

Our Firm Foundation

Volume 14, Number 9

September 1999



Children for the Heavenly King

The Seventh-day Sabbath

Christ Our Righteousness

The Immutable Law of God

The Non-Immortality of the Soul

The Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary

Christian Standards

Christian standards are not a means of earning salvation; this we can never do. However, Christian standards aid in the development of a holy character, preparing us to live in the sight of a holy God and holy angels who have never fallen. Christian standards guard us against yielding to sinful tendencies, both cultivated and hereditary. One cannot read the Bible without recognizing that God is calling His people to a higher standard than that of the world. In this issue of *Our Firm Foundation*, we will take up the question of Christian standards. The subjects of particular interest will focus on recreation, dress, and music.

Recreation has become a subject of great importance because of the extra leisure time available to many more people today. The development of character has much to do with whom we spend our leisure time, and in what sort of activities we are involved. Tragically, television in America consumes the larger amount of our leisure time. Some of the adverse effects of television viewing include: lessens family time; weakens brain power; reduces interest in reading and learning; increases daydreaming;

increases aggressiveness; decreases interest in spiritual growth; encourages poor lifestyle choices; and encourages immorality, crude jesting; and so forth.

Music plays a major part in our leisure time. The number one network for teens on television is MTV [Music Television]—with programming centered on rock music and seduction. One study demonstrated that when a group of 222 young people stopped watching MTV for five months, they experienced a 32 percent decrease in verbal aggression, a 52 percent decrease in aggression against objects, and a 48 percent decrease in aggression against other people. To be sure, what we watch, listen to, and wear has a profound impact upon character development.

Of course, no discussion would be complete by focusing entirely on negative forms of recreation, music, and dress. There are alternatives in these three areas. Our challenge is to aim for the highest standard. We want our recreation to have a re-creating effect on us. We want our music to lift our thoughts heavenward. We want our dress to exemplify the characteristics of a virtuous people. Our prayer is that this issue

of *Our Firm Foundation* will encourage you to reach for the highest ideals, not for the purpose of being saved, but indeed because He *has* saved us and we love Him supremely.

The greatest standard that Jesus presents to each one of us is found in the Beatitudes. Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: Blessed are they that mourn: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: Blessed are the merciful: Blessed are the pure in heart: Blessed are the peacemakers: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” Matthew 5:3–11.

While these are the greatest standards of all, our activities—what we watch, how we spend our leisure time, what we listen to, and what we wear—will and do influence the power of the Beatitudes to work in our lives. So let us surrender all to our Lord Jesus Christ and become willing to do all things that will bring honor and glory to His name. ✝

Jeff Wehr, Co-Editor

About Hope International . . .

Hope International is a special ministry assisting in the God-given work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe this Remnant Church of Bible prophecy has been brought into existence by the calling of the Lord, and we look for its final triumph in purity at the second coming of Christ. That the church does not now perfectly reflect the will of our Lord is cause for sorrow, but not for discouragement. The Word of God stands pledged that all within her borders will be sifted and tried, and though the greater portion will fail the test, there will yet remain a remnant to honor the Lord by their obedience to all His commands. Therefore, Hope International urges upon all the duty of supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in every way possible, insofar as is consistent with the principles of the government of God and the leading of His Holy Spirit upon the heart.

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Christian Standards

Why?

Leonard Lang

For many Christians, the place of standards in the Christian walk is a real puzzle. They are often seen as petty rules designed to take all the fun out of life, while having little to do with the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” Matthew 23:23. Many can see no relationship between these rules, which may appear trivial, and the grand and glorious plan of salvation. And if there is no significant connection between standards and the plan of salvation, which involved the death of our Saviour on Calvary, then they are just that: trivial, irritating, and unnecessary. What then do Christian standards have to do with the plan of salvation?

Every plan has a purpose—a goal it wants to see accomplished. The purpose of the plan of salvation is the elimination of sin and evil. Had sin never entered the human race, no plan of salvation would have been necessary. But with the appearance of sin, Jesus came that He might “save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. The great object and purpose of God’s salvational efforts is the elimination of sin and the restoration of the

relationship between man and his Creator.

How do Christian standards aid in the removal of sin?—By guarding against *temptation*. Notice that the whole problem of sin begins with *temptation*. “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin.” James 1:14–15, NASV. To be tempted is not a sin, but to invite or play with temptation is placing oneself on Satan’s territory where the evil one has a superhuman advantage. The fall of our first parents should resound as a piercing warning through the ages. Note that Eve’s very first mistake was to place herself in the path of temptation by wandering away from Adam into the vicinity of the tree—Satan’s only avenue of temptation. “The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 53.

Here, even before the fall of man, God had laid down a standard of conduct that many today would rebel against. “Wander off by myself!

What’s wrong with that?” they would murmur. “It would be so much more fun just to do things by myself once in a while. God certainly has some unreasonably strict rules around here. I guess He doesn’t want me to have any freedom.” However, had Eve avoided the temptation, she most certainly would also have avoided the sin and all of its horrendous consequences. “If we venture on Satan’s ground, we have no assurance of protection from his power. So far as in us lies, we should close every avenue by which the tempter may find access to us.” *Messages to Young People*, 70.

So then, Christian standards are simply common-sense guidelines which, if followed, will close the door to many temptations and prevent a multitude of sins. They help us to guard the senses by which temptations reach the mind. “All should guard the senses, lest Satan gain victory over them; for these are the avenues of the soul. . . . They must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts.” *The Adventist Home*, 401, 403. In this modern age, Satan has multiplied ways by which to bombard the senses with sights,

sounds, tastes, and feelings that make sin appear interesting and attractive. Consequently, prohibitions, or safeguards, must be multiplied. Many avenues of temptation, such as radio and television, did not even exist in the days of Christ, or even in the time of the pioneers of our faith. For each new allurements or device of Satan, the church must set forth a new guideline of warning. Church standards concerning proper music, entertainments, associations, or reading materials are intended to shield us from the temptations that may come through our being involved in these activities.

Note that, though these standards are undoubtedly restrictive from the worldly perspective, it is only the improper form of these activities that must be prohibited. Pure music, wholesome reading, simple entertainments, and good friends may be enjoyed by the Christian as much or more than those things that are improper and degrading are enjoyed by worldlings.

Let us be careful to distinguish between the medium and the message. Stereos, TVs, movies, and books are simply means of communication, and are not evil in themselves. They can be used for good as well as for evil. However, it is always necessary to control these instruments, discriminating carefully between their beneficial and their deleterious uses. But sometimes, as in the case of TV, when control and proper discrimination are nearly impossible, the wisest course may be to simply eliminate the instrument itself. (Furthermore, even the best of programs are often interrupted by commercials appealing to the basest of passions.)

Christian standards are necessary not only to avoid temptation from without but also to prevent Christians from becoming channels of temptation themselves. As our Lord stated in Luke 17:1–2, RSV, “Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him *by* whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should *cause* one of these little ones to sin.” (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

It is undoubtedly upon this

principle that Paul instructs women in 1 Timothy 2:9 to dress modestly. His inspired judgment recognized that immodest forms of dress present a powerful temptation to impurity of thought and deed. “When once the barriers of female modesty are removed, the basest licentiousness does not appear exceeding sinful. Alas, what terrible results of woman’s *influence* for evil may be witnessed in the world today!” *The Adventist Home*, 58–59. And without question, it is the duty of both men and women to avoid

upon me or upon others? Here are some answers that should throw up the red flag of warning:

1. The activity cultivates pride by fulfilling the desire to be praised and admired. Examples: use of make-up and jewelry; sports rivalries and competitions; wearing the latest fads and fashions in clothing and hairstyles.

2. The activity suggests impure thoughts and appeals to the base passions of lust and/or violence. Examples: most theater movies and TV programs; dancing and typical

Christian standards are necessary not only to avoid temptation from without but also to prevent Christians from becoming channels of temptation themselves.

arousing, by appearance or action, unholy sentiments in the opposite sex. Yet, often unconsciously, ignorant Christians adopt the fashions of the times which were designed by Satan’s agents to do exactly that. And so, almost imperceptibly, licentiousness and social immorality have become prevalent among professed Christians.

This principle of not being a source of temptation also applies in certain commercial aspects of the Christian life. Raising swine, selling jewelry and cosmetics, serving alcoholic drinks, and any similar occupation in which a person profits from the use of things which we as Adventist Christians know are wrong, should never be entered into by a conscientious Christian. To engage in such businesses makes the Christian a partaker in the sin, even if he never uses the offending product himself.

The question may now be asked, How then, with the endless variety of stimuli and activities available in today’s society, can we distinguish between the good and the evil—between the beneficial and the harmful? A simple method is to give honest answers to the following two questions concerning any particular activity or situation: (1) What is the real *purpose* of this activity? (2) What will be its *influence*

commercial roller-skating-rink activities; violent sports; pornography; premarital physical contact; nudity and immodest dress; reading material dwelling on sex and crime; rock, jazz, and many other forms of popular music.

3. The activity fosters contact with demonic forces. Examples: ouija boards; astrology; hard-rock music; acid-rock music; books, movies and television programs on witchcraft and the occult; séances; fortune telling, and friends who participate in these activities.

4. The activity fosters the desire for escape from reality, often leaving a distaste for practical and spiritual activities. Examples: science fiction, novels, mysteries, fairy tales, romance stories, and similar fictional reading matter; alcohol and drugs; partying; video games and movies; gambling and cards; sensationalist tabloids like the *Enquirer*; role-playing games—such as “Dungeons and Dragons,” and so forth.

5. The activity promotes ideas and philosophies contrary to Biblical facts and principles. Examples: books or programs promulgating evolutionistic or atheistic ideas or which convey acceptance of non-Biblical social relationships—premature dating and courtship, living together unmarried, divorce, and homosexuality.

6. The activity profits from the sins of others. Examples: raising grapes for wine or unclean animals for food; selling jewelry and cosmetics; serving or selling alcohol or tobacco.

On the other hand, if questions about purpose and influence can be answered positively, without including the above negative aspects, the Christian can feel free to enjoy the activity with due moderation. In this regard we must bear in mind that Satan is a master of perverting something innocent by mixing evil with good.

learned from it. Examples: certain nonfictional reading; educational and historical films and TV programs; Bible games; photography; stamp collecting; and other hobbies.

3. The activity cultivates an appreciation of God's world of nature. Examples: nature books and films, camping, boating, birdwatching, and other outdoor pursuits.

Note that these categories are quite broad and can include a wide range of possible Christian recreational activities. Some other positive attributes are characteristics such as

group. Young people in particular are social creatures and derive pleasure from almost anything they can do *together*.

