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Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Come visit us at our Web sites: www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org

www.InStepWithJesus.org

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Author

Jane Thayer, PhD

Illustrator

Lars Justinen

Editor

Gary B. Swanson

Designer

Kristin Hansen-Mellish

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In Step With Jesus is a series of four Bible study guides for new members of the Seventh-day Adventist family. It is prepared by the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and printed by the Pacific Press® Publishing Association.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

New Members' Bible Study Guide

THE POWER OF MISSION: GROWING THROUGH DISCIPLING AND SERVING

Mission is a powerful force. It gives people energy, purpose, and meaning to their lives. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave His disciples a world-encompassing mission, and then provided them with the authority and power to fulfill it. Earlier, He had also given them a two-part command to love God with all their hearts, minds, and souls and to love others as He loved them.

As today's disciples of Jesus consider how to build their lives around His commission and commandment, we are blessed to have examples of how those first disciples, in the power of the Holy Spirit, carried out the instructions of Jesus. For this insight we are largely indebted to Luke's two-volume work of the Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles.

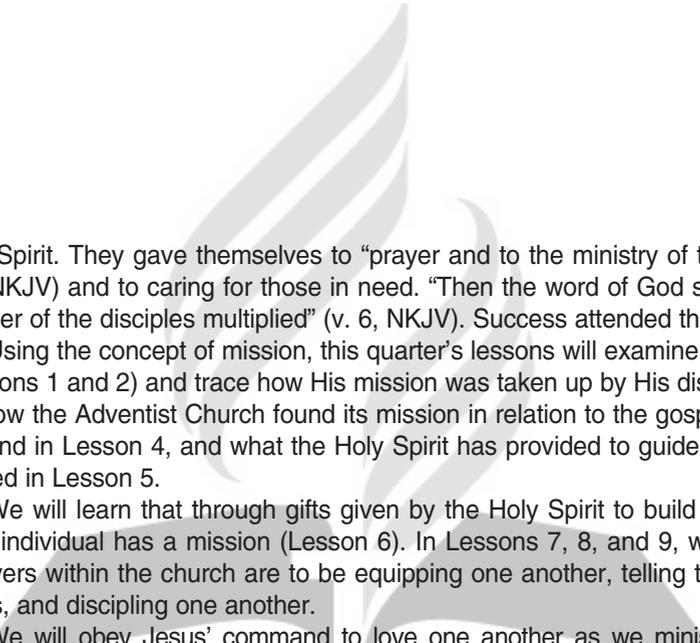
Luke shows us that Jesus' mission in the Gospel account was imitated by His disciples in The Acts of the Apostles after He had ascended to heaven. The book of Acts is the priceless history of the beginning of the Christian church.

In Luke, would-be disciples first see the works of Jesus and then hear His words before making a commitment to Him. In Acts, would-be disciples first see the works of the Holy Spirit through the actions of the disciples and hear the words of Jesus repeated by the disciples. This led them to make a commitment to Jesus.

In this pattern we can learn how to fulfill the commission and commandment that have been passed down to us. Now we carry the torch. Even today, would-be disciples need to see the works of the Holy Spirit and hear the words of Jesus through us. That is our mission. "Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission. In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated."^{*}

In Acts we see how the members of the New Testament church worked together to fulfill their mission under the authority of the risen Christ and in the power of the

^{*} *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 141.



Holy Spirit. They gave themselves to “prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4, NKJV) and to caring for those in need. “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied” (v. 6, NKJV). Success attended their mission.

Using the concept of mission, this quarter’s lessons will examine Jesus’ mission (Lessons 1 and 2) and trace how His mission was taken up by His disciples (Lesson 3). How the Adventist Church found its mission in relation to the gospel commission is found in Lesson 4, and what the Holy Spirit has provided to guide that mission is studied in Lesson 5.

We will learn that through gifts given by the Holy Spirit to build up the church, each individual has a mission (Lesson 6). In Lessons 7, 8, and 9, we will see how believers within the church are to be equipping one another, telling the world about Jesus, and discipling one another.

We will obey Jesus’ command to love one another as we minister to the sick (Lesson 10), care for the poor (Lesson 11), and—in the power of the Holy Spirit—rescue those entrapped in one of the many forms of evil (Lesson 12). In conclusion, we will recognize that the core of our mission is found in always lifting up Jesus (Lesson 13).

The stories “**Walking With Jesus in the Real World**” and the essays “**Consider This**” will relate to each week’s lesson and can be used for discussion in your study group.

The “**Closer Look**” sidebar goes into a little more depth on a word or concept in the week’s lesson.

To help introduce new members to the Adventist “world,” the “**Adventese**” sidebar defines or explains terms or institutions or activities that are part of the Adventist Church and its people.

