

Our Firm Foundation

The Seventh-day Sabbath

Christ Our Righteousness

The Immutable Law of God

The Non-Immortality of the Soul

The Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary

Volume 16, Number 2

February 2001

*The Garden
of the Heart*

The Book of Books

Jesus, the Model
Self-Supporting Worker

The Lord's Prayer and
the Eternal Gospel



What Is Right With the Church?

It would not be difficult to write an article, or even a book, about what is wrong with the church. So many of our people drive away from the church every Sabbath feeling unfed. The Bible describes us as being in a Laodicean condition. See Revelation 3:14–17. We are neither righteous nor are we entirely worldly. We are neither overly generous nor are we entirely selfish. We are lukewarm!

If we choose to continually search for the flaws in the church, we will always find them. But why become overwhelmed and depressed by always looking at that side of the picture? Let us ask, What is right with the church? First of all, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not only based upon Christianity – as opposed to Buddhism or Islam – but it is also based upon the truth for this time.

You can walk into any Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, or Catholic Church, and you will not find one soul who believes in all of the following truths: the nonimmortality of the soul, the law of God, the seventh-day Sabbath, the sanctuary doctrine (including Christ’s high-priestly ministry above, the 2,300-day prophecy, and the investigative judgment), healthful living, the historical understanding of prophecy (including the three angels’ messages, the mark of the beast, the image of the beast, and the work of the antichrist), righteousness by faith (including the nature of Christ, justification, and sanctification), the Spirit of Prophecy, and on and on. But you can find in Seventh-day

Adventist Churches all across this world, thousands who believe and teach these glorious, important truths.

But you say, “We know that there is a remnant of faithful believers within the church. However, the denomination as a whole has become so lukewarm that God is not now working to bring people into the church.” This observation is upheld by Sister White who said: “The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted, and those who were once converted, but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?”¹

The question is not simply, “What is our current spiritual condition?” The real issue is whether there is a remedy, and what will be our response to the remedy. We have known for over 100 years what the remedy is and where it is to be found. See Revelation 3:18–22. The problem is that we have never implemented a plan for the remedy to heal us spiritually.

The time has come when both church leaders and self-supporting ministries need to implement a plan, based upon that passage which spells out the remedy, to prepare our people for the latter rain and the soon return of Christ. Currently, we are not ready for either. As a church we are further from heaven now than we were when our pioneers were waiting for Jesus to return on

October 22, 1844. There was a consecration then that we have not seen since. We need to regain that vision of a holy people. We need to be charged with the Holy Spirit daily. We need to speak more about Jesus and His soon return. We need to learn to abide in Him and practice His presence all day long.

I welcome any conference official, any local pastor, any elder of the church, or any precious member of God’s remnant church to contact us on preparing for heaven. If we fail to prepare our people for eternity, we are of all people most to be pitied.

We have the truth, but do our members know how to defend the truth? Do we know how to live the truth? The time is coming when all of us will be tested. Every doctrine will be scrutinized. Are we ready? What tools do the churches have to help our members to defend the truth? Are revival meetings being conducted to help our people live victorious Christian lives? If not, then let us do something about it.

Remember, good intentions will not finish the work. Good intentions do not prepare our people for heaven. We must plan to go to heaven. We must plan to proclaim the truth for this time. We must plan to defend the faith. Plan, plan, plan – and then put those plans into action! Let us do it. Contact us. Let us go home to heaven! ✠

Jeff Wehr, Associate Editor

References:

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 371; see also *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 455.

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 to continue to be faithful to God and His cause.

It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of *Our Firm Foundation* to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days that yet remain of this world are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.
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Large Print Edition: US \$45
Audio subscription: (2 cassettes per month) US \$60 per year. For foreign subscriptions, please inquire regarding postage.

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The Garden of the Heart

Alane Waters

If you could choose any place to live for the rest of your life, what environment would you choose—the country, the seaside, the wilderness, a cave?

We recently discussed this question in our home, and pondering it, I concluded that a garden would be my best choice. If you have ever been in a beautiful garden, you know how you are drawn to studying the delicate flowers more carefully, and marveling at the lofty trees and the finely sculptured hedges. It is simply a beautiful environment! What peace you feel while beholding the things of nature that reflect the loveliness and goodness of their Creator!

In this study about cultivating Christian character in our children, we will use the garden as our lesson book, for there are many parallels between the garden and the heart.

Let me ask you a question: What individual is necessary in order to maintain a beautiful garden?—A

gardener, someone who will oversee the work of planning and caring for the garden. He does not necessarily have to do all the work himself, but he must be responsible to see that the grass is cut, the hedges trimmed, the weeds pulled out, and the flower bulbs planted in the right season.

As parents, the Lord has given us children whom we are to nurture and train for His glory. We are to be the gardeners of their hearts, responsible for tending and fertilizing the soil, that the good fruits of Christian character will be produced. God wants to teach us, as gardeners, how to cultivate the soil of our child's heart to produce in it the loveliness of the character of Jesus Christ.

A Gift on Loan

Think of the experience of Amram and Jochebed. Remember when Pharaoh's daughter found their son Moses in the basket in the river, she asked for a Hebrew

woman to nurse the child for her? And so Amram and Jochebed were again given their child to raise for the Lord. Not only were they given the opportunity to raise that child, but they received wages for doing so. Isn't that wonderful?

In Exodus 2:9 the command was given to Jochebed: "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." These words were spoken by an Egyptian princess to Moses' mother, but they are applicable to all parents. David said, "Children are an heritage of the LORD." Psalms 127:3. Our children are a blessing from Heaven, but they are given to us simply on loan for a time that we might cultivate and prepare them for eternity.

We all get paid as parents to raise children, not in monetary wages, but in blessings far better than silver or gold. We are blessed by the relationship we develop with our children and from the satisfaction that we can gain in seeing that they are learning how to have a

personal walk with Jesus Christ. These and many more are the rewards that we receive on this earth; but the greatest reward will be when Jesus comes, and, together with our children, we can say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." Isaiah 25:9. Then the King of the universe will place a crown upon the head of our child, and He will say to him, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:21.

There is no occupation, profession, mission, or responsibility as great as has been given to us as parents to raise our children for the Lord. It is the greatest and holiest privilege that has ever been given to men and women, and whatever calls to take us away from that work must be subordinate to the first work that God has given us as parents.

How to Begin Gardening

Soon after my husband Tom and I were married, we decided to grow a garden. Neither of us had experience in gardening, but we enthusiastically set about the task of planting anyway. At harvest time we had a few tomatoes, a few peas, and even a few green beans, but our harvest was not even equivalent to our cost of planting the garden. Why? — Because we did not have a practical understanding of how to grow a garden.

Likewise, most of us become parents without any training or practical understanding of where to begin or how to cultivate our children's hearts. In God's Inspired Counsels we can find all the instruction we need. How well it would be if we would start implementing these important principles even before our first child is born! Yet many of us, not understanding this, find ourselves in the midst of parenting unprepared. Then we must begin wherever we are and move forward. Let us not be discouraged. Jesus has promised us, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength [the strength of the Almighty God] is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9. For

every one of us, God's grace is sufficient. When we realize that we are weak, and we call upon Him, He gives us His enduring strength.

I would like to share with you where we should begin. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, the Lord, speaking through Moses, said: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." From our first surrender in the morning, we

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are to allow Christ to work in us a practical example of knowing and receiving power to do the will of God as we train our children to walk with Him. When we are sitting at the meal table, when we are ironing the clothes, when it is family recreational time, when we are in family worship, when we go to bed, when we get up in the morning — all day long the Word of God is made practical, and the gospel becomes visible in the lives of every member of the family. Upon the firm foundation of God's Word alone, can the garden of the heart be made beautiful and fruitful.

Spiritual Tools

Now that we know we can receive power and instruction for successful gardening, what tools will we need? In a physical garden, we would need hoes, rakes, and hoses to water with — all kinds of tools to make our work efficient and effective — along with wheelbarrows to haul out that which is bad and to haul in the good soil. What are some of the tools that God has for us, as parents, to cultivate the garden of our children's hearts?

Prayer

Prayer is probably the most important tool that God has given us. In prayer we have the opportunity to commune with God — to tell Him our needs and our desires. Through prayer the power of Heaven is available to help us as we work for our children. How often we lose that power because we neglect this most powerful tool to win the hearts of our children!

We need to be earnest in praying for our children, asking God to give us wisdom to know how to rightly perform the task He has given to us.

We need to be specific in our prayers, pleading with God to show us how we can help our children overcome their particular weak traits of character and develop the qualities that they are lacking. Prayer is vitally important! We need to ask God to give us wisdom to see things that we have been ignorant of thus far, because we may have been blinded to the little weed seeds of sin beginning to take root in our children's hearts that would someday grow to be very destructive.

Sometimes weeds are very attractive. Where we live we have beautiful weeds that look very harmless, especially when they are young and tender. There are sometimes character traits in our children that we may not perceive to be damaging, but, if left to grow, they will become overpowering and destructive to our children. I will give you one simple example from my own experience:

I greet Mary at the door and say to my daughter, "Allison, say 'hello' to Mary." Allison looks at Mary and then turns around and hides behind me.

Have you ever had that experience? What excuse do we parents

use?—We say, “She is shy.” True shyness—a meek and quiet spirit—is something to be recognized as an attribute of Heaven. Yet true shyness is never disrespectful or disobedient. Instead, I should teach my child to so love and trust her parents that when I ask her to say “Hello” to Mary, she can say, “Hello, Mary,” even though she may be very meek.

Initially, when we see the false shyness, as we have just described, it does not look too bad; we may even think it is cute. But how often, after we excuse our children’s behavior because they are “shy,” within minutes they become loud and disruptive and do all sorts of things that are far from being truly shy. So God wants to give us, as gardeners, wisdom to see that there are little weeds that are creeping up

ever, it seemed as though the harder I tried, and the more earnestly I prayed, the more situations came up which tested my patience beyond the limit. One day in particular I had been praying, and I could sense the Spirit of God calling to my heart to subdue myself. However, about four o’clock in the afternoon, one of my children did some little thing that brought me over the edge, and I lost my patience. Instantaneously, the old fleshly habit that I had developed, flooded out, and I spoke hastily.

After I lost my patience, I was heartbroken, and said, “Lord, I did it again!” I went out and took a long walk, crying out to the Lord in my heart, “Why can’t I be patient? I have been praying and praying and praying, but You are not answering

kinds of candies: one was M&M’s with peanuts and the other was Tootsie Rolls. I recognized that God was saying, “Those are not good for you. You do not need them.” But even though I denied it, this habit had a lot of control over me.

Day after day during my break times at work, I went down to the hospital’s gift shop. The attractively packaged little candies seemed to have a way of coaxing my hand into my pocket to pull out a little bit of money. Upon recognizing that this was a weakness in my appetite, I surrendered, and then by God’s grace, I experienced victory in that area.

However, just because we may have victory over something for even as long as ten years, does not mean that at some point the temptation will not return. A couple of years ago I was in the checkout line at the store. Having not eaten for some time, I was feeling rather hungry. All of a sudden I saw a Tootsie Roll, and immediately a thought came to me: “Why don’t you just get it? Your family is not with you. They will never know the difference! It will give you a quick energy boost, and you can be on your way.” Now, the flesh wanted to say, “Yes, that would be kind of good just this one time. Your family would never know about it. Eating sugar is not a sin.” But the call came to my heart from the Spirit of God and said: “You really do not need that.” Then I prayed, “Lord, I do not want to displease or dishonor You in any way. Please help me.” And I made a firm resolve then and there to stay yielded to God and His will for me, and self was brought under the control of the heavenly powers.

God is calling parents to recognize that self-control in our lives is a tool that not only works in our hearts, but also influences our family as we work with the garden of our children’s hearts.

Truth

Another tool that is necessary is truth. What is *truth*? Truth is exemplified in the life of Christ. That

At one time I thought I was extremely patient. . . . Then I had children!. Suddenly, meekness and patience started to dissolve, and I saw a part of my character that I had never seen before.

in the characters of our children that we are not as sensitive to as we should be. It is through the tool of prayer that we may ask God to give us the insight that we need to help our children develop righteous characters.