Some may justify certain reading or viewing habits by pointing out that the material is all true. However, just because something is true does not make it good. The question to be answered is, What is the influence on my spirituality? Magazines like *True Romance* and *True Detective* may be relating actual facts, but by detailing and dwelling on sordid acts of lust and crime, they degrade and desensitize the moral faculties. Eventually sin seems commonplace and almost normal. Ignorance of sin is a virtue. "In evil be babes," Paul said. 1 Corinthians 14:20, NASV. "Everything that can be done should be done to place ourselves and our children where we shall not see the iniquity that is practiced in the world. We should carefully guard the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears so that these awful things shall not enter our minds. . . . It seems as if the enemy is at the foundation of the publishing of many things that appear in newspapers. Every sinful thing that can be found is uncovered and laid bare before the world. Those who would have that wisdom which is from God must become fools in the sinful knowledge of this age, in order to be wise." *The Adventist Home*, 403–404. We can be well-informed citizens without dwelling on all the filthy and sordid details of man's evil acts.

We should now see that Christian standards are the ounce of prevention making unnecessary the pound of spiritual cure. Yes, God has made provision for the saint who sins, but, though repentance be ever so sincere and forgiveness assured, the broken health, financial ruin, shattered relationships, and dreams denied, that so often result, may be bitter fruits lasting a lifetime. The life lived within the protection of wise Christian standards can be productive, peaceful, and joyous! For "no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11, NASV. ❄

"Those who would have that wisdom which is from God must become fools in the sinful knowledge of this age, in order to be wise."

A genuine Christian activity will usually adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The activity is physically and socially beneficial. Examples: canoeing; skating; backpacking; and noncompetitive group activities or sports.

2. The activity is educational and something of value can be

these: It does not decrease my desire for spiritual things; I can enjoy doing it with fellow Christians; and it leaves a satisfying feeling of accomplishment when done properly.

One hint here on finding something fun for Christians to do: For those who are not jaded by passive electronic entertainment, almost any activity is fun if done as a





Children for the Heavenly King

Alane Waters

One evening several years ago my husband and I were sitting in our family room with our young children. The fire from the fireplace gave a warm and cozy glow to the room as we found ourselves talking about what matters most in life. He asked me the question, “What is the most important goal in your life?”

Reflecting back on that evening, when our two little girls, Allison, three years old, and Emily, eighteen months, were playing happily beside us in their pink pajamas, with their soft blond hair gently framing their sweet, innocent faces, I recalled the frequent times that they called to us to watch something “important” they had done. I remembered all the little tokens of love that they brought us, trusting us to keep them safe until they returned for them. As I sat quietly, the cords of my heart were pulled by “only a mother’s love” placed there by God Himself, and with tears in my eyes, I answered the most important question of my life in these words: “I want my girls in heaven. I want to know that they will be saved and forever enjoy the beauties and happiness there. I don’t want them to miss out and have to suffer the fire of damnation and be forever lost. I don’t even care if I don’t make it, but I want them to be in heaven.”

As I spoke these words, awesome and solemn thoughts flooded my mind: “If you don’t make it, will they? How will they

know the way to heaven, if you don’t? Who else cares for and loves them as much as you do? Then, who will lead them, if you don’t?”

My husband, turning to me with tears in his eyes, said, “How much do we really care? Is this just an emotional experience tonight, or are we willing to make practical changes in our lives to accomplish this goal? You see, honey, I want this too, but I’m a realist and know that in a day or two, when the emotion is gone, unless we make a firm commitment to persevere in this goal, we will fall right back into our old habits and lifestyle. Then we will have lost valuable time and precious opportunities in meeting our heart’s desire. Are you willing, am I willing, to make this commitment right now?”

“Yes!” I responded.

“I am too, so let’s do it *now!*” he declared.

Bowing on our knees before God and one another, with tears streaming down our cheeks, we confessed and repented of our mistakes and sins in raising our children, and asked the Mighty Counselor to give us wisdom, understanding, discretion, courage and a willingness to raise our precious little girls for the heavenly kingdom.

From that point on we have never turned back. It has been, and continues to be, our goal and lifework to raise our children (now three, counting our son) to be “children for the heavenly King.”

This resolve has meant so many changes for us as a family, as parents, and for me personally as the mother, that it would be impossible to list them all for you. However, for the sake of this article, I would like to list these three important changes that have been made, and continue to be made, in our lives on a daily basis. These three “important essential principles,” as I call them, can be applied in everyone’s life, regardless of environment, financial status, educational background or ethnic upbringing; and in application they cannot be separated. They are as follows:

1. *Surrender of my will to Christ*, fully and completely. See Proverbs 23:26; James 4:7.

2. *Being consistent in my life*, in all areas, including that of training my children. See James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8.

3. *Using all my time for the glory of God*, taking whatever time is necessary to work diligently for the salvation of my children. See Ephesians 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

In order to prepare my children to be “children for the heavenly King” only, I must first know the King. I do not mean merely to be well-versed in doctrines and Bible truths, which are essential, but further, to have a personal, abiding experience with Christ—a willingness to know and to do His will. I must be willing to learn how to totally abandon my own will and ways of thinking about things and doing things, and to fully surrender

my heart, saying, “Not my will, but thine, be done.” Luke 22:42. This submission is not a one-time submission, but rather an ongoing, continuous, moment-by-moment yielding of my own selfish plans and desires, and a willingness to give myself up entirely to do God’s holy will. As I am learning how to submit, more and more I have come to know and experience that only in this complete surrender do I find my greatest happiness and peace.

One of the first areas God brought my attention to as I prayed for His will to be done in my life, was the time that I was spending on the telephone talking to friends about things of little or no value when weighed against the things of eternal value—my children’s salvation.

First, I began to be willing to put my own interests aside in this area. I chose to use the phone only for a “real need,” and when someone called I would just take care of the business, rather than entering into “chit-chat” conversation. Then, I began to see how many hours each day that I had been spending with others, while all along I thought that I was spending those hours with my children because I was home with them. I also saw how I had been putting off their needs and ignoring their misbehavior because I was so involved in my conversations that it was inconvenient to deal with them. Usually by the time I would finally hang up, I had either lost my patience with them, or they had lost their interest in what they were doing that they wanted my help with. I was allowing other people and circumstances to take my time away from doing my most important work. Now I could understand why God had asked me to yield myself in regard to the use of our phone.

Other areas in my life were brought to light as I continued to seek to cooperate with God in the salvation of my children. One of those areas was that of shopping. There is nothing wrong with appropriate shopping, but I began to see how much time I was spending in the malls and stores without a real need, and also how much money I was spending there needlessly. In this revelation God was asking me to give my will to Him.

I was beginning to understand that God was asking me to redeem the time (see Ephesians 5:16), my time, because a great work was to be done in my life and in the lives of my little ones. Not only was my life changing with a willingness to know and to do God’s will, but my dear husband also began to be shown areas in his life to “cut out”—like the ball games, the extra commitments, and so on—so that he could have more time with the children and with me. He also began to take more seriously his God-given role as “priest” and “house-band.” See *Adventist Home*, 211–212.

seeking after the righteousness of God. Therefore, we committed ourselves to give Him the first hours of our day to seek in an orderly and thorough way to know and to do His will.

In addition, we began to work in practical ways with our three small children, training them to order their day with God first, and to be thorough in learning how He loved and cared for them and wanted to guide them through their day, just as He did ours. Even before they could read, we would put on a simple, a cappella scripture-song tape, and in just a few weeks we



The areas that we were being shown to cut back on, or to put out of our lives, were to help us reach our goal. God wanted to show us what we needed to implement in our lives and in the lives of our children to prepare us and them to be “children for the heavenly King.” Our commitment was to prepare our little ones for heaven, and to this end we have never turned away.

We began our new commitment in self-examination, asking ourselves, Are we as parents instilling these kingly characteristics in our lives and in the lives of our children at the beginning of each day? Are we seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness that all these things shall be added unto us? See Matthew 6:33.

We realized that we were not orderly and thorough in truly

were excited and amazed at the numerous Bible passages they had memorized. We were thrilled to hear them cheerfully singing them as they went about their day. I will never forget the day I heard our three-year-old son singing, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,” (Galatians 2:20) as he was out weeding the garden. It was helpful to bring out God’s Word through the songs they knew as we instructed them throughout the day.

Then as the children grew older and could read, I spent time with them morning by morning teaching them how to read God’s Word for personal application. We looked for answers to these questions:

1. What does God want to do for them for their salvation?

2. What does God want *them* to do for their salvation?

I remember some time ago when Allison, then nine, and Emily, then seven, and I were studying Joshua 18, which tells how the Promised Land was being divided up. Verse one reveals God's part: "And the land was subdued before them." Then when we came to verse 8 and read, "Go and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me," Allison said, "I see, God wants us to take a close look at ourselves, to see how we really are,

Scriptures, and you must if you would be children of God." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 264.

In this way, the Lord was asking us to allow Him to put into our lives His very character. This was what our children needed in their lives. It was not enough just to be "good, moral people," but rather to be "Christlike." We then began, and even now continue, to study and to search His Word to know and to understand what His character is like.

It has been exciting for us to see the common and simple stories of the Bible unfold with practical truths and principles as we have

according to His standard, and to claim His strength to have these attributes of His character instilled into us. Yet it did not stop there. We saw the need to have these characteristics instilled into our children's lives also.

It required of us (Tom and me) a surrender of our old habit patterns and a willingness to do everything God's way, not just one time, but that we consistently make choices to be neat, orderly and thorough. At first I thought I did not have the time; however, by learning to act from principle by God's power, I saw that, in reality, I saved time by not having to go back and do the "task" over again. It required, and continues to require, a submission on our part, but we can understand and experience now how our characters are being changed. It is becoming "more natural" to do our work by "God's standard." In addition, just as we are in our physical and temporal life, so also we are in our spiritual life.

In order to prepare our children to be "children for the heavenly King," they too must have these attributes of Christ's character instilled into them. They must understand on a practical basis how to experience these qualities. We learned that it was our responsibility to train them, knowing that as we were willing to cooperate with Him, He would provide the power to instill neatness, order and thoroughness into them. See Philippians 4:13. Our children have thus become a part of the simple and practical everyday duties of our home, for in what better way could these characteristics be taught?

In every new "duty" we give instruction by "example" and "precept"—"show" and "tell." (In this same way God works with us.) Then we have our children repeat the demonstration and evaluate their understanding to know how to better help them. This process needs to be repeated several times according to our child's particular age and understanding, and we as parents must be willing to give of ourselves, our time, consistently training them in the right way.

I remember when our son was only two years old, we taught him

and come to Him so He can change us, giving us what He knows is best for us." What an encouragement and joy to my heart! God was actually instilling His characteristics into our little ones.

This sitting at the feet of Jesus is necessary for us and our children to come to "know" who Jesus is and what part He plays in our lives today. These little attentions often are the beginnings of training "up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6. Do you not long to see yourself and your child excited about heavenly things?

To be a "child for the heavenly King" we must be like the King—the Lord Jesus—in character. "The Bible presents a perfect standard of character. . . . You can attain to the high standard set before you in the

been willing to "search the Scriptures" as for "hidden treasures," not for a knowledge alone, but for application to our lives.

In the very first chapter of the Bible are given several attributes of Christ's character. In the simple record of Creation we see God's order, neatness and thoroughness with which His work was done, "that it was good." Genesis 1:10.

