

ELDERS MEET WITH REGULAR PIONEERS, SPECIAL PIONEERS, AND FIELD MISSIONARIES

PROGRAM FOR DECEMBER 2016 THROUGH JANUARY 2017

Note to the elders:

This meeting is to be conducted in December or January by two elders selected by the body of elders. Other elders may attend. Encourage pioneers to participate in informal witnessing and to improve their teaching methods. The meeting should be positive, practical, and encouraging. Allow those in attendance to comment freely on the questions posed. Supplemental questions may be used as needed and as time allows

Theme: Be Skillful “Fishers of Men” (Mt 4:19)

FROM FISHERMEN TO FISHERS OF MEN (5 min.)

Jesus extended an invitation to four fishermen, who eventually abandoned their business and followed him the rest of their lives [Read Matthew 4:18-22] (w05 3/15 13-14 ¶14-15)

You are among those who have accepted Jesus’ invitation today [Mention some sacrifices the pioneers have made, and commend them for their self-sacrificing spirit] (Mt 19:29)

Let us review how pioneers can continue to imitate the example of Jesus in three areas: (1) where and when he preached, (2) his teaching methods, and (3) his trust in Jehovah

SEEK OUT PRODUCTIVE WATERS (15 min.)

A good fisherman is not content simply to go fishing—his purpose is to catch fish; so he seeks out productive waters

Likewise, Jesus preached *where* and *when* he could find those willing to listen

He spoke to Matthew at the tax office, to Zacchaeus as he walked through the city of Jericho, and to a Samaritan woman while he was resting at a well (Mt 9:9; Lu 19:1-6; Joh 4:6-8)

We want to examine our territory to determine *where* and *when* we will have the best results [Read 1 Corinthians 9:23, 26]

Many have obtained good results by preaching from house to house on *different days* of the week or at *different times of the day, including evenings* (km 12/03 1 ¶2-3)

Some have found productive “fishing grounds” at parking lots, gas stations, bus stops, and other public places

Question: What methods have you found to be effective in contacting people?

Seek out opportunities to give an informal witness (km 6/03 3 ¶3-6)

Many who are not willing to listen to us when we preach from door to door are willing to do so when we speak to them in an informal setting

While participating in informal witnessing, it is not necessary to start conversations with a formal introduction or with a scripture (km 8/10 3-4 ¶4)

Questions: What methods have you found to be effective in starting conversations? How might you use *JW Library* when witnessing informally?

If you feel hesitant to attempt informal witnessing, keep in mind what Jesus said to Peter: “Stop being afraid. From now on you will be catching men alive” (Lu 5:10)

Pray to Jehovah for courage to speak up (1Th 2:2)

While literal fish perish when caught, our work rescues people out of this world’s utter spiritual darkness, so we do not want to squander any opportunity [Read 1 Timothy 4:16]

IMITATE JESUS' TEACHING METHODS (20 min.)

Unlike professional fishermen whose main objective is merely to sell their catch, spiritual fishermen strive to make disciples, teaching them (Mt 28:19, 20)

Jesus continued teaching the apostles

He used *questions* to make his listeners think, rather than having them memorize his teachings (Joh 11:26, 27; *ia* 172 ¶2)

Jesus prepared his disciples for future challenges by teaching them to *think in terms of Bible principles* [Read Matthew 5:43-45] (*w08* 5/15 8-9 ¶5-8)

Questions: How does our desire to 'prove ourselves sons' of Jehovah: (1) help us be impartial in the ministry? (2) benefit us when we encounter an irate householder? (Ro 12:19-21)

Use questions to help students turn Bible teachings into personal convictions (Mt 17:24-26; *w08* 1/15 10 ¶7-8)

Questions: Why may it be effective to ask the student to explain a scripture, rather than explaining it to him? How does patience help when asking questions? (*km* 4/12 1 ¶4)

Do not be satisfied with a student simply giving the right answer; find out what he really thinks

For example, when considering Jehovah's viewpoint on fornication, you might ask why the student thinks that God condemns it and what he personally thinks of God's moral standard (1Co 6:18)

Resist the temptation to talk too much, so the student is not drowned in information (Joh 16:12; *mwb*16.09 8)

Help students to come to know, love, and live by *Bible principles* as soon as they start studying

After considering a scripture that reveals Jehovah's standards, you might ask: "How does this information benefit you personally?"

[Read John 15:14, 16]

Question: How could you use Jesus' words to help a student choose his friends wisely? (*lv* 29)

[If the "Apply Bible Principles" series of videos is available in your language in *JW Library* or on JW Broadcasting, explain how these can be used during a Bible study]

Like fishing, good teaching is hard work, but it prepares our students to stand firm in the faith (1Co 16:13; Php 1:27)

TRUST JEHOVAH AND HIS ORGANIZATION (17 min.)

In the first century, successful fishermen were patient, hardworking, and willing to endure hardship in the pursuit of a worthwhile reward

Pioneers also need these qualities, since they may confront economic uncertainty, unresponsive territory, health concerns, and so forth

Complete trust in Jehovah is vital (Pr 3:5)

Jehovah always provided for Jesus during his ministry, even though he had "nowhere to lay down his head" (Mt 8:20)

[Read Matthew 6:25-32]

Question: What confidence can all full-time servants have?

Successful pioneers are not influenced by what the world considers important but realize the value of being content with basic necessities (1Ti 6:8; Heb 13:5, 6)

Undue anxiety over possessions can crowd out the more important things (Php 1:10)

Jehovah appreciates your efforts, and he will provide you with what you need and will help you cope with difficult circumstances (Lu 11:13; Jas 1:5)

Jesus promised: “I am with you all the days” (Mt 28:20)

[Read Mark 10:28-30]

Question: What blessings do you receive when you make sacrifices for the Kingdom?

Jehovah and Jesus use the elders to assist in caring for your needs

The elders are grateful for your example of zeal and faith

They take a personal interest in each pioneer and provide encouragement and commendation

Elders regularly make plans to work with pioneers in the ministry

Approach them for practical suggestions for your full-time ministry, especially when problems arise

The congregation and body of elders are encouraged by “your faithful work, your loving labor, and your endurance” (1Th 1:2, 3)

Jehovah is well-pleased with the sacrifices you make in behalf of his name (Heb 13:15, 16)

YOUR HARD WORK BRINGS JOYFUL RESULTS (3 min.)

Imitate Jesus’ example as you zealously continue the work he began

Preach where and when people can be found, and create opportunities to witness informally

Use questions in your teaching, and help your students learn how to apply Bible principles

Trust in Jehovah to care for you

Just as was the case of the first four who accepted Jesus’ invitation, your self-sacrificing work will result in everlasting blessings (Mt 19:27-29)