And as before, the *In Step With Jesus* Web site provides further readings and activities provided to enrich the study of this Bible study guide: <http://www.InStepWithJesus.org/Mission>.

Answers to all of the Friday quizzes can be found in the *Teacher’s Guide*.

It is the hope of the people who produced this New Members’ Study Guide that as you study each lesson, you will see that Jesus is being “lifted up” in it.

BRINGING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Key Texts: *Daniel 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Matthew 6:8–13; 13:44–46; Luke 2:25–38; 4:16–21; John 1:29; 3:14–18*



In what ways are Jesus' mission and message still relevant in the twenty-first century?

Have I really done what Jesus said needed to be done to enter the kingdom of God?

Do I value the kingdom of God as much as Jesus said I should?

This week's memory text: *"After John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel' "* (Mark 1:14, 15, NKJV).

Sunday

People want their lives to have meaning. When they think about dying, they want to be able to look back over their lives and know that they have made a positive difference.

As disciples of Jesus we ground our identity, our values, and life purpose in His life. Central to Jesus' preaching and teaching was the kingdom of God. He even taught His disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 11:2, NKJV).

Perhaps when you think of the kingdom of God, you think of heaven or the earth made new. What is the nature of this kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed? And what does it have to do with our mission in life? This week we begin a two-week study on the mission of Jesus.

Walking With Jesus in the Real World

Storing the Word

"I want to know God" is not the usual child's wish before blowing out birthday candles. But Bob had an early thirst for God. He was raised in a happy family, but there was never any serious discussion about God, even though his parents sent him and his siblings to a nearby Sunday School.

As a teenager, one night, after jogging around the block, he rested in a nearby field. Looking up at the stars, he asked himself, "What's this all about? Who is God? Why am I here?"

Some weeks later he purchased a popular book on Bible prophecy. "It really shook me up," he said, "I felt I wasn't ready to meet God." The words of Jesus kept racing through his mind: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass" (Luke 21:36, NKJV).

This brought on an intense desire to study the Bible. "Help me," he prayed, "to understand this book."

Even though he later learned that the book he found on prophecy misinterpreted Scripture, God had used it to draw him to the Bible. During his college years, he continued his study of Scripture, discovering important truths, including the seventh-day Sabbath. He received an invitation in his mailbox to attend a Bible prophecy seminar. Soon after he made his decision to become a Seventh-day Adventist.

Every spare moment for Bob was precious for the study of Scripture. While working one summer, he had a small Gideon Bible nearby, lying open to the book of Romans, so he could memorize the verses while coating a foundation wall with tar. Today, that Bible, still covered with tar, is a sentimental treasure.

Study and memorization of Scripture has become a major part of Bob's devotional life. To date he has memorized over 600 chapters of the Bible, including 28 complete books, including Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, John, and most of Paul's epistles. Memorization is not an end in itself. "The most important benefit," Bob says, "is my own spiritual enrichment. It keeps me connected to God's voice through His Word."

How is it possible to memorize so much Scripture? "God has helped me," Bob says. He works on memorizing about ten chapters at a time, taken from different books of the Bible. He carries with him a stack of small cards, each side of the card containing a series of verses, which together make up a chapter.

Every day he reviews some of the passages he memorized in order to keep them fresh in his mind. At present, he actually spends more time reviewing chapters than memorizing new verses. "The most enriching part of reviewing is that it allows my mind to dwell on the meaning of the words and its practical application to my life."

Monday

PREDICTIONS OF JESUS' MISSION

The entrance of the Son of God into human history at a particular time and a particular place excited great expectations among the Israelites because of their national history and their vision for the future inspired by certain passages in their sacred Scriptures. What words of Moses in one of his farewell addresses gave the Israelites hope for their future? Read Deuteronomy 18:15.

What other text helped to create the context for Jesus' entrance into, and mission for, the nation of Israel? Read 2 Samuel 7:12, 16.

What were the people expecting?

In the months preceding Jesus' birth and at His birth, what information was given, recorded in the Gospel of Luke, concerning His mission . . .

In Gabriel's announcement to Mary? (1:31–33).

In Mary's song? (1:52, 53).

In Zacharias's prophecy? (1:68, 69).

In the angel's words to the shepherds? (2:10, 11).

When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the temple, two elderly people testified to the mission of this Baby. According to Simeon, what was the mission of Jesus? Read Luke 2:25–32.

What did the 84-year-old Anna tell everyone about the Baby's mission? Read Luke 2:36–38.

John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for the Lord. He was " 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness' " (John 1:23, NKJV). What did he announce as the mission of Jesus? Read John 1:29.