Was the work of my hands neat, orderly and thorough? How did I keep our home: the floors, counters, furniture, cupboards, drawers and closets? Did they show that I was neat, orderly and thorough? How were our car, garage, yard, and the surroundings kept? As we saw these character traits of God, we realized that we fell short in some of these areas. Therefore, we began to evaluate all our work



how to make his own bed. It required a choice on our part to invest time, consistently, morning by morning, having him pull up his sheet first, then the blanket, then the bedspread, each time getting the wrinkles out before going to the next, showing him how he could keep it straight and even, so that the sheet was not hanging out from under the spread, and, finally, how to put the pillow on. We did not just discuss with him the task at hand, but we also taught him how everything we do should be done to the best of our ability, as unto Jesus. See Colossians 3:23.

We told him that by doing our work well we would make Jesus happy, and that he would be happy as well! In several days the reward came as our son made his bed all

part in the family circle, to make a success of their efforts to share the burdens of father and mother and brothers and sisters. Thus they will have the satisfaction of knowing that they are really useful." *The Adventist Home*, 285–286.

Useful occupation not only helps to relieve the day-to-day burdens of father and mother but also gives us as parents practical opportunities to instruct our little ones in the ways of the King. This applies not only in neatness, order and thoroughness but in all the characteristics of Christ Jesus as well—perseverance, patience, gentleness, honesty, simplicity, integrity, unselfishness, diligence, and many others. Useful occupation provides other benefits to our children as well:

At any age we can instill the characteristics of the King in having them keep their rooms neat and orderly—everything having a place and everything being kept in its place.

alone before we came in to him, and he was so excited that he had done it “all by himself” and that it was done “well.” Words cannot express the joy that it brought to our hearts to experience in this simple way the true happiness that comes when we choose to follow after the King and not our own way!

You see, it would have been much easier for us to make our son’s bed, and it would have been done better even than what was his best at two years old. However, we realized that the counsel given to us as parents to train and educate our children had a deeper value than what may first appear. We are instructed to “help your children, parents, to do the will of God by being faithful in the performance of the duties which really belong to them as members of the family. This will give them a most valuable experience. It will teach them that they are not to center their thoughts upon themselves, to do their own pleasure, or to amuse themselves. Patiently educate them to act their

1. Our children are not left to idleness and boredom, which will lead to self-centeredness and indulgence of themselves in their own unguided pursuits.

2. Our children learn to experience the great joy and satisfaction that comes from working for others, and to feel that they have accomplished something worthwhile and useful.

This training can begin right now, regardless of the ages of our children. When working with our babies we can teach them to pick up their toys and put them back into the basket before going on to something else. At the toddler stage, we can show them how to rinse the dishes without covering themselves and the floor with water. We can have them stand on a stool and clear the shelf or dresser so that it can be dusted. When our children are of school age, in addition to all the home duties that can and should be taught, we can use their schoolwork as the tool to teach them the lessons of neatness,

orderliness and thoroughness. Are all their letters formed as the “pattern,” to the “best” of their capabilities? Was the entire lesson completed? Was the lesson done according to the instruction given? You might say, “Well, that is the teacher’s responsibility.” But we as parents have been given the responsibility to shape our children’s characters to prepare them to be “children for the heavenly King.” See Deuteronomy 6:7–9.

So also with our children. At any age we can instill the characteristics of the King in having them keep their rooms neat and orderly—everything having a place and everything being kept in its place. This training brings up another character attribute of Christ, and that is “simplicity.” We are told, “If children would have firm constitutions they must live naturally. The path of obedience is exalted by the Majesty of Heaven coming to the earth, and condescending Himself to become a little Child, and living simply and naturally, as children should live, submitting to restraint and privation, giving youth an example of faithful industry, showing them by His own life that body and soul are in harmony with natural laws.” *The Youth’s Instructor*, April 1, 1872.

Simplifying our lives from so many “things” has helped us to redeem our time. We find that by so doing, not as much time, money and energy are needed as were required in the past to maintain all our “things.” This lesson will be beneficial to our children as well, for the care of their rooms will be easier. They will not be tempted to become frustrated and discouraged because of “over-clutter.”

As our children watched how we sorted through drawers, closets, cupboards, basement and garage and unburdened our lives of boxes, boxes, and more boxes of needless items, they too wanted to unburden their lives of toys, stuffed animals and clothes that were never being used, but required their time and energy to maintain. In addition to the “cutting away” of things, the children had a great deal of fun seeking out a needy child or family to give them to, thus experiencing the joy of giving of themselves to others.

These are but a handful of the ways that God continues to work in our hearts and lives, calling us to a “complete surrender” of our whole heart continually. Our high calling as parents is to surrender our own unsanctified thoughts, wills, and ways to Christ and to cooperate with Him in preparing our precious heritage to be “children for the heavenly King.” We must be consistent, not only in our own lives, but consistent in instilling the characteristics of Christ in our little ones. We must be willing to give of ourselves and our time to this most worthy cause.

Is it *too great a sacrifice* to give of ourselves to our children? To answer this question my mind goes back to the night of our discussion that changed our whole lives; I, *we*, wanted to do *all* that we could in cooperation with God to prepare

our children to be “children for the heavenly King,” to know that they would experience the joys of heaven forever. Oh, yes, there have been areas in our lives which were difficult to give up; there were trials that tended to make us discouraged; there have been times when we have been tempted to give up, *but* we have tasted and continue to taste of the Lord’s goodness and power. See Psalm 34:8; Isaiah 40:29.

We continue to trust in His promise that He will finish the work He has started in us and that He will bring it to completion. See Philippians 1:6. As we look ahead, at times the task still before us seems overwhelming, but as we see the changes that God has already wrought in our lives and in the lives of our children, as we have been willing to yield our own will and way, we look forward to the new heights

and rewards that we will experience here on this earth—and finally in the earth-made-new. It daily requires of us a *sacrifice of self*. We must be willing to give of ourselves, our time, constantly; yet it will not seem like too much when “with joy unutterable, parents see the crown, the robe, the harp, given to their children. The days of hope and fear are ended. The seed sown with tears and prayers may have seemed to be sown in vain, but their harvest is reaped with joy at last. Their children have been redeemed.” *Child Guidance*, 569.

Fathers and mothers, will you be willing to give of yourselves for your children in order to hear the words of the King Himself, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21), with *your “children for the heavenly King”*? ✚



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“Christ, the Example of Children and Youth”

Ellen White

Jesus came to this world as its Light. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” John 1:40. He says of Himself, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12.

The example of Jesus is a Light to the young, as well as to those of mature years; for His was a representative childhood and youth. From His earliest years His example was perfect. In both His physical and His spiritual nature He followed the divine order of growth illustrated by the plant, as He wishes all youth to do. Although He was the Majesty of Heaven, the King of Glory, He became a Babe in Bethlehem, and for a time represented the helpless infant in its mother’s care. In childhood He did the works of an obedient Child. He spoke and acted with the wisdom of a child, and not of a man, honoring His parents, and carrying out their wishes in helpful ways, according to the ability of a child. But at each stage of His development He was perfect, with the simple, natural grace of a sinless life. The sacred record says of His childhood, “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” Luke 2:40. And of His youth it is recorded, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” Verse 52.

The life of Christ, from His earliest years, was a life of earnest activity. He lived not to please Himself. He was the Son of the

infinite God, yet He worked at the carpenter’s trade with His father Joseph. His trade was significant. He had come into the world as the Character Builder, and as such all His work was perfect. Into all His secular labor He brought the same perfection as into the characters He was transforming by His divine power.



He is our Pattern. By many children and youth, time is wasted that might be spent in carrying home burdens, and thus showing a loving interest in father and mother. The youth might take upon their strong young shoulders many responsibilities which someone must bear.

Jesus did not, like many youth, devote His time to amusement. He applied Himself diligently to a study of the Scriptures; for He knew them to be full of precious instruction to all who will make them the man of their counsel. He was faithful in the discharge of His home duties; and the early morning hours, instead of being wasted in bed, often found Him in a retired place, meditating

and searching the Scriptures, and in prayer. Every prophecy concerning His work and mediation was familiar to Him, especially those having reference to His humiliation, atonement, and intercession. In childhood and youth the object of His life was ever before Him, an inducement for His undertaking the work in behalf of fallen man. He would sow seed which would prolong their days, and the gracious purpose of the Lord should prosper in His hands.

Jesus studied the Word until He became familiar with its sayings. Even in His childhood, He was skillful in their use. When His parents lost Him in Jerusalem, He was found sitting among the wise men of the nation, both hearing them and asking them questions. He inquired as one who wished to learn; but in His questions there were gems of light that not only pleased His hearers, but flashed into the Scriptures concerning the Messiah a meaning which these teachers of the law had never before seen. “All that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” Luke 2:47.

When His mother said to Him, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing,” He answered, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” Verses 48–49. And when they understood not His words, He pointed upward. Although a Child, He was engaged in the work that He came to do. He was revealing God, showing the

meaning of His Word to those leaders in Israel, giving a new significance to their sacrifices and services.

There is here a lesson for all children and youth on the duty of honor and obedience to parents; for the record continues, "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Verse 51. From Jerusalem He returned home with them, and aided them in their life of toil. He hid in His own heart the mystery of His mission, waiting submissively for the appointed time for Him to enter upon His work. For eighteen years after He had recognized that He was the Son of God, He acknowledged the tie that bound Him to the home at Nazareth, and performed the duties of a Son, a Brother, a Friend, and a Citizen.

Jesus carried into His labor cheerfulness and tact. It requires much patience and spirituality to bring Bible religion into the home life and into the workshop, to bear the strain of worldly business, and yet keep the eye single to the glory of God. This is where Christ was a Helper. He was never so full of worldly care as to have no time or thought for heavenly things. Often He expressed the gladness of His heart by singing psalms and heavenly songs. Often the dwellers in Nazareth heard His voice raised in praise and thanksgiving to God. He held communion with Heaven in song; and as His companions complained of weariness from labor, they were cheered by the sweet melody from His lips. His praise seemed to banish the evil angels, and like incense, filled the place with fragrance. The minds of His hearers were carried away from their earthly exile, to the heavenly home.

Jesus was the Fountain of Healing Mercy for the world; and through all those secluded years at Nazareth, His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin-burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden—all were happier for His presence. He whose word of power upheld the worlds, would stoop to relieve a wounded bird.



There was nothing beneath His notice, nothing to which He disdained to minister.

Thus as He grew in wisdom and stature, Jesus increased in favor with God and man. He drew the sympathy of all hearts by showing Himself capable of sympathizing with all. The atmosphere of hope and courage that surrounded Him made Him a blessing in every home. And often in the synagogue on the Sabbath day He was called upon to read the lesson from the prophets, and the hearts of the hearers thrilled as a new light shone out from the familiar words of the sacred text.