Patience

Our second tool is inexhaustible patience. Is that a character trait you have? At one time I thought I was extremely patient. My coworkers in the nursing unit where I worked commended me for my patience with an occasional arrogant physician, aggressive nurse, edgy family member, or the patients themselves. These experiences reaffirmed how very patient and forbearing it seemed I was. Then I had children! Suddenly, meekness and patience started to dissolve, and I saw a part of my character that I had never seen before.

Recognizing my weakness, I sincerely desired to change. How-

my prayer, Lord. What is wrong with me?” The Lord spoke to my heart, “I am answering your prayer. I am trying to help you to cultivate patience by allowing circumstances to come that will bring you ever closer to Me, so that you will be dependent upon Me through these experiences.”

Friends, we all face an adversary who is busy with his hellish host trying to sow tares and weeds in the hearts of our children. God is calling us to develop patience.

Self-Control

The next tool that we need is self-control. If we expect our children to have this quality of Christ, then we must begin to develop self-control ourselves. Our feelings, emotions, and even our appetite, must be brought under the control of the power of God.

I have struggled to win victories in this area as most of you have also. At one time I really liked two

means that we parents, as gardeners, must spend time daily in the Word of God to learn what is the truth. It is more than doctrine—much more than a set of beliefs. Truth is the revelation of God’s principles through a living connection with Christ—a connection that affects how we live our daily lives.

Solomon says, “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.” Proverbs 20:13. God wants to wake us up to our need, and He leads us to seek the solution in His Word and through communion with Him in prayer. Then we can gain an experience with Christ that will enable us to exemplify truth in our homes. Many of us say what is true, but our lives do not correspond with what our mouth speaks. To possess the truth means that we live what we say—we keep His Word, and we teach and train our children to do the same.

Some time ago we went on a trip to Australia. A few days before we were to leave, there was a severe cold snap where we live. Temperatures dropped to 20 below zero, and, even though it was early in the season, the water in the lakes and ponds nearby froze solid. As a family we enjoy ice skating, and so the day before we were to leave on our trip, the children asked, “Wouldn’t it be fun to go ice skating?” We discussed it as a family and agreed that we would go ice skating that afternoon, at a certain time, on one condition: that the things that needed to be done were completed by the time we expected to leave.

When the afternoon came, our children had faithfully completed all the tasks they had been given to do, and so, as we had promised, the entire family went ice skating together. It would have been easy for my husband and me to rationalize: “Well, we said that we could go, but there are so many things we need to do before we leave on our trip tomorrow! The children will have other opportunities when we return.” However, God wants us to

teach our children the importance of telling the truth by giving them a living example. Successful home government is one of steadiness and evenness.

Sympathy

Sympathy is another tool we parents need for our children. We should not pamper or indulge them, but godly sympathy gives us an understanding of their waywardness. We do not condone, ignore, or accept their wrong behavior, but we understand why our children struggle with pride or slothfulness or with a lack of self-control.

It is very helpful when we are dealing with our children to show sympathy and understanding for a misdeed. We can say, “Honey, I understand why that was hard for you. I have had things like that happen to me, but God says that He can give us victory over that. Even if your sister did not treat you right,

learn the foundations of music. So that is where I focused my attention in my instruction of the girls. When they wanted to skip from song to song, I could sympathize with why they wanted to move on, but I shared my experience with them and said, “No, I want you to do it again, and again, and again, until you know each piece very well.” Being sympathetic toward them, while still requiring them to master the foundations of music, has allowed them to advance far beyond my ability. That is just a little example of the tool of sympathy and how it can work in our hearts and homes.

Insight

In addition to these, we need to consider the tool of insight. Sympathy and insight go hand in hand. Insight allows us to know how our children are feeling. We can learn to be sensitive and ask the Lord to help

True sympathy helps us to see a situation through the eyes of our children, and it makes us willing to listen to their point of view, to give guidance, and not to get into a debate or a rebuttal.

and though your brother spoke unkindly, what matters is that you learn how to have victory in Christ in these difficult situations.” True sympathy helps us to see a situation through the eyes of our children, and it makes us willing to listen to their point of view, to give guidance, and not to get into a debate or a rebuttal.

While teaching my daughters to play the piano in our home, I had an opportunity to practice using this tool. Typically, when children are learning to play an instrument, they want to play a song three or four times and then move on to something new. That is the way I was when I took music lessons. After five years of studying music, I could not play the piano well because no one had ever challenged me to stick with anything long enough to solidly

us minister to them. Jesus says to us through James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.” James 1:5.

Sometimes I may say, “How is school going for you right now?” because I see my child looking out the window at all the beautiful new snow that is coming down in heaps. Insight says, “I know that she is thinking, ‘I can hardly wait to get out there on a sled and go down the hill and have a great time!’ ” Recognize that, and call her thoughts and attention back to the work at hand. It is not difficult to help the children refocus when they start to waver, if you have the insight to know why they are struggling.

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Self-Discipline Necessary to Parents

Ellen G. White

It is the work of parents to educate and discipline themselves, in order that they may educate and discipline their children. Let parents remember that they have transmitted to their children their own hereditary tendencies. Let them deal sharply with themselves as they see themselves mirrored in the dispositions of their children. Let parents open the door of their own hearts to Jesus, that His love and grace may take possession of the soul, and bring their will and ways into conformity to Christ's will and ways; then they will be able to impart divine instruction to their children.

It is a mistake for parents to notice every little defect in the manners of their children. They should not criticize them continually, but when they see wrong traits of character developing, they should make most strenuous efforts to correct the wrong by strengthening traits of an opposite nature. If you

roughly lay hold on these disagreeable developments, and battle with them concerning their objectionable traits, you will be in danger of causing two evils to exist in trying to eradicate one. When children are inclined toward evil, seek to draw their minds away from the things that will mar them, and turn their attention in a different channel.

If you would train a precious pink, or rose, or lily, how would you minister to it? Ask the gardener by what process he makes every branch and leaf to flourish so beautifully, to develop in symmetry and loveliness. He will tell you that it was by no rude touch, no violent effort, for this would only break the boughs, but by little attentions oft repeated. He moistened the soil and protected the plants from the fierce blasts and from the scorching sun, and God, by His miraculous power, caused the plants to flourish and to blossom into loveliness. Parents should follow the method of the gardener in

dealing with their children, and if the grace of Christ is in the heart, parents will seek in various ways to educate and train their children, to fashion their characters after the divine Model. Parents should not be satisfied until they see the image of the Divine in the characters of their children. They may give God all the glory for their success, because it has been the grace of Jesus Christ that has made the fathers and mothers wise to train their children.

That cannot be a happy home where love is not cultivated between husband and wife, between parents and children. If parents have been self-centered, and have trained their children in an atmosphere where love was not manifested in affectionate words and actions, then change the atmosphere of your home as quickly as possible. Let husbands love their wives, and let the wives see that they reverence their husbands. See Ephesians 5:33. The plan of salvation was devised in order to

transform the natural character, and fashion it after the divine image. When the grace of Christ is received in the heart, it will soften whatever is harsh, and subdue that which is coarse and unkind. Courtesy will be expressed in the affairs of home life. Let father and mother remember that they themselves are but grown-up children. Though great light has shone upon their pathway, and they have had long experience, yet how easily are they stirred to envy, jealousy, and evil surmisings! Because of their own mistakes and errors, they should learn to deal gently with their erring children.

Just as you conduct yourself in your home life, you are registered in the books of heaven. He who would become a saint in heaven, must first become a saint in his own family. If fathers and mothers are true Christians in the family, they will be useful members of the church, and will be able to conduct affairs in the church and in society after the same manner in which they conduct their family concerns. Parents, let not your religion be simply a profession, but let it become a reality. When truth is brought into the inner sanctuary of the soul, it has a wonderful and powerful effect upon the life. It will expel the love of self, indulgence of self, hastiness and petulance of temper, sensitiveness, and pride. These are the things that drive Christ from the heart, and when they are manifested in the life, the professors of religion cannot experience that noble joy that makes the servant of Christ free. He who professes to love the truth, and yet does not bring it into practical life, is bearing a heavy yoke. He admits the principles of truth to be right, and yet fails to carry them out in his actions, and thus cuts off his influence. He is subject to various caprices of his own natural character, and robs God of the service for which he was purchased by the precious blood of Christ.

Until Christianity is planted in the heart, it cannot control the life, for it is the evil in the heart that must be corrected. It is not enough to have a form of godliness without

holiness to the Lord, for it is like cleansing the outside of the cup while impurities remain within. A belief of doctrines, however pure they may be, will not save a soul from death, unless they are brought into contact with the life. The heart must be purified through obedience to the truth.

Parents, you need to study your Bibles in order to know how to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You cannot continue to indulge in your fitful manner of managing your children, and yet be accounted as true and faithful before God. You must watch for the souls of your children as those that must give an account. You should consider it your duty before God to educate your children in some useful employment. They

are set on things above, and not on things on the earth? The heart is the citadel of the whole man, and, until the heart is wholly on the Lord's side, the enemy will find his stronghold there, and no human power can dislodge him. The Lord alone can do this work.

There are many professed Christian parents whose souls are preoccupied with so many other things that there is no room in the soul temple for the presence of Jesus. They have given to their idols the devotion that is due alone to God. The door of the heart is closed against the truth, and Christ is misrepresented in spirit, in character, and in actions. Their children are unconverted, wayward, and pleasure loving, and no recommendation to the truth. Should some of

Just as you conduct yourself in your home life, you are registered in the books of heaven. He who would become a saint in heaven, must first become a saint in his own family.

cannot be permitted to spend their lives in amusing themselves simply, without being exposed to temptation. You should train your children to orderly habits, teaching them to bear responsibilities according to their years. You should train them also in habits of economy, instructing them to bind about their wants and restrict their desires for indulgence in dress and holiday pleasures.

Parents who profess to believe the truth should earnestly strive for the salvation of their children, teaching them, both by precept and example, that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 111:10. It is with God, who looks upon the heart, that we have to do. Have the parents given the whole heart to God? Have parents appreciated the countless blessings He has bestowed? Have they educated themselves in presenting gratitude offerings to God in response for all His blessings until their affections

these youth be cut down with disease and have no opportunity to repent, they would be lost, forever lost. They are indulging in worldly follies and pleasures, and this will not give their souls a fitness for the society of heavenly angels. Souls are perishing because they have not an experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Many sit under the sound of the gospel, but they do not take it as the truth, because parents keep practical religion apart from their lives. The glad tidings that should awaken every soul is of none effect to them. They are pointed to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, but they say, There will be time enough tomorrow, and the bewitching power of sin holds them firmly in its grasp. As they cannot serve Christ and the world at the same time, they choose the service of sin and receive its wages.

My brethren and sisters, will you not face heavenward? Will you not

open the chambers of the mind to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness? Will you not open the door of the heart, and welcome Jesus in? There is healing in His

embrace your own household, but will flow out to those around you in the church and the world. We do not plead for a manifestation of what the world calls courtesy, but

the daily life of our Saviour, and were revealed in all the associations which He cherished! There never was so perfect an illustration of genuine courtesy as that which was exemplified in the life of Jesus. He bids parents to come unto Him and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart. See Matthew 11:28–29. He says to the children, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” Mark 10:14. Send them not to the rabbis, send them not to the Pharisees, but take the little children to Jesus for instruction and discipline. ✠

There never was so perfect an illustration of genuine courtesy as that which was exemplified in the life of Jesus.

wings. He will create the kindness and love in your hearts that should be cherished and exhibited in your family, and this love will not only

for that courtesy which everyone will take with him to the mansions of the blessed. Oh, what rays of softness and beauty shone forth in

Signs of the Times, May 7, 1894.

The Garden of the Heart

continued from page 7

Unity

Another tool that is vitally important is that of unity between husband and wife in the parenting relationship. If we have a garden and there are two gardeners of equal importance who do not agree on how the garden is to look, then the garden will not turn out to be very beautiful. So it is in the garden of our children’s hearts: a lack of unity causes confusion.

