

“Win their confidence? You gat to be kidding!”

The following article is written by Barrington Brennen, counseling psychologist and minister of the gospel. It is intended to stimulate objective and critical thinking and discussion about the third quarter's Sabbath School lesson topic: "The Role of the Church in the Community" (2016). It is not designed to answer specific questions from the lesson but to open new avenues of thought and action.

This quarter's adult Bible lesson quarterly in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is so timely. It is entitled "The Role of the Church in The Community." Each topic rivets home an important message of "making the gospel attractive and not a pain in the neck." This week's lesson, entitled "Jesus Won Their Confidence," is another practical example of how sincere Adventist Christians are to love and live. However, do you know what really came cross my mind when I read the topic? It is this: "Win their confidence? You gat to be kidding!" How can we win the confidence of people we judged, hurt, ostracized, and condemned for so long? How can we win the confidence of people with whom we acted so superior for so long? Of course, we know it all. We have it right—so we think. It is as though we are saying, "You don't have it, so you are not going to make it. Ah! Where? You are not going to heaven."

Another serious point is this: How can we win the confidence of people not of our faith, if we do not have the confidence of all the people within our faith? Some of us only show up to church because we do not know any better, but we will not want anybody in church to know our "business." Either we think they are "too nosey," or that they "gossip too much." "Win their confidence? You gat to be kidding!"

How do we win the confidence of those with whom we come into contact —Adventist or not, Christian or atheist? Here are a few tips I put together:

1. **Do not try to "win" them.** Avoid having a battle to win them like it is a tug-of-war. Do not "hit" them over the head with "the truth." In that case you are going to lose. You will push them away. Even if you are successful in coercing them on your side, it will, in the end, be a win-lose situation. Soon they will pull away, and it will leave bitterness in the mouth. Make it a win-win situation where in the long run both side remain happy. Contact them with a genuine reason to either be friends or provide their needs.
2. **Witness without strings attached.** Far too many Adventists believe that they must win someone to Jesus or the Sabbath before they win them to their hearts. This is not always the best approach. We are to do something expecting nothing in return. Do not always seek to invite them to church if you have not won their confidence and met their basic needs as yet. Do not seek to pray with them without their permission.
3. **Get rid of the drive that you must "win one" for Jesus this year.** This is a good goal if it is not the end in itself. We win that "one" for Jesus, and we move on "winning others" and leaving the other behind cold and hungry for understanding and attention.
4. **Get rid of the pride and self-righteousness.** Too many of us really act out in a negative way our belief that the Adventist Church is a superior church, and that it is the only vehicle that will lead people to the kingdom. They walk around with their chests puff out as if they are saying, "Hey! Look at me! I am an Adventist! Do you know what that means? It is a guaranteed seat in the kingdom." Many of us really do not believe this, but we act this way. Humility is a key component that will open doors and will help us to win the confidence of people.
5. **Stop judging their dress and lifestyle.** Why do so many of us believe that lifestyle is the first prerequisite for salvation? I believe it is this way because, humanly speaking, it is a very easy measuring tool. So we are inherently taught to judge and not to love. We have been conditioned to judge one another instead of loving and accepting each other unconditionally. Our judgmental attitude makes people feel guilty, which results in making them vegetarians for a week, dress reformers for a month, and Sabbath keeper for a year.
6. **Start listening with the heart and not just the ears.** Things begin to happen when we listen to them not just with our ear but with our hearts. What is "heart listening?" It is:
 - **Listening with compassion** – "I will seek to be sensitive to what is being said and watch my body language."
 - **Listening with understanding** – "I will try to understand and put myself in her/his shoes."
 - **Listening with appreciation** – "I will respect and acknowledge her/his feelings and thoughts."

- **Listening with patience** - “I will listen while honoring the personality and limitation of the speaker.”
- **Listening non-judgmentally**—“I will not preclude that my information is better, that the person does not care, is not understanding, or is not hurting.”
- **Listening with humility** – “I am willing to change, accept wrong, forgive, receive forgiveness, acknowledge the goodness in the one I am trying to help.”

I believe this quarter's lesson is telling us these four points:

1. Those who are understanding have been understood.
2. Those who are loving have been loved.
3. Those who are caring have been cared for.
4. Those who are comforting have been comforted.

I must conclude with an excerpt from my article “[**The Butterfly Principle**](#),” published February 2014. It is how and why butterflies are attracted to you. The principles will also help us to know how to “win” the confidence of someone.

