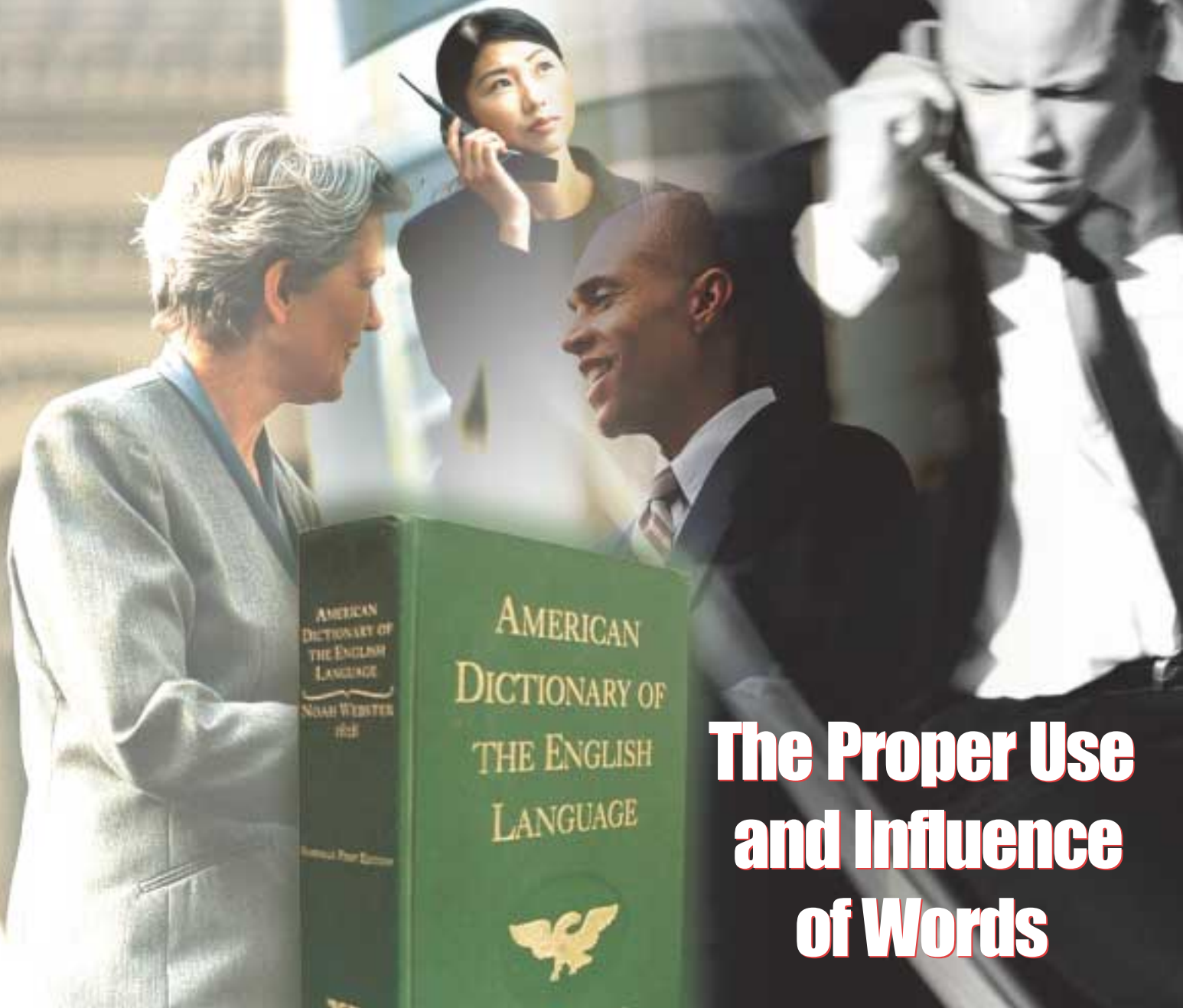


Our Firm Foundation

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God's Ideal for His Children

When Lucifer, the covering cherub, revolted against the law of Heaven, the whole universe was in jeopardy. God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, faced an enormous problem. There was war in heaven, and Christ and His angels won the first phase of the great battle, which will end in the second phase at the end of the millennium, when the wicked are destroyed.

When Adam and Eve sinned, the enormity of their sin demanded the eternal death of the sinner. However, Jesus, our Creator, stepped in between the sinner and the death decree demanded by God's righteous law. Here we see the matchless love of our holy God, even for a race of rebels. In His great love He was willing to risk everything to save those who were willing to be made willing to follow in His footsteps. But first He must come to the human family as one of them—born as every child is born. He came to live in poverty, to work at a carpentry shop with His father for 30 years, and then for three-and-a-half years to minister to the great needs of the human family—healing the sick, casting out demons, giving sight to the blind, and restoring life to those who had died.

In all things He was tempted as every human being is tempted, but He resisted every temptation by the Word, saying, "It is written." Matthew 4:4. He never sinned. See Hebrews 4:15. His perfect life is a pattern which all who are seeking salvation must follow. We can overcome as He overcame.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.' Revelation 3:21. We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with Him." *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 144.

"Christ's overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity. His imputed grace and power He gives to all who receive Him by faith.

"The obedience of Christ to His Father was the same obedience that is required of man. Man cannot overcome Satan's temptations without divine power to combine with his instrumentality. So with Jesus Christ; He could lay hold of divine power. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's Holy Law, and in this way He is our Example. The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency. Man is, through faith, to be a partaker in the divine nature, and to overcome every temptation wherewith he is beset." *Our High Calling*, 48.

The enormity of sin demanded eternal death, and all have sinned. See Romans 3:23. Christ accepted the penalty of the law, and by His perfect obedience to it, He now offers all who obey, by His grace, His justification and His sanctification.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19-22.

We can overcome. Yes, fully!

"God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Matthew 5:48. This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning." *The Desire of Ages*, 311.