My husband Tom and I have come to an agreement in our home. At times we may see things differently, but we have agreed that we will not move forward until we are united. Sometimes this has meant that we have had to go back and study God’s Word to find the correct answer. Sometimes we discover that both of us have been wrong, even though each of us thought we knew exactly what we should do and that we could prove it from the Word of God. Through prayer, true surrender, and study, the Lord corrects our misunderstandings and leads us to the right principles that we should follow.

Unity has been a tremendous blessing in our home; it helps us to work together as allies – instead of not working together and becoming more like enemies.

Faithfulness

The last tool we will study is faithfulness. Most of us have heard something that sounded good, and we were inspired to jump into it with both feet and move forward. Of course, we should have zeal as Christians, yet all too often in a day or two we find ourselves mentally, spiritually, or physically exhausted. And then discouragement sets in. Have you ever felt that way?

The prophet Elijah appears to have had such an experience. After the mighty victory the Lord gave him on Mt. Carmel, he seemed invincible! But a day or two later, where was he? – Running away from an angry woman and saying to the Lord, “Take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” 1 Kings 19:4. What did God say to him? – “What doest thou here, Elijah?” Verse 9. God was not done with Elijah, and He has not given up on us either.

Faithfulness means that if we find ourselves defeated by our adversary in a weak moment, and discouragement is setting in upon us, we say, “Lord I fell; forgive me; help me to stand up on my feet and start all over again right here and right now.” It is easy to languish for

days in discouragement, but every moment we spend in discouragement gives the devil that much more opportunity to ravage our homes and children. God wants to raise us up! Be faithful in the littlest of things. Even if you have failed in an area, start where you are and ask the Lord to help you move forward in the work of cultivating the garden of your children’s hearts.

Each day we should strive to do the work with the tools God has given us for our homes. When we recognize, study, and apply these tools, the Lord will help us accomplish faithfully the all-important responsibility we have to raise our children to bring glory to God. When we start each day surrendering to Christ and cooperating with His Spirit to live out His will in our decisions, then God will be pleased with the harvest from our homes. ✠

Tom and Alane Waters, of Restoration International, reside in Eureka, Montana. They have dedicated their lives full-time to reaching all people with the practical gospel.

In upcoming issues of Our Firm Foundation, Alane will present various good character traits and some practical ways on how we can cultivate them in our children’s hearts. – The Editors



Rest

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Genesis 2:2-3.

Of course, God did not rest on the seventh day because He was tired or fatigued. To rest simply means to cease a particular activity. In this case God had ceased His work of Creation and was sanctifying (setting apart) the seventh day for something else—namely, fellowship with Adam and Eve as they enjoyed the newly created earth together. Thus, the seventh day was set apart for all time, and ever after it was to be kept holy as a reminder of the truth about our earth's Creation and as a day to worship God.

Notice that with the Creation of our world, activity preceded rest. The principle of activity preceding rest is an important one for our health. Physical and mental activity both require energy and create waste

products. As our energy level goes down and wastes accumulate, we experience fatigue and a desire for rest. During rest, energy is restored, and the waste buildup is diminished. An important difference between physical and mental activity is that physical activity usually leaves the muscles relaxed, whereas prolonged mental activity alone leaves the muscles tense. Rest and sleep are dependent upon our ability to relax; the person who is tense is not relaxing, and therefore cannot really rest. In our sedentary society, unbalanced by too much mental and not enough physical activity, we need more muscular exercise in order to truly relax, rest, and counteract fatigue.

Fatigue is protective in that it serves to make us aware of our need of rest. It is not a good idea to ignore this signal or to try to counteract it with drugs. The "coffee break" is anything but restful. Coffee and cigarettes provide an artificial stimulation, but no recuperation. Therefore, the underlying fatigue is still there. As fatigue increases, efficiency and performance decrease.

Relaxing with tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs is not recommended. They all have dangerous side effects and do not teach one how to relax naturally or how to avoid the causes of tension. They do not supply any energy, but actually cause the person to borrow excessive amounts of energy from his own emergency reserves, some of which is never replenished. Fatigue is actually increased instead of decreased by the use of these drugs.

There are many other factors that can produce fatigue, such as overeating, lack of exercise, stress, stale air, and not drinking enough water. There is also "pathological fatigue" that may be caused by diseases like anemia, heart failure, depressed thyroid or adrenal function, cancer, or any chronic infection. Unaccountable or persistent fatigue should be reported to a physician.

In spite of our fatigue we are a very recreational society. We have recreational vehicles, recreational halls, recreational parks, and on and on. The workweek has shortened over the years. Some industries are moving toward a 30-hour workweek and are beginning to experiment with a 20-hour workweek. Our leisure time is lengthening, and there is more money to spend—or at least there is credit. Is all our recreating helping us obtain the rest we need? To help ourselves, let us first learn to pronounce the word a new way. Instead of "wreckreation," let us say "re-creation." For those of us who are tired of feeling "wrecked" after our recreation, here are some suggestions for "re-creative" activities: Make them something different from your usual work, done at your own pace and with no deadlines. Of course, you should enjoy them! Something of a practical or creative nature is ideal. Having the activity be something outdoors with the family is nice, but it should be noncompetitive and engaged in with the whole heart—cheerfully, not grudgingly—for the best results. The less expensive the better. It should be engaged in more frequently for shorter durations,

rather than saving it all up for a two-week annual vacation. How many come home from their vacation needing a vacation to recuperate from their vacation?

Our "re-creation" could even come on a weekly basis. After all, God Himself worked six days and then rested the seventh. He invites us to do the same today. We all need a rest, a break, from the routine of our major activity. For the logger or construction worker, a rest could mean sitting down with a good book. However, for the salesman or secretary, resting might mean an invigorating hike in the mountains.

Our ability to rest also depends upon our ability to shift gears. Some people take their work home. They can pick up work, but they cannot lay it down. They seem unable to cease. We should be able to say, along with the one-hundred-year-old man, who when asked his secret of long life, responded, "When ah works, ah works hard, and when ah sits, ah sits loose-like."

Other ways to help bring relaxation include: taking a warm bath or a shower, sitting or reclining comfortably while listening to soothing music, or reading something uplifting. Enjoyable, nonstressful hobbies, being out in nature, doing some simple deed for somebody else, and prayer are also forms of relaxation.

Physical work usually makes muscular relaxation automatic afterward. Yet it is surprising how much useless muscular tension we can maintain. Clenched fists and set jaws, furrowed brows and jumpy knees, even squinting eyes are tension-producing habits to overcome. Progressive muscle-relaxation exercises can help in breaking these habits, as long as they are used to illustrate the difference between how a tense and a relaxed muscle feels and to practice relaxing areas of tension. However, many teachers today use progressive, muscle relaxation, as well as transcendental meditation, autogenous training, hypnosis, biofeedback, deep-breathing exercises, and visualization

exercises to elicit the "relaxation response." The so-called relaxation response is basically another name for a particular altered state of consciousness with a high alpha brainwave index. When we train ourselves to enter into this state to help us relax, there may be some unhealthful side effects, such as brain damage, insanity, and spiritualistic or "psychic" phenomena. These techniques that overtly or covertly teach people to enter into an "alpha state" are not necessary for health or to relax, especially when there are equally effective and safe methods, such as we have already recommended.

Rest is so important to life that the vital organs are designed with built-in rest periods. The heart rests between each beat, and the lungs rest between each breath. The stomach rests between each meal if it is given time. The central nervous system is recharged during sleep.

Rest and relaxation cannot take the place of sleep. Human beings were designed to be awake during the day and asleep at night. We are "larks," not "owls." Wakefulness and sleepiness are normally controlled by enzymes and hormone systems within the body which remain fairly fixed, even if one were to remain isolated in total darkness or total light. These "internal clocks" can be nudged forward or backward a few degrees, or even ignored, but not without negative consequences.

It is better to avoid rotating-shift work. Such workers are twice as likely to have trouble sleeping. They report less job satisfaction and have lower work productivity. They tend to use more coffee to get going and more alcohol and sleeping pills to go to sleep. Many shifts rotate in the wrong direction. It is better to go from days to evening to nights (rotating clockwise), and not the other way around (days to nights to evenings—rotating counterclockwise). Also, most shifts rotate too frequently. Workers should stay on a shift at least ten days, since it takes about five days to adapt. The more slowly the shift rotates the better.

The following additional suggestions may be helpful: Gradually change the hours of sleep when nearing the end of the shift, and during days off between shifts, adjust back clockwise three hours per day in anticipation of the next shift so that the change is not quite so drastic. Eliminate alcohol, caffeine, and other drugs that complicate and confuse the body's normal functioning. Practice strict regularity in all aspects of the daily schedule, even on the days off.

With increased air travel, jet lag becomes a problem for many. To reduce jet lag, get enough sleep before you leave; eat little while in flight, and take no alcohol or caffeine; reset your watch to your new time zone; and adapt to your new time by walking, talking, and keeping occupied till bedtime.

As a rule, plan to go to bed early (before 10 P.M.). It has been estimated that every hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after midnight. Studies have shown 7-9 hours of sleep per night to be the most healthful. Nine or more hours have been associated with decreased health, and six or less with the poorest health.

The first prerequisite for a good night's sleep is daily exercise. Remember, activity precedes rest. In our sedentary society imbalances between physical and mental activity are common. Too much brainwork and not enough physical work cause the muscles to be in a state of tension. However, too much exercise too near bedtime can keep you awake. Tension lessens the depth and soundness of sleep. The quality of sleep depends upon the ability to relax. City living, with all its light and sound, is not very conducive to sleep or rest. Noise pollution is doubling about every ten years. We may not even be aware of all the sounds that are around us, but they can still affect us by producing tension and nervousness.

It is better to wear pajamas or a warm nightgown and to use lighter-

weight covers than heavy blankets. Do not cover the head while sleeping. Leave the windows open several inches to allow fresh air in the room. Beds should not sag or be too soft. Pillows should be flat, except in cases of hiatus hernia or heart failure, in which the head should be elevated a few inches. Avoid starting new activities late in the day. Allow yourself time to wind down. Have an evening ritual. Avoid stimulants such as television, drugs, and rich, spicy foods at night before going to bed. Big evening meals interfere with good sleep, especially in children. If needed, naps should be taken before lunch—not in the evening. Even a fifteen-minute rest before lunch is worth about forty-five minutes of nighttime sleep. Drink plenty of water. Stay alert and active during the waking hours. The quieter and darker the room, the better the sleep. Patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease may do better sleeping on their stomach with a pillow under their chest. People with back problems can try sleeping on their side. All these suggestions should improve the quality of sleep.

Sleeping pills alter the sleep cycle and decrease sleep in the Rapid Eye Movement (REM) phase. As the body tries to make up the lost REM sleep, too-frequent dreaming and nightmares occur which disturb the sleep even further. Thus, the regular use of sleeping pills does not promote good sleep and can make insomnia worse. Sleep complaints should be considered as any other health problems—they are only symptoms. The cause should be ascertained and corrected. Is the problem acute or chronic? Keep a weekly 24-hour log. Compare your living habits with ones that promote good sleep, such as those suggested in this article. Not following good "sleep hygiene" habits is responsible for 60 percent of all such disorders. Daytime drugs—prescription and/or the over-the-counter type—affect us at night too. Be aware that anxiety is the chief cause of insomnia, whereas depression

tends to cut sleep short in the mornings.

The most outstanding symptoms of sleep loss are depression and apathy, interspersed with irritability and aggression. The best way to recover from a bad night is to resume the normal schedule. If a nap is needed, it should be short—no more than 30 minutes, and not in the evening.

Those who still have trouble falling asleep can try a little hops or catnip tea before bedtime. Slow, deep breathing or soaking in a neutral bath for ten minutes before going to bed may help. Blot the skin dry and move slowly and quietly. Do not panic. Worrying and concentrating on sleeping will drive it from you. Just resting in bed will do you good anyway.

