so thankful that you *give* us victory over these things, and tonight we are saying *thank you* for setting us free.” You do not want to dwell on how difficult it is to quit; you want to focus on the fact that God wants freedom for them, and He’s *given* it to them—already.

Meet regularly each evening, or have a trusted pastor or elder meet with people to pray. If someone slips, encourage him or her. For example, if someone tells you they broke down and had a cigarette at work, you could say, “Well, didn’t you normally smoke a whole pack in a day? Look at that! God has already given you victory over 19 cigarettes today; let’s claim that last cigarette now!”

Using positive expectation is *far* more effective than lecturing. Most people will need hand-holding for the first four or five days. We often call people in the morning to pray with them, again thanking God for the victory He has given them already, rather than asking God to get them past “the horrible withdrawal and temptations” that are going to come with the day.



## CHAPTER 15: VISITATION AND DECISIONS

The success of your evangelistic program will rise or fall on visitation. The number one reason that evangelistic meetings fail is because the church assumes that presenting information is enough to secure meaningful presentations. Far too often, we hear people saying, "Well, they've been *told*. It's up to them whether or not they accept the truth!"

True, it *is* up to the individual to accept or reject the truth. But even a cursory study of the methods of Jesus will demonstrate that it is not enough to merely mention the truth out loud. Evangelism is about *people*. It means engaging them where they are and ministering to their needs.

It is easy to tell which evangelists are going to succeed. The ones who preach and make a beeline for their car generally fail. The ones who head to the door to greet people after the meeting—the ones who linger until the last guest leaves—those are the soul-winners.

*When a minister has presented the gospel message from the pulpit, his work is only begun. There is personal work for him to do. He should visit the people in their homes, talking and praying with them in earnestness and humility. There are families who will never be reached by the truths of God's Word unless the stewards of His grace enter their homes and point them to the higher way. (Gospel Workers, p. 187)*

*To my ministering brethren I would say, By personal labor reach the people where they are. Become acquainted with them. This work cannot be done by proxy. Money loaned or given cannot accomplish it. Sermons from the pulpit cannot do it. Teaching the Scriptures in families,—this is the work of an evangelist, and this work is to be united with preaching. If it is omitted, the preaching will be, to a great extent, a failure. (Gospel Workers, p. 188)*

*If half the time now spent in preaching, were given to house-to-house labor, favorable results would be seen. Much good would be accomplished, for the workers could come close to the people. The time spent in quietly visiting families, and when there speaking to God in prayer, singing His praise, and explaining His Word, will often do more good than a public effort. Many times minds are impressed with tenfold more force by personal appeals than by any other kind of labor. The family that is visited in this way is spoken to personally. The members are not in a promiscuous assembly where they can apply to their neighbors the truths which they hear. They themselves are spoken to, earnestly, and with a kindhearted solicitude. They are allowed to express their objections freely, and these objections can each be met with a "Thus saith the Lord." If this work is done in humility, by those whose hearts are imbued with the love of God, the words are fulfilled, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." (Evangelism, p. 463)*

As with the other components of your meeting, it is essential to plan a visitation program carefully and execute it faithfully. The Voice of Prophecy team generally assembles all of the pastors and volunteer visitors on the first Monday morning of a campaign. We systematically read through the names of every person who has attended the meetings—and we say each name out loud. It can be time-consuming (up to eight hours if you have a couple thousand guests), but it is one of the most important exercises you can engage in near the beginning of the campaign.

Read through *all* the names as a team, including guests who have labeled themselves Seventh-day Adventists at registration. (Some who identify as Adventists may have never been baptized; others may have lapsed but have shown up for the meetings. There may be others who have been taking the *Discover* lessons and already identify as Adventists, but have not actually joined the church.)

Your task is to assess each name carefully. As you read them aloud, ask if anyone knows the individual you have just mentioned. If they do, assign the name to their team. If no one knows the individual, ask which of your visitation teams would like to visit them.

*Never* assign names randomly or by zip code. You want to ensure that the person making the visit actually wants to, and doesn't have so many names that keeping up with visitation becomes impossible. There is something about *requesting* a name that compels a person to be faithful about following up.

