



The General Conference  
Sabbath School &  
Personal Ministries



TO

# GAINING DECISIONS FOR CHRIST & HIS TRUTH

SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH 

**Bringing People to Decisions for Christ** is created by the General Conference Sabbath School & Personal Ministries Department

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**Available from:**

*AdventSource*  
5040 Prescott Avenue  
Lincoln, NE 68506  
800.328.0525  
[www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org)

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-57756-579-6

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# **GAINING DECISIONS FOR CHRIST AND HIS TRUTH**

What a precious privilege to become involved with heavenly agencies in the greatest work in the universe, leading people from darkness to light; from a lost condition to salvation in Christ; and then step-by-step into biblical truth that will bless their lives! Many books have been written on this vital subject of helping people make decisions that affect their eternal destiny. We will begin with a brief overview of key points and then enter into an extended discussion of the subject. There will be a bit of overlap; we will endeavor, however, to keep repetition to a minimum.

## *A Brief Overview*

### **1. Create an atmosphere where total concentration and understanding is possible.**

For example, try to arrange the weekly Bible study at a time when little children are in bed.

Have a few vital points arranged in logical order. Present these points clearly and sufficiently, at times utilizing simple stories and illustrations. But don't overdo it. Ask questions and watch their eyes and body language. Listen to their answers and reinforce their correct answers. The message must be clearly understood for a decision to be made. And it is vital to get a decision in every study. That makes the bigger decisions easier.

### **2. Create an atmosphere of confidence, security, and freedom with the hearers as Jesus did.**

He "won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"<sup>1</sup> Don't get pushy. Don't be sharp. Jesus "exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention. . . He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul."<sup>2</sup> (This is from a most valuable paragraph; it would be wise for you to memorize it.)

Show understanding in their hesitation and slowness to grasp and learn. They must see that the truth is correct and vital and how it has gripped and changed your life.

Maintain a balance between your concern for the truth and your concern for each individual. Show deep concern for their personal problems. Assure them that you will help them work out the difficulties that hinder their decision making. With Jesus, people had confidence and decided not only because of what He said but who He was. They knew He was a friend who loved, cared, and understood their challenges, and would support them.

It is not only what we say, but how and when we say it that counts (Isaiah 50:4). “The tones of the voice have much to do in affecting the hearts of those that hear.”<sup>3</sup>

### **3. The ABCs<sup>4</sup> of obtaining decisions:**

- a. Accept, by agreeing and showing approval and appreciation.
- b. Believe they sincerely seek truth and desire a better life, and that the Holy Spirit can use you.
- c. Have confidence that “they will hear it” (Acts 28:28, 31).

### **4. Four levels of decision making:**

- a. Information on the subject must be clear and free of objections. They must have . . .
- b. Conviction it is right, but then they must have the . . .
- c. Desire to do the specific . . .
- d. Action.

The key to getting action is to fan the flame of desire. This is not automatic. The Holy Spirit will use you to ask questions to make certain the information is clear. For example, you can ask, “Is it clear that. . . ?” Gain a decision in every Bible study. This makes the big decisions easier.

Show the benefits of the right action. Always stress the blessings more than the requirements of God. Here are five basic benefits: Inner peace (John 14:27 and Psalm 119:165); the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32); true happiness (John 13:17; 10:10; and Psalm 84:11); a heavenly home (Hebrews 11:24-26); and forgiveness and freedom from guilt (Acts 2:37-39; 22:16).

Show the consequences of the wrong action which are the opposite of the right action.

Show the expectations of a God who loves: “The desire to honor God should be to us the most powerful of all motives.”<sup>5</sup> All decisions should be in response to a loving Lord, but people are preoccupied with self-preservation, money, romance, recognition, and with the opinions of parents, partners, pastors, etc. It is therefore vital, through cooperation with the Holy Spirit, to make Jesus their most significant other; and to lead them into a living love relationship with Jesus as Saviour and Lord first before the testing truths are presented. Then as you lead them step by step into what He asks them to do, continue to discuss and nurture that relationship, helping them to depend on His power for obedience.

Here is how you may utilize the very important prayer of commitment after you have presented the subject on salvation and explained and illustrated such words as “purchased” and “reach out” clearly: (Using a little booklet such as *The Four Spiritual Laws*<sup>6</sup> makes it easier.)

Make a direct personal appeal: “As you have seen clearly the tremendous love of Jesus for you, what He has done for you, and that He now offers you the free gift of eternal life, I’m sure you would like to reach out and accept it. Isn’t that right? Why don’t we kneel in prayer and you tell God of your decision. Let’s review what you would want to say and then you tell God in your own words. If you miss a major point I’ll insert a word or two to remind you and then I will close. OK?”

Suggested Prayer: (Key points are underlined). “Dear God, I am a sinner who is supposed to die. I thank you for sending Jesus, who died for me, purchased eternal life for me, and, wants to give me the gift of eternal life. I want to reach out and accept the gift. I am sorry for my sins. Please forgive me of all my sins. I want to turn away from sin completely. I receive Jesus into my heart as Savior and I want to make Him Lord and Master of my life. Help me to live for Jesus until He comes.”

(If the person is too shy he/she can repeat after you.)

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving. Welcome the person to the family of God. Give him/her *Steps to Christ*, urging the person to make the commitment daily in an established daily devotional life.