Jesus is our Example. There are many who dwell with interest upon the period of His public ministry, while they pass unnoticed the teachings of His early years. But it is in His home life that He is the

Pattern for all children and youth. The Saviour condescended to poverty, that He might teach how closely we in a humble lot may walk with God. He lived to please, honor, and glorify His Father in the common things of life. His work began in consecrating the lowly trade of the craftsmen who toil for their daily bread. He was doing God's service just as much when laboring at the carpenter's bench as when working miracles for the multitude. And every youth who follows Christ's example of faithfulness and obedience in His lowly home, may claim those words spoken of Him by the Father through the Holy Spirit, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." Isaiah 42:10. ✨

The Youth's Instructor, May 25, 1909

Amusements and Crime:

Not Very Amusing

Jeff Wehr

Violent crime seems to be increasing every year. Those committing these acts of violence are getting younger and younger. According to one statistic, murders committed by children ages 14 to 17 have increased 165 percent since 1985. The cause of this terrible trend is partly due to the increased use of illegal drugs among America's youth. Drugs not only alter mental functioning, but place individuals in dangerous environments—with drug addicts and the people behind the drug business.

Another major culprit is alcohol. While tobacco has seen its day in court, alcohol still freely roams this great nation devouring our youth. Many statistics show that 50 percent of the victims and the perpetrators of violent acts are under the influence of alcohol.

However, perhaps the greatest culprit is the simple lack of spiritual and moral direction in the homes of America. So many young people today are growing up without a moral standard—while every day they receive a heavy dose of violence and immorality on television. The movie theaters also present more violence and immorality than films of yesteryear. The rap music of today is horribly satanic. It is time that the “Christian” families of America take a very hard look at what sort of activities occupy their time. Are these activities building Christlike characters, or are they strengthening the tendency to sin?

Television

The activity that consumes most of America's leisure time is television. Of the approximately nine hours of leisure time available to many Americans every day, television occupies nearly half of it.

Young children are perhaps the most vulnerable victims of television viewing. Research tells us that children's programming is six times more violent than adult programming. By the time a young person reaches the age of eighteen, he/she could have viewed nearly 500,000 violent acts. Imagine trying to teach your child the Golden Rule of “doing unto others what you would have them do unto you,” while that same child watches an average of 27 hours of television per week! I know who will win that battle—the devil!

The effects of television may even be worse for children under the age of four, because they have not as yet distinguished reality from television drama and fantasy. However, whether or not they can distinguish reality from fantasy, the fact remains, the mental image of violence and immorality is imprinted upon their young minds. When these children become adults, they will have a much harder time saying “No” to aggression, immorality, and crude jesting.

Moreover, we know that the effects of television viewing often become evident long before adult-

hood. Children who watch violence on television are more likely to hurt others than are those who watch nonviolent programming.

When it comes to the teenage years, we find television capitalizing on a lot of unsupervised time available to the youth. During these unsupervised hours, the teens are not usually watching something on the Christian Family Film Festival. In fact, the most popular television network for this age group is MTV—hours of programming laden with rock music and sexual gestures.

We know statistically that the more television programs teenagers watch, the earlier will be their first sexual contact. Other negative effects of television on teens include: poor attitudes, poor health, decreased interest in spiritual realities, and decreased interest in learning and reading.

Competitive Sports

Another leisure-time activity that strengthens sinful tendencies is competitive sports. For years we have been told that competitive sports build character. But do they? In a study that included 1,600 male, high school seniors involved in varsity athletics, they found the following:

- Increased aggression
- Increased irritability
- Reduced honesty
- Decreased self-control
- Decreased independence

See Neil Nedley, *Proof Positive*, 311.

In this study, they also found a slight increase in self-esteem. However, we must ask ourselves: Is the world's understanding of self-esteem truly character building? For example, if I have an increase of self-esteem because I am the best football player on the team, is that healthy or unhealthy? Is it healthy to think less of myself if I am the worst player on the team?

The problem with the world's conception of self-esteem is that it is based on comparing yourself with others. This unhealthy attitude produces unchristlike behavior—like pride, self-centeredness, jealousy, envy, and aggression.

Of course, our focus should not be upon self, but upon Christ. We should not see ourselves as being better than others, but we are to esteem others as being better than ourselves. See Philippians 2:3.

In another study it was found that athletes tend to be less sportsmanlike than nonathletes. By definition, sportsmanship is the ability to accept defeat without complaint and to accept victory without gloating. It is an attitude that treats all your opponents with fairness and kindness. However, the higher the level of competition the less sportsmanlike the player becomes. For example, the “starters” are less sportsmanlike than “substitutes,” and the major-league players are less sportsmanlike than the minor-league players. *Ibid.*, 313.

Indeed, the question of recreation and sports is an important one. Sister White instructs us, “Exercise in a gymnasium, however well conducted, cannot supply the place of recreation in the open air, and for this our schools should afford better opportunity. The pupils must have vigorous exercise. Few evils are more to be dreaded than indolence and aimlessness. Yet the tendency of most athletic sports is a subject of anxious thought to those who have at heart the well-being of the youth. Teachers are troubled as they consider the influence of these sports—both on the student's progress in school and on his success in the afterlife. The games that occupy so much of his time are diverting the mind from study. They are not helping to prepare the

youth for practical, earnest work in life. Their influence does not tend toward refinement, generosity, or real manliness.

“Some of the most popular amusements, such as football and boxing, have become schools of brutality. They are developing the same characteristics as did the games of ancient Rome. The love of domination, the pride in mere brute force, the reckless disregard of life, are exerting upon the youth a power to demoralize that is appalling.

“Other athletic games, though not so brutalizing, are scarcely less objectionable because of the excess to which they are carried. They stimulate the love of pleasure and excitement, thus fostering a distaste for useful labor, a disposition to shun practical duties and responsibilities. They tend to destroy a relish

strong desire to help our fellow men.

Another vital element in daily spiritual activities is singing hymns. The apostle Paul wrote, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Ephesians 5:18–19. Let us all take this scripture as a challenge! Read this verse every day and then pick out a hymn or two and sing aloud. Sometimes I take a little hymnal with me and read a hymn at a traffic light or while I am waiting on someone. Never let a day go by without a hymn upon your heart. Even if your circumstances do not allow you to sing out loud as I do, you can certainly give expression to the words as you read them aloud.

Helping others in loving service when we recognize needs, such as raking leaves or carrying in firewood, can provide physical activity.

for life's sober realities and its tranquil enjoyments. Thus the door is opened to dissipation and lawlessness, with their terrible results.” E. G. White, *Education*, 210–211.

Recreation That Is Re-creating

Recreation refers to activities that give us a break from the usual—the mundane. But more than that, we need activities that draw us upward toward the Creator for re-creation. These activities can be simply divided up into four different categories: spiritual activities; physical activities; family and social activities; educational activities.

Spiritual activities would certainly include personal, daily devotions and Bible study. Daily we should be saturating our minds with God's Word. Yet, we should not study God's Word without prayer. Daily prayer has a way of meshing the lessons from God's Word with the Golden Rule. All study should instill in us a spirit of entire consecration to God and a

Of course, while these spiritual activities have a private and personal application, they also have a family or group dynamic. Let the family gather together for a reading from God's Word. Spend time together in prayer and the singing of hymns, and be sure to find time to discuss the rich blessings you receive from these activities.

Physical activities do not have to include competitive sports. In fact, family physical activities should be noncompetitive. My family has enjoyed walking, cross-country skiing, bicycling, and swimming together. We also have two garden areas that seem to have plenty of weeds and produce to pick. Of course, there are other daily chores that take some physical activity. However, physical activities do not have to be confined to our own home. Helping others in loving service when we recognize needs, such as raking leaves or carrying in firewood, can provide physical activity.



Family and social activities can include any and all of the spiritual and physical activities. The focus of family activities is to get the family involved in doing things together. The essence of social activities is to provide a way of inviting other people into your lives. We can go on nature walks or on field trips with another family or families. We can have a local Bible-study group in our own home, or attend one at someone else's home. Also, there is regular Christian fellowship at the local church and at the church potluck. We can participate in community seminars as we reach out to the public and meet new people. We can go to any community and share books and magazines that contain precious truth. You can have your children invite friends over—the kind who will respect your family rules. You can establish special occasions for your extended family to get together. Whatever you do, find a way of meeting people, and letting the image of Jesus shine through you.

Educational activities are self-improvement activities. These activities include: developing home-making skills and musical skills, learning about nature and the human body, beginning a meaningful hobby, developing a trade skill,

and learning how to be a good steward of our possessions, talent, and time.

When we think of homemaking skills we think of sewing, cooking, organizing, cleaning, making beds, folding clothes, and so forth. When it comes to musical skills, we think of learning how to play a musical instrument or how to sing hymns and spiritual songs. But we could include taking the time to know the history behind some of our various hymns and thinking more often about the message they bring. Of course, we could include poetry—both the writing and reading of it—in this category.

We are told that nature is the second greatest lesson book that God has provided for us. Yet it is only as we study the Bible and nature together that we will understand God correctly in the things He has made. Sister White wrote, “Upon every page of the great volume of His created works may still be traced His handwriting. Nature still speaks of her Creator. Yet these revelations are partial and imperfect. And in our fallen state, with weakened powers and restricted vision, we are incapable of interpreting aright. We need the fuller revelation of Himself that God has given in His Written Word.” *Ibid.*, 17.

Sister White goes even further in saying, “Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature’s teaching be read aright.” *Ibid.*, 101. It is only as we contemplate the self-sacrificing love of Christ that we can understand God through nature.

Again she counsels us, “Children should be encouraged to search out in nature the objects that illustrate Bible teachings, and to trace in the Bible the similitudes drawn from nature.” *Ibid.*, 120. Imagine how wise we would all be, both parents and children, if we combined lessons from nature with principles from the Bible! There is no doubt that the Bible and nature shed light upon each other. They both make us acquainted with the laws that God uses to govern His universe in love and righteousness.

The study of the human body and how we can best take care of it is a study of a lifetime. We are wonderfully made, and it would be wise for us to know how to ennoble this human mind and how to strengthen this human body. Our motivation should be to honor Him who gave us life and who promises us eternal life through His shed blood.

When it comes to hobbies, my wife and I have helped our children to begin stamp and coin collections due to all my travels, and also due to all the letters we receive from overseas. These activities provide good opportunities to appreciate various cultures around the world and also to learn how to organize the stamps or coins neatly. We also have activities of finding different plants and flowers in our area, as well as some other nature-oriented hobbies.

The importance of learning some trade skill is twofold: First, the ability to work with your hands allows you to develop another part of the human brain. Second, it provides us with another potential means with which to support our families, to save some money, or for use in some missionary endeavor, both local and foreign. For example: I am reading a book on how to build my own root cellar. The book not only gives instruction about root-cellar structures, but also has wonderful information on the kinds

of foods you can put into storage, and when you should plant them. In all likelihood, I will not be going out making a living building root cellars, but I will be saving a large sum of money by learning to construct one for myself. Also, it will, no doubt, provide me with an opportunity to help someone else. Hopefully, I will be able to utilize this information to meet someone and lead them to Jesus.

Lastly, there is the self-improvement activity of becoming a good steward. Of course, a whole article, or series of articles, could be devoted to the subject of stewardship. However, let us keep in mind the following principles:

- We are not our own; we have been bought with a price and belong to God. See 1 Corinthians 6:19–20.