Let us commit ourselves to follow the example of Christ, seeking for the filling of the Holy Spirit, and allowing the plan of redemption to be fulfilled in our lives today. ✠

Ron Spear, Executive Editor

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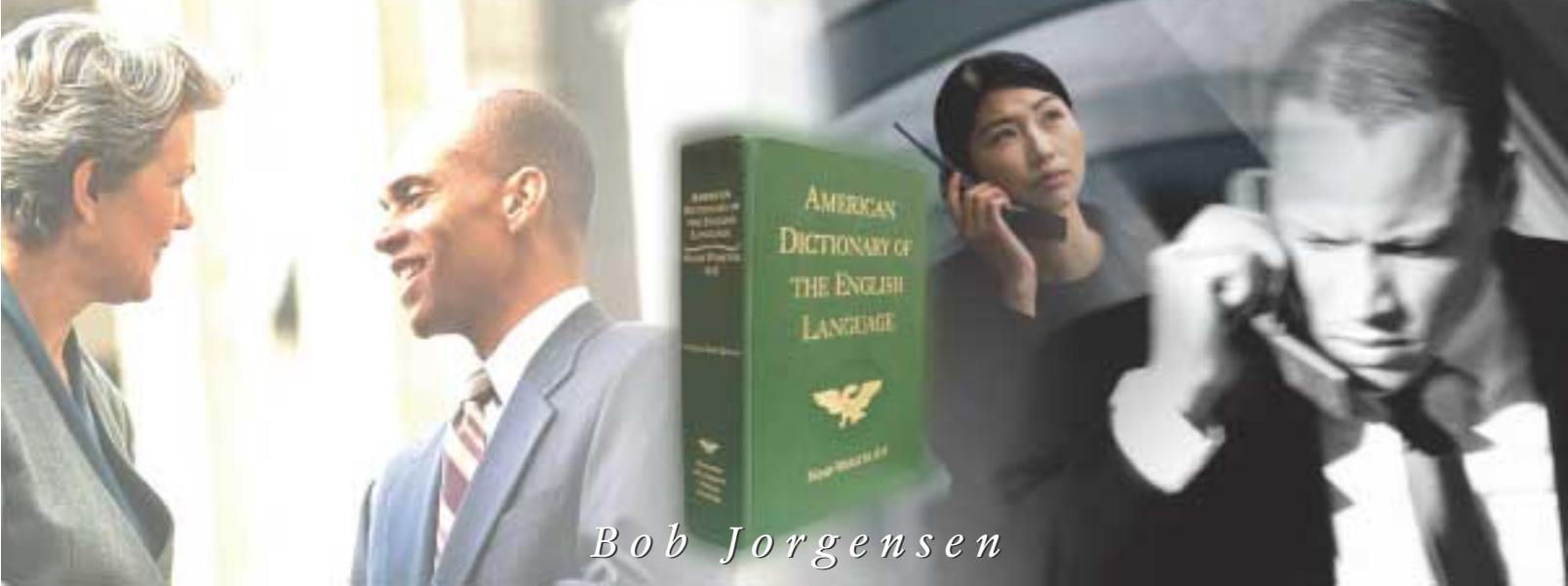
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The Proper Use and Influence of Words



Bob Jorgensen

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Ephesians 4:29.

Of those who will finally compose the 144,000, who will be translated without seeing death, it is written that “in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14:5. In this characteristic they are following in the steps of their Master, Jesus Christ, Who, according to 1 Peter 2:22, had no guile in His mouth.

In both cases, the characteristic of having “no guile” in the mouth parallels the characteristic of being without sin. It shows that God’s people in the last days will have gained a special experience in things pertaining to the use of the mouth. Uppermost among these is their choice of words in conversation.

These last-day people of God are noted in the prophecy of Zephaniah 3. Notice verse 9 where, according to the margin, the Hebrew word literally means “people of pure lip.” In verse 13 they are described as not doing “iniquity, nor speaking lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth.”

The word “guile” in Revelation 14:5 is translated from a Greek word which also means “bait,” according to *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. The use of words in an inappropriate way could be considered “bait” in the sense of not being a correct representation of actual fact, or it could also be “bait” in the sense of an enticement leading others to inappropriate words and actions. Our use of the word “bait” may fit either or both senses of this word.

No doubt we all remember that the apostle James tells us that anyone who has complete control of his tongue is a perfect person.

The Power of Speech

Have you ever thought of what it would be like if you could not speak—if you were dumb? Think of the frustration and the difficulty which you would experience in trying to communicate with others. Many times we depend completely on speech to get the attention of others and to convey our thoughts to them.

Notice the tremendous potential contained in the power of speech:

“The power of speech is a talent that should be diligently cultivated. Of all the gifts we have received from God, none is capable of being a greater blessing than this. With the

voice we convince and persuade, with it we offer prayer and praise to God, and with it we tell others of the Redeemer’s love. How important, then, that it be so trained as to be most effective for good.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 335.

“The gift of speech is a valuable talent. Never despise or demerit this gift. Thank God for entrusting it to you. It is a precious gift; to be sanctified, elevated, and ennobled. As a sacred trust, the voice should be used to honor God. It should never utter harsh, impure words or words of faultfinding. The gospel of Christ is to be proclaimed by the voice.

“With the talent of speech we are to communicate the truth as we have opportunity. It should ever be used in God’s service; but this talent is grievously abused. Words are spoken which do great harm. Christ declared, ‘Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.’ Matthew 12:36-37.” *The Voice in Speech and Song*, 14.

Notice also the seriousness of using the powerful influence of speech in a wrong way: “Men may deny Christ by evil speaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind.” *The Desire of Ages*, 357.

“Unchristlike speech, lies at the foundation of nine-tenths of all the difficulties that exist in the church. Satan’s agents are industriously trying to get professed Christians to speak unadvisedly. When they succeed, Satan exults, because God’s followers have hurt their influence.” *The Voice in Speech and Song*, 56.

Part of Character Growth

The work of cultivating Christian character is one that includes all of our thoughts, words, and deeds. It is undoubtedly true, as some have said, that thoughts are the seeds of actions and words. Anything we say was first planted as a seed in our thoughts. It may have been just a flitting, temporary thought or an impulse momentarily cherished, but the seed, planted and cultivated, was sufficient to produce fruit. How important then that we learn how to direct our thoughts and steadfastly pursue the work of refining and purifying our words and language!

It is very interesting to note that Inspiration oftens emphasizes the importance of words as a part of our influence and character development. Here are a few examples:

“The cases of Moses and Aaron, of David, and numerous others, show that it is not a safe thing to sin in *word* or thought or deed.” *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 370. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

“Our *words*, our acts, our dress, our deportment, even the expression of the countenance, has an influence. Upon the impression thus made there hang results for good or evil which no man can measure.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 339–340.

