

The Gospel Commission

Why do we do it? Is there a compelling reason that we should actively seek to evangelize others? Absolutely! Our marching orders come directly from Jesus and are recorded in the Bible. Let's take a look at them right now:

And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:18-20 KJV.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. Mark 16:15-18 KJV

. . . Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. Luke 24:47-49 KJV

In the Inter-American Division, Junie Parchment, WM director of West Jamaica, conducted evangelistic meetings resulting in 107 baptisms and nine weddings! *News from the World of Women's Ministries*, October, '97

According to Teresa Gonsales de Santos, the Women's Ministries Director for Cuba, there is a WM director in every Adventist church in Cuba. During October, Cuba's Women's Ministries conducted a series of evangelistic meetings at 150 sites; all were organized by women and all the preachers were women. An estimated 250-260 were baptized as a result. *News from the World of Women's Ministries*, April 1998

. . . It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witness unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:7-8 KJV

The mandate is right here before our eyes. Not only must we invite the people to come to us but we must go where they are. And what are we to do? Teach all nations, preach to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and teach them to observe all things He has taught us.

And the promise is there: He will be with us to the end! Hang on to that promise. His presence

is our stability, our encouragement, our help, our source of strength and power. He has our best interests in mind, He, more than we can ever fathom, has a heart for the lost and has given His all to work with and provide salvation to the people we are seeking to reach.

But let us not go, or teach, or preach without the promised power—the Holy Spirit who will train us and fit us and enable us to fill this great commission. Remember to ask for, prepare for, and expect to receive this greatest of all gifts from God. Be intentional in spending time in preparation for the reception of the gift. Plan and ask a group of women to pray with you and for you that you will be an open channel for the Holy Spirit to use; not only you but also the women who are working with you. Ask them to pray for you as you prepare and conduct meetings, small groups, seminars, and Bible studies; and as you follow up the interests and disciple the new believers.

Because we have been promised that the Spirit will be poured out in greater measure at the time of the end, some of us have been guilty of thinking we can wait until the end of time to receive the Holy Spirit But we *are* at the end of time! We must ask for this outpouring now. We do not use the Holy Spirit—He uses us to accomplish for us that which we would be absolutely unable to do. He is the one who will prepare the hearts of the people. He will convict them when the invitation to follow comes from God through you. Without Him our work would be meaningless and ineffective.

Some of us have waited for His Spirit to come thinking that only then could we go out and warn the people. We have not realized that God

In the newly liberated society of modern Russia, Olga Pivovarova is at the forefront of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's outreach ministry. A former history teacher and now an evangelist working for the Ural Conference, Pivovarova has held 14 public evangelistic events and over 230 people have been baptized since 1995. She directs the Public School Evangelism program which consists of teaching Bible classes in public schools.

Pivovarova usually has a team of five young people helping her in the campaigns. She recalls evangelistic events in the city of Alapaevsk, population 45,000. There were no Seventh-day Adventist churches in the city. The team had distributed handbills and placed posters announcing the meetings.

The evening the meetings were to begin, the team sat in the rented hall and waited; however, no one came. Fifteen minutes before starting time, the team went outside and saw a chain of people, headed by two Orthodox priests, keeping them from entering the building. "We will excommunicate you if you attend these meetings. We have not sanctioned this," said the priests.

Eventually, 30-40 people braved the consequences and came to hear Pivovarova speak. For seven days the priests stood by the door during the meetings and tried to keep people out. From the small audience who attended, 12 were baptized. Two of the newly baptized members were the chief doctor of medical care in the area and her husband, who is a surgeon. The new city administration now welcomes Adventists and Pivovarova's second public series was very successful. —Dixil Rodriguez, from *ANN Bulletin*, December 19, 1997

In Parapat, in the north of Sabah, there were three evangelistic meetings conducted using the family seminar materials by Gordon Martinborough. The women of each of these areas were all very active in conducting the meetings. Fifty-four people were baptized as a result. Mrs. Metia Bendah, the pastor's wife, who has only a third grade education, led out in these groups. Her enthusiasm inspired the women. She also conducted a choir and has taught herself to play the organ by ear.—Dorothy Walter, Women's Ministries Director, South East Asia Union, Southern-Asia Pacific Division

gives His gift now to those consecrated ones who are willing to go out and fulfill the great commission. The people out there are lost. Someone must go out there and reach them. Who will have the courage and boldness to go out to those who are without hope, without Christ?

We may say, But who am I? I am just a woman. Is that a reason or an excuse?

God Calls Women to Evangelism

Yes, I am just a woman, and it has been true that most of the public evangelists are men. But that does not mean that women have not been involved in proclaiming the gospel in the past. We were actively there since the time our church started in the mid 1800's. Many of our early church mothers were active public evangelists- some more successful even than their evangelist husbands. And always, we have supported the men in their work, visited, prayed and studied with interests from home to home, and befriended the people who came to the meetings. We often listened to women and youth as they told us their joys and sorrows and struggles with sin, and prayed with them in their search for life. Many times we played musical instruments, sang in choirs, duets, and even solos to reach the hearts of those who came. We were there greeting the people, handing out handbills, Bibles and lessons, and trying to make all who came feel welcomed and loved.