- Jesus became poor that we may become rich. See 2 Corinthians 8:9.
- The tithe belongs to God, and we should not withhold our offerings. See Malachi 3:8.
- Live simply and not in extravagance. See Colossians 3:2.
- Time is a talent, and the talent that God will hold us most accountable for is time. See Ephesians 5:15–16.
- Health is a talent, therefore whatsoever you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. See 1 Corinthians 10:31.

These are but a few principles to guide our stewardship. I encourage each one of you to take the book *Counsels on Stewardship* by Sister White and discover the blessings

that await those who become faithful stewards unto God.

When we consider how many character-building activities are available to us, we would be wise to stay away from those things that compromise our characters. We do have a choice. It is my prayer that each one of us will take inventory of how we spend our time, and that we will prayerfully consider what is best spiritually for our family—carefully considering the eternal consequences of our activities. I would hate to think that any one of us would choose the entertainment of the world over spending an eternity with Jesus in paradise. Let us therefore exercise the power of choice and do all to the glory of God. ✨

5 Great Story Books for Children



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Sun's Weather May Add to Y2K Woes

News Item: "As if potential Year 2000 computer problems are not enough, stormy weather predicted for the sun next year also could torment Earth's modern technology.

"That could mean celebrating the new millennium in the dark, with a dead cellular phone. Ships and planes relying on satellites for navigation might have trouble. Even spacewalking astronauts are at risk.

"Researchers, using new techniques, are forecasting the sun is going to enter the most violent and disruptive part of its 11-year cycle. The worst is expected to begin in January, when computers around the world struggle to cope with possible problems caused by the Y2K bug [the year 2,000 computer bug].

"Severe solar storms erupting with massive bursts of magnetic energy and radiation are expected to continue at their peek until April.

"Solar flares and coronal mass eruptions—solar explosions that can equal a million 100 megaton bombs—send waves of energy toward the Earth.

"They can cause power black-outs, block some radio communications and trigger phantom commands capable of sending satellites spinning out of their proper orbits." *Associated Press*, May 31, 1999.

Prophetic Perspective: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations,

with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Luke 21:25-26.

God's Word is very clear—signs in the sun will be followed by perplexity and distress among the nations. May God give us the discernment to understand the fulfilling events around us.

Five Presidential Candidates—One Idea

News Item: Al Gore has recently gone public with the statement that he believes in "giving federal money to religious groups that take a 'faith-based' approach to current social ills. . . .

"That is a sentiment that, in variation, finds a chorus of amens in almost every presidential campaign this year. . . .

"And former Senator Bill Bradley, Gore's only Democratic rival, has said that religious organizations are crucial to building a 'civil society.'" *Time*, June 7, 1999.

Prophetic Perspective: We know where all this is leading—the time is not far off when it will be urged that "the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the morals of society." *The Great Controversy*, 587. The stage is definitely being set for it in our country. Soon we will have entered a course from which there will be no return. Let us call upon the Lord today while there is yet time. When the crisis really breaks upon us, it will then be too late to develop the "Enoch experience" that we all will need.

Pope, Patriarch Meet to Heal an Old Wound

News Item: "Pope John Paul II and Romania's Orthodox patriarch stood shoulder-to-shoulder Friday in a remarkable show of unity on the first visit by a Roman pontiff to a mainly Orthodox Christian country in nearly 1,000 years. . . .

"At the Orthodox cathedral, they prayed together—the 78-year-old John Paul hunched over, the 84-year-old patriarch standing ramrod straight. The two men, both in white robes, then sat on twin thrones.

"The second millennium of Christian history began with a painful wound for the unity of the church,' the patriarch said. 'It is ending now with a positive sign. . . a sincere effort by Christian churches to heal that wound.'" *The News Tribune*, May 8, 1999.

Prophetic Perspective: "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." Revelation 13:3. Today we are seeing the fulfillment of these words. There is much individual "healing" happening between Rome and those with whom she has differed. Whether it is the healing between Rome and the Church of England, or with Lutherans, American Evangelicals, or the Orthodox Church, one thing is certain—it will all lead to the final and complete healing of the deadly wound.

Deadly Signs of Christ's Return

News Item: In recent severe storms "Oklahoma and Kansas would suffer one of the nation's deadliest tornado outbreaks in two decades. More than 70 tornadoes—including a monster more than a half mile wide—blew through the two states, killing 46 people, injuring some 900 others, and laying waste to over 4,500 homes and businesses. Like a giant scythe, the tornadoes cut down whole neighborhoods, hurling houses and cars around like chaff. . . .

"At the heart of the fateful storm was a monster tornado, one that had winds in excess of 260 miles per hour. At times, it was more than a half-mile wide. Storm experts call it an F-5, a rating reserved for 'incredible' tornadoes that can strip the bark from trees, lift houses off



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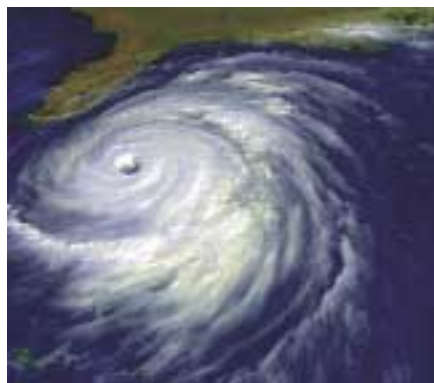
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their foundations, and make automobile-size objects fly more than 100 yards." *U.S. News & World Report*, May 17, 1999.

News Item: "Strong storms barreled through central Michigan and Indiana, dumping heavy rain, downing trees and knocking out power to thousands of people. . . .

"Winds up to 115 mph knocked down a new home in Wyoming, Michigan, killing a man inside. . . .

"High wind, hail and rain pelted Lansing, Mich., snapping utility poles built to withstand 100-mph winds along Interstate 496, closing the freeway and snarling rush-hour traffic. Three large trees fell on the Capitol lawn.



Hurricane Floyd (NASA)

" 'It sounded like a freight train came through,' said Kevin Webb, manager of Woodworks and Design Co. in Lansing. 'It sucked the windows right out.' " *The Associated Press*, May 18, 1999.

News Item: "Pakistan's southern coast has been hit by a severe cyclone that was originally headed for India's west coast. . . .

"It hit the southern province of Sindh at 10 am (0500 GMT) near the fishing harbour of Keti Bander, 200 miles east of Karachi.

"Winds of up to 270 km/h were reported by the institute of Meteorology and Geophysics in Karachi. . . .

"Several small villages dotting the Arabian Sea coast were in the path of the cyclone, but the remoteness of the area made it difficult to get instant reports of the damage.

"Heavy rains and winds were reported along India's Kachh region as the cyclone passed coastal Gujarat.

"The small fishing port of Dwarka and the neighbouring harbour of Kandla were lashed with rain and winds of up to 150 km/h. Reports say that around 50,000 people were evacuated from their homes and streets were deserted.

"Arif Suleman was one of many fishermen who had gathered to shelter in local schools requisitioned by authorities.

" 'The waves were 12 feet high and the sea water was pouring into our homes. Nearly everything we had was destroyed,' he said." *BBC News*, May 20, 1999.

News Item: "Legions of African army worms chomping through East Africa threaten to severely reduce agricultural production in the region, an insect control expert said Wednesday.

"The army worms, first spotted in Tanzania more than two months ago, are spreading rapidly, said Charles Muinamia, who is in charge of the Nairobi station of the Desert Locust Organization for Eastern Africa.

" 'If not checked, the worms will have seriously implications for food production,' he said.

"Muinamia said the worms, members of the insect family Noctuidae, feed primarily on the leaves of young maize, rice and wheat plants. The insects take their name from the manner in which they move across wide expanses of land.

" 'They move in a line spreading nearly 1 kilometer (six-tenths of a mile), literally feeding on all grass family plant leaves, doing a better job than a lawn mower,' Muinamia said.

"Agriculture Minister Musalia Mudavadi said the worms have worked their way through more than 247,000 acres of Kenya's prime agricultural land." *The News Tribune*, May 20, 1999.



Prophetic Perspective: "It is on the law of God that the last great struggle of the controversy between Christ and His angels and Satan and his angels will come, and it will be decisive for all the world. . . . Men in responsible positions will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but from the sacred desk will urge upon the people the observance of the first day of the week, pleading tradition and custom in behalf of this man-made institution. They will point to calamities on land and sea—to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire—as judgments indicating God's displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed. These calamities will increase more and more, one disaster will follow close upon the heels of another; and those who make void the law of God will point to the few who are keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the ones who are bringing wrath upon the world. This falsehood is Satan's device that he may ensnare the unwary." *Christian Service*, 155.

"While at Loma Linda, California, April 16, 1906, there passed before me a most wonderful representation. During a vision of the night, I stood on an eminence, from

which I could see houses shaken like a reed in the wind. Buildings, great and small, were falling to the ground. Pleasure resorts, theaters, hotels, and the homes of the wealthy were shaken and shattered. Many lives were blotted out of existence, and the air was filled with the shrieks of the injured and the terrified.

“The destroying angels of God were at work. One touch, and buildings, so thoroughly constructed that men regarded them as secure against every danger, quickly became heaps of rubbish. There was no assurance of safety in any place. I did not feel in any special peril, but

the awfulness of the scenes that passed before me I cannot find words to describe. It seemed that the forbearance of God was exhausted and that the judgment day had come.” *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 92–93.

In another place we see: “A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians, and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He allows. There

are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere.” *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, 441.

We have certainly come to the great time spoken of by Christ—a time when there will be earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs in the heavens. See Luke 21:11. The nations are stirred to war, and everything in our world is in agitation. We see men’s hearts failing them for fear. See Luke 21:26. All the many signs we see around us herald the great event of Christ’s second coming. May we faithfully prepare, is my prayer. ✨

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AB, Georgia

True Dress Reform

Sally Hohnberger



DO I know how to live “in Christ” and manifest a Christlike spirit in all circumstances? Do I know how to surrender to God’s will when my will is crossed? Or, do I spend too much effort on, and talk too much about, the externals such as, “What shall I wear?” Or, as Jesus stated the question, “Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” Matthew 6:31–33.

The weightier matter is, “Am I clothed in Christ?” See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 513–516. Do I daily “put on Christ,” enthroning Him on my heart’s will, so that His divine power can change, subdue and save me from serving self inwardly? This yielding must be learned in order for Christ to adorn me with the essential undergarments of Christlike faith and virtue. These are the foundations of our Christian life in Christ. See 2 Peter 1:5–7. Putting them into practice in one’s life, in the specific order, prepares the Christian to receive the fuller dress—Christ’s outer garment, His robe of righteousness—which represents being changed in character and temperament from sinfulness and self-serving to serving God and holiness. These and other character traits must be a daily reality, working deeply, and effectually in my Christian experience and walk. By His grace through the Holy Spirit, Christ wants to redeem me now from all selfishness, be it manifested in irritation toward my spouse or child, or in an

unchristlike dress style. Securing this robe of righteousness requires our greatest efforts in the Christian walk. This putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to be the dress we secure, without fail, and it must be done daily, continually, lest we be naked of the indwelling Christ before the whole world.