“The Saviour of the world would have His co-laborers represent Him; and the more closely a man walks with God, the more faultless will be his *manner of address*, his deportment, his attitude, and his gestures. Coarse and uncouth manners were never seen in our Pattern, Christ Jesus. He was a Representative of Heaven, and His followers must be like Him.” *Gospel Workers*, 91.

Notice especially the phrase “manner of address.” This usage of the word “address” is defined in the

Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary as the “manner of speaking to another; as, a man of pleasing address.”

In this article we will make a brief survey of some of the counsel God has given for our use of words, and then suggest some commonly used words and phrases which may need evaluation in our speech.

Inspired Counsel

“Our language should be modest and elevated.” *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 348.

“All frivolity, all cheapness of conversation, all jesting and joking, weakens the soul, and weans the heart from prayer.” *The Voice in Speech and Song*, 126.

The Saviour of the world would have His co-laborers represent Him; and the more closely a man walks with God, the more faultless will be his manner of address, his deportment, his attitude, and his gestures.

“God’s Word condemns also the use of those meaningless phrases and expletives¹ that border on profanity. It condemns the deceptive compliments, the evasions of truth, the exaggerations, the misrepresentations in trade, that are current in society and in the business world. ‘Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.’ Matthew 5:37, R.V.

“ ‘ As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?’ Proverbs 26:18–19.

“Closely allied to gossip is the covert insinuation, the sly innuendo, by which the unclean in heart seek to insinuate the evil they dare not openly express. Every approach to these practices the youth should be taught to shun as they would shun the leprosy.” *Education*, 236.

According to Inspiration, the disciples of Jesus were known for their purity of speech. The following counsel indicates the high calling to which God is desiring to elevate His people:

“The workman for God should make earnest efforts to become a representative of Christ, discarding all uncomely gestures and uncouth speech. He should endeavor to use correct language. There is a large class who are careless in the way they speak, yet by careful, painstaking attention these may become representatives of the truth. Every day they should make advancement. They should not detract from their usefulness and influence by cherishing defects of manner, tone, or language. Common, cheap expressions should be replaced by sound, pure words. By constant watchfulness and earnest discipline the

Christian youth may keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile.

“We should be careful not to give an incorrect pronunciation of our words. There are men among us who in theory know better than to use incorrect language, yet who in practice make frequent mistakes.” *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 238–239.

The counsel which God has given for ministers applies, no doubt, to every individual who professes to be a servant of Christ, and who desires to do a faithful work for Him:

“He [the minister] should be much in prayer, and should bring himself under discipline to God, that his life may reveal the fruits of true self-control. His language should be correct; no slang phrases, no cheap utterances, should fall from his lips.” *Gospel Workers*, 145.

The counsel which Inspiration gives is that we should weed out from our language all slang phrases and common, cheap expressions, including expletives that border on

profanity. Exaggerations are also to be purged from our habits of speech.

Noah Webster

In studying the matter of slang phrases, I discovered in the introduction to the 1828 Noah Webster dictionary that Noah Webster recognized that “a national language is a bond of national union.” He wrote, “Let us then seize the present moment, and establish a national language, as well as a national government.”

Webster keenly felt a burden that a standard of language be established in America, seeing this as an essential means of establishing a bond of cohesiveness and national identity. But he saw even more—that an established standard of unified language was essential to prevent the “demoralization” of language usage and meaning.

He felt that the “demoralization” of the language would bring “demoralization” of the people. The moral integrity of the national conscience, the moral level of people’s standards in communication and relationship, the American identity by nations abroad, all made it essential that high standards of a unified language be clearly established.

Webster spent years in intensive research, traveling thousands of miles to trace down the roots and usages of words, painstakingly compiling his findings in handwritten notes. The results of his research not only led to the production of his well-known dictionaries, but also to a translation of the Scriptures, as well as numerous texts for spelling, grammar, reading, history, geography, civics, and literature.

The orientation of the material he prepared for educational purposes reflected a Christian philosophy of life, government, and education. As a Christian scholar he “laid his foundation of etymology upon the Scriptures, and his research into the origin of language stems from this premise.” “In harmony with this outlook he often used Scripture as the example of word usage in his dictionary.”

In his compelling ambition to trace the origins and usages of words, Webster learned 20 different languages. He was convinced that if the uprightness and correctness of word usage and meaning were not conscientiously protected and maintained, national decline would inevitably take place. This conviction led him through almost unbelievable efforts and accomplishments. More than that of any other person, Webster’s work contributed to a unified (and dignified) American language.

“Noah Webster recognized that each age is subject to the demoralization of its language by the ‘literary’ or ‘modish’ segment of society. Thus he put, as a check and balance upon each other, universal undisputed practice and the common law of language, or established principles of analogy. Change for the sake of change, or the use of vulgarity, cant,² or slang for its own sake, was to Webster like the principle of motion in physics—if not controlled it became the principle of destruction. Thus ‘expressions peculiar to, and generally understood only by, members of a particular sect, class, or occupation; as (a) the secret jargon of thieves, tramps, etc., (b) the special idiom of a profession or trade, or, (c) a mode of talking used merely out of convention; esp., the insincere use of pious phraseology’ found no place in Noah Webster’s dictionaries.” *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Introduction, 10.

Slang

Slang is probably one of the more elusive areas of language to evaluate because the meaning of a word can change over a period of time. An expression that was once considered slang may become generally accepted as a part of informal or even formal speech. We can be aided by looking at the origin of such words, whether there are better words that should be used anyway, by the way they are most *commonly* used, and, most of all, by earnest prayer for the Lord’s guidance in what speech is most representative of Him. Think of

how it would sound to hear Jesus talking to His angels, or to His disciples, and using the words that are in question.

While we do not appeal to our readers to make the dictionary their moral rule of speech, it becomes all of us to seek to avoid expressions that are generally recognized as inelegant, incorrect, vulgar, or otherwise nonstandard.

Let us give consideration to some examples of words and phrases that would fit the descriptions given for slang, or would otherwise be unacceptable.