Yet let us face it, when there is a serious concern on our minds, these tactics are like aiming a peashooter at a charging elephant. The cause of the concern must be squarely dealt with. If it is an interpersonal problem, then make things right as fast as you can. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Ephesians 4:26. If it is a financial problem or some other circumstance that is threatening, we need to do our part and leave the remainder with God. Remember, to rest means to cease from our activity. It also means to cease from our worries and cares of the day. We are given only one day at a time, and no one knows what the next day will bring. It could be better than we think—especially if we heed the invitation of a loving God:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30.

Pleasant dreams! ✨

Kurt Unglaub, M.P.H., wrote this article while he was an instructor at Life Abundant Missionary Institute. He is now working as an instructor at Laurelwood Academy in Oregon.

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Spanish?

Do you know someone who knows Spanish?

Here are a few Spanish publications available from Hope International:



Preparación para la Eternidad (Preparing for Eternity)

by Ron Spear \$4.⁹⁵

Are you preparing for Christ to come? Do you want to receive eternal life? Here is a collection of Spirit of Prophecy passages that will give you direction and encouragement to stand fast amidst the confusion of today.

Dos Cristos Dentro de la Iglesia (Two Christs Within the Church)

by Marshall Grosboll 50¢

Why are there two different messages within the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding the human nature of Christ? Can we determine from God's Word what is the true message? Does it make a difference what we believe?

El Mensaje A Laodicea (The Message to Laodicea)

by Ron Spear \$3.²⁵

Is our lukewarm, Laodicean condition irrelevant to our eternal destiny? What is God's solution for His church in the last days?

Heraldos de Paz (Heralds of Peace)

by Ellen G. White \$2.⁷⁵

A collection of the latter chapters of *The Great Controversy*, especially focusing on the final conflict of God's people and their deliverance. Excellent for outreach!

¿Es Cierto Que Dios Mata? (Does God Kill?)

by Ron Spear \$1.⁰⁰

Some are teaching today that all destruction comes from sin and Satan—that God does not destroy. Is such a teaching Biblical? Can God be a loving God and still vindicate His character by destroying the wicked at the end of the millennium?

La Voz de la Autoridad (The Voice of Authority)

by Ron Spear \$1.²⁵

What establishes authority in God's remnant church? Is there abuse of authority in God's church? These questions and others are addressed by Ron Spear in this booklet.

Una Carta Abierta a los Miembros de la Asociación de Washington de los Adventistas del Séptimo Día (An Open Letter to the Members of the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) 25¢

This letter was written when the Washington Conference was recommending that the staff of Hope International and their families be disfellowshipped by the local churches. The first part, entitled "On Disciplining Hope International," was written by C. Mervyn Maxwell.

See page 3 for shipping and sales-tax information.

Record Breaking Disasters: A Sign of Christ's Soon Return

News Item: Today we are experiencing record-breaking floods, hurricanes, fires, and so forth. Notice how the following news items emphasize the record-breaking disasters of our day:

" 'We've never had five Category 4s all in one year before,' said Max Mayfield, deputy director of the National Hurricane Center. 'We've had 20 major hurricanes over the last five years, and that's a record.' "



www.abcnews.com/sections/science/DailyNews/hurricanes991130.html

"In the aftermath of the massive floods caused by Hurricanes Dennis and Floyd, authorities reported that at least 42 people had been killed and about 30,000 homes had been damaged, at least 1,600 beyond repair. Total property losses were estimated at \$6 billion, a record for a natural disaster in North Carolina, and with losses of at least \$1 billion, the state's farm economy was in shambles. By state estimates, the floods killed 2.4 million chickens, 500,000 turkeys and 230,000 hogs.

"Concerned by the threat to public health, state and local

officials were pushing hard to collect the rotting animal carcasses and burn them. . . .

"Many of the animal carcasses were floating down rivers full of raw sewage, pesticides, fertilizer and other chemicals – an environmental catastrophe in the making." *Newsweek*, October 4, 1999.

"Grief was mixed with growing anger in much of Mexico on Sunday as the death toll rose above 400 from landslides and flooding caused by record-breaking rain that has pummeled nine of Mexico's 31

states. More than 200,000 people have been driven from their homes along the Gulf Coast and in inland valleys." <http://www.latimes.com>

"The death toll in Vietnam's worst flooding in four decades is reported to have topped 300." *BBC News*, November 4, 1999.

"At 1:47 on Tuesday morning, Taiwan was slammed by a 7.6-magnitude earthquake. Centered near Puli, the quake left nearly 2,000 dead and at least 100,000 homeless, and toppled some 6,000 buildings." *TIME*, October 4, 1999.

"Deaths from AIDS reached a record 2.6 million in the past year – 2.2 million died in 1998 – and an estimated 5.6 million adults and

children were infected." *BBC News*, November 23, 1999.

End-Time Perspective: When Jesus explained to His disciples about the signs of His return, He included in this last-day prophetic picture: "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." Matthew 24:7. In the United States, these record-breaking disasters seemed to begin in 1988 with a drought that challenged the records of the scorching, bone-dry summers of the 1930s Dust Bowl. From that time on, meteorologists seemed to be talking in superlatives – the worst, the biggest! We had the worst ice storm of the century in 1998; we had the worst flood of the century in 1993 – the worst heat wave in Chicago in 1995, the worst East Coast blizzard in 1996, and the biggest outbreak of tornadoes in the history of Oklahoma in 1999. In 2000, the Western United States, stretching from Texas to California, and from Arizona to Montana, was scorched with the century's worst forest fires.

The consequences of these disasters are important. First, there was the loss of human life. Many of these victims have been buried in Christless graves. Second, there are the staggering losses in property damage. With damages running in the billions of dollars, we could see major insurance companies crumble. Third, there is the threat to public health. Epidemics could easily be the result of some of these natural disasters. Fourth, there is the belief that these disasters are an expression of God's wrath against an immoral nation. The tragic human remedy will be "to appease God" through religious legislation.

While we expect record-breaking disasters to continue until the Sunday laws are enacted, it stands to reason that such disasters will intensify after the Sunday laws are passed. The devil would like nothing better than to bring wave after wave of disasters to put teeth into the Sunday laws. God's



Have a news item of interest?

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To mail or fax us a copy, see page 3

Sabbathkeeping people will, of course, be blamed. But we must now learn to put our trust in the Lord. In the end, He will be our sole Support.

Rewriting History

News Item: David Barton, founder and CEO of Wallbuilders, Inc., is has distorted the history of our Founding Fathers.

Barton claims that James Madison wrote, "We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God." *Liberty Express*, Winter 2000.

End-Time Perspective: Did Madison really write such a statement? — No. Barton's erroneous quotation has been exposed as being fraudulent. Tragically, Barton is willing to mislead Evangelical Christians with fuzzy history about our Founding Fathers in order to justify their political thirst to return to the Puritan days of the union of church and state.

It will be important for us to separate the history and religious-political leanings of the Puritans from the spirit of religious liberty emanating from our Founding Fathers. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison were not Puritans. They were among our greatest Founding Fathers who handed us the greatest Constitution ever — established upon civil and religious freedom.

It is interesting to study how the Puritans, who planted the seeds for a new politic, and prepared the way for the American Revolution, had little impact on the genius of the American Constitution.

The Puritans had a longstanding interest in the union of the state with an established church, mandatory religious tests for public office, tax-supported clergy, church schools, and church edifices.

The Puritans' desire for a church-state system was in part due to their misconception of the millennium. They were pre-millennialists — believing that there would be a thousand years of peace on earth before the second coming of Christ. They saw the potential of a new nation becoming the New Israel. From the shores of the New World, they hoped and believed themselves to be the instruments in God's hand to establish this millennial reign of righteousness in our little world.

However, the Puritans were not the only ones with a dream. A growing number of enlightened rationalists had dreams of a secular utopia. America was to them a place of opportunity, which could become a nation built upon a comprehensive system of law, ensuring civil and religious freedom.

Once the British threat was gone, those of Puritan descent and the rationalists needed to hammer out a constitution for the new nation. The subject of religion sparked the most controversy. But the Puritan church-state system did not win the day. They wanted religious tests for public office and also tax-supported religious teachers and schools, but they did not get them.

The Framers of the American Constitution did refer to religion in two instances. First, they rejected the idea of a religious test for public office. Second, in the First Amendment, they provided freedom of religion for all Americans with no government interference — "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Church and State Separation—A Myth?

News Item: D. James Kennedy of the nationally televised Coral Ridge Ministries has been calling the separation of church and state a myth:

"Kennedy: 'Separation of church and state was intended to bar only the

establishment of a national church.' " *Liberty Express*, Winter 2000.

"Kennedy: 'Nowhere does the Constitution mention a separation of church and state.' " *Ibid.*

End-Time Perspective: It is true that there were proposals to the First Amendment that only prohibited a national church:

1. "Congress shall make no law establishing one religious sect or society in preference to others."

2. "Congress shall not make any law . . . establishing any Religious Sect or Society."

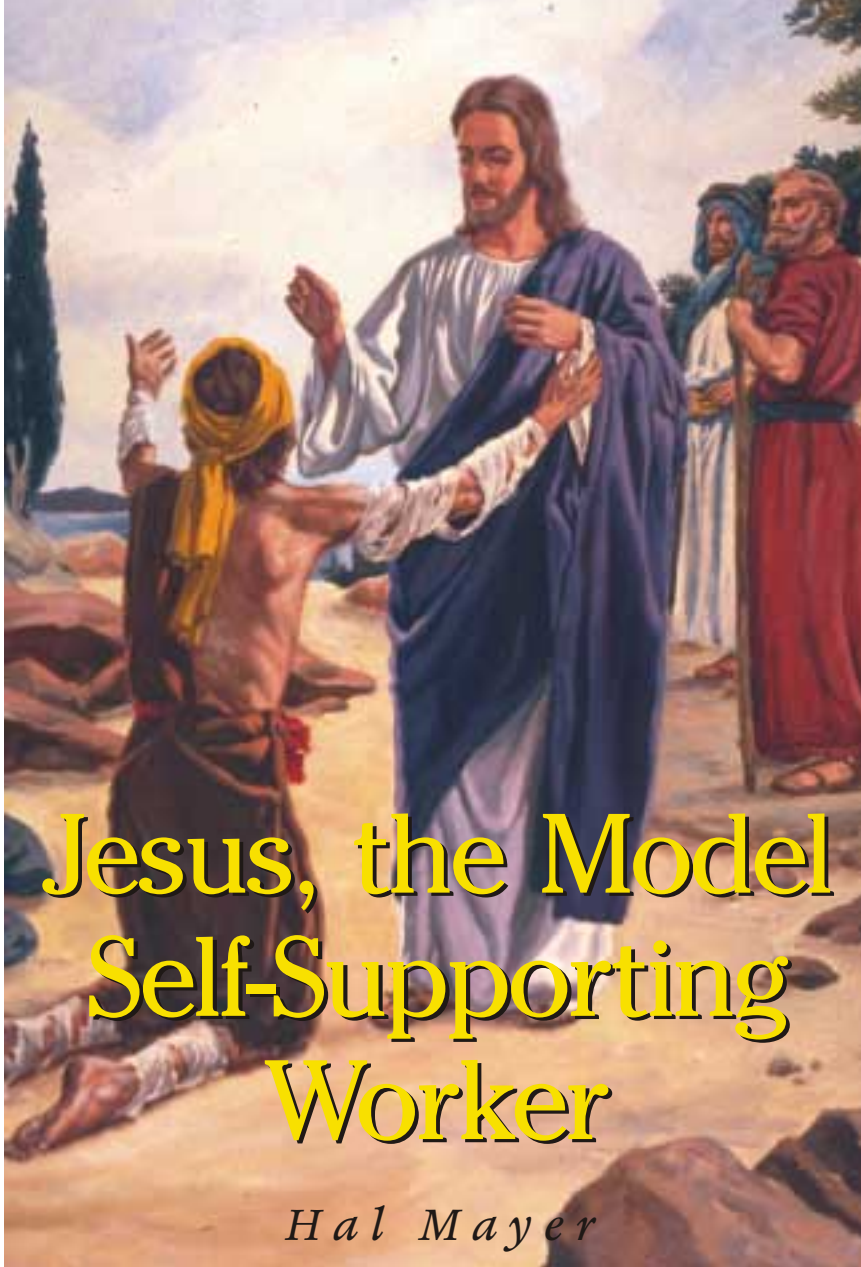
3. "Congress shall make no law establishing any particular denomination of religion in preference to another. . . ."

