



THE EVANGELISM PYRAMID (Sabbath School Program)

February 5, 2022

**Pastor Michael Rugube Ngwaru
Retired Pastor-Zimbabwe East Union Conference
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division**

Song Service

Suggested Hymns from the music team/chorister

Opening Proceedings

Welcome Remarks

Sabbath School superintendent or program host for the day

Opening Song

Special item or congregational hymn

Opening Prayer

Selected person

Scripture Focus

Matthew 28:18-20 and Isaiah 6:8

Sabbath School Program Goal

To empower every Sabbath School member to be involved in personal outreach.

Presentation Ideas

The program for today runs like a panel discussion on TV or radio. The discussion will be moderated by a host and include five panelists. Please remember to supply real names of people wherever the script says "Host" or "Panelist." The show can be broadcast via zoom or equivalent, if necessary. It can also be hosted at a physical church building in the presence of a live audience.

Sabbath School Program

Host:

"Welcome to SSBC (Sabbath School Broadcasting Corporation – *you may use a name of your choice or leave it out altogether*). My name is (*please insert name*). With me in the studio are five guest panelists (*supply their names*). We will be discussing the role of each Sabbath School member in God's mission. Hence, I chose to entitle this program Reach the World – Personal Outreach. I really like our key texts: Matthew 28:18-20 and Isaiah 6:8 (*reading them is optional*). You can't fail to get the idea that we are all commissioned to make disciples for Christ and that we each have to say, 'I Will Go.' Where do we go and how do we get there? This is the essence of our live discussion this morning. Welcome to the show, Ladies and Gentlemen." (*Welcome is directed to the panelists*).

Panelists:

They briefly respond to the host and may say, "Thank you, (*insert host name*), and hello, viewers/listeners.

Host:

The host requests Panelist 1 to explain what personal outreach entails and why they think it is important to the life of the church and its members.

Panelist One:

In response, Panelist 1 needs to highlight that the church is a corporate body made up of many members, but each member has a special place in the life and mission of the church as human parts are to the body (1 Corinthians 12:12). So, each member is commissioned to reach the part of the world where they are (their sphere of influence). Involvement in mission grows both the church and those who work side by side with Jesus. You can't work with Jesus and the Holy Spirit and remain the same (the first 12 disciples of Jesus are the best example of this in the Bible. A short illustration may help here like the transformational journey of Peter).

Host:

Check if one or two panelists may want to say something in addition to what Panelist 1 will have said.

Panelists:

Any panelist with additional information to share is given just a few seconds to do so. In view of time, no more than two should speak.

Host:

Host provides thanks for the contributions made by panelists and takes the discussion forward. He/she finds out from Panelist 2 if personal outreach is a once-off event or whether it is a process.

Panelist 2:

Panelist 2 admits that outreach may take any form between being a once-off event to a process that engages a member and the target person or group over a period of time. The latter is the most preferred of the two since disciple making is the goal of evangelism.

Host:

Host acts surprised and seeks to understand more. He/she asks a follow up question to Panelist 2. "How does that work? Please unpack this for us."

Panelist 2:

Panelist 2 may say, "A once-off event is something a member does for a community or individual where no follow up interaction takes place. An example could be dropping a missionary book of the year into people's hands with no plans of ever meeting those people again (*you may give any example that best suits your context*). On the other hand, process evangelism involves follow-up interaction with people to learn and meet their needs at a personal level. Hence, the process approach is the one most suited for disciple making. For instance, you may give someone a missionary book of the year with the view of walking through the book with them. From there one step leads to the next until confidence and trust in you develops resulting in unlimited spiritual outcomes."

Host:

Host agrees but requests panelists to demonstrate event and process evangelism in detail. He/she directs a question to Panelist 3 such as, "Where does it all start?"

Panelist 3

Panelist 3 may say, "Whether it is event evangelism or process evangelism, everything starts with meeting people where they are. That initial stage is what I would like to call 'Contact Evangelism.' We may meet people for the first time in the context of mission during a health expo, welfare community service, literature distribution, family life seminar, etc. The outcome of such meetings may produce contacts or what the church calls interests. The other possibility is that no contacts or interests may be made at all with some of the people we meet for the first time."

Host:

Host asks a follow up question like, "What do you mean contacts, or interests, or none at all?"

Panel 4

Panelist 4 offers to answer the question. He/she may say, "Contacts or interests are people who show interest in the services or interaction provided and are willing to share their personal contact details. This may be at a health expo or any event, including people who sit next to us in public transport, etc. None obviously means that no

effort is made by members to get the contact details of some of the people they meet during outreach events. In essence, 'Contact Evangelism' is equivalent to seeding. In this case, it is equivalent to seeding for the development of future relationships or friendships, although it's not always guaranteed that any relationship will emerge."

Host:

Host may respond this way, "That clarifies issues. So, you are giving me the idea that 'Contact Evangelism' comprises events that are designed to seed relationships with the hope that these relationships will germinate and grow one day. As a church, we should not be seen just seeding and doing nothing to create conditions for germination to take place. For instance, we should not just do a health expo or share literature and think that our job is done. Am I understanding this correctly?"