We realize that one can look at various dictionaries and see that in some cases a word that is labeled “slang” in one era, or by one language panel, may not be viewed the same at a later time or by other equally educated linguists. Even among our readers, we know that opinions will vary as to whether a given word or expression is slang; however, we encourage our readers to think carefully about the usage of such words as:

- *Cool*, in the place of Good, Fine, Wonderful, Ingenious
- *Guys*, in the place of Fellows, Men, Boys, Friends
- *Gals*, in the place of Girls
- *Bucks*, in the place of Dollars
- *Cop*, in the place of Policeman, State Trooper, and so forth.
- *Kid*, in the place of Boy, Girl, Child, or Youth

• *Kidding*, in the place of Teasing or Telling something not true. We should also consider the propriety of teasing, jesting, and joking: “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.” Ephesians 5:3–4; see also Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 26:18–19.

Profanity

There is a class of slang that is a form of profanity also. Many of these words are used as exclamations. The following are some examples of such words that have no relevance to the topic of conversation. They are

derivatives of sacred words used totally out of place. Some of these are forms of using God's name in vain:

Gee, Gosh, Golly
Doggone
Heck
Damn, Damned, Darn, Darned

There are other phrases that are often used in common language that really need to be evaluated as well. Consider the following:

"Oh Dear!"; "Dear Me!" — Who is dear in these phrases?

"Oh, my!"; "Oh, my goodness!" — The first is short for "Oh, my God!" which is an obvious inappropriate use of God's name. We should never make use of God's name to express our surprise at something. "Oh, my goodness!" is a substitute for "Oh, my God!" Furthermore, is our goodness something to call attention to when exclaiming our surprise? A proper usage of reference to "My God" is in a very serious and reverent way as in Psalm 22:2; 25:2; 71:4; Daniel 9:18.

The Right Word in the Wrong Context

Some words or phrases have been adapted into slang usage that often describes an otherwise normal life experience expressed in street language with sexual innuendos or connotations. Though some may innocently use these slang words without being aware of the misappropriation of the meaning, it is nonetheless true. These are terms that should be avoided except in their proper and obvious context of meaning.

Though we will not give examples of improper and proper usage of these terms, a few of these expressions are: *Screwed*; *Shafted*; and *Riding me*.

Exaggerations

Some phrases are exaggerations and should be replaced with words of correct meaning. Gross exaggerations have a tendency to develop the habit of overemphasis for the sake of causing an impression. Often such exaggerations are an expression of some complaint, which makes them

doubly objectionable, for we are to be training our minds to thankfulness—not to habits of complaining. Here are several examples:

"That just blows my mind."
"I'm about starved to death."
"I really got burned on that deal."
"I'm frozen to death!"
"He was scared to death!"

While these expressions are commonly used in our society, the meanings of which we all understand, yet don't you think that as Christians we ought to strive for higher and better speech?

There is a class of slang that is a form of profanity also. . . .
Some of these are forms of using God's name in vain.

Conclusion

Picture for a few moments several groups of people: First, imagine a group of criminals in a prison. They are planning a breakout, which will necessitate killing some guards. What do you think their conversation would be like?

Next, picture a street gang in the inner city that is making an excursion into some "enemy" territory. They are advancing with chains, pipes, knives, and other weapons. Imagine the discussion they might be having with each other.

Now picture a group of young people in their teens. They are wearing torn and flapping clothing. Their pants are large and baggy. Some of them have rings in their lips, their ears, and elsewhere. What words might you hear as they talk to each other about their experiences of the past few days?

Last, picture a group of earnest Bible students who are meeting together. They love their Redeemer very much and want to please Him in everything. They believe that He is coming soon, and they are striving by God's grace to reflect the character of Christ perfectly. They are sharing some of their struggles

and asking for prayer for themselves and for others whom they know.

Now into each of these situations that you have pictured put sentences using the words we have discussed here, also considering how they contrast with more appropriate words. You may try this with other words which may be in question also. I think it will not be hard to see which usages belong best with the last scene pictured.

It is my hope that these thoughts will suggest some areas in which we may each give prayerful consider-

ation as to our choice of words, and that we will choose those words that "minister grace to the hearers."

Would it not be a marvelous thing in this world if there were a whole generation of Seventh-day Adventists known all over the world for their purity of language? Will God ever be able to have a people like that? It lies with you and me to strive for that goal by faith in His enabling strength. ✨

References:

¹ "An exclamation or oath, esp. one that is profane, vulgar, or obscene." *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 483.

² In this statement, reference is made to cant and slang phrases or language. One of the definitions of "cant" is: "The language or jargon spoken by gypsies, thieves, professional beggars, and the like, and containing many words different from ordinary English; a kind of slang or argot."

The definition of "argot" is "An esoteric jargon or speech used by a group of thieves or other disreputable characters to conceal the true import of what is said; hence, any slang."

The primary definition given for "slang" is: "Colloquial words or phrases having hardly the stamp of general approval, and often regarded as inelegant, incorrect, or even vulgar. Slang may consist either of unmeaning jargon to which restricted specific meanings have been given, or of expressions apparently legitimate, but used in an arbitrary, capricious, or grotesquely metaphorical sense." These definitions are from *Webster's Unabridged 20th Century Dictionary*.



Holy in Conversation— Or Jesting and Joking?

Bill Humeniuk

“It is no time now for lightness, vanity, or trifling. The scenes of this earth’s history are soon to close. . . . The apostle Peter says, ‘Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . so be ye holy in *all manner of conversation*; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.’ 1 Peter 1:13, 15–16.” *Gospel Workers*, 131. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

“When a minister bearing the solemn message of warning to the world . . . is careless in his example and deportment, engaging with the young in trifling conversation, in jesting and joking, and in relating humorous anecdotes to create laughter, he is unworthy of being a gospel minister, and needs to be converted.” *Ibid.*, 131–132.

“A spirit of frivolity may be in keeping with the profession of clowns and theatrical performers, but it is altogether beneath the *dignity* of a man who is chosen to stand between the living and the dead, and to be a mouthpiece for God.” *Ibid.*, 132.

As I read these statements the strongest conviction came to my heart and to my soul: Where do I stand in this solemn hour of earth’s history? Am I holy in *all* manner of conversation, being sober in this final hour, as each moment passes by into eternity? Am I prepared for translation as I walk with God?

One day, I made a joking remark to a staff member. It was in no way an off-colored joke or mannerism. Oh, no—just a smart remark! While I said it, another staff member, who was standing close by, cast a puzzled look at me. Just then an arrow from the Holy Spirit cut into my heart!

It is time that God’s people rise above the earthly and carnal state. Considering that angels of God are leading us and guarding us until we reach that heavenly home, where does our conversation center?