When the names have all been read and assigned, it is time to hit the streets. You have approximately one week to 10 days to make friends with *everyone* coming to your meeting. If you fail to make personal contact, you will find the decision process much more difficult later on—but you will find *friends* are willing to ask honest questions and raise genuine concerns. They are more likely to continue attending, while strangers will simply disappear the moment they hit a speed bump in their experience.

The Voice of Prophecy team typically meets on every day that does not have an evening meeting—usually every Monday and Thursday. We review the names, assign any new ones, and report on how things are progressing. We pray over the names as well.

Additionally, we often plan a Sabbath afternoon meeting with all of the Bible workers/visitation volunteers prior to the seminar meeting. Not everyone who volunteers will be able to meet on a Monday or Thursday morning, so the Sabbath afternoon meeting (around 4-5 p.m.) allows you to review the visits of the past week, answer questions, and give instructions for the next week.

## The First Visit

Your first contact with a guest outside of the meeting should be *as brief and non-threatening as possible*. The first visit should last a minute or two, seldom longer. Your objectives are simple:

1. Create a personal relationship.
2. Assess the interest level of the individual.

We often recommend taking a sheet with the following week's meeting schedule with you. Even though you have handed it out in the auditorium, or perhaps have mailed it to everyone, it is still a great reason to drop by the home: you want to thank everyone personally and make sure they know what's coming next.

We do not generally recommend making an appointment; most people will say "no" because they don't know what to expect, and once they have refused a visit, the door has likely been closed permanently. Instead, make a doorstep visit that lasts all of two minutes.

When you get to the door, hold something identifiable in your hand, such as a copy of the handbill. Even if you are the presenter, you will look different to many people on the doorstep, and the handbill will help brand you with the meetings.

When you knock, take a few steps back and turn slightly to the side. Body language is important; if you block the doorway or fill the door frame, some people will feel intimidated by what they consider an aggressive stance. If there are steps, go down a couple of steps so you are not taller than the person who answers the door.

When someone answers the door, remember the **three things everybody wants to know when the doorbell rings**: (1) who are you? (2) what do you want? and (3) how long are you going to be here?

Answer all three questions the moment they open the door. Smile broadly and say:

"Oh, hi! I'm (first name) from the prophecy meetings. I really can't stay but half a minute—I just wanted to make sure that everyone got their hands on a copy of this (*extend schedule to them*) and thank you personally for coming out!"

That's it. It's the whole visit. Start to walk away. You've identified the face behind the name, and now you'll be able to watch for them at the hall and greet them by name. They'll be relieved, and the next time you drop by, you will not be perceived as a problem.

As you start to move away, however, ask one more quick question:

"Say, how did you hear about the meetings?" Pause and smile.

What they say next will be invaluable. It will tell you if a friend invited them, or if they have Adventist family, or if they came because of a handbill. It is a valuable diagnostic question to help you assess how far along they might be in their experience with the church. Listen carefully to what they tell you, then say:

“Well, I hope it’s been a blessing to you.”

Smile again. Listen to any response they might give. It will tell you much about their interest level. Finish by saying:

“See you tomorrow night!” (Or, of course, *tonight*, if that’s the case.)

Short and sweet, but powerful. You’ve broken the ice, and you are more likely to become friends at the auditorium.

## **The Subsequent Visits: Clear and Set**

Subsequent visits are different; they are meant to help deepen understanding, entrench decisions, and keep people moving forward. You are also looking to deepen your personal relationship with people, always ministering to their needs. Show them that you genuinely care about them, without becoming overbearing or pushy.

You should aim to make contact with every interest, every week.

For these visits, you will be using what evangelists call the “clear and set” method. You are ensuring that the subjects are understood, and you are helping settle people into new truths. The “clear and set” method uses three diagnostic questions, each designed to be as non-threatening as possible. You do not want to make people feel cornered; you want to ask questions that elicit an honest discussion and leave people room to make their own decisions:

### **Question 1: Was this new?**

*“Mike, the other night we were talking about the seventh day, Saturday, being the Sabbath. Have you ever heard anything like that before?”*

It’s non-threatening: either Mike has heard it before, or he hasn’t. If he *has* heard it before, he might tell you that he has Adventist friends or family, which would be an incredibly valuable piece of information.

