

TELL THE WORLD: IN THE COMMUNITY

May 12, 2012

Get Out!

In front of the group, place a loaf of banana bread (or any sweet bread that has salt as an ingredient) in a bread pan, and a bread pan the same size filled with salt. Cover both “loaves.”

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 5:13. Jesus has called the members of His Church, to be “salt,” which is a transforming agent. With what—or whom—should this “salt” mix? (***People inside AND outside the Church.***) Church members should intentionally mix with people outside the church to transform the community in Jesus’ name.

Point to the two covered “loaves.” Here are two “loaves.” (***Uncover and show the bread.***) Here, salt is part of the recipe—and here (***uncover and show the bread pan filled with salt***) salt is the WHOLE recipe. To live out Matthew 5:13, salt is *not* the whole recipe. Salt is meant to mix with something different from itself so that it can be of benefit to it.

Ask the group these questions:

1. Which loaf do you prefer, and why?
2. Which loaf describes the situation in your church? Is your church all about the salt, or is it all about with whom you, the “salt of the earth,” should mix?

Give everyone a small sheet of paper. Have them make a list of their friends. Then ask them to pair up with the person next to them and share whether these friends and associates are largely church members. Have them count how many are and aren’t church members. Then tell them to discuss with their partner: Do we need to make any changes in our social calendar? How can we make more friends outside our church?

In 2001 a world survey of the Seventh-day Adventist Church revealed that only 29 percent of church members are involved with their community outside their church walls.

The church is like a container of salt, such as a saltshaker, and the members are like the salt particles. Not only is it important to get out of the salt shaker and flavor the community, but *how* we do it is important.

Place two more loaves of sweet bread next to the loaf of bread already in front of the group. One loaf should have a salt shaker full of salt inserted inside. (Ahead of time, cut a hole the shape of the salt shaker under the loaf, and insert the salt shaker.) Also place near the loaves a full salt shaker and a shaker containing something that doesn’t go well with sweet bread, such a garlic or celery salt, etc.

Now we have three loaves of bread; each represents a community. Robert Linthicum,¹ one of the great leaders of urban ministry, describes three positions a church can take in its community:

If possible, project on screen the following: (Or hold a card up with “IN” printed on it in big letters.

1. The Church *in* the Community
 - Refers to location.
 - Members are not from the community.

¹ Robert C. Linthicum, *Empowering the Poor: Community Organizing Among the City’s ‘Rag, Tag, and Bobtail.’* (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC Publications, 1991), pp. 21-30.

- Little or no involvement in the community.

Have a Sabbath School member cut off a slice from the bread that has a salt shaker inside. Show where to cut—the part of the bread where the top of the salt shaker would show. Hold up the bread to reveal the salt shaker inside.

The members (the salt) in this church stay in the saltshaker. They do not mix with people in the community around them. This church does no good in its community. If this church suddenly disappeared, the community would not miss it.

Project on screen the second slide. (Or hold a card up with “TO” printed on it.)

2. The Church *to* the Community

- Feels a sense of responsibility to do something for the community.
- Decides on its own what the community needs—without community input.
- Invites the community to participate.

Have a Sabbath School member sprinkle/throw salt on top of another loaf of bread.

For our illustration this loaf has no salt mixed in—only sprinkled on top. This is like a church that knows it should “salt” its community but chooses not to mix in with the people of the community, and “throws” programs out to the community. It decides on its own what the community needs, without asking leaders of the community about its felt holistic needs. Then it invites the community to participate in programs in which they might not have any interest. ***(Have someone sprinkle/throw the garlic or celery salt, etc. on the loaf.)*** This approach is risky because it may be inappropriate for that particular community, just as garlic or celery salt isn’t appropriate to go with banana bread (or other sweet bread).

Project on screen the third slide. (Or hold a card up with “WITH” printed on it.)

3. The Church *with* the Community

- Sees mission to the community as a partnership.
- Discovers from the community the burning issues.
- Brings the ministry of the church out into the community.
- Nurtures personal relationships with individuals in the community.

Hold up third loaf of bread that has salt mixed in with the bread recipe. The church *with* the community works *with* the community to meet the discovered needs of community members. Thus the salt of this church is flavoring the community from within, making the community a better place because this church is mixed in with the community. If this church disappeared, the community would sorely miss it, just as if salt is missing in the bread recipe it is missed.

Organize into small groups and discuss the following:

1. Which of Linthicum’s three positions describes our church? (*to*, *in*, or *with*?) Why?
2. What is your church and Sabbath School currently doing to flavor—to improve your community?
3. What will be your next step to get out of the “salt shaker?” (Distribute the handout below for tested and tried community-based ministry ideas/steps/goals.)

Close with:

Jesus says, “I have sent them into the world. . .” (John 17:18). John Stott concludes, “Every Christian needs two conversions in their lives: (1) One from the world to Christ, and (2) Another back into the world with Christ.”

Prayer: Lord, help us to actively flavor our community and make it a better place because Your Church is there. Like salt, may our loving service create a thirst in their lives to know You better. Amen.

How can we more effectively salt—not assault—our communities?

10 Commandments for Community Outreach (Preparing the Way for Following Jesus)

1. Thou shalt study Jesus' ministry method (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143) and pray for a spirit of revival, of love, and caring for the people in thy community.

2. Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church. What are the skills, interests, and availability of members?

3. Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT)—a small group of 4 to 6 members in your church to lead out in reaching the community.)

4. Thou shalt choose thy territory and narrow it down.

5. Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory.

6. Thou shalt drive or walk around the chosen territory and note the types of homes, stores, churches, and people, etc.

7. Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover holistic community needs as they see them.

8. Thou shalt join community boards, town councils, local ministerial associations (pastors), civic clubs to network with community leaders and business people.

9. Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the holistic community needs thou hast discovered.

10. Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate. Get involved with service organizations in thy community and socialize with their personnel, whenever possible.

11th Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to:

- Watch for opportunities to share Jesus and invite community people to follow Him. Schedule and implement reaping events (meetings, Bible studies, etc.).

- Intentionally disciple/mentor those who choose to follow Jesus.

- “Salt” and serve the community *anyway*, in Jesus' name, even if there is no apparent spiritual interest.

“Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

Suggested Musical Selections:

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal

578—“So Send I You”

581—“When the Church of Jesus”

582—“Working, O Christ, With Thee”

He Is Our Song

126—“Make Me a Servant”

140—“We Are His Hands”

Optional PowerPoint slides to illustrate this presentation can be downloaded from <http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acsi>. Click on “May 12, 2012, Community Services Sabbath School Program PowerPoint Slides.”

For more information on community outreach go to
<<http://www.sabbatschoolpersonalministries.org/acsi>>. Click on “Resources” and then “ACSI Curriculum.”