“Do we, by our lives and holy conversation, show to those around us that we are looking for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?” or is it that “there is too much seeking after amusements and things to take the attention in this world. . . . The

tongue is engaged too often in light and trifling conversation, which gives the lie to our profession, for our conversation is not in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour.” *Early Writings*, 111.

On one occasion I attended a meeting conducted by a self-supporting ministry. It was a solemn assembly; yet outside I overheard a light and trifling conversation which persisted, much to my displeasure. Truly God’s people are not ready!

We sit in judgment on our beloved church—as apostasy grows and multiplies. Yet right in our own self-supporting ministries and in our own lives, we need to search our hearts and cry out: “Lord, examine my heart, please *help* me to see if there be any wickedness within me.” See Psalm 139:23–24.

“Angels are watching over and guarding us; we often grieve these angels by indulging in trifling conversation, jesting, and joking, and also by sinking down into a careless, stupid state.” *Ibid.*

“Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

Matthew 12:36. What solemn words, solemn thoughts, for this solemn hour!

“For the hour of his judgment is come.” Revelation 14:7. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

2 Corinthians 5:10. Yes, time is winding down, my people. The hour is late. Are we contemplating the treasures of the redeemed—the Holy City, our eternal home, and the joys of heaven—or is the earth and the things thereof, including earthly, carnal conversation, still dominating our thoughts? See *ibid.*, 112–114.

Ministers of the gospel, where do you stand? “The minister is using strange fire when he mixes storytelling with his discourses. . . . God is offended when His representatives descend to the use of cheap, trifling words. The cause of truth is dishonored.” *Evangelism*, 210.

Strong words! Yes, the Holy Spirit is speaking through His servant. Are we listening? Yes—are we really?

“Amusement is not to be interwoven with instruction in the Scriptures. . . . The messages of truth are to be kept entirely free from cheap, common words of human devising. . . . Ministers are to be the mouthpiece of God, and they must eradicate from their speech every expression that is cheap or common. Let them be careful lest by attempting during their discourse to cause laughter, they dishonor God.” *Ibid.*, 211.

In my travels, visiting different churches, my heart is saddened when I hear much storytelling created to draw laughter from the congregation. God is dishonored. At the General Conference Session, in my beloved city of Toronto, Canada, where I was born and raised, they were employing clowns to promote the gospel. What hypocrisy to “the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Romans 1:16.

“No light, trifling words will fall from his lips. . . . All jesting and

joking, all lightness and trifling, is painful to the cross-bearing disciple of Christ.” *Ibid.*, 206–207.

Ellen White addressed these words to ministers of the gospel, yet it applies to all who live the gospel—to you and, of course, to me. Further, she adds “the trifling anecdotes, the words spoken to create a laugh, are all condemned by the Word of God and are entirely out of place in the sacred desk.” *Ibid.*, 643.

No wonder Peter wrote, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, [speaking of destruction by fire], what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.” 2 Peter 3:11. “We are forbidden by God to engage in trifling, foolish conversation, in

“frivolity, in jesting and joking . . . is a hindrance to spiritual growth and a cause of grief to the angels of God.” *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 173. If we cause the angels grief, how can we soon join their company and fellowship?

“Let not your tongue run at random in jesting and joking. These are signs that your heart needs to be cleansed from its defilement.” *Sons and Daughters of God*, 180.

“Into the city of God there will enter nothing that defiles. All who are to be dwellers there will here have become pure in heart. In one who is learning of Jesus, there will be manifest a growing distaste for careless manners, unseemly language, and coarse thought. When Christ abides in the heart, there will

Let not your tongue run at random in jesting and joking. These are signs that your heart needs to be cleansed from its defilement.

jesting, joking, or speaking any idle words. We must give an account of what we say, to God. . . . Remember that you are of value with God. Allow no cheap, foolish talk or wrong principles to compose your Christian experience.” *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 458.

Oh, what a God! We are of great value to Him—so much so that He lovingly sends us a warning to be holy not only in our conversation, but also in our entire being. We are preparing for translation and eternity—where only praise and worship will proceed out of our hearts and mouths.

God also speaks to the youth to encourage sobriety: “Lightness, jesting, and joking will result in barrenness of soul and the loss of the favor of God.” *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 236. God is calling everyone, especially those who are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to a higher calling, to a holier lifestyle and to a holy conversation. Why?—Because

be purity and refinement of thought and manner.” *Maranatha*, 88.

As I review the Word of God, and what the Holy Spirit reveals through the Spirit of Prophecy, I am thoroughly convicted that it is time for God’s people everywhere to stand up, lay aside self, and put on Christ.

While in the Czech Republic several weeks ago, I noticed a dear sister of the faith, who dearly loves the Lord, and who constantly spoke soberly and thoughtfully, honoring God in all her conversation. She was such an inspiration to me, an American! It humbled and inspired me to resolve that in my walk with God, my conversation will in the future be centered only in Christ, on the Holy City, in encouraging others, and in uplifting Jesus before all those around me.

We are on the very borders of eternity! Will you join me in being diligent, sober, and serious in *all manner of conversation* as we hope in the Lord? ✨



Our First Love

Kurt Waldau

“God is love,” is a saying that most people have heard of, and many believe. Is there more to this saying than meets the eye? God’s Holy Word, the Bible, tells all people that God’s love is demonstrated by what He *does*.

For example, God is love because He is willing to forgive our wretched and terrible sins. Satan wants to destroy us and keep us from eternal life, but God has shown His love to us by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to rescue us from the snares of Satan.

We see God’s love in so many varied ways that our minds cannot understand or retain them all in the short span of life on this earth.

Reflecting God’s Love

On the other side of the coin, God wants all of His children to love Him in return. How can we reflect God’s generous love back to Him?—At the top of the list, in number one position, is: By obeying what He commands us in His Ten Commandments. These Commandments are *not* ten suggestions. God expects all of His offspring to obey them in every detail—totally and completely.

God is a jealous God. He wants *all* of our affections and loyalty. He is not satisfied with second place.

He must be our *first love* in all areas of our lives, or He is not our God at all.

In this day many of us are not obeying God in all points of the Ten Commandments. We who say we love God must ask ourselves, “Is God our first love, or are we allowing our selfishness to put someone or something else in the place of God?” We must ask ourselves this question often. Do we take this question seriously? What is our answer?