### **Question 2: Was it clear?**

*“As we were studying that from the Bible, did that make sense to you?”*

You always want to direct someone's attention to the Scriptures, because it emphasizes that you are dealing in God's opinion rather than your own. It is at this point that Mike may raise some questions or objections, which you can deal with. (See section on answering objections.)

If Mike is resistant at this point, *back off completely*. It's more important that he continues attending than it is to win an argument. You can say, "I always enjoy comparing notes. I'm so glad you've been coming—see you tonight!"

**Question 3:** *"Have you given this some thought for yourself?"*

Notice, again, that the question does not paint Mike into a corner. If you ask, "Are you going to do it?" he can answer with a "no" and the discussion is over. But "Have you given this some thought?" leaves the door open for Mike to exercise choice and/or continue the discussion:

*"Mike, have you given some thought as to what this might mean for you?"*

You want to go through this three-question process with every interest, over every key doctrine. You might feel like a broken record using the same approach each time, but it is by far one of the most effective ways to help move interests forward without violating their freedom of choice.

If there is a decision to be made, such as keeping the Sabbath, and Mike is positive as you move along, then you'll want to extend an invitation. Perhaps the discussion would go something like this:

*"Mike, have you given some thought to what this might mean for you?"*

*"I have. I just don't know where I'm supposed to go to church now, because my own church worships on Sunday."*

*"Yeah, I can see your point. You know, I'm going to a Sabbath-keeping church this weekend myself—why not come with me as my guest? I'd love that!"*

Another good question to ask, if someone is clearly convinced and/or under conviction, is, "Can you think of any good reason not to . . . ?" For example:

*"Mike, you've been giving this some thought. Can you think of any good reason not to move forward with Jesus on this?"*

It's a powerful question because there is *no such thing* as a good reason not to follow Christ, and most people will recognize that. There may be *excuses*, but not good reasons. When you ask this final question, you may discover some sincere objections to our message that need to be addressed.

Remember the value of *silence* after you ask each question. You want to leave space for people to hear the voice of the Spirit speaking to their hearts. If you tend to jump in and say something when people do not respond to your questions immediately, those who are struggling with conviction will take your next statement as a welcome diversion from the decision process, and you may lose a valuable opportunity. Keep quiet until *they* speak.

## Objections: When Things Don't Go Smoothly

It is often after the second diagnostic "clear and set" question that people may raise objections to what you have been presenting. It's entirely possible when you ask "Does that make sense?" or "Was that clear from the Bible?" that someone will say *no*. What should you do?

### 1. Understand that objections are usually a buying signal.

If someone seems unsettled by a key doctrine, it is often because they are attempting to reconcile it with the knowledge they already possess. If it doesn't fit neatly into their current worldview, they will experience cognitive dissonance. In order to absorb new knowledge, we need to be able to associate it with something we already know. If we can't, we are tempted to reject it.

An objection usually means that your interest has been struggling to absorb the information. If they seem a little uneasy, it's actually a good sign: their mind has been working on the problem, attempting to make things work. There is a level of conviction. *Apathy* is much worse than an objection, because it means there is little to no conviction.

Your task is to help your interest resolve cognitive dissonance by helping them attach new information to the worldview they possess. Be in prayer; God will usually show you how to make the new doctrine meaningful to your interest.

### 2. Repeat the objection as a question.

You want to make sure that you understand what the objection is. If you immediately launch into an answer without pausing long enough to ensure you understand, you risk answering a question they never had in the first place.

"I just don't think I could keep the Sabbath, because I'd lose my job."

*"Mike, are you saying that you're afraid you won't be able to provide for your family if you start keeping the Sabbath?"*

"No, that's not it. I'd probably find something for less pay. I really like and need this job, and I think my boss won't understand."

*"So you think he'll refuse to help you?"*

*"Yes."*

Now you can move forward, sharing some of God's promises to provide for us if we're faithful, and you can explain that religious liberty laws provide for reasonable accommodation—and perhaps offer to write Mike's boss a letter explaining the situation.

### **3. Make sure the objection is the real problem.**

Most people do not like to bare their souls to a recent acquaintance. Some will dance around the problem before being forthright about what is *really* bothering them, and the first objection you hear might simply be an excuse instead of the real issue.

When someone raises an objection, consider asking, "Is that the *only* reason?"