Panelist 4:

Panelist 4 responds and takes the discussion forward. "You hit the nail on the head. Mission does not end with just acts of meeting people. Of course, I admit that we have no capacity to develop meaningful relationships with everyone we give literature to or those we meet is some events. Similarly, not every person Jesus met developed a personal relationship with Him. However, there are some who really became His friends, like Mary Magdalene. That said, personal outreach should enable us to seize every opportunity to develop a social *and* saving relationship with the people who show some deep interest in interacting with us at a personal level. This step is a step above mere 'Contact Evangelism.' We call it 'Friendship Evangelism.'"

Host:

Host may interject and say, "So how does a contact or interest become a friend?"

Panelist 5:

Panelist 5 offers to help Panelist 4 by responding to the Host. He/she may say, "We become socially connected with the contacts or interests. We express through various ways that we have an interest in getting to know them better. Generally, we try to present ourselves in likable ways. The major key that seems to unlock relationships is when we identify and seek to meet people's felt needs at a personal level over time rather than through just once-off events. Although there is an endless list of human needs, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a good guide—the need to satisfy basic survival needs—the need for security and safety, the need for love and belonging, the need for self-esteem, and the need for self-actualization. People develop confidence and trust in us as we continue to minister to their felt needs. And remember, without fellowship relationships may prove unsustainable. These days people have several options for fellowship—physically or through social media and more. Here are some fellowship options:

- Watching favorite sports on TV together.
- Going out on picnics as families.
- Taking care of a neighbor's kids while they are busy or travelling.
- Sharing relevant motivational messages on social media.
- Providing emotional and social support during difficult times.
- The list is endless."

Panelist 4:

Panelist 4 bounces back with an additional comment. He/she may say, "Thank you Panelist 5 and to add to what you have said, I would like to say, while some relationships may quickly become spiritually fulfilling, some people prefer to keep them at secular level. Religion intimidates a lot of people, so it is no wonder some people pull out of relationships if religion is introduced too quickly. Timing matters a great deal. Interestingly, some people prefer to like you before they can like what you believe. However, we should avoid the temptation of simply being good friends and end there. Seeking souls should remain active in the back of our minds."

Host:

Host nods in agreement and faces Panelist 1, "What then should be the next step in the process?"

Panelist 1:

Panelist 1 may say, "It's good to have friends out there, but we should do everything in our power to lead them to Jesus."

Host:

Host may say, “How do we do that? What if they are not ready to talk religion? I’m sure that’s the challenge many of us face daily.”

Panelist 1:

Panelist 1 may respond this way. “Sure, to some members, dropping a missionary book of the year into people’s hands and disappearing thereafter or watching sports on TV with a neighbor may not be that challenging, although, it may to some. However, initiating conversations along religious lines may be a daunting task. No wonder this stage sometimes remains undone. And if it remains undone, then the gospel commission--according to Matthew 28:19-20, Revelation 14:6-12, and John 4:23-24--suffers a great deal. Our obligation is to intentionally lead people to Christ and grow His kingdom, as did the founding fathers of the Christian church and our Adventist pioneers.”

Host:

Host addresses panelist 1: “We have no dispute over that. It’s a given. The point members want to hear is the how part of it. For instance, where do you start off from with a friend who is secular and nothing else. All that brought you together was a health expo.”

Panelist 2:

Panelist 2 jumps in. He/she may say, “Look, evangelism takes the shape of a pyramid. ‘Contact Evangelism’ finds itself at the base, and it’s logical that many members participate at that level. There is no pressure to start or maintain relationships. ‘Friendship Evangelism’ is one step higher and may have fewer participants than those at the base since it requires developing personal relationships. ‘Study Evangelism’ comes after friendship, and its main goal is to share our faith and beliefs. The number of members taking their friends through Bible studies decreases for the same reason: that we either fear to initiate Bible-based discussions or our friends send signals that they are not quite ready for such discussions. Or we may have no idea of how and where to begin, even if they may be ready. We will share other levels of the evangelism pyramid later. For now, here are some hints on how to initiate discussions towards sustainable Bible studies:

- Some people who may be going through personal crisis prove to be more receptive to spiritual intervention than not. So, you may wish to start with prayer ministry and slowly introduce the Bible to deliver messages of hope. Also, our fundamental beliefs, properly packaged, offer solutions to many human needs.
- Global pandemics are also opportunities for sharing. Demonstrate how world events fit into prophetic revelation. Please avoid sharing conspiracy theories at all costs. The devil uses them to divert focus from the true gospel to human speculation.
- You may also check how well someone is benefiting from a book or tract you may have given them. If they are reading it, it may be a sign that they are interested in discussing its content.
- Seek an opportunity to introduce your friends to some free Bible correspondence lessons and keep checking on them for possible questions or issues that may need clarification, including praying with them.
- Check if your friends want to join a small group ministry that addresses both felt needs and biblical themes for the strengthening of families and marriages. You don’t have to worry about conducting Bible studies on your own if you are not gifted. Small groups can cover that gap for you.
- Introduce your friends to some programs on Hope Channel and Adventist World Radio.
- Prayer moves mountains. Pray relentlessly for God to open your friends’ hearts to receive the message. The Holy Spirit is available to do that.
- Research or try other ideas of your own making. This is how outreach knowledge is created.
- Finally, be patient with people. If they are not ready, they are not ready. But keep nurturing the relationship because some seeds take long to germinate.”