The Sabbath

For example, how do we keep the Sabbath? As we gather for worship services or Sabbath School, are our minds completely and totally on God and Jesus Christ and the worship that we owe God on His day? Or are our minds more on worldly matters and cares? Do we attend Sabbath services to worship God, or are we attending them in order to see friends and talk about the events of the past week—about work, or about problems we might have had? Do we view this *holy day as sacred time*, or as a time for social gathering? Does our conversation run in almost any channel *except* what God would have us talk about? I submit that this is the experience of far too many of us each week. Is God our *first love* on His day—and every other day?

What about our dress on God’s holy day? Do we come into God’s presence with suitable clothing, or do we dress like the world?—We see short, slit skirts on some of our women, and common, everyday clothing on some of our men. Is God, our great Creator, concerned about how we come before Him on His day?—Oh, yes indeed! Some of us would show by our dress more respect if the President of the United States were to come to our services than we do for the presence of God at our meetings.

When we became baptized our zeal for God and His love was uppermost in our minds. However, after a time, our love for God and for one another began to dim. Coldness crept into our hearts and minds, and our first love became the second or third love in the lives of many of us.

“Thou Hast Left Thy First Love”

Our prophetess, Ellen G. White, in the *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, pages 421–423, tells us, “The True Witness addresses the church of Ephesus, saying: ‘I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candle-

stick out of his place, except thou repent.' Revelation 2:4-5.

"At the first the experience of the church of Ephesus was marked with childlike simplicity and fervor. . . . The believers rejoiced in the love of God because Christ was in their hearts. . . . The praise of God was on their lips."

Was not this our experience when we were baptized? Now we must ask ourselves, Has our zeal for God and His way in our individual lives started to fade? Are we becoming too much like the world in our music and in our preaching? Are we as a church repeating the mistakes of the Ephesian church in our generation? Do we seek church membership for the social events, or are we members worshiping and glorifying God in our lives—all day and every day?

In the lives of many of us, the warmth and zeal of our first love is becoming frozen up, replaced with self and selfishness—the foundation of all sin. If we have a high esteem of self, rather than the humility of Jesus Christ, our first love will fade. We lose a proper regard for God's Commandments, and instead of the Sabbath being God's day, it becomes our day.

Many of us have forgotten the wonderful manner in which we received the "truth." Our love for God and for one another has been on the decline in our church, and, as a result, the love of self has sprung up. We have followed too many of

the ways of the world's churches. Are we more interested in winning a larger number of members than we are in nurturing our present membership?

Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisees is applicable to those who have lost their first love. A cold, legal religion can never lead others to Christ and eternal life because it is a loveless, Christless religion.

Temptation comes suddenly, and the light is quenched. Henceforth light is to them darkness, and darkness light. God calls for repentance without delay. So long have many trifled with salvation that their spiritual eyesight is dimmed, and they cannot discern between light and darkness. Christ is humiliated in His people. The first love is gone; the faith is weak,

In the lives of many of us, the warmth and zeal of our first love is becoming frozen up, replaced with self and selfishness.

Has the light that gladdened our hearts when we first understood the message for this time left us? Has this zeal and fervor been lost out of our hearts and lives? If this is our position individually and as a church, we are in a perilous situation.

We are told, "Leaving the first love represents a spiritual fall. Many have fallen thus. In every church in our land, there is needed confession, repentance, and reconversion. The disappointment of Christ is beyond description. Unless those who have fallen repent speedily, the deceptions of the last days will overtake them. Some, though they do not realize it, are preparing to be overtaken.

there is need of a thorough transformation." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, 192.

We must not trifle with our salvation. Is our spiritual eyesight so dimmed that we cannot discern between light and darkness? Have we as a church, the remnant church, forgotten God? Do we extend to Him only *lip service*?

God in His great mercy calls for repentance and a return to our first love. God tells us that unless we repent, He will come and remove our candlestick out of its place. See Revelation 2:5. We are warned in Revelation 3:15-16 that if we are lukewarm, we will be spewed out of the mouth of God. *We have been warned. Watchmen, let us wake up!* ❄



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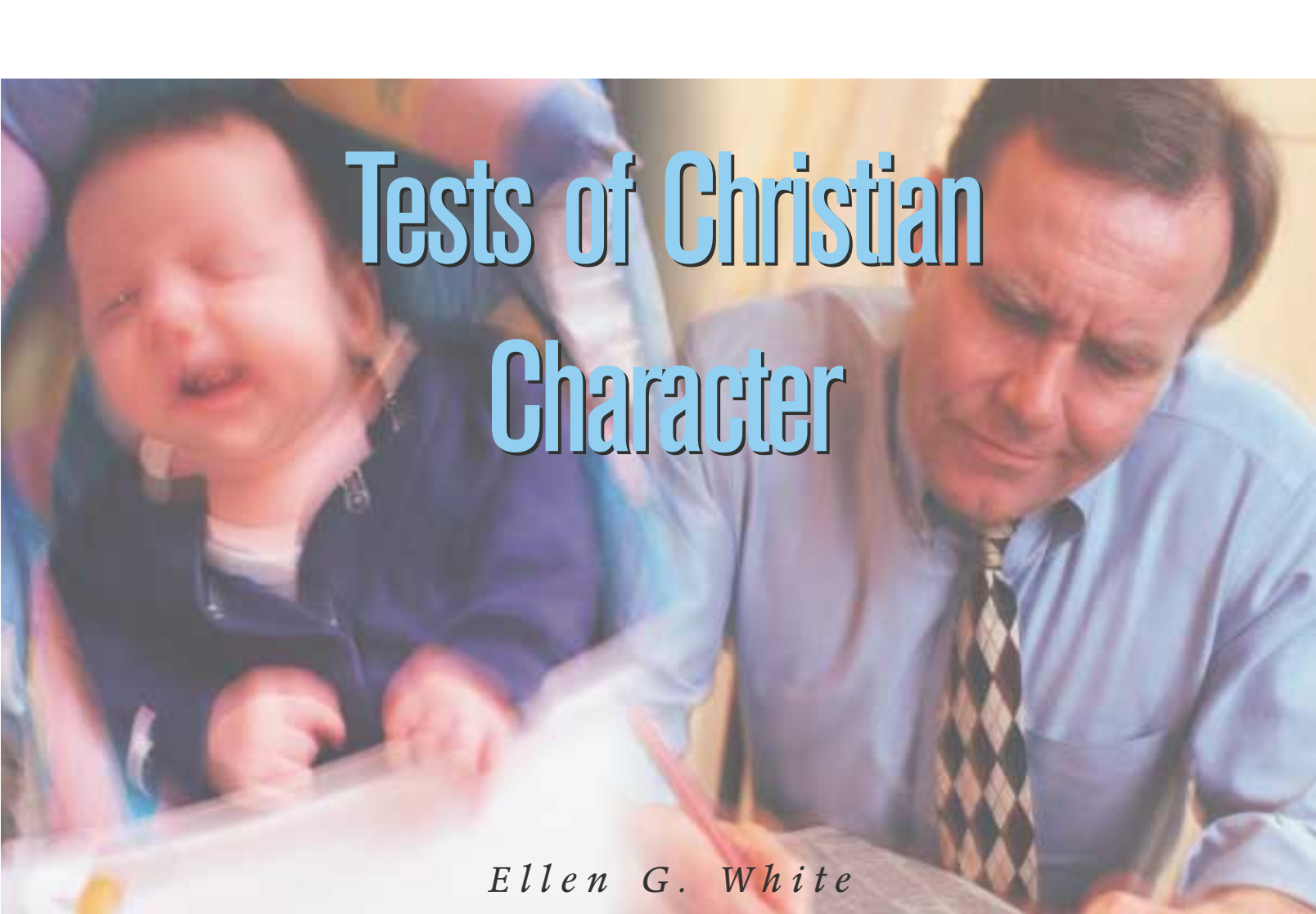
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Tests of Christian Character

