



**VISITORS DAY
(Sabbath School Program)**

April 13, 2019

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Sabbath School can be a key way to get visitors and members talking to each other, as well as studying the Bible in a relaxed and inviting environment. As this is a day especially for visitors, try and involve everyone in the church, including the young kids and the youth. Ensure that you have greeters at each door of the church so that they can warmly welcome everyone.

1. Proposed Sabbath School Program Outline

1. Welcome
2. Opening song – “Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, No. 524
3. Opening prayer
4. Burnt out? (Short explanation/personal testimony about the Sabbath)
5. Sabbath School
6. Testimony
7. Giving thanks and closing prayer

2. Proposed Special Ideas

- **Prayer Meetings:** At least three weeks before the event, make sure that church members are actively thinking and praying about who they can invite to the Visitors Day Sabbath service. If your church has a prayer meeting or small groups, use these to facilitate intentional prayer. Encourage them to ask God to give them eyes to see opportunities and for the confidence to take them. These should continue up to the day of the event.
- **Service Length:** Given that it will be an unusually long day for many people who have not been to church before, you could consider starting church a little later than normal. This will mean that the time for Sabbath School is shorter and the day feels less daunting. However, you could still meet at the normal time to lift up the day and people in prayer.

- **Gifts for Visitors:** You could put together gift bags with freshly baked bread (or something similar), contact details for the church, a copy of an accessible Christian book (such as *Steps to Christ*) or tracts (such as Glow tracts) and a list of church activities or an invitation to attend a future activity to give to visitors as they enter the church.
- **Community Lunch:** After the service, why not have a community lunch? Ask members to prepare and bring a simple dish to share with everyone at a special post-service lunch. This will give visitors and members a good opportunity to get to know each other and to hopefully form deeper friendships! If you're not able to have a lunch, cold/hot drinks and crackers/snacks after the service would be a good alternative.

3. Proposed Sabbath School Program Outline

A. Welcome - Warmly welcome everyone. Explain the reason behind Visitors Day.

B. Opening prayer

C. Opening song - Suggestion: "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" *SDA Hymnal No. 524*

D. Burnt out?

- Given that one of the key elements that sets Seventh-day Adventists apart is our keeping of the Sabbath, you could use this spot to do a five-minute introduction as to why the Sabbath is an 'oasis of calm' in the modern world of relentless busyness. You could link it to the idea of trust, namely that the Sabbath encourages us to remember that the world will keep on turning if we rest and that putting all our productivity, worry, disappointments, and fears aside for a 24-hour period shows how we trust God's ultimate authority over our lives.

E. Sabbath School

- Separate the congregation into small groups, each with a Bible study leader.
- *Purpose:* To help people understand that fear and doubt is a natural part of trust, but it should not stop us from trusting altogether.
- *Say:* "It's easy to be scared to trust someone or something, right? Trust often requires great vulnerability. It involves opening ourselves up to the possibility of betrayal and failure."
- *Opening Activity:* Ask the members of the group to rank in order of 1 to 4 who or what they trust the most and why. Discuss the results. *Ask:* "What do you think it means to have faith/trust in someone or something? What gives you confidence in someone?"
- *Explore:* Read Matthew 14:22-33 together. Give some of the context of the passage.
- *Ask:* "Why were the disciples afraid? (vs 25-26) Who did they think Jesus was?"

- How does Jesus encourage them? How would this have given the disciples confidence? (vs 27) *Note the fact that Jesus' response is immediate, focusing on His identity. He attempts to soothe their misunderstandings and fears about Him.*
- “What does Peter ask of Jesus? Why? What do you think about his demands?” (vs 28) *Peter does not fully believe that it is Jesus who is in front of him. Discuss the idea of reasonable doubt and how Peter's need for proof was a human response to the situation.*
- “How does Jesus respond to Peter? What do you think this shows about His attitude to helping Peter to trust Him?” (vs 29)
- “What does Peter's response show about how he trusts Jesus? What are the things that hinder his journey towards Jesus? How does he respond to these?” (vs 29-30) *Peter demonstrates a (albeit short) journey of faith. Something knocks him off course (here, a storm) and in his fear, he begins to rely on himself. He begins to sink; however, he quickly cries out to God for help.*
- “What does Jesus do when Peter begins to sink? What do we notice about His actions?” *Note the three times that Peter doubts and asks something of Jesus, Mark makes use of the word 'immediately' to show the speed with which Christ responds.*
- “Why do you think Jesus says that Peter had ‘little faith’?” (vs 31)
- “How did the disciples react to the events that they saw before them?” (vs 32-33)
- *Close: Ask:* “What do you think about Jesus when you read this story? Do you think you'd be able to trust Him?”

F. Testimony: You could use this slot for someone to give a personal testimony of what it means to trust.

G. Giving Thanks and Closing Prayer

- Using Colossians 3:15 and other verses, explain why thankfulness is a big part of the Christian walk. Note some scientific facts about how thankfulness can help your mental wellbeing. Ask people to share one thing they are thankful for this week with the person next to them. This will lead up to the closing prayer.