After Jesus had been engaged in His public ministry for some time, He acknowledged that His mission was fulfilling the expectations of the prophets when He said, " 'Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it' " (Matt. 13:17, NKJV). And as the common people witnessed the miracles of Jesus, they concluded, " 'God has come to help his people' " (Luke 7:16, NIV).

Tuesday

JESUS EXPLAINS HIS MISSION

Already at age 12 Jesus had some kind of understanding of His mission in life. When His parents finally located Him after three days of searching in the Passover Feast crowds, they found Him in the temple discussing Scripture with the highly educated Jewish scholars. The boy Jesus gave this explanation: “‘Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?’” (Luke 2:49, NKJV).

As He began His public ministry, Jesus formally announced His mission by reading a prophetic passage about the Messiah from Isaiah and then claiming that He Himself fulfilled it. Read Luke 4:16–21. Now go back over the quotation from Isaiah as found in Luke 4:18, 19 and list Jesus’ actions, classifying them into “actions of speech” or “actions of service.”

Actions of speech

Actions of service

In His discussion one night with Nicodemus, Jesus explained in His own words His mission, His Father’s role in that mission, and how people should respond to Him. Read John 3:14–18. What was the great purpose for which Jesus came into this world?

What was God the Father’s role in Jesus’ mission?

How was Jesus to accomplish this mission? (verse 14).

What must human beings do to enter the kingdom that Jesus brought? (verse 5).

“In the interview with Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation, and His mission to the world. In none of His subsequent discourses did He explain so fully, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the hearts of all who would inherit the kingdom of heaven.”*

What was the central topic of Jesus’ preaching and teaching? Read Luke 4:43; 8:1.

At His trial before Pilate, what important statement about His kingdom did Jesus make? Read John 18:36.

See this week’s “A Closer Look” (p. 8) sidebar for a clearer understanding of the “kingdom of God.”

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 176.

Wednesday

THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

Have you ever watched while friends or loved ones engaged in self-destructive behaviors? You see the danger and you know what they ought to do, but you are powerless to make them do the right thing. In the same way, God sees our self-destructive behaviors and knows far in advance the outcomes of those behaviors.

But unlike us, God is all-powerful. With spectacular means, He could make it impossible for us to reject His reign in our lives, but He does not. God's reign, His kingdom, is not based on force. It is based on His love for us. Because love by its nature does not coerce, He lets us choose whether to accept His reign or not.

The disciple/writer Matthew collected a number of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of God into one section of his Gospel. Read each parable and then briefly state a key message that it teaches about the "reign of God."

The Sower (13:1–9). Jesus later explains this parable (verses 18–23).

The Wheat and Tares (13:24–30). Jesus' explanation (verses 36–43).

The Mustard Seed (13:31, 32).

The Leaven (yeast) (13:33).

The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price (13:44–46).

The Dragnet (13:47–52).

Jesus' message, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe" (Mark 1:14, 15, NKJV), is a message of judgment, as the parables of the Wheat and Tares and the Dragnet indicate. His message brings judgment because it presents us with a choice with serious consequences. The reign of God must have priority in our lives (Matt. 6:33), even to the point of figuratively having our hand cut off or an eye plucked out (Mark 9:45, 47). The gate to the kingdom is narrow, but once inside we receive life, an abundant life (Matt. 13:11, 12; John 10:10).

A CLOSER LOOK

Kingdom of God

The expression "kingdom of God" (or "kingdom of heaven," as Matthew calls it) can be somewhat puzzling to us. Typically, we limit our understanding of "kingdom" to the idea of realm or territory. Scholars of Greek, however, say that "kingdom of God" is more accurately translated "reign of God." The word *reign* can refer to "realm" or "territory," and importantly it can also mean "rule" or "authority." It was the mission of Jesus to bring the rule and authority of God to people and situations and territories. The fullest expression of the reign of God will arrive with the second coming of Jesus.

PRAYING FOR THE REIGN OF GOD

Seventh-day Adventists have always been interested in the kingdom of God because the denomination grew out of a nineteenth-century movement that looked for the very soon coming of Jesus to set up His kingdom. The peoples' hopes were based on the prophecies of the Old Testament book Daniel and the New Testament book Revelation. The Scriptures have a pattern of introducing names, terms, and symbols in the Old Testament and then transforming and enlarging the meaning of these words with the birth, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament.

The concept of the kingdom of God was introduced in the book of Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that he could neither remember nor interpret. His prime minister, Daniel, was called on for help, and he recounted the dream and then interpreted it. Read Daniel 2:34, 35, 44, 45. Who cut the stone, that is, set up the final kingdom?

How extensive was this kingdom?

What happened to the kingdoms that the kingdom of God replaced?