Presently, women in many parts of the globe are still following the footsteps of the pioneers to reach the world for Christ. Still other women are making the salvation and training of their children paramount. But many of us go to church, sit in the pews, perhaps teach in the children's or adult Sabbath School and smugly think of how much we are accomplishing for God while all around us people are perishing for a lack of knowing God.

Can we do more? Could we possibly lead or assist in small evangelistic minded groups, seminars or public meetings? Could we befriend our neighbors, work associates, and others in such a way that we would have opportunities to lead them to Christ and nurture them to become reproducing

disciples? And why not?

It's true, we are only women, but we could be women filled with the Spirit helping to reach the world for Christ! We could help to hasten the coming of the Lord! We could be bringing our family, our dearest friends, our coworkers with us to heaven in the process.

Is it possible? Yes! Women are leading women and men to Christ in small villages and large cities all over the world. They are leading small groups and conducting evangelistic meetings. New churches have been started and unentered people groups have been reached. I am not talking about a few here and a few there who have been converted through the efforts of our women, but many thousands who have been reached by women and have been baptized in the last few years.

In church development, I think women have a very important role. If properly trained, they can do many things that men cannot do. When we were doing ground work for the women's evangelistic crusade, in Maranding, Lanao del Norte, I found out that women can easily make friends with other women. We taught the children songs and stories. We demonstrated how to cook vegetarian food. We took care of their babies while they were busy opening their Bibles. Male Bible workers cannot easily do what we did, for fear of being misunderstood by the husbands. If women will work side by side with men, then better results will come.

—Victoria Villanueva, South Philippine Union Conference, Southern Asia-Pacific Division

One woman, Cordelia Amspacher, befriended several Muslim couples near Walla Walla College in Washington State, USA. She found that she could only contact the Muslim women at their home and was uncomfortable with customs so different from her own. She never thought of sharing the gospel with them.

"I guess I didn't think that they would process any thoughts that were not from their country or different than what they were used to. Looking back, I thought of them as having tunnel vision. I wish I would have used the opportunity.

"I believe that it will take a woman to minister to women. Being a nurse helped, especially since I worked in OB and they had many questions; the men would ask me questions also. I think the medical arm is one way to get into their lives."—Cynthia Burrill, North American Division Evangelism Institute, Women's Ministries

Does God call women to evangelism? Definitely! God wants all of His disciples, both men and women, to be involved in evangelism. He did not just call men to go preach and teach the people in the world. He called all of His disciples, both men, women and children to evangelize the furthest reaches of the globe. But in some places of the world, the birth rate is higher than our rate of reaching the people for Christ. If we continue as we have been, it will be impossible to warn every person of the events that are soon to engulf the world. If we depend on just the ministers and pastors to finish the work, it will never happen. We must join together as a unit, both men and women, layperson and clergy, children and youth, to

evangelize the world. If we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, work together to reach the lost, how much sooner could the world be warned and His kingdom come. Oh how I want this to

happen!

So who can women especially reach? *Anyone* with whom we come into contact:

- ' Our families—there are many unchurched living right in our own families who need to be reached. Sometimes we try to reach people in far off places, and we should, but we forget that there are lost people right in our own homes.
- ' Our neighbors—many can be reached with simple acts of kindness and friendship.
- ' The men in our lives—our husbands, our sons, our neighbors, our work associates.
- ' The youth—the ones in the church, those in the neighborhood, the youth who are at risk, those that need love, guidance, training and mentoring.
- ' The old—those that are in need of kind, loving words and help, who are lonely, the ones who have gradually seen their whole network of friends and relatives die, those who are

As I was typing in the office, a man asked me to come to his house for prayer for he had multiple problems in his home. I accepted. The family told me their problems and asked me to pray. In simple language I told them of the wonderful way the Lord had led the children of Israel. They were very interested. The whole family knelt with me in the house and I prayed with them and they received peacefulness in their hearts. I continued visiting them every afternoon, giving them Bible studies.

One day, one of the sons had trouble breathing. They took him to the hospital for a thorough check up and found a hole in his heart. The doctors recommended immediate surgery and a ventilator to help him breathe until the surgery. The operation would cost the family one *lakh*, which the family was unable to pay. They were in tears.

Mrs. Manuel Sundaram and I went to the house after learning about this and comforted them with Bible promises. We knelt and prayed with tears that God would shut the hole in his heart.

Fifteen days after this visit the boy was taken for a final check up and word from the doctor before surgery. The doctor examined him again and said that the surgery was not necessary. The father immediately felt that this was an answer to their prayers.

But it was harder for the mother to believe; so they took the boy to another cardiologist and he underwent another thorough examination. The doctor certified that the surgery was not needed because he could not find any hole. The parents came back thrilled and thankful to God.

I still keep on praying for the boy. He is healthier now than before, and the family is taking Bible studies. No doubt it is a miracle of God.—A secretary, South Tamil Conference, Southern Asia Division