### **5. The strategy to use with the testing truths after Christ is both Saviour and Lord:**

Make certain the truth is clear and free of objections. Clarify that it is important to Jesus (his/her Best Friend), who requests obedience. Base the appeal on love for Jesus, the Word of Jesus, and His promised blessings. Ask for a specific, definite action to be carried out immediately without delay. Express confidence. Ask expectantly.

Example: When making an appeal to John on Sabbath keeping after the Bible truth is clear and you sense, after much prayer that he desires to obey, you may say,

- a. “John, is it clear that Saturday is the Lord’s Day?”
- b. “You’ve given your heart to Jesus. I know you love Him more than anything. Isn’t that right?”
- c. “Because Jesus says to you in John 14:15, ‘If you love me keep my commandments,’ I’m sure you want to keep all His commandments, including the Sabbath.”
- d. “As we have studied in Isaiah 58:13, 14 and elsewhere, He longs to bless you for doing it.”



- e. “Therefore, I’m sure you don’t want to delay in doing it. David didn’t. Notice what he said in Psalms 119:58-60, ‘I thought in my ways . . . and delayed not to keep thy commandments.’
- f. “So because you love Jesus, He asks you to keep His Sabbath and receive His special blessing. Why don’t you let me pick you up at 9 a.m. this Saturday morning?” (Welcoming the Sabbath at his house on Friday night would be excellent).

To get a decision you must ask for a specific action. Remember the right moment to ask is when the fruit is ripe: There is conviction based on facts clearly understood to be right, objections are cleared, and desire is heightened and evident.

**6. Seven reasons for asking for decisions promptly:**

- a. It is clearest when it is fresh in the memory.
- b. Satan is working to lead the thoughts away.<sup>7</sup>
- c. Conviction may completely disappear if the person is not brought to decision at the “earliest period possible.”<sup>8</sup>
- d. A decision may be turned in another direction or toward another church.
- e. Relatives or members of other churches may confuse the issues or the truth in the mind.
- f. The interest in truth may completely disappear and the student may drift farther from Christ.<sup>9</sup>
- g. Circumstances such as moving, sickness, or death, may place the student beyond your reach in a very short time.

## **7. Answering objections:**

Here is an effective way to answer objections. Use the FFF Technique.<sup>10</sup>

- a. Say, "I can understand how you feel.
- b. Many others in your present situation have felt the same way,
- c. but they have found. . . .
- d. Use this to...

## **8. Find an open door in the objection and pass through it to a favorable decision. Here are the steps:**

- a. Listen carefully to the objection.
- b. Make sure it is an objection and not an excuse by asking if that is the only reason.
- c. Ask, "Why?" Ask the reason for the objection.
- d. Show you understand the real objection by repeating it in your own words. Paraphrase it.
- e. Get a commitment by asking, "If the objection could be removed would you decide immediately?"
- f. Answer the objection.
- g. Get the decision.

## **9. "You tell God:"**

To strengthen the decision, ask the person to tell God in prayer in front of you what he/she has decided. Most people who are happy with the decision made will gladly do this.

## **10. Begin training:**

Begin training this new potential soul winner by urging him/her to lead friends, family, work associates, or neighbors step by step as you have done.

## **11. Depend on the Holy Spirit moment by moment.**

Persevere in following these simple guidelines and you will have success in gaining decisions for Christ and His truth.

Now we will enter into a more comprehensive discussion.

### *The Need for the Holy Spirit*

Tremendous success is promised as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Above all methodology His continual presence, wisdom, guidance, power, and persuasiveness are essential. “Thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth. . . . These conversions to truth will be made with a rapidity that will surprise the church, and God’s name alone will be glorified.”<sup>11</sup> “It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.”<sup>12</sup>

There must be a balance, however. Relying on the Holy Spirit does not negate human efforts and methods in reaching the heart: “When divine power is combined with human effort, the work will spread like fire in the stubble.”<sup>13</sup> “The agency of the Spirit of God does not remove from us the necessity of exercising our faculties and talents.”<sup>14</sup> “What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do. God does not dispense with man’s aid. He strengthens him, co-operating with him as he uses the powers and capabilities given him.”<sup>15</sup> “When in our work for God right methods are energetically followed, a harvest of souls will be gathered.”<sup>16</sup>

## *Jesus and His Methods in Brief*

Before we proceed to an in-depth study of theory and methods we must remember Jesus and His tremendous love. He said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3). Nothing draws like the love of Jesus. If your student understands clearly that his/her Creator loved him/her individually so much that He would have left heaven, with the adoration of the entire universe, come to this dark world and died for him/her alone, there is nothing greater than this to draw your student to a decision.

Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). The whole universe is drawn toward decision when we lift up Jesus. In gaining decisions there is nothing needed more than His love for each person we are endeavoring to draw to Him. The exciting fact is that the same love is ours for the asking: “Christ will impart to his messengers the same yearning love that He Himself has in seeking for the lost.”<sup>17</sup> We only need ask for it.

Jesus is also our example in gaining decisions. Let’s ponder the relationship we need with Him, His methods, and what we can learn from them:

Jesus made the mind. He understands how it works and how to reach it. Only He really understands how people make decisions. His Word has the most effective decision-making principles embedded in it. He says “Follow me” (Matthew 4:19).