*"Mike, you're afraid that your boss is going to fire you if you ask for Sabbaths off. Is that the only thing standing in the way of moving forward?"*

*"No. My wife doesn't believe in the Sabbath, and she's told me that she doesn't want a divided house, and she's told me she will be very upset if I decide to do this."*

*"Would that be the only thing standing in the way, then?"*

*"No. My son has Saturday morning ball games, right when your church meets, and I'm supposed to drive him there. I guess that's really the reason my wife doesn't like this."*

*"So is that it, then?"*

*"Yes."*

Most of the time, you will only have to work through the last objection raised because it happens to be the truth.

### **4. Ask for a decision before you give an answer.**

You always want to be sure that your conversations with interests are as productive as possible. Your aim is to help people keep moving in the right direction, no matter how small each step might appear. Another way to determine if an objection is genuine is to ask if they would be able to move forward if the objection were to disappear.

*"I just can't keep the Sabbath, because I've got a family to feed and I'm afraid I'd lose my job!"*

*"Mike, if that problem went away—if you knew for sure that God would take care of you, and that we could resolve this, then you'd be able to keep the Sabbath?"*

"Yes."

*"Well, I've got good news, Mike. I know for a fact that God will help you get past this! Let's see what we can do . . ."*

Mike has just decided to keep the Sabbath if the problem is resolved; now you have a target to aim for. The decision to follow Christ is already in place before you begin working on the problem.

### **5. Answer the objection quickly, simply . . . and from the Bible.**

You want to make the objection seem as minimal and easy to resolve as possible. If your answer stretches to a half-hour Bible study, your interest is likely to think that their objection was a really *good* one with lots of merit—otherwise, why would it be so complicated to figure out?

Be sure your answers come from the Bible. Bible study interests are usually not interested in your opinion; they want to know what *God* thinks. So show them . . . from the Bible:

*One sentence of Scripture is of more value than ten thousand of man's ideas and arguments. (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 71)*

*Be very careful how you handle the Word, because that Word is to make decisions with the people. Let the Word cut, and not your words. (Evangelism, p. 298)*

Never forget: this is not *your* Bible study. God works with individuals long before we ever make contact with them; be sure that He's in the driver's seat when you begin speaking.

### **6. Visit often.**

Visit often, but not *too* often. (You don't want to be perceived as a nuisance.) Once a week is ideal. The first few visits, which help deepen friendship, are essential because most people only open up to a trusted friend. If you are a stranger, you will find it very difficult to work through issues with a Bible study interest.

### **7. Never argue.**

It doesn't matter how gifted you are at debating—you must *never* do it with a Bible study interest. *Ever*. You will certainly win the argument, because our message is logical and airtight. But you will lose the interest, because nobody likes to feel humiliated. If you see



people becoming resistant or getting edgy, back away. Come back another day after the Spirit has calmed their minds.

Repeating an argument or dwelling on it gives it more strength than it deserves in your interest's mind. They'll be thinking, "I must have made a really great point—look how long it's taking to answer it, and how agitated he's getting!"

It is far better to downplay the argument an interest raises, saying something like, "Oh, I wouldn't worry too much about that," and then diverting the conversation to something more pleasant for a while. Many of us have to fight the urge to defend ourselves . . . but do it. By treating the objection as something small, it will seem smaller in the interest's mind.

### **8. Practice positive expectation.**

Always speak to your interest as if you expect him/her to do the right thing. Far too often, we phrase our questions negatively: "You wouldn't want to do that, would you?" When you speak negatively, you sometimes *create* objections in an interest's mind. It is far better to simply *assume* they will do the right thing and speak as if they're doing it.

*"Mike, we're planning a beautiful baptismal service this weekend. That's the one you should be part of!"*

(Note: you didn't ask, "Would you like to be part of it?" You assumed that Mike *would* be getting baptized, and you've already moved forward to planning a date.)

### **9. Agree with people whenever you can.**

No matter how different someone's worldview might be from yours, you can generally find *something* to agree with.