Let us consider the spiritual lessons that can be learned from true dress reform:

Modesty

True modesty is an attitude of the heart. It is being so pliable in God’s hands that when God’s will and my selfish will are at variance, I will say “No” to self by saying “Yes” to God’s will, and then bending all my energies to do what He asks, by His grace—no matter how crucifying to self it may be. I become willing to lay aside any favorite article of clothing in order to remain clothed in Christ. But where do I get such firmness, decisiveness and self-control as this?—By spending those morning hours faithfully, regularly, at Jesus’ feet, by communing with God and by choosing to do His will. He can then clothe me with His divine nature, replacing my garments of selfishness.

We must cooperate in this

process of putting on Christ, the same as a little child must cooperate with his parents in order to get properly dressed in the morning. In reality, we are just as dependent on Christ’s helping us with right doing for the day as that little child is in putting on his physical clothes properly. You will notice God always works from the inside out. Inward heart modesty (yielding) precedes true outward, lasting modesty. We must learn to yield our wills to God; then we will be willing to yield our outer dress to His control, too. Then we will have heavenly modesty, and we will do Christ’s will not only in dress but in all we do, say, or think today.

Fig Leaves

If true modesty is the very life of Christ replacing my nakedness of unrighteousness, by my choosing to lay self aside and to receive Christ’s will—strength, wisdom, selflessness, purity, and obedience—then what is the counterfeit to this clothing of Christ?—Fig leaves, of course. Man-made clothing of fig leaves are the covering—the arguments or excuses

for disobedience. See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 1084. They lay the blame on others or circumstances, excusing their disobedience and thereby denying their nakedness, which is the clothing of self. What a contrast! Did not Adam and Eve use substitute garments of fig leaves to cover their nakedness and also to deny or excuse their disobedience? When they sinned (disobeyed), their lives were then in self—independent of Christ and His robe of light.

When we live our own way, or wear the clothes we like without consulting God for fear that He may say “No” to us, we are not then in Christ, but rather in self, are we not? Since God cannot cover disobedience, Christ must quietly leave, taking with Him His garment of righteousness and light. Then man,

be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Peter 3:3–4.

Practically speaking, our fig leaves could be attitudes such as, “I don’t want to” change my dress style, or “I can’t”—for whatever reason. These thoughts merely represent our present feelings or tastes in this matter, irrespective of knowing God’s will for us. If in reality we follow these thoughts and feelings without consulting God first, we are exercising our independence from God—just as Satan wills for us to do. If we recognize these facts, and set our will to follow Christ’s way, we can call upon our Saviour to save us from our resistive, independent feelings and tastes. Then we will experience a change in our dress

gave me some time and space to make a free-will decision. God does not force anyone. Furthermore, He began also to teach me why these clothes were not modest for a woman or a child professing godliness. God presented them to me as being a stumbling block in my sphere of influence to both men and women. My use of these clothes was encouraging others to retain that same style, which was debasing to all. In women it can stir up jealousy and/or envy. In men it can stir up baser passions, and I was to be sensitive and to avoid dressing in that way. He would put this sensitivity in me and change my tastes, if I would let Him. I was no longer to be an instrument to attract attention or thoughts away from God to the earthly or sensual. Was I willing to lay self aside? God even gave me sufficient evidences of how these particular clothes were debasing. God made me aware of the truth He was teaching me whenever I wore one of these controversial blouses or pants. In a relatively short time I yielded to God’s will, convinced that God’s way was the best way for me and others. Then He clothed the inner me with divine contentedness and peace. Christ has the power to change us, as we cooperate with Him.

However, we must not swing our dress style way to the other extreme—to baggy, untidy, unclean or unattractive attire. That would not please God either. These changes toward greater modesty and purity do not eliminate taste, order and properly fitting attire. We must remain balanced. Please read *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 464, and *The Adventist Home*, 254.

Proper Dress Characterized

“No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide all in their dress.” *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 718. The old health reform dress in its exact pattern was no longer urged, but there was ever a uniform testimony borne by Mrs. White regarding the fundamental principles that should guide the Christian in this matter. “Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good material, durable, modest, appropriate for this age,

Practically speaking, our fig leaves could be attitudes such as, “I don’t want to” change my dress style, or “I can’t”—for whatever reason.

sensing his own nakedness and not wanting to confess his wrong, makes a covering of fig leaves—the arguments and excuses to justify his disobedience. God does not want our sins covered up—but rather cleansed away. See *Review and Herald*, June 4, 1901. Notice that the “self-made” clothing attempts to cover and excuse disobedience, but God’s clothing requires the confessing and forsaking of unrighteousness in words and actions. Then Christ can replace our unrighteousness with His righteousness. See how we need to cooperate? Do we not want God to clothe us with His beauty of holiness—rather than leave us to retain the dangerous, pretentious fig leaves of self’s devisings? See *The Desire of Ages*, 581–584. We need then to bend every energy and choose to be in Christ and to cooperate with God in helping us to change our garments of self in exchange for the garments of Christ.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning . . . but let it

style, for Christ will put within us that new heart, that new desire to dress for His honor and glory. We are then preparing for the full robe of Christ’s righteousness as we step closer to the full surrender of everything in our lives to His Lordship.

I recall when God called me to a higher level of modesty in my dress. First, He put within me a strong desire to dress more like a lady. Also, at that time God began revealing to me which of my clothes that I needed to put away. He wanted me to cleanse away several articles of clothing: my shorts, my short skirts, my V-necks, my tighter clothing, my favorite two-piece bathing suit, as well as other inappropriate, figure-revealing articles.

My conscience inside was in a war with personal likes and dislikes and with conflicting emotions—one to put those favorite articles of clothing away, and another to cling to them. What a struggle at times ensued with self! God graciously

and let not the dress question fill the mind.” *Child Guidance*, 414.

“Christians should not take pains to make themselves a gazingstock by dressing differently from the world. But if, when following out their convictions of duty in respect to dressing modestly and healthfully, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world; but they should manifest a noble independence and moral courage to be right, even if all the world differ from them. If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress. Christians should follow Christ and make their dress conform to God’s Word. They should shun extremes. They should humbly pursue a straightforward course, irrespective of applause or of censure, and should cling to the right because of its own merits.” *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 458–459.

As we seek to know God’s will through personal study and prayer, God will be right there to guide the sincere in heart to find His answers. For example, God desires to keep us balanced even in the length of our dresses. We read, “My views were calculated to correct the present fashion, the extreme long dress, trailing upon the ground, and also to correct the extreme short dress, reaching about to the knees, which is worn by a certain class. I was shown that we should shun both extremes.” *Ibid.*, 464. I encourage you to study to find the answers to any questions you may now have in the specifics of proper heavenly dress, and God will be with you in this matter.

Remember, if indeed my inward veiling is Christ, then my outward dress will not be showy, with pride or display. Rather, it will reflect Christ through modesty, cleanliness, neatness, orderliness, tastefulness and simplicity—all in accordance with the revealed light given in the Bible. I am accountable for the light I know, or could have known. I will seek God’s will to rule my life, which includes my tastes in clothing. And God promises grace to work in me

to change my wrong tastes as I submit and yield to His will.

We can choose to bring all our clothing before Christ for His approval and instructions in what is best and right. Then God can shine through us, manifesting Christ’s purity to the world, as well as encouraging others who are truly walking in the way. We are called to “study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15. Let us read God’s Word to bring our dress into conformity to His will. Let us see what God says, and not depend upon man’s interpretations that may try to explain away a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” Choosing to follow God requires being grounded in His Word—not traditions, customs or the fashions of the day.

Pants and Women

Deuteronomy 22:5 says, “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.” This plain truth is easy to understand. Becoming willing, I discarded my slacks and pants to wear simple dresses and skirts to be the lady God called me to be. This aroused much animosity and agitation in some of my Christian sisters who were close to me. Yet, I was not pushing or even encouraging others to do the same—just quietly following God myself. In fact, several counseled me with arguments and excuses as to why this verse no longer applies today. Yet in my mind, God kept impressing upon me the verse, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Hebrews 13:8. I sought the Lord’s will in prayer and further study. In doing so, I was impressed in prayer and confirmed in studies that my course was God’s will for me and that I was to follow God in this matter—“Thus saith the Lord” and not to follow man or man’s reasonings.

I read *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 421: “There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men,

but God pronounces it abomination.” Let us rather be women who “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.” 1 Timothy 2:9. It still applies to us today. We then must ask ourselves, Is it God’s will for women—for me—to wear those sleek Levis or form-fitting dress pants? Or what about the sloppy, baggy pants; are they depicting neatness, orderliness and purity?

Surely some will ask, Is there no place for slacks? My response is, Let us give each other room to grow in Christ. I encourage my sisters to seek counsel from God rather than man, and to study with a heart willing to learn—not excusing self or condemning that sister who does not hold the same perspective as ours. Look to see and ask what God would have you to do.

Instead of condemning or entering into needless controversy with one another, let us bring each other before the throne of grace for Christ to work in each of our hearts and lives today. Perhaps a sister feels that there is a place in her wardrobe for modest, nonbaggy, nonform-fitting slacks for those occasional activities—horseback riding, ladder climbing, and perhaps a few other activities. Can we not let that sister have the religious liberty to follow her conscience before God? Surely we must. Personally, I have found that in almost all of these activities, a heavy denim, full skirt, with cotton opaque tights underneath work well for modesty, while another sister has a strong preference for a split-skirt and a distaste for cotton tights. We must each leave the other free to follow her own conscience, not trying to force or condemn each other. Unity in diversity may be effected without compromise of principle.

We may feel sad to see a woman professing Christianity while dressing in men’s clothing, but how much sadder it is to see a woman professing Christianity dressed in proper attire, texture and look, yet naked of the inner virtue of Christ—naked of power over self! Her harsh speech, gossip, or her critical spirit, reveal her nakedness of Christ, which is most unbecoming. The worst part is the misrepresentation



of Christ, whom she is claiming to represent. Her outward dress gives a Christlike appearance while her words and deportment deny Him. If we are going to properly influence others, we need to have both the inner and the outer clothing depicting Christ's righteousness and purity.

Men, you must also evaluate your closet with God. The same principles of health, modesty and duty apply to your wardrobe. Let us all be aware and guard against the leaven of serving the self that is within, and the fashion that is without. Let us make haste to seek God's will for all of us, and follow Him withersoever He leadeth us.

Let us realize that "to many the externals are the sum total of religion, and yet it will be evidenced that the heart has not that genuine courtesy which alone is of value with God." *Testimonies to Ministers*, 196.

Let it be said of us that our externals give true evidence of the indwelling Christ.

Fashion

"How many of them [styles], when not in fashion, would be declared immodest; how many would be pronounced inappropriate for a refined, God-fearing, self-respecting woman." *The Ministry of Healing*, 290; see also *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 647; *Review and Herald*, November 17, 1904.

Dear friends, we are not addressing just the obvious issues of bosom-baring, shape-accentuating, short-skirted fashions, which are all too commonly seen in the dress of professed Christians today. Let us look a little closer. Cannot our baggy-fitting style stir up men's baser passions just as much as the previously mentioned styles? Satan's cunning must be seen for what it truly is, for he uses fashion successfully to crucify Christ's character and to destroy us.