How did Jesus work with people? “The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”<sup>18</sup> People decided because of what He said and Who He was. It was not knowledge and facts alone, but His personal relationship and identification with them that caused them to decide. He won their hearts as well as their minds.

Persuasion results from both *logos* (knowledge) and *ethos* (feelings) toward the presenter of facts. We must repeat what was stated above: *It is not only what we say that counts, but how we say it and when we say it.* There must be the right word in the right way at the right time—a “word in season.” This is accomplished through daily communion with the God of the mind: “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season . . . : he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isaiah 50:4). This daily communion enables one to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) at the pace at which the learner can respond. What is needed is loving people presenting the whole beautiful truth at the rate the student is able and willing to digest it and accept it.

Decisions for Christ are rooted in deep interpersonal relationships. The deeper the relationship and the greater the confidence in the presenter, the more effective the appeal.

All you are, all you say, and all you do affect the student’s acceptance or rejection.

## *Utilizing the ABCs of Decision That Jesus Used*

A = Acceptance. Jesus accepted men and women in the condition He found them. He established relationships and a confidence bond first before attempting change. Here are the ingredients of acceptance, the three A’s of social contact.

**Agreement:** Seek it out no matter how small.

“Agree with the people in every point where you can consistently do so.”<sup>19</sup>

**Approval:** When others condemned Mary, Jesus praised her (Luke 7:44-50).

**Appreciation:** Jesus complimented the centurion (Matthew 8:10). Jesus looked for a good point to compliment, even regarding a scribe (Mark 12:34).

Show people you accept them where they are. Don't be repelled by their negative attitudes or actions. Don't appear shocked at any response they make.

Demonstrate acceptance by getting them to talk about themselves. Focus on them, not on yourself. "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth" (Proverbs 27:2). Look and listen to build a bond of unity. Ask deep, penetrating questions about the topics of their interest. This kind of friendship will help to build bridges over which the truth can march into the mind and be accepted.

B = Believe. Believe the person sincerely desires truth and wants to follow Jesus. Believe he/she is winable. Christ was effective with the woman at the well, the centurion, the demoniac, and the thief on the cross because He believed they were winable. He believed that, although they were caught in struggles and conflicts, they desired something better. They were not worthless. "In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace."<sup>20</sup> He read their inner longings and believed the Holy Spirit could work through Him.

To believe people are hard hearted, unresponsive, and unreachable tends to produce such a response. Studies show a strong correlation between a pastor's and members' belief in the church growth potential of their church and its actual growth. Jesus recognized the tremendous potential of each person, such as Peter. He saw not a rough outspoken fisherman, but a mighty preacher. Christ accepted people as they were, and believed in them.

C = Confidence. Jesus confidently expected those He encountered to make a decision. The early church grew by addition (Acts 2 – 4) and then by multiplication (Acts 9:31; 21:20) because its members were confident that the Gentiles

would listen. “They will hear it” (Acts: 28:28). Paul preached and taught “with all confidence” (verse 31) about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us review the ABCs: We must accept men and women as they are by being agreeable, manifesting approval, and expressing appreciation. Believe they are sincere, genuine, and winable. Confidently expect them to make eternal decisions.

Put these principles to work and watch God work through you to bring about success in leading people to decisions.

## *The Laws of the Mind*

We need to understand the laws of the mind. “He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity.”<sup>21</sup> “In order to lead souls to Jesus there must be a knowledge of human nature and a study of the human mind.”<sup>22</sup> “We shall have to contend with people of varied dispositions, and we should be in a position where we know how to deal with human minds.”<sup>23</sup>

## *Attitude versus Behavior Change*

How do people make decisions? A change in attitude does not automatically change the behavior. Large numbers believe the Sabbath is the day Jesus wants them to keep, but they still keep Sunday. When we succeed in getting people to agree that Saturday is to be kept, we have done very little about getting them to actually keep the Sabbath.

A decision is really an intention to perform a given act. The more specific the act the stronger the decision. A person’s intention to attend church next Sabbath is far more reliable as an indicator of future behavior than his/her attitude toward the “truth” about the Sabbath.

Three variables are important in determining behavior.

1. Act = Attitude toward performing a given act in a given situation.

2. Eo = Expectations of relevant others.
3. Mc = Motivation to comply with the expectations of others.

Observation guided by wisdom from the Holy Spirit can indicate to you where among the above three variables you must aim your persuasion in dealing with each specific student. Those who study the mind say that the stronger the intention (1. above), the more likely it is for action to follow, and that action almost always follows strong intentions. Therefore, logical facts and sound arguments from Scripture certainly will strengthen one's attitude toward the act. These arguments must include blessings that the student feels are important to him/her, because his/her attitude toward the act involves also the belief about the consequences of performing the act. For example, the person reasons, "If I attend church next Sabbath what blessings will I receive? Are these really important to me?"

Few are motivated properly. We return to what should motivate as mentioned above: "The desire to honor God should be to us the most powerful of all motives."<sup>24</sup> The Christian persuader must realize that few are to that point. Though we want to lead them to that ideal, we must begin by motivating from the values they appreciate in order to move them at all. "God's plan is first to get at the heart."<sup>25</sup> And we are told, "The love of Christ is the only power that can soften the heart and lead to obedience."<sup>26</sup> However, most are not sufficiently interested in Christ. Each is emotionally preoccupied with predominately one or two of the following: Self preservation, money, romance, or recognition. Let's look at these in more detail.