Ellen G. White

“He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” 1 John 2:6. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Romans 8:9. Conformity to Jesus will not be unobserved by the world. It is a subject of notice and comment. Yet the Christian may not be conscious of the great change; for the more closely he resembles Christ in character, the more humble will be his opinion of himself. Those who have the deepest experience in the things of God, are the farthest removed from pride or self-exaltation. They have the humblest thoughts of self, and the most exalted conceptions of the glory and excellence of Christ. They feel that the lowest place in His service is too honorable for them.

Moses did not know that his face shone with a brightness painful and terrifying to those who had not, like himself, communed with God. Paul

had a very humble opinion of his own advancement in the Christian life. He says, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Philippians 3:12. He speaks of himself as the “chief of sinners.” See 1 Timothy 1:15. Yet Paul had been highly honored of the Lord. He had been taken in holy vision to the third heaven, and had there received revelations of divine glory which he could not be permitted to make known.

John the Baptist was pronounced by our Saviour the greatest of prophets. Yet what a contrast between the language of this man of God and that of many who profess to be ministers of the cross. When asked if he was the Christ, John declares himself unworthy even to unloose his Master’s sandals. When his disciples came with the complaint that the attention of the people was turned to the new Teacher, John

reminded them that he himself had claimed to be only the forerunner of the Promised One. To Christ, as the Bridegroom, belongs the first place in the affections of His people: “The friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all.” John 3:29-31. “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” Verse 33.

It is such workers that are needed in the cause of God today. The self-sufficient, the envious and jealous, the critical and faultfinding, can well be spared from His sacred work. God is not straitened for men or means. He calls for workers who are true and faithful, pure and holy; for those who have felt their need of the atoning blood of Christ and the sanctifying grace of His Spirit.

When we see those who profess the faith firm in principle, fearless in duty, zealous in the cause of God, yet humble and lowly, gentle and tender, patient toward all, ready to forgive, manifesting love for souls for whom Christ died, we do not need to inquire, Are they Christians? They give unmistakable evidence that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. When men reveal the opposite traits, when they are proud, vain, frivolous, worldly-minded, avaricious, unkind, censorious, we need not be told with whom they are associating, who is their most intimate friend. They may not believe in witchcraft, but notwithstanding this, they are holding communion with an evil spirit.

To this class I would say, "Glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." James 3:14-18.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees flocked to the baptism of John, that fearless preacher of righteousness addressed them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Matthew 3:7-8. These men were actuated by unworthy motives in coming to John. They were men of poisonous principles and corrupt practices. Yet they had no sense of their true condition. Filled with pride and ambition, they would not hesitate at any means to exalt themselves and strengthen their influence with the people. They came to receive baptism at the hand of John that they might better carry out these designs.

John read their motives, and met them with the searching inquiry, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Had they heard the voice of God speaking to their

hearts, they would have given evidence of the fact, by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. No such fruit was seen. They had heard the warning as merely the voice of man. They were charmed with the power and boldness with which John spoke; but the Spirit of God did not send conviction to their hearts, and as the sure result bring forth fruit unto eternal life. They gave no evidence of a change of heart. Without the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, John would have them understand that no outward ceremony could benefit them.

None are farther from the kingdom of Heaven than self-righteous formalists, filled with pride at their own attainments, while they are wholly destitute of the Spirit of Christ; while envy,

not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Verse 10.

Those who laud and flatter the minister, while they neglect the works of righteousness, give unmistakable evidence that they are converted to the minister and not to God. We inquire, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Was it the voice of the Holy Spirit or merely the voice of man which you heard in the message sent from God? The fruit borne will testify to the character of the tree.

No outward forms can make us clean; no ordinance, administered by the saintliest of men, can take the place of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God must do its work upon the heart. All who have not experienced its regenerating power are chaff among the wheat.

Those who laud and flatter the minister, while they neglect the works of righteousness, give unmistakable evidence that they are converted to the minister and not to God.

jealousy, or love of praise and popularity controls them. They belong to the same class that John addressed as a generation of vipers, children of the wicked one. They serve the cause of Satan more effectively than the vilest profligate; for the latter does not disguise his true character; he appears what he is.

God requires fruits meet for repentance. Without such fruit, our profession of faith is of no value. The Lord is able to raise up true believers among those who have never heard His name. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Verse 9.

God is not dependent upon men who are unconverted in heart and life. He will never favor any man who practices iniquity. "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth

Our Lord has His fan in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. In the coming day, He will discern "between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." Malachi 3:18.

The Spirit of Christ will be revealed in all who are born of God. Strife and contention cannot arise among those who are controlled by His Spirit. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD." Isaiah 52:11. The church will rarely take a higher stand than is taken by her ministers. There is need of a converted ministry and a converted people. Shepherds who watch for souls as they that must give account will lead the flock on in paths of peace and holiness. Their success in this work will be in proportion to their own growth in grace and knowledge of the truth. When the teachers are sanctified, soul, body, and spirit, they can impress upon the people the importance of such sanctification.