Taking an even closer look into this issue, we must also ask ourselves, Are we spending too much time pouring through the many catalogs that come into our homes, or walking through the malls looking for just the right color of shoes to match a new color just added to our bulging closets? Is this not an equally shameful use of our time and means? Has Christ directed us to use our time and means in this manner? These catalogs and malls are all calculated to steal our time and means, sometimes even keeping us from spending that needed time with Christ in prayer or reading our Bibles.

Do you see Satan's purposes and intentions here? He has obviously taken the world captive. God's people need to be warned; fashion is ever keeping our time and means occupied or consumed. The ever-changing styles encourage us to gather unto ourselves clothes which are far beyond our true needs. Let us choose to live according to principle—and no longer to the rule of fashion. Let us repent and say in all honesty, "Lord, forgive me; I now see it clearly. By grace I want my closet to reflect Christ from this day forward. Show me the errors of my ways and teach me to trust and

follow You. I choose to put on You, Christ, and let You rule over me as my Lord and Saviour of the inner me first, and also of the outer me—that it may reflect You by grace."

With a repentance and commitment like this, our closets will represent divine self-denial effectually working in us. What might that closet look like? I see a few favorite choice colors that coordinate well. Careful planning and close differentiating between wants and needs are evident in this wardrobe, taking each season into consideration. I see a few work blouses, a few dress blouses and a few everyday blouses, a modest number of skirts to meet the varying needs of life and a few well-chosen dresses, again to meet true needs and not merely wants. Self-denial is characterized. You will find that even this simple, modest wardrobe will take three or more years to wear out. Amazing, is it not? You know Americans do not wear out their clothes today, for there are too many. It is more customary to just grow tired of them and discard some to make room for more. Yet how much simpler life can be! Do you see? I found that I was wasting time, wearily gathering unto myself the excessive contents of my closet. What a burden it was! And you know, I was never really satisfied with more!

Once this modest wardrobe is established, the only shopping that is needed is to replace an article of clothing now and then when it wears out. How simple it is! We could even choose to live in smaller homes, and we could live well on smaller incomes—if we continued with this principle. Simplify, simplify, simplify—what a blessing is to be found in conforming to God's ways!

By redeeming this time, I can now spend more time with my Lord and Saviour in His Word, in prayer and in contemplation of how He can save me. This wise use of my time transforms my heart from self-serving to godliness. Now God dresses the inner and the outer me with Christ, and His meek and quiet spirit will give evidence to all that I have met with Jesus today. "God is the Author of all beauty, and only as we conform to His ideal shall we approach the standard of true beauty." *The Ministry of Healing*, 292.

With Christ indwelling, we are beautiful in thought, word, deed and dress. Thank you, Lord, for freeing me from the drudgery of fashion. Oh, what love!

Clothing That Breathes

How important are the fibers of my clothing in my Christian walk? Is cotton the only fiber that Heaven approves?—I dare say “No.” There *are* some important, real physical advantages to wearing clothing fibers that breathe, but let us also realize that cotton is only one of several fibers that breathe. In addition, how much more essential and vital for the life and health of our body, mind, and especially our soul, is the indwelling Christ! How much more important it is to learn of connecting with Christ so that our souls can breathe Heaven’s life-giving atmosphere of grace! Without this essential, continual abiding of Christ in us, we have no life, no breath to walk the walk of right doing. How much more essential it is than the issue of wearing only cotton!

Christ has gained for me His robe of righteousness, made of heavenly fiber, with not one thread of human devisings. He has also gained entrance to heaven and will bring me in with Him—if I yield self and let Him clothe me. This robe is mine, if I learn to cooperate with Him, yielding implicit obedience to Him, and if I learn how to “put on Christ” fully. In this covering there can be no man-made fiber of selfishness. Here we must examine ourselves closely, and these selfish fibers must be given up, replacing them with Christ’s fibers of doing right. Let not the exclusive use of cotton consume our time, means and thought. Rather, let Christ be the Center of these things.

Whited Sepulchers

A Biblical principle is found in Matthew 23:24–27. The latter part says, “Like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.” Matthew 23:27. So also we can become with this matter of dress! We see a pretty little girl beautifully arrayed in cotton clothing to the tip of her hair with a lovely bow. She

sits in church quietly—until her will is crossed. Then we see disrespectful looks, words and actions. Lying, argumentative, uncooperative lips betray the unrestrained selfishness that lies within her inner heart. Is she dressed to the glory of God or is she naked of Christ? Sadly, she is naked of Christ. The outward is professing purity while the inward is lacking. This all-too-common scene brings pain to every sincere Christian’s heart, especially to the conscience of parents. While we commend the mother for the effort she has made to present her child in simplicity, modesty and cleanliness outwardly; nevertheless, we counsel her not to leave the teaching and training of the inward adorning of Christ neglected or undone.

We as parents must personally understand, experience and exem-

plify the how-tos of yielding our wills to Christ before we can teach our children and train their wills in these vital basics of how to be clothed with the life from Christ, which will enable them to live aright and dress aright. Let our outward clothing be an outflowing of the inward clothing of Christ.

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I entreat you to follow Christ, and not man, in order to determine what changes God is calling you to make today—in what fibers of clothing you put on your external bodies, or any aspect of dressing for Jesus. This decision must come between God, His Word, and you in the secret chambers of your prayer life. I strongly admonish you to seek without delay to let Christ live within you, which is the weightier matter. He will lead you in your search of true heavenly outward adorning. However, if the true inward adorning is missing or neglected, all outward dress is vanity and is not pleasing to God. God wants our whole hearts. We need Christ to dwell within us, to influence and redeem our inner selves first, in order for us to be enabled to put on the externals—the modest, life-giving robe of right doing. Our characters are our robes, and they must be examined daily—whether every fiber of our lives is of God or of self. This concern is indeed the weightier matter of the law. It must be done while also the other matters must not be left undone. I caution you to follow God—not man, custom or tradition—in this vital issue. What fibers or ways of my Christian walk need to be replaced by the fibers or ways of Heaven’s order? Does irritation rule over me in my dealings with my spouse, children or friends? These are the real questions that must be asked regarding what fibers I shall wear. The fabric of selfishness can and

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must be replaced with Christ’s nature in wisdom, love, and self-control.

Dear friends, let us consider that this inner beauty, rest, and peace, which God longs to put within us, is purchased with our time, by communion with God, and the right action of our wills. This full heart-surrender requires both hearing and doing. Since it requires more time than we realize, let us commence immediately to “redeem the time, for the days are evil.” See Ephesians 5:16. It is the best investment of our time and means for now and eternity. Let us “put on Christ,” that Christ’s beauty may be manifested in truth to all those around us—by what we wear, what we say, and what we do. In this way we proclaim a risen Saviour in our lives. To God be the glory, for He hath redeemed us from all sin. May we now choose to avail ourselves of His redemption from the pit and the drudgery of fashion and custom! God has left the choice with us. ✨

Christians in Dress

How to mark your Bible and know God's Word better

We present this study with the desire that it will encourage you, our readers, to pursue a deeper examination of God's Word. The warning has been given us that "none but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." The Great Controversy, 593–594. It is our suggestion that you use this study personally, in group settings, or with your family. We also encourage you to add other Scriptural references to this study as you proceed in your own personal, attentive scrutiny of God's Word.

The Editors

Bible Marking Directions

1. In this month's study our Bible marking key letters are CD, which represent "Christians in Dress."
2. On the blank flyleaf at either the beginning or end of your Bible, write in the key letters followed by the first Scriptural text. This month's beginning entry should appear as follows: *CD 1 Corinthians 10:31.*
3. Turn to the first reference and in the margin near it write the second reference. Then turn to the second reference and in the margin near it write the third reference, and so on to the end of the lesson. When you come to the last reference write "End CD."

1CD: 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Every Christian should make it his first and supreme purpose to please Jesus Christ in all that he does. From the time that one accepts Christ as his Lord and Saviour, he is to live each day, not to please the world, not to please himself, but to please Him who gave all that we might have eternal life.

2CD: 2 Corinthians 5:14–15.

Being true Christians, we will eat, drink, dress, talk, sing, and act so as to please Christ. The only way we can please Jesus in all things is to see to it that through the power of the Holy Spirit we govern ourselves in all matters according to the principles He has laid down in the Holy Scriptures—and not according to the vain customs of this world.

3CD: 1 Timothy 2:9.

We are to clothe ourselves in modest apparel, and not to adorn ourselves with ornaments such as gold or pearls. According to the Bible, our dress should be plain, modest, neat, clean, healthful, becoming and appropriate. If fashion prescribes any mode of dress that is unhealthful, immodest, or extravagant, Christians should refuse to follow it. Instead, they should stand by the principles laid down in the Bible.

4CD: Genesis 3:7, 21.

Any type of clothing that does not properly cover one's body is wrong. In harmony with this principle, Christian men and women

should dress modestly. They should not appear in public in tank tops, shorts, miniskirts, sleeveless dresses, or any other form of clothing that does not properly cover the body. They should also maintain a consistent Christian witness by dressing modestly in their homes around family members or visitors, following the same principles of dress as they follow in public.

5CD: Deuteronomy 22:5.

God has commanded that His people shall maintain a proper distinction between the sexes in the matter of their dress. Anything that tends to break down this distinction is forbidden by the Word of God.

6CD: Ecclesiastes 9:8.

Our garments are to be neat, clean, durable, and suitable for the season and climate. They should be healthful, not restrictive, and should encourage proper circulation and warmth to the limbs of the body. See Proverbs 31:21, marginal reading.

7CD: Judges 8:24.

In contrast to God's people, the Ishmaelites were distinguished as heathen people by the fact that they wore gold earrings.

8CD: Genesis 35:2–5.

When Jacob's household gave up their worship of idols, they changed their dress and took off their ornaments. Not only did they remove them, but Jacob buried the offending items, and thus permanently disposed of them.

9CD: Hosea 2:13.

When the Israelites departed from God they decked themselves out with jewelry like the people of the world. See also Isaiah 3:16–26.

10CD: Exodus 33:5–6.

God commanded His people to take off all their ornaments, such as earrings, rings, bracelets and necklaces.

11CD: Exodus 35:22.

Later on, these golden ornaments were given to the Lord to be used in building the tabernacle in

the wilderness. These texts make it clear that God’s people should not wear rings, earrings, necklaces, beads, or any other kind of jewelry that serves only as an ornament. Even functional items, such as watches, should be simple and plain—not ornamental.

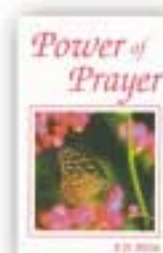
12CD: 1 Peter 3:3–5.

God wants us to have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit—a pure, kind, noble, Christian character that will make us truly attractive, and which we can take with us into that better eternal world that He has prepared for us. Just as

when a tree dies, the leaves drop off, never to return, likewise, when we really die with Christ to sin, and when self is crucified with Jesus on the cross, then all these worldly adornments—such as rings, earrings, necklaces, beads, rouge, lipstick, and immodest or extravagant clothing or hairstyles—will drop off from us never to return.