### **Distinguishing characteristics of the four preoccupations:**

1. **Self preservation:** Personal enjoyment; great love for food; great concern over health; love of ease and comfort; fear of death, pain, injury, or inconvenience;



strong feelings for family and religion; strong love of freedom and of life; fear of imprisonment.

2. **Money:** Desire for rewards, treasures, riches, money, possessions, prizes, and bargains; deep concern over waste of time, energy, etc.; great interest in property, future security, and savings.
3. **Romance:** Desire for novelty, originality, and new experiences; concern with attraction to the opposite sex; desire to get married; love for adventure and change; curiosity.
4. **Recognition:** Desire for popularity, reassurance and appreciation; hatred for criticism; fastidious care about appearance and choice of friends; obsessive effort to be better than others; almost total preoccupation with name, pride, influence, prestige, praise, and honor; strong desire to win and excel.

## *Breaking Through the Preoccupational Barrier*

To get someone to listen, we must break through his/her preoccupational barrier by using the emotional appeal that fits. How is that done?

By listening carefully and watching the person's actions to discern his/her motives. "Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45, RSV).

By observation you can tell which one or ones of the four are the big one or two in the category of interest. Then appeal to the person within that same area.

Remember that all of them are in all of us but one or two will be the key to the heart. "We all need to study character and manner that we may know how to deal judiciously with different minds, that we may use our best endeavors to help them. . . ."<sup>27</sup>

Study the four until you can automatically categorize people. Your appeal can then be based on the following general suggestions:

1. **Self preservation:** The Bible promises eternal life, health, joy, happiness, peace, and love.
2. **Money:** The Bible promises riches, prosperity, financial success, and treasures in heaven. In heaven we'll be richer than any man on earth has ever been.
3. **Romance:** The Bible promises love that never changes, a new life and new experiences.
4. **Recognition:** The Bible promises honor, success, superiority, courage, the approval of the God of the universe, to actually sit with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:21) and to shine as the stars throughout eternity (Daniel 12:3).

Apply the Word to the person's interests. That is what Jesus did. When He met a woman whose biggest interest was romance and whose second emotional appeal was self preservation, this is how He acted: "As Jesus spoke of the living water, the woman looked upon Him with wondering attention. He had aroused her interest, and awakened a desire for the gift of which He spoke."<sup>28</sup> Jesus appealed to her curiosity (romance) and offered her eternal life (self preservation). Immediately He broke her preoccupation and entered her heart.

One lady who had just been presented with the Sabbath truth mentioned that she would feel very odd walking to church on Saturdays. This statement revealed to her teacher her "recognition" desires and gave him the key to her heart. He immediately appealed to her with a "recognition" emotional appeal. He told her kindly that first class people do not respond to what others think, but only to what God thinks. She proved she was a first class person by

attending services the following Sabbath. Remember, “God’s plan is first to get to the heart.”<sup>29</sup>

Building your appeal on your student’s preoccupation interest brings success in reaching the heart and in gaining decisions.

## *Back to the Second and Third Variables*

***Eo = Expectations of relevant others. Mc = Motivation to comply with expectations of others.***

Usually we tend to think that a very logical presentation will produce the greatest result. But behavior is affected more by emotion than by logic.

The key to motivation is to make Jesus the most significant of the “relevant others” so that the student in response to Christ’s love longs to know His “expectations” and to “comply” with them above the desires of all others.

This is the reason it is vital to present Christ in His beauty first. Lead the student to accept Him as both Savior and Lord, as illustrated above, before presenting Christ’s desires concerning behavior. The branch can do nothing about bearing fruit without first having an intimate union with the vine (John 15). So it is futile and of no value to urge the student to obey until he/she is prepared to do so by union with the vine. On the other hand, when this union is established and nurtured there will be an abundance of power available to produce the fruit of obedience (Philippians 4:13, 19). “You should not feel it your duty to introduce arguments upon the Sabbath question as you meet the people. If persons mention the subject, tell them that this is not your burden now. But when they surrender heart and mind and will to God, they are then prepared candidly to weigh evidence in regard to these solemn, testing truths.”<sup>30</sup> This leads us to a most vital point:

## *The Significant Other and Friction*

Friction and tension are produced in the mind when one tries to make new ideas consistent with existing beliefs and

integrate them (called cognitive consistency). Therefore, one tends to resist change. Greater tension results when considering a change of life style because of the Sabbath truth. But if the person has committed the life totally to Jesus and can sense the strong connection between keeping the Sabbath and showing love for Jesus (because it is important to Jesus and his/her relationship with Jesus) he/she will experience greater friction if the Sabbath message is resisted. Therefore, to minimize the friction between himself/herself and Jesus it would be easier to accept the Sabbath than to reject it.

**There are three steps in cognitive consistency:**

1. Develop a deep love for Jesus in the heart of the student with whom you are studying.
2. Present each testing truth as being very important to Jesus. Emphasize the “expectation” of Jesus. He expects acceptance of the truth and action.
3. Show that to resist a truth is not to resist a doctrine, but to actually resist the One who is the author of the truth—Jesus. It is one thing for a person to reject the Sabbath as a doctrine. It is an entirely different thing for him/her to reject Christ as his/her Creator and Savior.