Host:

Host may just say, “Wow! Isn’t that incredible. I can’t wait to hear what comes next as we study with our friends. Panelist 3, please take us through.”

Panelist:

Panelist 3 thanks Panelist 2 for sharing the levels on the evangelism pyramid and then makes his/her personal contribution. The contribution may be something like, “Now we come to ‘**Reaping Evangelism**’ on the evangelism pyramid. Imagine yourself as a salesperson who knows his/her sales talk very well, but all you do is talk to customers. Not once do you close the sale by asking for an order. One thing will be obvious: you will not be able to make sales and commissions. The same applies to ongoing Bible studies that do not challenge people to make decisions. The church will not grow in membership. However, special care should be taken to decide the right moment to call for decisions. Here are a few hints:

- Test the waters by pushing for small decisions first. In salesmanship we call that trial closes.
- Give your friends an opportunity to make big doctrinal decisions once they habitually agree with the small decisions you present to them.
- Avoid calling for decisions while the people are still very raw and unconvinced. Forcing them only hardens their hearts. Be patient. The right time will come.
- It is most preferable for personal decisions to be made during one-on-one interaction (personal evangelism) so that all questions are satisfactorily answered, and the decisions are rationally processed. Some people shy away from making decisions in public settings.
- Sometimes your friends will go ahead of you by asking how one may join the church. Stop right there and secure that decision. It shows that the Holy Spirit is convicting them.
- Truly speaking, the church should organize public meetings (reaping series) to reap the decisions members have already secured or are currently working on at a personal or small-group level. The average person doesn’t seem to have enough time to sufficiently comprehend doctrines in two weeks to the point of making major life changing decisions considering that each sermon covers a major belief in just an hour or less and some people do not attend the entire series. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule, but it should not be the norm. No wonder the exit door is as wide as the entrance door with new converts. The best-case scenario is for doctrinal Bible studies to be taken ahead of the reaping meetings. More personalized teaching is required than mere public preaching.”

Host:

Host comes in to make follow up remarks. He/she may say, “I totally agree with you. Reaping meetings that are not well supported by personal evangelism operate like buckets with holes. No matter how much water you pour in, much of it simply leaks out. I hope our local church leaders are listening. This is a profound discussion. Well, before I end this meeting, let me hear if ‘Reaping Evangelism’ is at the tip of the evangelism pyramid or if there’s something above it. Panelist 5, your take on that, please.”

Panelist 5:

Here is what Panelist 5 may say: “One of the worst mistakes we sometimes make as a church is to make baptism an end goal. Once our friends get baptized, we feel the whole job is done. Then we abandon them and go out to search for yet more people to baptize. By the time of the next baptism, we may have already lost 40 percent or more from the previous baptism. The worst-case scenario is that some churches lose all their new converts. The challenge comes when we are more in the business of baptizing than discipling members. Notwithstanding the need for disciple making, baptism is critical to mission. It should still be done, but without negating discipleship in the process. So how do we disciple new converts? Here are a few ideas:

- We need to set a good example of what it means to be true followers of Jesus in all aspects of church life. Let’s walk the talk.
- We should help new converts fit well into the church family. They need to develop or enhance relationships.
- We also need to help new members deal with some challenges of transitioning from an old way of life to a new one. Walk with them through their life changing journey.
- Ground them thoroughly into the doctrines, fundamental beliefs, and lifestyle teachings of the church.
- Help new members to understand the structure and mission of the church.
- Involve them in church ministries, including personal outreach. For the goal of personal outreach is to make disciples who also do personal outreach.
- Have a new member’s Bible study group that discusses the Adventist beliefs in more detail.

- Distribute a “Discipleship Handbook” to every newly baptized member and assign a mentor to encourage and support them.”

Closing Session

Closing Remarks

Host challenges Sabbath School members to find their place on the evangelism pyramid and to have more and more of them participating at the higher levels of the pyramid. Appeal to Personal Ministries and Sabbath School classes to facilitate on-going training of members on personal evangelism. Thank the panelists and the members for taking part in this broadcast.

Closing Song

Special item or hymn

Closing Prayer

Selected person

Preparatory Reading

I recommend that, ahead of the execution of this program, the program host and the panelists should acquaint themselves with personal evangelism ideas shared by the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries program called International Institute of Christian Discipleship (IICD). Look at core courses like CR 01 Spiritual Gifts – Keys to Ministry and CR 02 Principles of Personal Christian Witnessing, including specialization courses under Personal Evangelism. The Grow Your Church resources under the same department will also prove very helpful. Media presenters do a lot of background research before they present their programs on TV or radio. Hence, the counsel I am giving to those who will present this Sabbath School program. You need to know more than you will present.