Let us seek in the manner of our adornment to show that we love Jesus Christ best of all. Let us adorn ourselves in keeping with our profession as followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. ✠

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by Ellen G. White

Power of Prayer

by Ellen G. White

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Hebrews 11:5

What is more important in this life than prayer? Prayer is our connection with God—our strength, our bridge to Heaven!

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“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.”

Psalms 91:15

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Family Prayer

Ellen White

If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Infidelity and skepticism are prevailing. Iniquity abounds, and in consequence, the love of many waxes cold. Corruption flows in the vital currents of the soul, and rebellion against our Heavenly Father breaks out in the life. Depravity spreads its loathsome canker over the entire heart. The moral powers, enslaved by sin, are under the tyranny of unholy appetites and passions. The soul is made the sport of Satan's temptations; and unless some mighty arm is stretched out to rescue him, man goes where the arch-rebel leads the way.

It is Satan's regular employment to work for the destruction of the race. Says the apostle Peter, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. Here Satan is represented as prowling about, hoping to find some poor soul off his guard, separated from God, that he may make his prey. And man in his pride is utterly helpless. He may well tremble at the awful power, cunning, and deception exercised by Satan over all who are not by faith holding fast the hand of Christ.

And yet in this time of fearful peril some who profess to be Christians have no family altar. They do not honor God in the home, nor teach their children to love and fear Him. There are persons who

attempt to teach the Bible who open their meetings without prayer; and there are not wanting some who profess to be followers of Jesus, and yet argue that there is nothing in the Word of God that teaches the duty of vocal prayer. These things grieve me; for I know that continual watchfulness and unceasing prayer are necessary for every soul that would successfully resist the wiles of the great deceiver. Those who maintain such positions are not sincere Christians. There are many, who, like unruly children, have separated themselves so far from God that they feel under condemnation in approaching Him. They cannot "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8). They have not clean hands; they have not pure hearts; they have no living connection with God. Theirs is a form of godliness without the power.

The idea that prayer is not essential is one of Satan's most successful devices to ruin souls. Prayer is addressing the mind to God, the Fountain of Wisdom, the Source of Strength and Peace and Happiness. Prayer includes acknowledgment of the divine perfections, gratitude for mercies received, penitential confession of sins, and earnest entreaty for the blessing of God, both for ourselves and for others. Jesus prayed to the Father with strong crying and tears. Paul

exhorts believers to "pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17. "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Philippians 4:6. "Pray one for another," says James. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5: 16. God has a right to command our devotions; His authority is sacred and unquestionable. We are under obligation to pray because He requires it; and in obeying His requirements we shall receive a gracious and precious reward.

I know of nothing that causes me so great sadness as a prayerless home. I do not feel safe in such a house for a single night; and were it not for the hope of helping the parents to realize their necessity and their sad neglect, I would not remain. The children show the result of this neglect; for the fear of God is not before them. Parents should make a hedge about their children by prayer; they should pray with full faith that God will abide with them, and that holy angels will guard themselves and their children from Satan's cruel power.

In every family there should be order, and regular habits. There should be a fixed time to rise in the morning, a time for breakfast, and a time for prayer, either directly before or directly after the morning meal. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children

about them before their fast is broken, and direct their young minds to our heavenly Father, who bestows upon us the bounties of His providence. Let them thank God for protecting them during the night, and ask for help and grace and the watchcare of angels through the day. Man should not be as unmindful of God as the beasts of the field, that eat and drink, but render no tribute of prayer or grateful praise to their Maker. Beasts have no reason; but men should understand the great condescension of God to finite, sinful mortals.

Fathers and mothers, at least morning and evening lift up your hearts to God in humble supplication for yourselves and your children. Your dear ones are exposed to temptations and trials. There are frets and irritations that daily beset the path of old and young; and those who would live patient, loving, cheerful lives amid daily annoyances, must pray. This victory can be gained only by a resolute and unwavering purpose, constant watchfulness, and continual help from God.

The father, who is the priest of his household, should conduct the morning and evening worship. There is no reason why this should not be the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home-life, and God is dishonored when it is made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited. Do not let your children or any member of your family dread them because of their tediousness or lack of interest. When a long chapter is read and explained and a long prayer offered, this precious service becomes wearisome, and it is a relief when it is over.

It should be the special object of the heads of the family to make the hour of worship intensely interesting. By a little thought, and careful preparation for this season, when we come into the presence of God, family worship can be made pleasant, and will be fraught with results that eternity alone will reveal. Let the father select a portion of Scripture that is interesting and easily understood; a few verses will be sufficient to furnish a lesson which may be studied and practiced

through the day. Questions may be asked, a few earnest, interesting remarks made, or incident, short and to the point, may be brought in by way of illustration. At least a few verses of spirited song may be sung, and the prayer offered should be short and pointed. The one who leads in prayer should not pray about everything, but should express his needs in simple words, and praise God with thanksgiving.

Abraham, the friend of God, set us a worthy example. His was a life of prayer and humble obedience, and he was as a light in the world. Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside it was set up his altar, calling for the morning and evening

our obligation to God and our dependence upon Him. It leads us to feel our own nothingness and the weakness of our judgment.

God has made earnest prayer the condition of the bestowal of His richest blessings. Prayer brings us nearer and nearer to Jesus. However fully we may have given ourselves to God at conversion, it is of no avail unless we renew our consecration in each separate duty as it presents itself. Dear reader, consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first business, even if you have to rise half an hour earlier in order to find time. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly thine. I lay all my plans at

We need the strength and grace that are born of earnest prayer. This means grace should be diligently used in order to gain spiritual muscle.

sacrifice of each member of his family. When his tent was removed, the altar remained. The roving Canaanite, as he came across that altar, knew who had been there before him; and when he had pitched his tent, he repaired the altar, and worshiped the living God.

From Christian homes a similar light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse, showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are homes where these principles are carried out—homes where God is worshiped and truest love reigns. From these homes morning and evening prayer comes up before God as sweet incense, and His mercies and blessings descend upon the suppliants like the morning dew.

We must have more religion. We need the strength and grace that are born of earnest prayer. This means grace should be diligently used in order to gain spiritual muscle. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. It makes us realize more and more our great needs, and hence

thy feet. Use me today in thy service. Whatever errand I may do, send me. Whatever I may say to honor thee, or lead souls to Christ, help me to say it."

This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself and your family to God for that day. Make no calculation for months or years; for they are not yours. One brief day is given you, and that one day work for yourself and your family as though it were your last. Surrender all your plans to God, to be carried out or given up, as His providence shall indicate. In this manner you may, day by day, be giving your life with its plans and purposes into the hands of God, accepting His plans instead of your own, no matter how much they may interfere with your arrangements nor how many pleasant projects may have to be abandoned. Thus the life will be molded more and more after the divine Model; and "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." *Philippians 4:7.* ✨

Signs of the Times, August 7, 1884.

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Letters

letters to the editor

Enclosed is a donation to help you continue with the work. We need to cooperate and work together to reach as many souls as possible. I need your prayers for Bill—an inmate on “death row.” He told me he was ready for baptism.

Thank you for your magazine—*Our Firm Foundation*. They are wonderful! May God continue to bless the work and workers. Keep looking up—we are nearing home!

EJ, Florida

I want to thank you so much for sending these issues of the magazine to me when I couldn’t afford to renew. I have been ill with a rheumatic heart.

I do want to keep up with *Our Firm Foundation* as long as I can. It has been a big help to me!

OB, Michigan

Enclosed please find my donation. Use it for postage for sending me information from time to time. I cannot send you more money, but I believe in the independent ministries as long as they follow truth, and from all I can see, you do follow truth!

MC, Florida

I have observed for many, many years, the New Theology coming into the Seventh-day Adventist congregation. I am deeply disturbed by where it is leading.

Sister White tells us in her writings that just before our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ returns to this earth, “Every wind of doctrine will be blowing.” The article by brother Kevin Paulson [see *Our Firm Foundation*, December 1998], about the attack upon the godhead by many, is very true. The true divinity of Jesus Christ is denied. The fallen human nature He took when He came to this earth 2000 years ago is denied. The Holy Spirit is said by many to be only a force. The Word of God is either taken out of context or twisted to prove something that is not true. Sister White’s writings are twisted and turned, to make them say and mean far different than she meant them to mean or say. We have

people in high places, and in high positions, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. False shepherds are leading many to sleep—lambs to muddy waters to drink, and sheep to yellow, dried-up meadows to graze. And many would have it so!

Far better would it be if all of us stopped debating and arguing about those things which are causing dissent in the church, and which we know anyway are not true, and, under the control of the Holy Spirit, live the good life in Jesus, and get on with preaching the pure gospel to a dying world and hasten Jesus’ return.

AP, Great Britain

Your magazine *Our Firm Foundation* is a blessing to us! We really enjoy the News Watch section about the signs of the end and Christ’s soon coming. Please use this donation where it is needed most.

BW, Canada

I love *Our Firm Foundation*! I have been so hungry for truth, and you tell it like it is. I am a new Adventist and a friend of Jesus.

An old-time Adventist lent me some 10-year-old Hartland camp meeting video tapes, and on one of them Ron Spear spoke about how when he is on walks, he memorizes Bible verses he writes out on index cards. So I started doing that too. Boy, has that changed my whole life! I bought 2 index card books, and I put in all the verses I could find about the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath and made a Bible study out of them—just in case my friends ask me about these things.

Also I put my AA and other 12-step words of wisdom on the cards. I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, and while I was chairing a meeting, I pulled out my index cards and explained how these index cards have helped me. Now several other members of AA are doing the same thing!

I love the way Ron Spear tells the truth. The people in the SDA church I recently joined don’t like *Our Firm Foundation*, and I drive them nuts

when I quote from the Spirit of Prophecy and get after them to read the books and do what is in the books. God has delivered me from alcohol, drugs, and many other addictions, including Satan worship. I am a walking miracle due to the grace of God, and I let others know how He delivered me from the pit of hell!

JP, New Jersey

Our Firm Foundation has a beautiful presentation. Very fine work! I also visited your web site (www.hopeint.org). It is improving greatly! I am happy for the achievements made. May God continue to bless your work.

PM, Michigan

We greatly thank God for making it possible that all these materials reached us at the time we are having our second-quarter crusade. It geared us up in sharing and extending the messages to people which helped them in finding their want of soul. The Lord has added many more souls to His church, though some are still awaiting baptism.

Sister E. G. White stated in her book, “What service will stand highest in the estimation of Him who gave Himself a willing offering to save a guilty race? What enterprise will be most dear to the heart of infinite love? What work will bring the greatest satisfaction and joy to the Father and the Son?—The salvation of perishing souls.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 91.

Since it is our duty to call these perishing souls to come into a right relationship with God in Christ, evangelism will be the life of the church. The only means of growth in the church of God is by conversion of sinners and holding them up to the Lord.

We need your assistance in supplying us with more Bibles, tracts, inspirational books, etc., to reach these people we’ve come in contact with, because “Tomorrow some of these souls may be where we can never reach them again.” *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 27.


CN, Nigeria

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and the knowledge of God.

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