**A powerful three step formula:**

1. Get your student to love Jesus deeply.
2. Present each testing truth as being very important to Jesus and emphasize that Jesus expects him/her to accept and act upon the truth.
3. Provide your student with an opportunity to express his/her acceptance of the truth by word and deed. Example: “Because you love Jesus and the Sabbath is very important to Him, (now provide the student with a definite specific action) you will let me pick you

up and take you with me to church this Sabbath, won't you?

A word of caution: Usually one would not appeal strongly for Sabbath observance after the first study on the Sabbath. As mentioned above it must be very clear, objections cleared, and evidence of conviction and desire must occur first.

### *Clarifying the Four Levels of Decision Making*

As we only touched on these in the brief overview above, it seems appropriate to expand and clarify this here.

1. **Information:** Seventh-day Adventists have excellent facts and are good at stacking them before the student. Prepared Bible study guides are also organized logically to bring the second level.
2. **Conviction:** results from a logical sorting of the facts to arrive at what seems right or is right.
3. **Desire:** results from sorting through one's feelings and identifying what one wants to do.
4. **Action:** results from the heightening of desire that is based on information and conviction.

Many students stay on level one. They accept and believe the information on the Sabbath, health, baptism, etc., but do nothing about deciding. The key to "action" begins with a sense of conviction that he/she ought to do something, but conviction is not enough. The person must desire to act on his/her convictions. Desire plays the ultimate role in producing action. The key to getting the decision is to fan the flame of desire. Desire does not happen automatically. Motivating desire has often been overlooked or assumed unnecessary; but just because the facts are clear does not mean that the desire to act will naturally come. The highest skill in gaining decisions is the ability by

God's grace and wisdom to fan the sparks of conviction and desire into the flame of action.

## *The Right Criteria*

To get the right decision we must provide the right criteria. People always make decisions by testing against criteria they have developed through life. When a man says, "I like that pie," it is because it meets the test of criteria he has developed over time that is self satisfying in regard to what a "good pie" is. If we ask him, "Are you willing to keep the Sabbath?" he will naturally test it with his criteria that he has developed that brings self satisfaction, and will begin to think of what his pastor, parents, children, etc., will think. He will ask himself questions like, "What about my job?"

We don't want him to test by his criteria. We need to provide the criteria of the love of Christ and say, "Is pleasing Jesus important enough for you to keep the Sabbath?" In addition, provide a reference source: "When you remember that Jesus who died for you said, 'If you love me, keep my commandments,' are you willing to keep the Sabbath to respond to His love for you and show your love for Him?" Notice that by making John 14:15 the reference source you have prevented him from using non-Biblical reference sources for his test. The decision you want should be based on Biblical criteria and not his own.

Here is a powerful strategy: Determine what you want your student to decide. Select the Biblical criteria/reference source you want him/her to use as a test for the decision. Formulate your request mentioning your reference source first, and then ask the specific question.

### ***Examples:***

- I want James to decide to be baptized next Sabbath. I want him to do it because of Mark 16:16. I'll make the request using these words: "James, you've believed in Jesus and given your heart to Him. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, 'He that believeth and is baptized

shall be saved'. Do you believe what Jesus said? Do you believe it enough to be baptized this Sabbath?"

- I want Mary to decide on living a healthy life style. I want her to do so because her body is the temple of God. The reference source is: I Corinthians 6:19, 20. I'll make the request using these words: "Mary, you've given your heart to Jesus. Since Jesus says to you through Paul in I Corinthians 6:19, 20 that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, are you willing to live the healthy life style that He told you about? Are you willing to begin now?"

## *Understand and Use the Structure of Motivation*

All emotions have a structure, and the structure of feeling motivated is this:

1. Awareness of something you want.
2. Believing that it is possible to get it soon.
3. Believing that the thing you want is important to you now.

This means that if you want your student Jerry to feel motivated to keep the Sabbath, you need to demonstrate: Sabbath keeping will give him something he wants. It is possible for him to get it soon. What he wants is important enough for him to act to get it immediately.

To do that we need to be aware of the blessings of Sabbath keeping and which blessings are important to him and/or convince him of the importance of the blessings.

First show evidence from God's promises. Second, tell how God has fulfilled these promises to you personally. Third, bring another person with an experience similar to Jerry's to testify. (This person should have attended the

study at least three times to bond with Jerry before this encounter).

Reassure him that God only wants the best for him and that he will receive greater joy and peace (or other blessings that he desires) that only God can provide. Utilize texts such as Psalms 84:11 and John 10:10.

Watch for the opportunity to build on the responses and admissions of your student in the interactive discussions during the Bible studies. Turn these acknowledgements into steps which will lead to decisions. The person may often say, "That is true. That is right." As an example, John may say, "You folks have certainly got the Bible on your side for keeping the seventh day." This is an opportunity to reply, "I am glad you see the truth about the right day to keep. It is a wonderful blessing to know the real truth from the Bible. There are greater blessings in store for you. Let us turn to Luke 11:28. It says, 'But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.'" Then say, "Notice Jesus pronounces His blessing on those who hear His Word and keep it, or obey it. So now that you see that the seventh day is Christ's day, I'm sure you want to keep it and double the blessings. Isn't that right?"

"Minimax" is a main motivating factor in human behavior. It means individuals will act when the risk is low and the benefits are high. Maximizing eternal benefits of right actions will always produce greater results than focusing on the negative consequences. Instead of emphasizing, "Christ invites you to deny yourself," stress, "Christ longs to bless you."