4. "Congress shall make no law establishing articles of faith or a mode of worship."

The Framers rejected each one of these proposals. Why? — Because they fell far short of the intent of the Framers. They did not want to simply deny Congress the power to enact "one religious sect or society in preference to others." The First Amendment was to prevent Congress from enacting any laws touching "religion."

By placing religion beyond the bounds of Congress, the Framers established the principle of "the separation of church and state." If our legislative bodies could enact religious laws, then does it not seem strange that God is not even mentioned once in the Constitution? Neither are God's holy Ten Commandments mentioned.

There are no laws prohibiting the worship of false gods, making graven images, or taking the Lord's name in vain. However, there are Sunday laws on the books. There should not be such laws. Yet we know what prophecy has declared. Men, with superhuman effort, will tear down the wall separating church and state in order to force their fellow men to worship on the spurious sabbath. It is tragic that so many of these well-meaning Christians have no idea where their efforts are tending. ❀



Jesus, the Model Self-Supporting Worker

Hal Mayer

Self-supporting work has often been viewed askance by many church leaders. Today is no exception. However, the present environment in the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church encompasses more than mere attitudes. Awareness of demands that self-supporting ministries and ministers unconditionally surrender to conference authority, and the litigation against disfellowshipped or separated believers, have placed questions in the minds of many thinking Seventh-day Adventists about the discernment of men in positions of trust.

Are we repeating the history of Israel in the way leaders are handling self-supporting churches and

ministries? What relationship did Jesus have with the leaders of His day?

Do you really want to be like Jesus?

There is much about Jesus that we naturally admire, such as His loving kindness and forgiveness. However, there are other things that many of us find painful and would rather not discuss, but we need to face the surprising and painful facts. If we really want to be like Jesus, then it may be necessary to change some of our thinking.

What was the relationship between Jesus and the “General Conference” leaders of His day?

Jesus never went to church school; rather, He was home-schooled. He did not graduate from any accredited denominational university. He never had the security of a “conference” job, salary, or future sustentation.

He worked as a self-supporter, and a very poverty-stricken one at that. He lived from hand to mouth. He accepted what people gave Him to eat. He never owned a house. He never owned a donkey, let alone a chariot in which to ride. He rarely slept in a bed, and even then is was under the roof of friends of the cause.

Jesus could not work for the church organization of His day, for the conference administration had placed so many restrictions on the leaders and people that He would not have been free to fulfill His mission.

Jesus came to a church that was steeped in apostasy and leading millions into hell! Not one school of that time was following God’s ideal. Not even the seminaries were willing to teach only the truth about God. The church had been in apostasy before, so seriously that Christ Himself had sent it into captivity to Babylon for a while. Now they were under the dominion of the Romans for similar reasons.

But this time, though the church leaders were very scrupulous about not bowing down to images and other forms of obvious idolatry, they were nevertheless devoid of the Spirit of God. *They had left the truth*, all the while claiming to believe the truth and to be looking for the first coming of the Messiah. They had restructured the truth into their own type of sin-and-live theology that fit their own hypocritical, selfish ideas.

Furthermore, the leaders had developed a theology that was built around the idea that you could only be saved if you were part of their organization—their structure. Those who were not in harmony with their ideas, or definitions of things, or those who would not come under their authoritative control, were disciplined or cast out—disfellowshipped. One example was

the blind man in John, chapter 9, who had been healed by Jesus. Notice in verses 37–38 that Jesus nevertheless accepted the worship of this disfellowshipped and outcast soul.

Politically Incorrect

Put yourself in the shoes of those religious leaders and imagine how they must have perceived Jesus. They would never have hired Him if He had applied for a position. To them, He was politically incorrect in so many ways. To start with, He did not come from the right lineage—the line of Levi. In fact, He could not even prove His legitimacy, and suspicions about the circumstances of His conception being out of wedlock were enough to prevent Him from being ordained into the rabbinical priesthood. What is more, He was from Nazareth—a place of “ill repute” among the elite of Israel.

As His life unfolded, He did other things that raised eyebrows. For example, when He went out to the river Jordan to be baptized by John, there were supernatural manifestations which, no doubt, raised questions in the minds of many church leaders.

He also associated with all the “wrong” people. His disciples were not “well chosen”—a publican (a hated traitor to the Israelite cause), some uneducated fishermen, and other unpromising men who would not accomplish much of anything—so they thought. Oh, yes, Judas was a “good” choice—though some said Jesus did not actually “choose” him. At least he would take astute care of the business affairs of Jesus’ “offshoot,” self-supporting ministry. To most onlookers it seemed that if anybody could make a go of His ministry, it was Judas.

How politically incorrect could one be? He went off to a village called Sychar to spend time talking with those despicable, half-pagan Samaritans, even though the unwritten code of conduct forbade any transactions with Samaritans that were not absolutely necessary. He stayed several days in their village, eating their food, and healing their

sick, and, He even talked with a woman of ill repute there.

Too Critical of the Church

Jesus seemed far too “critical” of the church and its leaders. He called the Pharisees and Sadducees hypocrites, whited sepulchers, blind guides, dumb dogs that will not bark, and other names which they thought were derogatory. He even accused them of being sons of the Devil. He was not going to make friends of important people by giving these stinging rebukes—even though He shed tears while saying them.

Not Discreet

Neither did it seem to many that Jesus was discreet. Do you remember the time when He was invited to a

leaders were self-defensive because He publicly pointed out their inconsistencies, and they felt that their self-esteemed authority was threatened. No wonder He did not get along very well with the leaders! He seemed to be too independent—too free. He persistently refused to recognize what the priests defined as “duly constituted church authority.”

In the minds of the “conservatives,” for example, He broke their Sabbath laws with impunity, and He seemed to show His disrespect for their laws by instructing others to break them. Remember the cripple whom He healed by the pool of Bethesda, telling him then to carry his bed? Never mind that He had healed the poor cripple—they were only concerned about His undermin-

The leaders were self-defensive because He publicly pointed out their inconsistencies, and they felt that their self-esteemed authority was threatened. No wonder He did not get along very well with the leaders!

feast at Rabbi Simon’s house, and a prostitute came in and made over Him as if He was some kind of a king? That just shows you the kind of people He associated with when He was not being watched, some thought. He even had the “audacity” to approve of her actions in front of everyone.

Subversive

The leaders thought He was subversive. He influenced the people not to trust them, by openly commenting on their inconsistencies: “All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” Matthew 23:3.

He also accused the leaders of being oppressive and inconsiderate: “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” Verse 4. The

ing of their authority to establish extra-biblical rules for religious life in their “Church Manual.” His touching of unclean lepers also was forbidden by the ritual cleanliness laws. Though He healed leprosy, the leaders did not want to verify the healing because they would then have to acknowledge His power, which would ultimately disengage their authority in the minds of the people.

Theological Problems

Jesus was full of theological ideas that were not compatible with the prevailing views held by the leaders of His day. For example, His famous “Ye have heard it said . . . but I say unto you. . . .” speech and other similar speeches really angered them, because He was in essence discrediting their teaching. Here are some examples:

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall

be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Matthew 5:21-22.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King." Matthew 5:33-35.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Matthew 5:38-39.

They may have even begun to suspect that He was trying to establish His own parallel church organization at their expense. After all, He gathered around Him large numbers of church people. He taught them things contrary to the prevailing teaching of the rabbis, thus undermining the support of the church. He commissioned His own missionaries and sent them out two by two. And could there not have been those suspicions that He was accepting tithes for His ministry? Compare 1 Corinthians 9:9-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Luke 10:7. What else could He be doing but positioning Himself to establish a parallel church?

Why do I rehearse this rather painful history?—Because somehow we have gotten the false idea that self-supporting reformers are

they finally could not tolerate Jesus any longer, and so decided to "bring Him down." They got their committees together to strategize and figure out a way to get rid of Him. They then appealed to the strong arm of the state and falsely accused Him before Judge Pilate of things He never did. They twisted His words and blatantly lied about Him. After an ordeal in which they revealed their true spirit, they got Pilate to crucify Him. In the process, they declared that they had no king but Caesar.

History Repeats Itself

Do you still think you want to be like Jesus, with all the rejection from church leaders and members, with all the accusations, misrepresentations, and mistreatment? Does God need self-supporting workers like Jesus today? Think about it. It is sobering. More than that, we must weep. God's church is infested with attitudes and practices that only come from the darkness of apostasy. The pit of my stomach hurts for my church. Imagine how Christ must feel. He weeps today like He wept so long ago as He rode toward Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37.

May God help us to be more like Jesus—faithful to the truth, uncompromising, yet sympathetic, unconcerned about internal politics and free from "the fear of the Jews" (see John 7:13), yet possessing great love for wayward leaders. We may suffer injustice, unkindness, hostility and even persecution—or prosecution—but let us remember that we are to "follow his steps." 1 Peter 2:21. ✠

Hal Mayer writes from Rapidan, Virginia, where he serves on the staff of Hartland Institute.

REFERENCES:

¹ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 127.

May God help us to be more like Jesus—faithful to the truth, uncompromising, yet sympathetic, unconcerned about internal politics and free from "the fear of the Jews," yet possessing great love for wayward leaders.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matthew 5:43-44.

Offensive

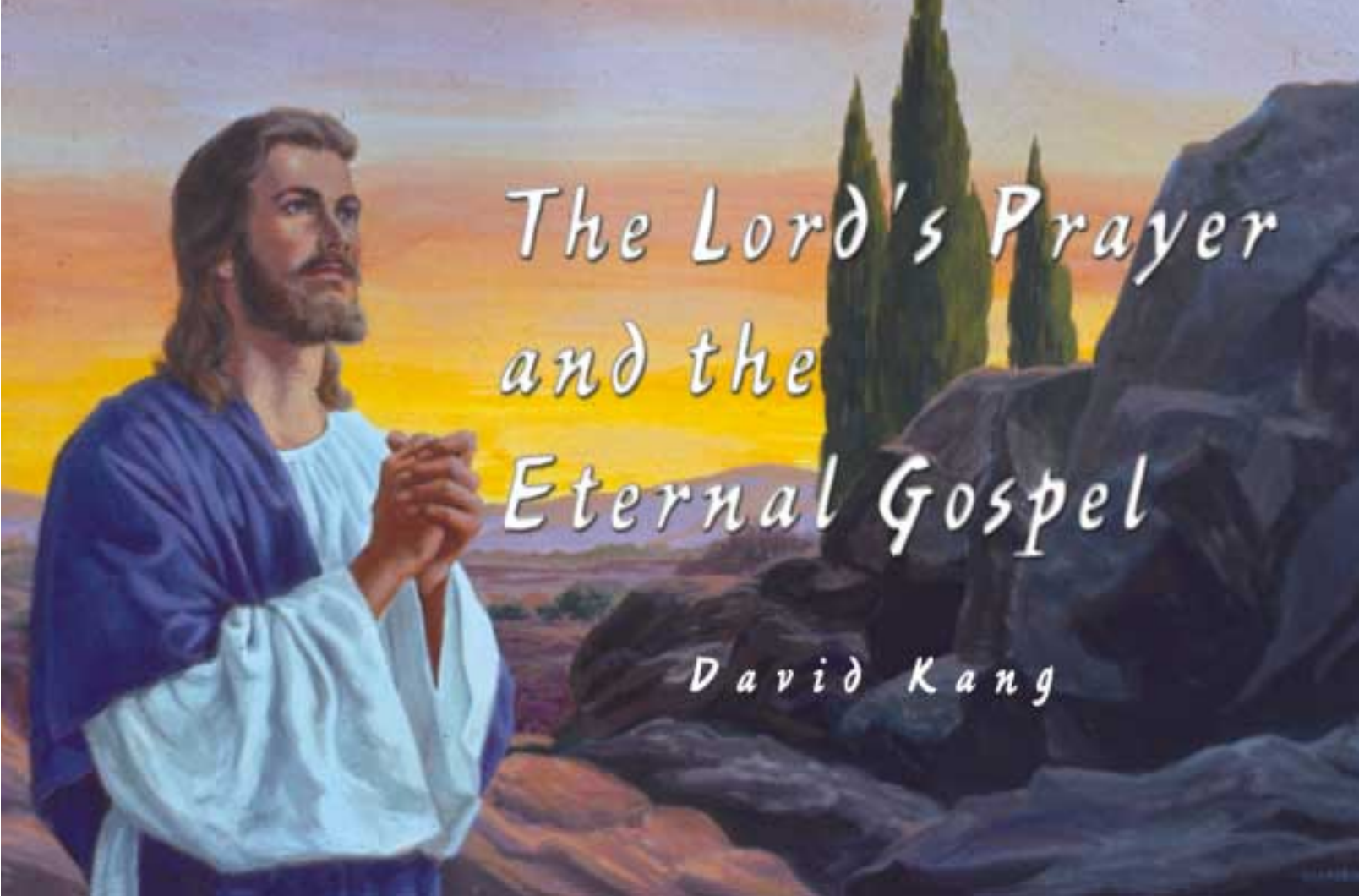
If anyone could possibly have given offense to the church leaders of that day, it was Jesus Christ. So what did they do to Him? They badgered Him. They misrepresented Him. They tried to alienate the people from Him. They attacked His theology on the nature of God (and His own nature)—calling it incorrect. They rejected the implication that He was part of the Godhead, because *they* could not seem to find evidence of it in the Inspired Counsel. And they said that it was His own interpretation, when in reality it was they who were teaching a private interpretation.