*When you are laboring in a place where souls are just beginning to get the scales from their eyes, and to see men as trees walking, be very careful not to present the truth in such a way as to arouse prejudice, and to close the door of the heart to the truth. Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so. Let them see that you love their souls, and want to be in harmony with them so far as possible. If the love of Christ is revealed in all your efforts, you will be able to sow the seed of truth in some hearts; God will water the seed sown, and the truth will spring up and bear fruit to His glory. (Evangelism, p. 144)*

Let's suppose Mike tells you that his mother is dead, and he's grateful that she's watching him from heaven. There isn't much for you to agree with in that statement, and he might raise it weeks before you cover the state of the dead, but ask yourself: what is Mike hoping is true? It could be a number of things: that his mother is secure, that he has someone watching over him, or that his mother will not be lost to him forever. If you look for the *reason* Mike hopes his statement is true, you will usually find something to agree with.

*"Isn't it wonderful, Mike, that we know we get to see our family members again?"*

You can both agree on that. You'll revisit the subject again after you present the state of the dead, then you can underline Mike's hope once again, tying into the new information he's just learned.

### **10. Always give people the space to make their own decisions.**

Nobody likes to be pushed. Sometimes, in our zeal to see people join the church, we become far too pushy. God has always given us the space we need to make our own decisions, and we owe His interests the same courtesy. If someone is struggling with getting Sabbaths off from work and seems to not appreciate the idea that you could get involved by speaking to his or her employer, consider backing off and using a gentler approach:

*"Mike, I can certainly understand why that might concern you. Here's what I can do: there's a letter I sometimes provide to employers that explains, in a very kind and gentle way, why the Sabbath is important to you. I could drop a copy off on your doorstep tomorrow so that you could see what that looks like. Maybe you'll find something helpful in there."*

Notice what you did *not* do: you did not push Mike to deliver the letter. You nudged him in the right direction, but made it *his* idea to use it if he chooses. You'll be surprised how many times an interest will do the right thing if you set the stage and then get out of the way.

### **11. Break ice, not people.**

It's okay to relax and smile—and even laugh—with your Bible study interests. If you seem somber all the time, they will have trouble relating to you. Be prepared to laugh with them, cry with them, and pray with them. You need to seem *human*. It is far more effective to be co-students sitting at the feet of Jesus than it is to adopt the roles of master and apprentice.

Far too often, when a discussion starts to grow tense, we make it far worse by adopting a severe or sober attitude. We think we're solving a problem by bringing weight down on an interest, but we're breaking people instead of the ice. You'd be surprised how often a smile breaks the ice and keeps things moving forward.

## CHAPTER 16: FOLLOW-UP

Nothing will undo your evangelistic efforts quite like failing to plan careful follow-up. Your audience has been attending meetings five nights a week, and if Sabbath morning activities are all that's available to them after the meetings have finished, you will lose many—maybe even *most*—of your interests.

This is the number one reason why evangelistic meetings fail. New members face a lot of challenges during the week. Their employer might be riding their case about the Sabbath. Their family might be appalled that they have chosen to leave the church they were raised in, and may apply constant pressure to get the interest to rethink what they're doing. Their friends might abandon them when they no longer drink, smoke, or gamble because they don't know how to relate to a born-again believer.

There are *many* pressures on new converts, and if we don't provide a means of support, the devil will most certainly take advantage of all the time and space we grant him.

### 1. Regular Faith-Building Activities

Do not rely on Sabbath morning church services to sustain people. It is *not* enough. Ideally, your new members and interests should be able to look forward to three activities per week, which could include Sabbath morning. Space activities throughout the week so that no one has to wait more than a day or two before they can make contact with the church again.

Will people come? That depends on whether or not you've made friends with them throughout the meetings. If you have failed to visit, you will lose 90% of your crowd after closing night.

Some suggestions:

- A midweek Bible study. You could use the *Discover* lessons or *Focus on Prophecy*. Go through our message again in a more relaxed format, allowing for discussion and questions. Plan on 45 minutes to an hour, followed by 20 to 30 minutes of social interaction in the fellowship hall.
- A midweek Bible marking class. Use the *Discovering Revelation* handouts to choose eight or 10 key texts, and lead your group in chain-referencing their Bibles. Provide colored pencils and rulers, and use the Bible they received during the meetings. Most of your interests are facing a lot of questions from friends and family, so you will find them eager to learn how to find the key passages. We have also created a more detailed Bible marking program at the Voice of Prophecy, which would be ideal for follow-up.