## *Use Texts as Direct Personal Appeals*

**Here are examples of how certain texts can be used in direct personal appeals:**

1. For a decision to become a Christian: "I would like to have you notice what Jesus says to you in Revelation 3:20 (read). Jesus wants to come into your heart and



make your life what it ought to be—filled with the peace only He can offer. You want Him to do this, don't you? Shall we ask Him to come into your heart now?"

**Texts for desire to accept Christ:** Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 7:25; Psalms 34:8; Romans 5:1; John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

**Texts for conviction to accept Christ:** Acts 16:30,31; John 3:16; Isaiah 53:6; Matthew 16:26; John 8:24; Acts 4:12.

2. For a decision to keep the Sabbath: During your Bible study focus on bringing conviction and desire to keep the Sabbath holy.

**Texts for conviction to keep the Sabbath:** Exodus 20:8-11; James 2:10; Luke 6:46; Matthew 15:9; Mark 2:27; I John 2:3, 4.

**Texts for desire to keep the Sabbath:** Hebrews 5:9; John 15:14; Revelation 22:14; Isaiah 48:18; 58:13, 14; 56:1-6; Ezekiel 20:12; Psalms 40:8.

When, after much prayer, you sense the conviction and desire are present you may say, "When you think how Jesus gave himself for you on the cross and that He would have died for you alone, you can't help but love Him. I know that you love Jesus. Here in John 14:15, Jesus says to you, 'If you love me, keep my commandments.' Now that you see that one of His commandments is to keep the seventh day of the week, or Saturday, you are going to start keeping it because you love Him, aren't you?"

Use these strong texts often as appropriate: John 14:15; Matthew 7:21, 15:9; Luke 6:46; I John 3:4; Romans 6:16, 10:17; Philippians 4:13, 19; Revelation 14:12, 22:14.

### *Use Bible Illustrations, Incidents and Narratives to Obtain Decisions*

The Bible contains many illustrations, incidents and narratives which can be made the basis for powerful direct

appeals to interested people whose cases or situations are parallel to the experiences set forth in the Bible.

***Examples:***

1. God opens the way when we step into the water. Use the story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan found in Joshua 3 (especially verses 13-16). Use this in relation to the person who is willing to begin to step out and keep the Sabbath if God will open the way in his/her home or work. It can also be used to encourage one who is almost willing to take the step.
2. Luke 6:46-49, about the two builders, is a powerful text to use with those who admit that the Sabbath is right but make no move to keep it.
3. The prodigal (Luke 15). Use in relation to the backslider who feels he/she has gone too far for the Lord to receive back.

***Balance between the Emotional and Intellectual:***

Even though people often respond on the emotional level, a balance must be maintained. We must speak to the whole person—intellect, conscience, emotion, will, etc. Jesus wants and needs all in order to bless. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). We must reach the total personality. Some teach 10 percent of the time and appeal 90 percent, but the strongest appeal should be to the intellect. The truth of the Word must stand central and supreme. Paul disputed, reasoned, taught, persuaded and spoke to every man’s conscience (Acts 9:29; 17:2; 18:4, 11; 2 Corinthians 4:2), to lead them to the truth.

We must not confuse emotional experience with spiritual reality. The Christian life does not move on moods and thrills but on trust and obedience. The honeymoon is not the whole of marriage. In obtaining decisions, we must avoid

the experience described as the seed that sprang up quickly but had no root by maintaining the proper balance between emotional and intellectual appeal.

### *“Try God Once” and “Don’t You Feel the Time Has Come?”*

If Joe is not 100 percent ready to keep the Sabbath, invite him to come this Sabbath. Do not give the impression that it is perpetual. Ask him to try God at least once. Conclude by asking, “Is that too hard for you?” If he hesitates, add, “Of course not. You love the Lord and want to follow Him.” Affirmation is very helpful.

If, after much listening and prayer, you are still uncertain whether he has sufficient desire to respond say, “Don’t you feel the time has come?” If Joe says, “No,” answering negatively, he is only saying the time has not come. He is not turning down the Sabbath or other truth. We need to avoid a negative response. It can be difficult to turn a negative answer into a positive one.

### *Dealing with Objections*

We should welcome objections as an opportunity to help the student into the church. To do that we must distinguish between objections and excuses. An excuse is an attempt to avoid making a decision. Excuses are evidence the person is in the valley of decision. Don’t argue or try to answer excuses. Just ask, “Why?”

Jerry had studied the Sabbath question thoroughly with Jim. One day Jim said, “I don’t think it is important for a Christian to keep Sabbath.” Jerry said, “Why?” Jim responded, “Well – ah – ah – ah. I guess it is important.” Jim had no real objection; he was just trying to find an excuse because he wasn’t sufficiently motivated. After Jerry confronted Jim with the blessings and made an earnest appeal based on the love of Jesus and scripture, Jim decided.

Keep asking “Why?” or “What do you have in mind?” until you discover what the real objection is. After you discover the objection and repeat what you understand the objection is, ask if that is the only objection. When it is the last and only one, get a commitment that if the objection could be removed the person would decide immediately. Answer the objection and get the decision.

**Here is an example.**

*Student:* “I would find it very hard to give up my jewelry. My mother gave these to me, and I love her very much.”

*Teacher:* “Is that the only reason for not getting baptized next Sabbath?” (The conversation between the two continues.)