supposed to have an easy time of getting along with the Conference. However, it has never ever been that way. If you study the history of the reformers and messengers that God sent to warn His church in the past, you will discover that they were most often self-supporting, and that they were despised, hated, mistreated, rejected, persecuted, and even killed by their contemporary leaders. Why do we expect it to be any different now? If we really want to be like Jesus, then we had better think carefully about what it means.

"Bring Jesus Down"

"Christ does not drive but draws men unto Him. The only compulsion which He employs is the constraint of love. When the church begins to seek for the support of secular power, it is evident that she is devoid of the power of Christ—the constraint of divine love."¹

Because the Jewish church had become devoid of the power of God,



The Lord's Prayer and the Eternal Gospel

David Kang

After warning them about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the vain repetitions and materially oriented requests of the heathen, Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. This prayer has become the classic model for Christian prayer.

Christian churches in the world throughout the centuries have recited this prayer many times. Through the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His followers the spirit, the purpose, and the method of prayer. He said, "After this manner therefore pray ye." Matthew 6:9. However, many Christians who recite this prayer all the time fail to understand the true meaning of it. Jesus laid out in this prayer the analysis of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. That gospel is called the everlasting gospel in the first angel's message of Revelation.

Let us read the Lord's Prayer before we discuss the analysis of it:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy king-

dom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Verses 9-13.

Jesus introduced God in heaven, not as King or Lord, Counselor or General, but as our Father. A father has a heart toward his children that no one else can match, nor understand. What a privilege to have the God of the universe as our Father! In a father's eyes, his children are the most precious and important people in the world. He drops everything and runs to them when he hears them cry. Jesus said that God is our Father. The Lord's Prayer is a God-centered prayer—not a self-centered one.

Then He taught us how to ask our Father for the gospel experience. If we pay close attention, we can see that the Lord's Prayer is all about how to experience righteousness by faith, step by step.

I. "Hallowed be thy name."

The ultimate purpose of our lives is to glorify God, and we pray that we will receive the power to do so. We need to begin our prayer by telling Him that more than anything else, we desire that His name be hallowed by all creatures in the universe—especially by us earthlings. The name, the glory, and the character are synonyms, according to Exodus 33:18-34:6. When Moses asked God to show him His glory, God proclaimed His name in response, and as He proclaimed His name, He actually proclaimed His character.

The salvation of mankind involves more than the redemption of mankind—it involves the whole universe. Sin did not start in this world. The sin problem goes all the way back to its originator in heaven—Satan. God's name was defiled by the accusations of Satan in heaven, and by the fall of Adam and Eve on earth. So God's name, His honor, needs to be restored to its

rightful state—to its former glory. The ultimate purpose of redemption is to vindicate God’s name—in other words, to vindicate His law and His character. That is what it means to say, “Hallowed be thy name.”

It takes a demonstration by sanctified witnesses to show that God is right and that Satan’s accusations are definitely wrong. The rest of the Lord’s Prayer is to teach us the gospel experience that will make us become sanctified witnesses. That is the gospel of the kingdom that is to be preached in all the world—the eternal gospel! The gospel started in the Garden of Eden, and it is never to change eternally—the sacrifice of the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for the sins of the world. Through His blood, sinners are forgiven and sanctified as obedient children. The design came out of the heart of the eternal God!

Ezekiel 36:21–28 gives us this insight: “But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers;

and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

Our righteousness and sanctification—received through the indwelling Spirit—will ultimately glorify God’s name.

2. “Thy kingdom come.”

This is the first step of our righteousness experience. He was not talking here about the heavenly kingdom. He meant the kingdom of grace. In Matthew 4:17, He said that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”—meaning, the work of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Jesus the Messiah. We need to pray that the workings of God’s Spirit will come into our hearts and change us. It is the working of the kingdom of grace. It is the first step of the Christian conversion experience. When the Holy Spirit descends into our hearts, God begins to rule in us. We become part of the kingdom of God. That is the justification experience of a sinner just entered into the courtyard of the sanctuary.

3. “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”

What is God’s will in your life? “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

1 Thessalonians 4:3. This sentence is an expression of the sanctification experience.

God willed to make us holy and perfect again: “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” 1 Thessalonians 3:13. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23. This is the eternal will of God from the Creation of this world. We pray that the will of God may be done in our lives.

4. “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Most people think that this is talking about physical bread—food. It may include physical food, but

primarily it is talking about spiritual food. Jesus said in Matthew 6:31–33: “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Having said that, why would Jesus tell us to pray for our physical, daily bread? To me it does not make any sense. Rather, He surely must have been talking about spiritual food.

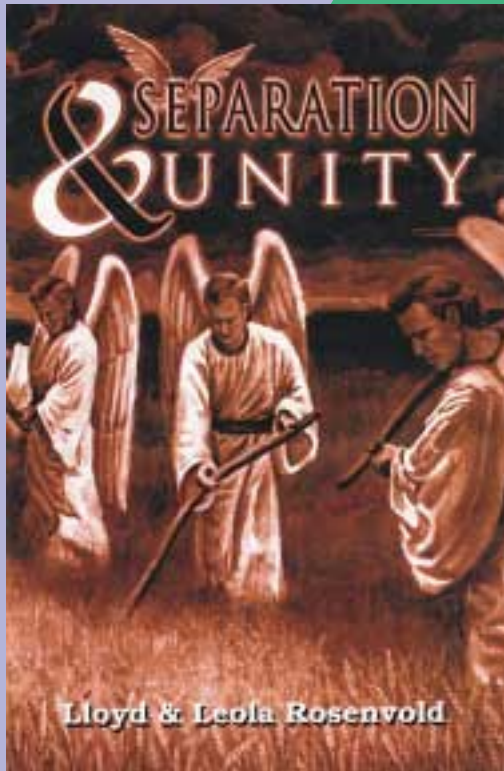
In John, chapter 6, we find an interesting event. Jesus was telling people that He Himself is the Bread of Life from heaven. He said, “I am the bread of life. . . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live.” Verses 48, 51. Again speaking, He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Verse 53. People began to murmur and shake their heads, for they could not understand its spiritual application. And most of the people who heard that message left Jesus and did not walk with Him any longer. Eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood is the way we become His true disciples. However, unconverted people do not understand the experiential aspect of His Words. He said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Verse 63. The same condition applies to us all. We can be saved by eating of Jesus day by day. Without eating of His Words, we cannot maintain a saving relationship. So we need to pray to God the Father to give us Jesus—His Words, the Eternal Bread.

5. “And forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

In the Bible, the word “justification” is mentioned only on a few occasions. Most of the time when it talks about justification, it uses the words “love” and “forgiveness.” When the Bible talks about someone

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Separation and Unity

Right now, thousands in modern Israel are sighing and crying for the abominations that have entered into the remnant church. Perplexity upon perplexity has come upon the faithful. "How shall we react?" ask many. The church seems "about to fall." Some say it has already fallen, and they advise everyone to depart. Others say, "Wait; the Lord has promised to rectify matters in His appointed time and way."

The question that concerns many of us now is, When will the false and true brethren in the church be separated one from the other? When will God's church militant be purified through the removal of the tares and the chaff from the wheat?

How grateful we are that the answer to these questions is so clearly revealed to us through Inspiration that none need wonder! Jesus says that the separation will take place at the time of "the harvest." In this book Lloyd and Leola Rosenvold go to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for the answers to these deep and troubling questions.

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being forgiven, it means they have been justified, and the sanctification process has begun. When we eat the Words of Jesus, we receive His character. If we receive His character by taking of His Words, we will be able to forgive others as Jesus did. So, the forgiveness in our character is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is an evidence of sanctification.

6. "And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

This is talking about a complete overcoming! "From evil" is the focus here. This evil force is none other than our sinful nature—self. In Romans 7:21, the apostle Paul said, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." He says that even though he knows what is right, his nature is

"evil." So, when we feel tempted, especially from within, we should cry out to God for deliverance. This verse is talking about overcoming—freedom from the power of sin—the ongoing work of sanctification.

At the time of Paul, there were two most horrible ways to execute the criminals: one was, of course, the crucifixion, and the other way was to bind a criminal with a dead body—binding them tightly together, eyes to eyes, chest to chest, and nose to nose. Can you imagine that? It was with this in mind that Paul expressed his dilemma: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Verse 24. This is the body we ask God to deliver us from also. If we truly understand the meaning of "evil is present with me," we will commit ourselves to the Lord all the time in prayer.

7. "For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever."

In the Lord's Prayer, we can see clearly the steps of Christian growth, such as justification and sanctification. We recognize that all the powers and secrets of the gospel experience—justification (becoming part of His kingdom), sanctification (receiving the power to overcome), and glorification (being transfigured at Christ's second coming)—belong to God and to Him alone. It is not our efforts or good deeds, but His mercy and power that make our salvation possible.

8. "Amen."

Yes, indeed, that is true! Lord, I want it to happen in my life! I believe in your power! ✠

The Seven Last Plagues

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 **SP**, which represent "**The Seven Last Plagues.**"
2. On the blank flyleaf at either the beginning or the end of your Bible, write in the key letters followed by the first Scriptural text. This month's beginning entry should appear as follows: **The Seven Last Plagues, 1SP: Revelation 15:1.**
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 SP.**"

1SP: Revelation 15:1.

God will pour out His wrath without mixture (see Revelation 14:10) by sending seven terrible plagues upon those who are disobedient just before Christ appears at the last day.

2SP: Revelation 16.

The first plague will be a terrible sore on millions of people who have the mark of the beast on their forehead or in their hand. This places the falling of the plagues after the mark of the beast is received; also the magnitude and fullness of God's wrath given, without any mercy or forthcoming repentance, indicates that this occurs following the close of probation.

Under the second plague the sea will be turned to blood, killing the creatures in it. During the third plague the rivers and the fountains—the source of man's drinking water—will be turned to blood, and for a time the disobedient people will have nothing but blood to drink. This will be like the plague that came upon the Egyptians when their water was turned to blood for seven days. See Exodus 7:17–25. Under the fourth plague the sun will scorch men with terrible heat. At the time of the fifth plague there will come a darkness that will be felt. During the sixth plague, the devil's three generals—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—will attempt to marshal the whole world to fight against God in the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Under the seventh plague there will be a great earthquake, thunder, lightning, and voices. Great hailstones will fall, each one weighing around 60 pounds. "Babylon" will be utterly destroyed.

That nothing like this has ever happened before is another indication of its future, end-time manifestation. These plagues are successive and will be the worst scourges ever to fall upon human beings, but each one is not wholly universal. See *The Great Controversy*, 628.

3SP: Revelation 18:8.