- A witnessing class. Friday night can be an ideal time to teach people how to share their faith. This has the added benefit of substantially multiplying your baptisms over the months to come; many of your interests will be sharing their faith with others at this stage, so equipping them to give Bible studies—or enlisting their help in running your *Discover* Bible School one evening per week—is an ideal way to tap into their newfound soul-winning zeal. You will find your new members and interests are generally more willing to help run a Bible school than longtime church members! You could also put together a team of people to answer questions that come into [Bibleinfo.com](http://Bibleinfo.com), and have them meet once a week to answer questions and pray for people they are interacting with.
- A Sabbath morning pastor's Bible class. Take a set of lessons—different from the ones you use midweek—and invite your interests and new members to join a special Bible class open only to them. This is generally a better idea than releasing them into the wilds of the other Sabbath School classes, where church members who were not engaged in the evangelistic meetings might have a tendency to offend, criticize, or introduce offshoot-type ideas to them. Make it a principle that anyone who has been a member for more than a year cannot come to the class unless they're bringing a personal guest from the meetings.
- Saturday night vespers. Create a vespers committee that will create a meaningful Saturday night program that could include testimonies, praise singing, short sketches, and readings, etc. Make it a relaxed and enjoyable way to end the Sabbath.
- A community service day/evening. Some people want to *do* something about their faith, rather than talk about it. Find a suitable way to reach out to the community, either through your own church's efforts or by participating in a humanitarian project in the community.
- Put on a second evangelistic series, but this time, have some of your bolder new members do the speaking. Yes, you read that right: turn them loose in soul-winning. Some of your longtime church members won't like this, insisting that they are "too new" and "don't understand" and will "make mistakes." There is no *question* that they will make mistakes; those of us who have been around for decades still do. But you will also find their zeal unmatched, their passion contagious, and, best of all, there is no better way to entrench yourself in the message than to teach it to someone else. These meetings do not have to be elaborate: they could take place in the church, and the guests could be the friends and families of your new members.

## 2. A New Social Life

Most new people do not leave the church because they no longer believe the message. Studies in the past have demonstrated that if new members do not make five or six meaningful friendships or social connections in the first few months, we are likely to see them drift away. Their previous social circles may have pushed them away for becoming “too religious,” or they might face religious tension at home for the decisions they’ve made. Others might find their old friendships unhealthy because of associations with immoral living.

It is easy for us to provide a new circle of friends.

- If you have access to a gymnasium, you could plan a social evening for those who love activity: volleyball, basketball, floor hockey, etc. Other good choices might be a hiking club, kayaking club, quilting club, knitting club, etc. There are people in your church who *love* activity but don’t feel comfortable leading a Bible study. Let them run a club!
- Have regular church socials, apart from Sabbath potluck, where people gather *just to hang out*. Perhaps you could have a Saturday night talent show or game night. A picnic in the park is often welcomed by people longing for interaction.
- Quietly arrange to have church members invite new people to their homes for Sabbath lunch. Do not assume that this will happen organically; have the social committee plan it. This will also ensure that invitations are coming from solid Adventist families, rather than from troublemakers and offshoots. If you are new to the church, Sabbath can be a long day, particularly if you are alone. Help fill the hours between the end of church and sundown.
- Have *everyone* wear name tags at church. This will help your longtime members remember the names of new people, and it will help new people learn the names of their new church family. Have reusable name tags. They don’t need to be elaborate or expensive; they could be the sort that people use for conventions. After church has started on Sabbath morning, have someone go and check which name tags have not been picked up—that will let you know who’s missing. If someone is missing, give them a call or text, or send them a bulletin in the mail. Don’t pressure people; simply say, “I missed seeing you this week. Just hope you’re doing okay, and wanted to make sure you got this week’s bulletin.”
- Assign the new people tasks in the church. If we make them feel like mere spectators, they will assume that they are not *truly* part of the family. Enlist their help. Give them genuine responsibilities. Many of them are bringing unique gifts to the church that were lacking before they arrived; find out what they are!
- Create a church-wide prayer circle. It is easy to arrange free or cheap conference calls. Have a time of the week when people can call in and just hear someone pray for or with them. Ask for prayer requests.