“Yes, that’s my only reason.”

“Why do you think this challenge is so big?”

“When people give you expensive things, you should appreciate them.”

(Teacher paraphrase): “You feel that your devotion to your mother is so strong that she would feel hurt if you had to surrender the jewels she so lovingly gave you? Is that right?” (Don’t avoid their problem.)

“That’s correct.”

“If you could convince yourself that this is not a real problem, you would decide immediately to be baptized this Sabbath, wouldn’t you?”

“Sure.”

*Teacher* (uses the FFF method): “I understand how you could feel that way. Many other young ladies have felt the same way. But they found that the One who loves them most is Jesus. When they considered how Jesus gave up all the precious riches of heaven and

came down to earth and died for them, they were willing to give up their jewelry as a willing sacrifice to Jesus. This is one way they were demonstrating the very spirit of Jesus and their gratitude for His great sacrifice. They found a happiness and satisfaction in that noble simplicity of setting aside the wearing of jewelry for outward adornment and focusing on the beauty of their inner self, as Peter portrays in 1 Peter 3. I am sure you want the same thing to happen to you. Would you like to go into the water with a friend or does that not make a difference?"

The last reason is almost always the real objection and the only one you should answer. Don't answer excuses. After you are sure the information is clear and free of objections, and there is conviction and desire, be willing to be turned down more than once during a tactful and loving interview. You may need to wait for another opportunity. Always leave the person approachable for another time by saying, "Would you like me to pray and ask God what you should do about this matter?"

### **Eight difficult objections and effective brief answers (read or refer to the texts listed):**

**1. "I would like to keep the Sabbath holy, but it seems to me I'd have to give up so much."**

**Answer:** "You don't give up anything when you follow Jesus. You exchange. Matthew 19:27, 29. Note that a hundredfold is 10,000 percent interest. This is the best bargain you'll ever get in your life."

**2. "What would happen if I lose my job?"**

**Answer:** Matthew 6:32, 33. "This text means that you will either get Saturdays free where you work now, or Jesus will give you a better job." (Tell stories of people who had the same problem and solved it

happily. As mentioned above, it is better to ask one who had the experience to share it).

Let God's Word answer excuses. Here is a similar situation: At the close of a second or third study on the Sabbath, Ted says, "I just can't see how I can find another job or quit working on Saturdays and still care for my family." Answer: Don't argue. Just say, "The Lord certainly has an answer. Trust in Him." Then pray and leave.

A week later present a shorter study. After the appeal, say, "This week in my devotions I was reading Matthew (Be sure you did). Several verses struck me. Would you read Matthew 6:24-32 to us and tell me how you understand these words of Jesus?" As he reads he will probably stop and smile and ask, "Did you choose this because of me?" Answer: "Well, when I read this I thought of you and wondered if you would interpret these words the same way I did. I can see that you do. The question of being obedient to God about the Sabbath is not a question between you and me. It is between you and the Creator. And if He takes care of the birds, do you think He will be able to do the same for you also? Just trust Him. He speaks directly to you through His Word and His promises."

**3. *"I am already saved and am now enjoying the process of sanctification. I don't see why I must keep the Sabbath."***

**Answer:** "Congratulations on being sanctified. Now you lack one thing—the sign. Ezekiel 20:12. Since you are being sanctified now, what else can you do but accept God's sign of sanctification in your life?"

**4. *"I believe that if I am sincere I will be saved in any church."***

**Answer:** "Sincerity is not enough. John 4:23. What else does God want you to do? Revelation 18:4. Since you are one of God's people you can't stay

where you are when He calls you out. God's people always respond to His call. John 10:16, 27. I know you will respond also. What else can you do?"

**5. "Why can't I keep Sunday to honor the resurrection?"**

**Answer:** "Jesus has already given us something to honor the resurrection. Colossians 2:12. Matthew 15:9. You don't want to worship Jesus in vain do you?" You may also say, but do it tactfully, "It is a pity to make such a sacred event as the resurrection an excuse for breaking one of the holy commandments that God wrote on tables of stone."

**6. "My family is against joining the church."**

**Answer:** "God expects you to set your family an example in this matter. Matthew 10:37. It's a matter of deciding where your greatest loyalty lies. It is in the best interest of your family for you to do the right thing. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be used by God to lead your family into practicing biblical truth? God is counting on you."

**7. "There are too many hypocrites in the church."**

**Answer:** "Where else do you expect to find hypocrites but in the church? Jesus had twelve disciples, and one was Judas. The other disciples did not forsake Jesus because of him. In fact, the more hypocrites there are, the greater the need for people like you and me to live for Jesus and show the world what a true follower is like."

**8. "What will my friends think?"**

This is a major excuse as people are afraid of losing their respect and friendship, especially when they have no or few friends in the Adventist church.

Joe, who was contemplating making a decision said, "What will the guys say if I take this step?"

Teacher: "What guys?"

Joe: "The guys in the dorm."

Teacher: "Let's make a list of the guys who would object to your becoming a Christian." The list contained six names, all heavy drinkers and poor students.

Teacher: "Would you have your life governed by God or by these six fellows who are often drunk? Whom do you wish to honor? God or these six people who don't understand what you know from God's Word?"

Joe saw that God's will was far more important, especially when he could not hide behind his friends in the judgement.