The plagues will come in one "day." This may mean prophetic time—one literal year (see Ezekiel 4:6)—or it may mean that the plagues will come suddenly and unexpectedly. Preference for the latter meaning is strengthened by the usage of the word "hour" in Revelation 18:10, 17, and 19. Also, the Greek terms used suggest a point of time—not a duration of time. See Jeremiah 50:29, 31; 51:8; Isaiah 47:9, 11.

4SP: Revelation 16:17, 20.

When the time comes under the seventh plague for the mountains and islands to be moved out of their places by that last mighty earthquake, then Christ will appear in the opening heavens. See Revelation 6:14–17; *Great Controversy*, 636–637.

5SP: Revelation 15:5–8.

During the time when these plagues are being poured out, Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Mediator, will no longer plead the merits

of His shed blood for sinners. Thus, there will then be no forgiveness available for sin. We must turn to God *now* to receive forgiveness and cleansing from every sin in preparation to receive His seal. See Revelation 7:2–3.

6SP: Revelation 22:11–12.

Before the plagues begin to fall, every person's case will have been decided forever. Christ will pronounce the decree of Revelation 22:11 at the close of His intercessory and mediatorial work. He will cease to plead for sinners as man's High Priest. Then the first plague of God's unmixed wrath will fall upon the disobedient. These scriptures make it plain that the seven last plagues will come during the interval of time between the close of Christ's priestly work and His second coming. See Revelation 8:3–5.

7SP: Psalms 91:1–10.

Those who are obedient to God and who trust wholly in Jesus will

be protected during all of these plagues. See Joel 3:16; Psalms 27:5; 46:1–3; 121:5–7; Isaiah 26:20–21.

8SP: Revelation 14:12.

Our only hope of escape from the plagues is to have the protection of God during this terrible time. We must turn to Him now in full obedience to all of His commandments. We must choose to develop—through the power of the Holy Spirit—the very faith of Jesus.

9SP: Isaiah 55:6.

It will be too late to attempt to prepare when the first plague falls. The decree of Revelation 22:11 will be pronounced by Christ before the first plague begins. No man knows when that decree will go forth. See Matthew 25:10–13.

10SP: Genesis 7:1, 4, 16.

The door of the ark was closed seven days before the Flood came. All who were saved had to have entered into the ark by the seventh

day before the Flood began. So as in the days of Noah so also will the coming of Christ be. All who will be saved in this great, coming, world crisis will have turned to God in obedience before Jesus closes the door of pardon and mercy, which will happen prior to the seven last plagues. See Matthew 24:37–39.

11SP: Luke 13:24–28.

Many will try in vain to enter after the door has been closed, and it is forever too late. See Jeremiah 8:20.

12SP: Matthew 24:42, 44.

We should be ready on a daily, moment-by-moment basis to meet Jesus, or eternal loss may result. Let us resolve by God's grace to get ready and remain ready! See 2 Corinthians 6:2. ✝

Adapted by Alan F. Esselbach from *Helps to Bible Study*, by J.L. Schuler.

Share Your Faith!

When we think of Jesus—His trials and His sacrifice for our sins—we begin to see how important it is to give the three angels' messages to the world, so that they, too, can come to know Him and be saved.

One of the ways you can share the gospel is by giving out literature. Here are some ideas that you might find quite helpful:

First, of course, you must obtain the literature. Yet large quantities of literature can be expensive. One person shared how he went through his home and sold the possessions that he did not need or use, and then used the proceeds to purchase literature.

In each piece of literature, put a card offering something—like free Bible studies or a book. Then leave the literature on bus-stop benches

and other places where people have to wait. Leave at least two pieces of literature on each bench. Often people will pick them up as soon as they are left. If the weather is wet, consider putting the literature in plastic bags. Better yet, save this work for a sunny day, for people are more apt to sit on dry benches than wet ones.

For those living in less rural areas, a morning or evening walk can be an excellent time to distribute literature. You can put the literature in plastic bags and hang them from door handles. If you do this, be sure to keep a record of what streets you cover, so that you do not duplicate the literature given to each house and thus needlessly waste your resources.

By the way, be prepared to talk to people. Smiling and greeting those

you meet gives a positive witness. Someone may even ask what you are doing, giving you the opportunity to further share your faith with them.

There is no reason why you cannot help fulfill the gospel commission in Matthew 28:19–20. Ask God what *you* can do to spread the three angels' messages further.

The ideas in this column were compiled from letters written by two different people. Do you have an experience that illustrates how to share the three angels' messages with others? Have you found an effective way to distribute present-truth literature? Write it down (in 300–750 words), and send it to the Managing Editor of Our Firm Foundation. We pray that many others will be better instructed and inspired to help spread the gospel to all the world.

THE EDITORS



Holy Bible

The Book of Books

Ellen G. White

The study of the Bible will give strength to the intellect. Says the psalmist, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Psalm 119:130. The question has often been asked me, "Should the Bible become the important Book in our schools?" It is a precious Book, a wonderful Book. It is a treasury containing jewels of precious value. It is a history that opens to us the past centuries. Without the Bible we should have been left to conjectures and fables in regard to the occurrences of past ages. Of all the books that have flooded the world, be they ever so valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, and is most deserving of the closest study and attention. It gives not only the history of the Creation of this world, but a description of the world to come. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and it reveals to our understanding the Author of the heavens and the earth. It unfolds a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. Those who are close students of the Word of God, and who obey its

instructions, and love its plain truths, will improve in mind and manners. It is an endowment of God that should awaken in every heart the most sincere gratitude; for it is the revelation of God to man.

If the truths of the Bible are woven into practical life, they will bring the mind up from its earthliness and debasement. Those who are conversant with the Scriptures will be found to be men and women who exert an elevating influence. In searching for the Heaven-revealed truths, the Spirit of God is brought into close connection with the sincere searcher of the Scriptures. An understanding of the revealed will of God enlarges the mind, expands, elevates, and endows it with new vigor by bringing its faculties in contact with stupendous truths. If the study of the Scriptures is made a secondary consideration, great loss is sustained. The Bible was for a time excluded from our schools, and Satan found a rich field, in which he worked with marvelous rapidity, and gathered a harvest to his liking.

The understanding takes the level of the things with which it becomes familiar. If all would make the Bible their study, we should see a people further developed, capable of thinking more deeply, and showing a greater degree of intelligence than the most earnest efforts in studying merely the sciences and histories of the world could make them. The Bible gives the true seeker an advanced mental discipline, and he comes from contemplation of divine things with his faculties enriched; self is humbled, while God and His revealed truth are exalted. It is because men are unacquainted with the precious Bible histories that there is so much lifting up of man, and so little honor given to God. The Bible contains just that quality of food that the Christian needs, in order that he may grow strong in spirit and intellect. The searching of all books of philosophy and science cannot do for the mind and morals what the Bible can do, if it is studied and practiced. Through the study of the Bible, converse is held with patriarchs and prophets. The truth is clothed in elevated language,

which exerts a fascinating power over the mind; the thought is lifted up from the things of earth, and brought to contemplate the glory of the future immortal life. What wisdom of man can compare with the grandeur of the revelation of God? Finite man, who knows not God, may seek to lessen the value of the Scriptures, and may bury the truth beneath the supposed knowledge of science.

Those who boast of wisdom beyond the teaching of the Word of God need to drink deeper of the Fountain of Knowledge, that they may learn their real ignorance. There is a boasted wisdom of men that is foolishness in the sight of God. Let no man deceive himself. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." 1 Corinthians 3:18-19. Those who have only this wisdom need to become fools in their own estimation. The greatest ignorance that now curses the human race is in regard to the binding claims of the law of God; and this ignorance is the result of neglecting the study of the Word of God. It is Satan's determined plan to so engage and absorb the mind, that God's great Guidebook shall not be the Book of books, and that the sinner may not be led from the path of transgression to the path of obedience.

The Bible is not exalted to its place, and yet of what infinite importance it is to the souls of men. In searching its pages, we move through scenes majestic and eternal. We behold Jesus, the Son of God, coming to our world, and engaging in the mysterious conflict that discomfited the powers of darkness. O how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, that the infinite God would consent to the humiliation of His own dear Son! Let every student of the Scriptures contemplate this great fact, and he will not come from such a contemplation without being elevated, purified, and ennobled.

The Most Effective Textbook

The Bible is a Book which discloses the principles of right and truth. It contains whatever is needful for the saving of the soul, and at the same time, it is adapted to strengthen and discipline the mind. If used as a Textbook in our schools, it will be found far more effective than any other book in the world, in guiding wisely in the affairs of this life, as well as in aiding the soul up the ladder of progress which reaches to Heaven. God cares for us as intellectual beings, and He has given us His Word as a Lamp to our feet and a Light to our pathway. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto

has had an entrance into their life and character. It must do its peculiar work, even to the piercing asunder of the joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. See Hebrews 4:12. God's Word is to become the nourishment by which the Christian must grow strong, in spirit and in intellect, that he may battle for truth and righteousness.

Strength Against Temptation

Why is it that our youth, and even those of maturer years, are so easily led into temptation and sin?—It is because the Word of God is not studied and meditated upon as it should be. If it were appreciated, there would be an inward rectitude,

Why is it that our youth, and even those of maturer years, are so easily led into temptation and sin?—It is because the Word of God is not studied and meditated upon as it should be.

the simple." It is not the mere reading of the Word that will accomplish the result that is designed by Heaven, but the truth revealed in the Word of God must find an entrance into the heart, if the good intended is obtained.

The best educated in the sciences are not always the most effective instruments for God's use. There are many who find themselves laid aside, and those who have had fewer advantages of obtaining knowledge of books taking their places, because the latter have a knowledge of practical things that is essential to the uses of everyday life; while those who consider themselves learned, often cease to be learners, are self-sufficient, and above being taught, even by Jesus, who was the greatest Teacher the world ever knew. Those who have grown and expanded, whose reasoning faculties have been improved by deep searching of the Scriptures, that they may know the will of God, will come into positions of usefulness; for the Word of God

a strength of spirit, that would resist the temptations of Satan to do evil. A firm, decided willpower is not brought into the life and character, because the sacred instruction of God is not made the study, and the subject of meditation. There is not the effort put forth that there should be, to associate the mind with pure, holy thoughts, and to divert it from what is impure and untrue. There is not the choosing of the better part, the sitting at the feet of Jesus, as did Mary, to learn the most sacred lessons of the divine Teacher, that they may be laid up in the heart, and practiced in the daily life. Meditation upon holy things will elevate and refine the mind, and will develop Christian ladies and gentlemen.

God will not accept one of us who is belittling His powers in lustful, earthly debasement, by thought, or word, or action. Heaven is a pure and holy place, where none can enter unless they are refined, spiritualized, cleansed, and purified. There is a work for us to do

for ourselves, and we shall be capable of doing it only by drawing strength from Jesus. We should make the Bible our study above every other book; we should love it, and obey it as the voice of God. We are to see and to understand His restrictions and requirements, "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not," and realize the true meaning of the Word of God.

When God's Word is made the man of our counsel, and we search the Scriptures for light, angels of Heaven come near to impress the mind, and enlighten the understanding, so that it can truly be said, "The

It is "of the earth, earthy" (1 Corinthians 15:47), and savors not of the truth, or of heaven, and does not come up even to the standard of the more cultured class of worldlings. When Christ and heaven are the themes of contemplation, the conversation will give evidence of the fact. The speech will be seasoned with grace, and the speaker will show that he has been obtaining an education in the school of the divine Teacher. Says the psalmist, "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me." Psalm 119:30. He treasured the Word of

should consider that, through the contemplation of sin, the sure result has followed, and their God-given faculties have been weakened and unfitted for moral advancement, because they have been misapplied. There are many who admit this as the truth. They have cherished pride and self-conceit, until these evil traits of character have become a ruling power, controlling their desires and inclinations. While they have had a form of godliness, and have performed many acts of self-righteousness, there has been no real heart change. They have not brought their life practices into definite and close measurement with the great standard of righteousness, the law of God. Should they critically compare their life with this standard, they could not but feel that they were deficient, sin sick, and in need of a physician. They can only understand the depth to which they have fallen, by beholding the infinite sacrifice that has been made by Jesus Christ, to lift them out of their degradation.