As we have learned, the kingdom of God was central to the preaching and teaching of Jesus. It was also given priority in His prayer life. When Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, Jesus gave them a prayer that is a model for disciples even today. Read this model prayer in Matthew 6:8–13. Where in the prayer is the kingdom of God referred to?

What are we to pray for regarding the kingdom of God?

Where in the prayer are requests for our personal needs placed?

When Jesus taught us to pray for God's name to be honored, for the coming of God's kingdom, and the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven, He no doubt had two meanings in mind: (1) that the kingdom of God would be fully established at His second coming; and (2) that the reign of God—His will and authority and power—would be set up in people's lives, in the church and other organizations, and in geographic places here on earth now. When praying for God's name to be revered, His reign to be inaugurated, and His will to be done, we can ask that these things be accomplished in the lives of the ones for whom we pray.

ADVENTESE

The Book of Daniel

The Old Testament book of Daniel has been important to Seventh-day Adventists from their earliest beginnings because they believe it contains important information about the sovereignty of God, world history, judgment, and the second coming of Jesus. Daniel belongs to the genre of literature called "apocalyptic," a word that means "revelation of the end times." Through visions and dreams, apocalyptic literature reveals the future, especially events of the end time. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, given in Daniel 2, of an image that is destroyed by a stone cut without hands is used by Adventists to explain the future. Artists' interpretations of this image are used in Adventist evangelistic meetings and are well known by most Adventists.

CHECKING UP

Place in the blank, the letter of the statement that best gives the meaning of each parable.

Parable

- ___ 1. The Sower
- ___ 2. Wheat and Tares
- ___ 3. Mustard Seed
- ___ 4. Leaven (yeast)
- ___ 5. Hidden Treasure and Pearl of Great Price
- ___ 6. Dragnet

Key Meaning

- A. The reign of God begins small but grows into a powerful, serving force.
- B. The message of the kingdom of God brings many people, but not all actually accept the reign of God.
- C. There are many obstacles to accepting the reign of God; not all people do accept.
- D. The reign of God permeates whatever it enters and imperceptibly works to change it.
- E. The devil places among Jesus' disciples people who do not accept God's reign, but we cannot judge who they are.
- F. A person who recognizes the value of the reign of God is willing to give up everything else to have it.

Extend Your Learning

How do these statements of purpose by Jesus enlarge your understanding of the reign of God? Read Luke 5:31, 32; 19:9, 10; John 10:10.

Examine Your Own Experience

In the first column of lines below, write three things you are praying for: people, situations, organizations, etc. Beside each of these, briefly state what you are specifically requesting.

Person, situation, etc.

Request

How many of these requests would be met if God's name were honored, His reign and authority were in control, and His will was being followed in each case? Can you see the importance of praying for God's kingdom to come—His reign to be extended even now before the Second Coming?

More resources on this topic can be found at <http://InStepWithJesus.org/Mission>.

Consider This

Does He Really Love Me?

Too often some Christians, who understand intellectually that Jesus loves them, do not experience that love. Perhaps by looking at how Jesus responded to people's requests, you may gain a sense of His love for you.

If you could somehow meet Jesus this coming week, and He said to you, as He said to blind Bartimeaus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51),* what would you say? And how do you think He would answer? Below are examples of people who encountered Jesus. Each had a problem. (The Pharisees' problem was Jesus Himself.) Read the dialogue between the person and Jesus. Focus on the words of Jesus. "Listen" for His attitude toward these people.

Matthew 8:5–13

Gentile centurion: "My servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented" (verse 6).

Jesus: "I will come and heal him" (verse 7).

Matthew 9:9–13

Pharisees to disciples: "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (verse 9).

Jesus: "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (verse 13).

Mark 1:40–45

A leper: "If You are willing, You can make me clean" (verse 40).

Jesus: "I am willing; be cleansed" (verse 41).

Mark 2:1–12

Paralyzed man lowered through the roof: No words; his condition said it all.

Jesus: "Son, your sins are forgiven you. . . . Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (verses 5, 11).

Mark 5:21–43

Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue: "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live" (verse 23).

Jesus, after arriving at the home: "Little girl, I say to you, arise" (verse 41).

Luke 5:1–11

Jesus: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (verse 4).

Peter: "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net" (verse 5).

Luke 7:36–50

A Pharisee, thinking to himself: "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner" (verse 39).

Jesus, after telling a parable about two debtors: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (verse 47).

Based on these dialogues, can you believe that Jesus loves you as much as He loved those He met long ago? The psalmist says God "redeems your life from destruction [and] crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Ps. 103:4). Be crowned today by Jesus.

* All Scripture references in today's study are from The New King James Version of the Bible.