### **Meeting some specific objections with texts:**

**1. "God is too good to let me be lost."**

I John 3:10; I Corinthians 6:9, 10; Revelation 22:14, 15; Matthew 25:45, 46.

**2. "I can't stand ridicule."**

Mark 8:38; 2 Timothy 3:12; Luke 6:22, 23.

**3. "I can't conquer my besetting sin."**

I Corinthians 10:13; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9.

**4. "I can't live up to your teaching."**

John 1:12.

**5. "There is one thing (jewelry, tobacco, etc.) that I cannot give up."**

Matthew 19:16-22, 6:24; Luke 14:33.

**6. "I will wait until I have the right kind of feeling."**

Isaiah 48:18; I John 2:3; Faith, not feeling, pleases God. Hebrews 11:6.

**7. "No, not right now."**

Proverbs 27:1; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:13; Isaiah 55:6; Genesis 6:3.



## *Key Sentences*

- 1. Feelings:** “It is not safe to depend on your feelings. Depend on the Word of God.”
- 2. Little things:** “The little things that people hold on to are often the very things that rob them of the joy of full surrender.”
- 3. Truth:** “Our only true security is in following truth. Error always leads to disappointment. Truth will finally triumph. You want to be on the winning side.” “You have everything to gain and nothing to lose by following truth.” “The greatest thing you can do for your family is to lead them in the way of truth.” “There is really only one question to settle, ‘Is it truth?’ If this is the truth then you want to do it.”
- 4. Don’t delay:** “The longer we delay after seeing the truth the more chance the devil has to confuse us.” “No one wants to be pushed, but it is interesting how men will let the devil push them away from eternal life.” “Don’t let duties accumulate. This is one of the rules of efficiency in life.” “It isn’t more time you need, it’s more love for God and determination to follow His leading to the blessings He has for you.”
- 5. God cares:** “God cared for you before you obeyed. He certainly would not forsake you when you decide to obey.”

## *Decision Indicators*

Salesmen know that the secret to finalizing the sale is to focus on closing it. Watch the eyes, body language, and comments. Watch for decision indicators, such as: “I wonder if my faith is strong enough?” “Wouldn’t it be great if my husband were agreeable to my joining the church?” “Would I need to quit smoking?” “Do you think I would lose my job if I asked to get Saturday off?” “I am used to shopping on

Saturday. What would I do all day?” “How long (or how many more studies do I need to take) before I can be baptized?”

Ask for the decision at the golden moment when you have clarified answers to decision indicators.

## *Do Not Use Force*

We must work diligently with the Holy Spirit but rest in the fact that it is His work to convict, not ours. Don't try to do His work. “Honor all men” I Peter 2:17. Honor the person's freedom of choice. When the rich young ruler came in his eagerness and went away sad, Jesus watched his retreating figure with an unutterable grief. But He did not run after him, strong-arm His way into his life, lower His demand, or increase the pressure. Nevertheless, we must persevere and never give up. Gabriel persevered for 21 days (recorded in Daniel 10).

Lift up Christ constantly as the mighty Creator and winner in the Great Controversy. Always emphasize the wonderful privilege of deciding for this awesome Person who has all power to help with every need. Vividly portray the triumph of truth and the beauties of heaven.

## *Expect Large Results*

“They should seek to attain larger and still larger results in their work. When this is the experience of our workers, fruit will be seen. Many souls will be brought into the truth.”<sup>31</sup> “When church members put forth earnest efforts to advance the message, they will live in the joy of the Lord and will meet with success. Triumph always follows decided effort.”<sup>32</sup>

The early believers “ceased not” Acts 5:42. If you work consistently, constantly seeking wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit, claiming from Jesus the same love He has for your student, and never giving up, you will receive the joy of seeing thrilled children of God prepared for Christ's soon return. God wants you to be incredibly successful in the most important work in the universe.

## Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> *Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.
- <sup>2</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 12.
- <sup>3</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 667.
- <sup>4</sup> If this document is translated, “ABCs” must be adjusted to translation.
- <sup>5</sup> *Messages to Young People*, p. 149.
- <sup>6</sup> The little booklet, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* is available from Campus Crusade for Christ (<http://www.campuscrusade.com>).
- <sup>7</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 441.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 322.
- <sup>10</sup> Adjust to translation.
- <sup>11</sup> *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 16.
- <sup>12</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 328.
- <sup>13</sup> *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 118.
- <sup>14</sup> *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 361.
- <sup>15</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 535.
- <sup>16</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 330.
- <sup>17</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 235.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.
- <sup>19</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 141.
- <sup>20</sup> *Education*, p. 80.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- <sup>22</sup> *Testimonies*, vol., 4, p. 67.
- <sup>23</sup> *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 434.
- <sup>24</sup> *Messages to Young People*, p. 149.
- <sup>25</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 400.
- <sup>26</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 57.
- <sup>27</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 69.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.
- <sup>29</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 400.
- <sup>30</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 228.
- <sup>31</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 95
- <sup>32</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 30.

This book is a must-read for anyone who wants to give Bible studies that lead people to Christ. *Gaining Decisions for Christ and His Truth* will give you the tools you need to lead people from darkness to light, from a lost condition to salvation. It will guide you through the process of creating the right atmosphere, identifying the right moment, answering objections, depending on the Holy Spirit, and more.

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ISBN: 978-1-57756-579-6



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