There are but few who have an appreciation of the grievous character of sin, and who comprehend the greatness of the ruin that has resulted from the transgression of God's law. By examining the wonderful plan of redemption to restore the sinner to the moral image of God, we see that the only means for man's deliverance was wrought out by the self-sacrifice, and the unparalleled condescension and love of the Son of God. He alone had the strength to fight the battles with the great adversary of God and man, and, as our Substitute and Surety, He has given power to those who lay hold of Him by faith, to become victors in His name, and through His merits.

We can see in the cross of Calvary what it has cost the Son of God to bring salvation to a fallen race. As the sacrifice in behalf of man was complete, so the restoration of man from the defilement of sin must be thorough and complete.

As finite, sinful man works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, it is God who works in him, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But God will not work without the cooperation of man.

entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." It is no marvel that there is not more heavenly mindedness shown among the youth who profess Christianity, when there is so little attention given to the Word of God. The Divine Counsels are not heeded; the admonitions are not obeyed; grace and heavenly wisdom are not sought, that past sins may be avoided, and every taint of corruption be cleansed from the character. David's prayer was, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wonderful works." Psalm 119:27.

If the minds of our youth, as well as those of more mature age, were directed aright when associated together, their conversation would be upon exalted themes. When the mind is pure, and the thoughts elevated by the truth of God, the words will be of the same character, "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Proverbs 25:11. But with the present understanding, with the present practices, with the low standard which even professed Christians are content to reach, the conversation is cheap and profitless.

God. It found an entrance to his understanding, not to be disregarded; but to be practiced in his life.

Working Out Our Salvation

Unless the Sacred Word is appreciated, it will not be obeyed as a sure, and safe, and precious Textbook. Every besetting sin must be put away. Warfare must be waged against it until it is overcome. The Lord will work with your efforts. As finite, sinful man works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, it is God who works in him, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. See Philippians 2:12-13. But God will not work without the cooperation of man. He must exercise his powers to the very utmost; he must place himself as an apt, willing student in the school of Christ; and as he accepts the grace that is freely offered to him, the presence of Christ in the thought and in the heart will give him decision of purpose, to lay aside every weight of sin, that the heart may be filled with all the fullness of God, and of His love.

The students of our schools

The law of God has been given to us, that we may have rules to govern our conduct. There is no act of wickedness that the law will excuse; there is no unrighteousness that will escape its condemnation. The life of Christ is a perfect fulfillment of every precept of this law. He says, "I have kept my Father's commandments." John 15:10. The knowledge of the law would condemn the sinner, and crush hope from his breast, if he did not see Jesus as his Substitute and Surety, ready to pardon his transgression, and to forgive his sin. When, through faith in Jesus Christ, man does according to the very best of his ability, and seeks to keep the way of the Lord, by obedience to the Ten Commandments, the perfection of Christ is imputed to cover the transgression of the repentant and obedient soul.

The Foundation of True Education

There will be an effort made on the part of many pretended friends of education to divorce religion from the sciences in our schools. They would spare no pains or expense to impart secular knowledge; but they would not mingle with it a knowledge of what God has revealed as constituting perfection of character. And yet a training in the truth of God would develop the mind, and impart secular knowledge as well; for the very foundation of true education is in the fear of the Lord. Says the psalmist, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 111:10. The Living Oracles of God reveal the deceptions of the father of lies. Who of our youth can know anything of what is truth, in comparison with error, unless they are acquainted with the Scriptures? The simplicity of true godliness must be brought into the education of our young people, if they are to have divine knowledge to escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust. Those who are truly the followers of Christ will not serve God only when it is in accordance with their inclination, but, as well,

when it involves self-denial and cross-bearing. The earnest counsel given by the apostle Paul to Timothy, that he might not fail in doing his duty, should be set before the youth of today: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12. Besetting sins must be battled with, and overcome. Objectionable traits of character, whether hereditary or cultivated, should be taken up separately, and compared with the great rule of righteousness; and in the light reflected from the Word of God, they should be firmly resisted and overcome, through the strength of Christ. "Follow peace with all men,

must be wrestlers for the crown of life. Strive, for the grasp of Satan is upon you; and if you do not wrench yourselves from him, you will be palsied and ruined. The foe is on the right hand, and on the left, before you, and behind you; and you must trample him under your feet. Strive, for there is a crown to be won. Strive, for if you win not the crown, you lose everything in this life and in the future life. Strive, but let it be in the strength of your risen Saviour.

Will the students of our schools study, and endeavor to copy the life and character of Him who came down from heaven to show them what they must be, if they would enter the kingdom of God? I have borne you a message of the

There will be an effort made on the part of many pretended friends of education to divorce religion from the sciences in our schools. They would spare no pains or expense to impart secular knowledge; but they would not mingle with it a knowledge of what God has revealed as constituting perfection of character.

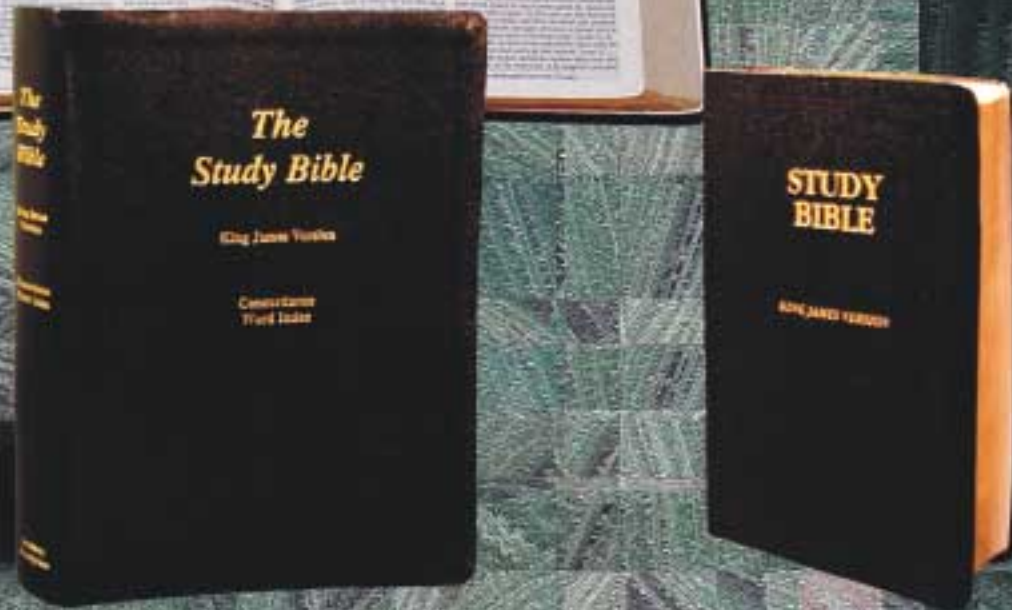
and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14.

Day by day, and hour by hour, there must be a vigorous process of self-denial and of sanctification going on within; and then the outward works will testify that Jesus is abiding in the heart by faith. Sanctification does not close the avenues of the soul to knowledge, but it comes to expand the mind, and to inspire it to search for truth, as for hidden treasure; and the knowledge of God's will advances the work of sanctification. There is a heaven, and O, how earnestly we should strive to reach it. I appeal to the students of our schools and college, to believe in Jesus as your Saviour. Believe that He is ready to help you by His grace, when you come to Him in sincerity. You must fight the good fight of faith. You

near coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. I have not presented before you any definite time, but have repeated to you the injunction of Christ Himself, to watch unto prayer, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:44. The warning has come echoing down the ages to our time, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:12-14. ❀

Review and Herald, August 21, 1888.

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letters to the editor

Have a letter to share?

contact editor@hopeint.org or see page 3 for our mailing address.



Thank you so much for speaking the truth so plainly. We really appreciate the spiritual inspiration in *Our Firm Foundation*, which is so hard to find elsewhere.

We attended camp meeting this year and are making plans for next year. Many, many thanks to all those who shared their important information with us.

AJ, Oregon

I have heard much about you within the past two years. I love *Our Firm Foundation* magazines, and I totally believe you are what God has sent. I have been an SDA all my life, but I have never before heard so much truth and preaching from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. I love it! Keep up the good work—God's work.

May God be with you!

BK, Newfoundland, Canada

I have just read the article about the self-supporting ministries in the recent August *Review*. I could not believe my eyes! I pastor a church that is about 3 hours from Hartland. Since we are that close, we have been the benefactors of their health program and have had their youth perform in our church.

All I can say is that in my opinion I am very sorry for what has taken place.

Pastor, via e-mail

I praise King Jesus for the spirit you have manifested in responding to the *Review* article in the August 2000 edition. . . . Again, thank you for being willing to stand for the truth in this time.

JC, via e-mail

From Overseas

I greet you in the name of our Lord of the Remnant!

I am requesting you to help me in my missionary work. The harvest is ripe, but the labourers are few. I would be very much grateful if you will send me plenty of prophecy books—*The Great Controversy*, *Immortality of the Soul and Spiritualism*, *The Lord's Day* and a *National Sunday Law*, *Bible Readings*, *Adventism*

in Crisis, health magazines and pamphlets, and above all, *Desire of Ages*.

Seventh-day Adventists are ordained of God to do a special work. That work is to enlighten the world with the everlasting gospel. We have one mission while we live and only one, and that is to give the three angels' messages. Anything that does not pertain to this work is not worthy of our time. Something startling and tremendous is about to occur in this world. "The day of the Lord cometh." An alarm must be sounded; the world must be aroused and warned.

Lastly, I believe in the teachings of the books you sent me, and I love to share the last message of mercy, the three angels' messages, with other friends to help prepare us for Christ's soon coming. Please! Please have mercy on me. Send *Behold He Cometh* and *Earth's Final Warning*, as many as possible. I need to be using them in evangelism. Please! Please have mercy on us! The harvest is ripe, but the labourers are few.

MC, Zambia

Thank you very much for your lovely gifts you sent to me. It is my prayer and desire that the Most High God will bless you by imparting unto you more about the knowledge of His work to publish abundantly in order to spread the message to the whole world, as Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, before the end of time will come.

DA, Ghana

I deem it right to write a letter of gratitude to you for the literature tracts you posted to me. Of course, these tracts reached me at the right time because I was going to conduct a two-week evangelism campaign at a certain unentered village from June 14 to 29.

SA, Ghana

I am again so very pleased to write to thank you for your wonderful parcel of literature. They are really a blessing to my work here! Anyone I hand a copy to comes back to me later to express his

appreciation and thanks. May God continue to bless you and the ministry.

I humbly pray you please keep sending me your magazine for they are worth handing out in any evangelistic venture.

I wish you all a rich blessing!

MK, Ghana

I am very much thankful to you for your fruitful messages that I requested from your office some months ago. These materials arrived in good condition a couple of days ago. Really these materials (Bibles) are very great help to my ministry and to me personally. As soon as I received the Bibles, I distribute and share to all brethren and co-workers and they were very glad to read these materials.

Unfortunately, the Bibles are not sufficient for that matter, I need more Bibles to distribute to other friends and believers. Do pray for our book room, library, and reading rooms through which many are receiving much spiritual benefits. We have the vision, but we need the tools. So please kindly send us more Bibles as we are most badly in need of them, and for which we shall be immensely grateful to you.

Besides, we are most grateful to you for the Bibles and leaflets that you have sent, which we read and share with many others. We are really very badly in need of sound Bible teachings, true to the Word of God. These are the last days, and we find adulterated teachings, not the pure milk of the Word of God.

We are praying to God so that He according to His richness may finance your work to meet our needs. We have no other resource to get spiritual food. We depend on you to accomplish His work to meet the lost and hungry souls.

May God bless you!

BB, Ghana

We wish to express our appreciation for the donations marked "Literature Assistance" that we have received. Please continue to support this fund as the Lord blesses you. You will be richly rewarded in heaven.

THE EDITORS

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[sick and tired]

No Energy?

[maybe just a little wasted]

Taking those Pills just to keep on Going?

[no, to cover up the side effects of my other prescriptions]

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