# APPENDIX

## Discovering Revelation

### Summary of Bible Beliefs

- 1.** I believe there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.
- 2.** I accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for my sins and believe that by God's grace through faith in His shed blood I am saved from sin and its penalty.
- 3.** I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal Savior and believe that God, in Christ, has forgiven my sins and given me a new heart, and I renounce the sinful ways of the world.
- 4.** I accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, my Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary, and accept His promise of transforming grace and power to live a loving, Christ-centered life in my home and before the world.
- 5.** I believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian. I covenant to spend time regularly in prayer and Bible study.
- 6.** I accept the Ten Commandments as a transcript of the character of God and a revelation of His will. It is my purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord and the memorial of Creation.
- 7.** I look forward to the soon coming of Jesus and the blessed hope when "this mortal shall put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:54). As I prepare to meet the Lord, I will witness to His loving salvation and by life and word help others to be ready for His glorious appearing.
- 8.** I accept the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church.
- 9.** I believe in church organization. It is my purpose to support the church by my tithes and offerings and by my personal effort and influence.
- 10.** I believe that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and will honor God by caring for it, avoiding the use of that which is harmful and abstaining from all unclean foods; from the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages; from the use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption; and from the misuse of or trafficking in narcotics or other drugs.
- 11.** I know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I purpose, by the grace of God, to fulfill His will by ordering my life in harmony with these principles.
- 12.** I accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion and desire to be so baptized as a public expression of faith in Christ and His forgiveness of my sins.
- 13.** I accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship. I desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world church.

## GOD'S PLAN FOR VICTORY OVER SMOKING

There are three steps to claiming God's victory over smoking (or other habits!)

**1. 1 Corinthians 15:57** reminds us, *"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Don't forget—God has *given* you victory over this habit. No struggling, no trying, because you are not quitting. This time, God is going to give you victory as a gift. It's up to you to claim it—right now!

**2. Romans 6:11** tells us, *"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Because the Bible says that you are dead to sin through Christ, and because you can count on God's promises, believe that you are dead to cigarette smoking. Consider—reckon—yourself to be dead. This is your part in the arrangement: it's over, because God *says so*.

**3. Romans 13:14** says, *"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."* Your part in this plan is to *not plan to fail*. If God says you're dead to smoking, you don't need your cigarettes, ashtrays, etc. They're useless to a non-smoker! Get rid of everything associated with smoking so God can work a miracle.

Remember what happened to Peter. (Matthew 14:22-29) Jesus called him to walk on water. That's humanly impossible! Yet Peter believed what God said and then Jesus did the rest—Peter actually walked on water! Believe and the victory is yours!

### **Practical help to make life easier:**

- a. Quit drinking caffeine—it's a poison that's related to nicotine.
- b. Drink *lots* of liquid (especially fruit juice) to help flush out your system.
- c. Get *lots* of fresh air by walking and breathing deeply.
- d. Bathe often—several times a day for the first couple of weeks.
- e. Take up chewing gum if you need something for your mouth to do!



## Discovering Revelation

### Fundamental Beliefs A

There are certain fundamental Bible beliefs that form the foundation of a solid relationship with Jesus and the community of believers that make up His church. These are some of those vital building blocks in the structure of Christian faith:

1. I believe there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.
2. I accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for my sins and believe that by God's grace through faith in His shed blood I am saved from sin and its penalty.
3. I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal Saviour and believe that God, in Christ, has forgiven my sins and given me a new heart, and I renounce the sinful ways of the world.
4. I accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, my Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary, and accept His promise of transforming grace and power to live a loving, Christ-centered life in my home and before the world.
5. I believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian. I covenant to spend time regularly in prayer and Bible study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Discovering Revelation

### Fundamental Beliefs B

There are certain fundamental Bible beliefs that form the foundation of a solid relationship with Jesus and the community of believers that make up His church. Here are some more of those vital building blocks in the structure of Christian faith:

6. I accept the Ten Commandments as a transcript of the character of God and a revelation of His will. It is my purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord and the memorial of Creation.

7. I believe in church organization. It is my purpose to support the church by my tithes and offerings and by my personal effort and influence.

8. I accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion and desire to be so baptized as a public expression of faith in Christ and His forgiveness of my sins.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_