



A pastor held up his Bible before the congregation. It was in tatters, full of holes. In seminary he and some classmates had gone through his Bible and underlined every passage that dealt with justice, poverty, wealth, and oppression. Then, with a pair of scissors, they cut out every verse dealing with those topics. When they finished, his Bible was in shambles. Throughout Scripture these themes are so central that there is a lot missing from the Bible when they are removed. The tattered Bible speaks powerfully and loudly about the things that God cares about.

What should this story say to us as Seventh-day Adventists? It should say a lot. Research shows that approximately 30 percent of Seventh-day Adventists are involved in meeting the needs of the community outside the church. What about the remaining 70 percent? Jesus calls His entire end-time church to proclaim and live the whole “everlasting gospel” (*Rev. 14:6*).

What is the *whole* gospel? Jesus’ mission and ministry depicted in Luke 4:16–21 portray the whole gospel as more than preaching the truth of salvation by faith, however foundational that is to all that we do. Jesus shows us that preaching the gospel also means tangible expressions of love and compassion for the poor, hungry, sick, brokenhearted, oppressed, outcast, and imprisoned. It’s about biblical justice and undoing what the devil has done, at least to whatever degree we now can as we look forward to Jesus’ ultimate triumph over evil at the end of the age.

This quarter we will explore this wholistic version of the “everlasting gospel” and will

examine the role of the church in impacting communities with this gospel. We define the “church” as a community of people who, together, do not exist for themselves but who are called out to live and to preach the everlasting gospel as expressed in the ministry of Jesus. This means not only preaching the gospel but living it in our lives through ministering to the needs of those in our local communities.

Organizationally, how does your local church serve those in need? All ministries of the church (for example, health, family, youth, Sabbath School, deacons/deaconesses, etc.) exist to work together for serving the community as well as church members. Adventist Community Services (ACS) units or centers work from the church to demonstrate the gospel and prepare the way for hearing the Word of God. In some parts of the world ACS is called Dorcas, Adventist Men, or some other name. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s humanitarian agency with a nongovernmental organization status, though it does not operate from the local church, is another important part of reaching those in need.

How do you personally express your appreciation for what God has done for you in Christ? One church member put it this way:

On the street I saw a small girl,
cold, shivering in a thin dress,
with little hope of a decent meal.
I became angry and said to God:

“Why did You permit this?

Why don’t You do something about it?”

For a while God said nothing.

Then that night He replied quite suddenly:

“I certainly did something about it.

I made you.”—In Dwight Nelson, *Pursuing the Passion of Jesus* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), p. 78.

Jesus shows us that preaching the gospel also means tangible expressions of love and compassion.

At the time of writing this Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Gaspar Colón was chair of the Department of Religion at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Maryland, USA. May-Ellen Colón is director of Adventist Community Services International, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. They served as missionaries in Africa and the former Soviet Union for nine years, and have two grown children and two grandchildren.