“If the ‘butterflies’ around you are not landing on your ‘hands,’ it might be due to the lack of ‘moisture’ on your hands.” The “butterflies” represent the people with whom you come into contact each day, those we are witnessing to. The “hands” represent the relationships you seek to foster each day. As the butterfly that is attracted to the hands feel safe to land, trusting that you will not crush it to death, so it should be with people around you. “Be my witnesses” not my judges. Do you have “moisture” in your hands? Are people attracted to you, or are you a pain in the neck? We are to take the time to create “moisture” on our hands, so that others around us will be attracted to us and feel safe to “land.”

WHAT IS THE “MOISTURE?” The “moisture” on your hands is a symbol of the attitudes we are to have so that others will feel emotionally safe to be in our presence. Those we are witnessing to must feel emotionally safe in our presence before they can spiritually connect. It is also about having an attitude that is so “sweet” that others cannot help but be attracted to us. To illustrate further, here are five behavioral attitudes that can create “moisture” on our “hands.”

Unconditional acceptance: Unconditional acceptance is being able to understand and tolerate the qualities of the person you love, work or live with, no matter what it is. “This doesn’t mean that you must accept everything that person does especially if it’s inappropriate and rude. What it does mean is to forgive them, and try to work past these problems; if that’s not possible, distance yourself and show them some tough love. How wonderful it would be if everyone in our society just accepted everyone as worthy of appreciation and respect. There is no prerequisite that persons would have to demonstrate to be accepted. The person would know that his speech accent, color or skin, race, educational level, gender, sexual orientation, is not a barrier to being accepted in society.”

Unconditional loving: This is loving anyone regardless of income level, nationality, ethnicity, race, etc. Unconditional love is affection without any limitations. This generally means to love someone . . . no matter what they do or who they are. This does not actually mean you do not see their fault, but you just love them despite everything. An example of this is a parent’s unconditional love for her/his child; no matter a test score, a life changing decision, an argument, or a strong belief, the amount of love that remains between this bond is seen as unchanging and unconditional. This scripture passage speaks directly to this topic: “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Note the word “deeply” suggests that it is not superficial. It is profound and meaningful. Also the word “cover” does not mean to hide or ignore. It is about not holding wrong against the person. This version of the text makes it clearer. From the New Living Translation it says: “Most of all, love each other steadily and unselfishly, because love makes up for many faults.”

An attitude of forgiveness: At attitude of forgiveness is greatly needed in our society. It is the willingness to make amends, to see the other person’s point of view and not hold grudges. We would have less violence if more of us demonstrated this attitude of forgiveness. Colossians 3:13 says, “Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.” If most of us claim to be Christians, then this attitude of forgiveness must be clearly demonstrated among us. Forgiveness is not amnesia. Forgiveness is a decision not to hold the wrong-doing against the persons who have caused you pain. However, forgiveness does not eliminate accountability. If someone stole something from you, that person may

be forgiven, but making amends is still appropriate. Restitution is an important part of building a healthy society.

A spirit of compassion and kindness: "Genuine compassion is based not on our own projections and expectations, but rather on the rights of the other: irrespective of whether another person is a close friend or an enemy, as long as that person wishes for peace and happiness and wishes to overcome suffering, then on that basis we develop a genuine concern for his or her problems. This is genuine compassion. Compassion can be demonstrated by helping persons who are needy, homeless, rejected, and abandoned. Our fragile economy today is making it more imperative for us to be compassionate and kind. There are many who are hurting in our society today. Some who do not have money to buy food to eat, or even a soft bed to sleep on. Let us be compassionate and kind to everyone."

A gentle spirit: Having a gentle spirit also means one is humble enough to listen, change, work with others and has an attitude of cooperation. The Greek word most often translated as gentleness is from the word "prautēs" and has no meaning of aggression at all. It is from the same root word as "meekness." Common meanings of gentle are kind and amiable, as well as "free from harshness, sternness, or violence." We do need more people in our society with a "gentle spirit." There is far too much aggression, harshness, and violence. Even the way we speak is to demonstrate a "gentle spirit." Our tone of voice, choice of words, and often rudeness, is a turn onto others. Let us display a gentle spirit among us. Do you have a gentle spirit, or are you a pain in the neck?

STOP CONDEMNING: Far too many of us are so busy criticizing and condemning each other that we have lost the attractiveness we once had as a people. We need to get rid of the self-righteous, self-exalting, loveless attitudes. We have become "dry" and "dull" people. We need to make the effort to create "moisture" on our "hands." Christian comedian, Mark Lowry said these profound words:

"Love the sinner, hate the sin?

How about: Love the sinner, hate your own sin!

I don't have time to hate your sin. There are too many of you!

Hating my sin is a full-time job. How about you hate your sin,

I'll hate my sin and let's just love each other!"

Think! How can we apply these concepts and principles to this quarter's lesson topic "The Role of the Church in The Community?" and to effective witnessing? Discuss with your friends and groups.

Can we win their confidence? Yes, we can! I'm not kidding.

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