The Lord has not closed Heaven against His people, but their own course of continual backsliding has separated them from Him. Pride, and love of the world live in the heart. Few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. The general opinion is that the church is flourishing, and that peace and prosperity are in all her borders.

The warnings of God's Word, and the influence of His Spirit, have alike been neglected. The result is apparent in the deplorable condition of the church. Impurity is today widespread, even among those who profess to be followers of Christ. Passion is unrestrained; the animal propensities are gaining strength by indulgence, while the moral powers are constantly becoming weaker.

of the depravity of the unregenerate nature. The heart of stone is not exchanged for a heart of flesh. Few are willing to fall upon the Rock, and be broken.

No matter who you are, or what your life has been, you can be saved only in God's appointed way. You must repent; you must fall helpless on the Rock, Christ Jesus. You must feel your need of a physician, and of the one only remedy for sin, the blood of Christ. This remedy can be secured only by repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the work is yet to be begun by many who profess to be Christians. Like the Pharisees of old, they feel no need of a Saviour. They are self-sufficient, self-exalted. Said Christ, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repen-

humble ourselves before God, like the common sinner. But we must be content to enter into life in the very same way as the chief of sinners. We must renounce our own righteousness, and plead for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us. We must depend wholly upon Christ for our strength. Self must die. We must acknowledge that all we have is from the exceeding riches of divine grace. Let this be the language of our hearts, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Psalm 115:1.

Genuine faith is followed by love, and love by obedience. All the powers and passions of the converted man are brought under the control of Christ. His Spirit is a renewing Power, transforming to the divine image all who will receive it.

God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him to death for our offenses, and raised Him again for our justification. Through Christ we may present our petitions at the throne of grace. Through Him, unworthy as we are, we may obtain all spiritual blessings. Do we come to Him, that we may have life?

Experience is knowledge derived from experiment. What we need is experimental religion. How shall we know for ourselves God's goodness and His love? The psalmist tells us— not, hear and know, read and know, or believe and know; but— "Taste and see that the LORD is good." Psalm 34:8. Instead of relying upon the word of another, taste for yourself.

Many believe in the wrath of God, but put forth no earnest efforts to escape it. They believe in Heaven, but make no sacrifice to obtain it. They believe in the value of the soul, and that ere long its redemption ceaseth forever; yet they neglect precious opportunities to make their peace with God. They read the Bible, but its threatenings do not alarm or its promises win them. They approve things that are excellent, yet they follow the way in which God has forbidden them to go. They know a refuge, but do not avail

Continued on page 30

Experience is knowledge derived from experiment. What we need is experimental religion. . . . Instead of relying upon the word of another, taste for yourself.

Many are eagerly participating in worldly, demoralizing amusements which God's Word forbids. Thus they sever their connection with God, and rank themselves with the pleasure lovers of the world. The sins that destroyed the antediluvians and the cities of the plain exist today—not merely in heathen lands, or with the avowed unbeliever, but among professors of Christianity. Base passions defile the mind and corrupt the soul. Some who are in the vilest iniquity have borrowed the livery of Heaven, that they may serve Satan more effectively. If God should present these sins before us as they appear in His sight, we would be filled with shame and terror.

And what has caused this alarming condition? Many have accepted the theory of religious truth, who have not been converted to its principles. There are few indeed who feel true sorrow for sin; who have deep, pungent convictions

tance." Luke 5:32. The blood of Christ will avail for none but those who feel their need of its cleansing power.

What surpassing love and condescension, that when we had no claim upon divine mercy, Christ was willing to undertake our redemption! But our great Physician requires of every soul unquestioning submission. We are never to prescribe for our own case. Christ must have the entire control of will and action, or He will not undertake in our behalf.

Many are not sensible of their condition and their danger; and there is much in the nature and manner of Christ's work averse to every worldly principle, and opposed to the pride of the human heart. Jesus requires us to trust ourselves wholly to His hands, and confide in His love and wisdom.

We may flatter ourselves, as did Nicodemus, that our moral character has been correct, and we need not

“They Shall Not Cleave. . .”

News Item: Washington—“To see the banknotes of Europe’s new common currency is to see Europe’s future. They are not pretty. . . .

“Tuesday’s introduction of the euro marks a milestone on the march to turn ‘Europe’ from a geographical into a political denotation. Enthusiasts say the march leads to a sunny upland of a perpetual peace produced by the subordination of politics to economics. And they say it will put an end to attempts to forge continental unity by beating plowshares into swords for Roman legions, Napoleonic marshals or the German armies. . . .

“The common currency serves the political objective of changing Europe’s civic discourse by supplanting political reasoning with economic calculation. The euro is an instrument for producing a European superstate, which requires erasing from the nations’ populations their national identities, which means their distinctive memories. . . .

“Under the euro, nations cede fundamental attributes of sovereignty—control of monetary (and hence, effectively, fiscal) policy to the European Central Bank in Frankfurt. This advances the integration of Europe’s nations into a continental federation, under which nations will be as ‘sovereign’ as Louisiana and Idaho are.

“In addition to a currency, the EU [European Union] has a parliament, a supreme court, a passport, and is working toward a military and a criminal justice system. It has a flag no one salutes and an anthem no one knows.” *Tacoma News Tribune*, December 30, 2001, George Will, Syndicated Columnist.

End-Times Perspective: For centuries man has tried to unite the countries of Europe, which represent most of the kingdoms that the Roman Empire was divided into, but

the prophecy of God in Daniel 2:43 that “they shall not cleave one to another” stands firm. As God continued to reveal in Revelation more details about the future, He showed that at the very end of time, when “the beast” receives authority (Revelation 17:12), these ten kings from the Roman Empire will also receive authority (political power) with him. Verse 13 tells us that these kings (nations) have the same mind, and that they will give not only their authority, but also their power (finances, military, population numbers) to the beast.

We are witnessing the beginning of this process of them becoming one mind. Satan is succeeding with money and riches where man could not in the past through arms, marriage, and treaties. In verse 14 our Lord tells us what the true purpose of this unity is: “These shall make war with the Lamb,” who is represented by His followers. As for who the victor will be, we are not left to conjecture or doubt: “and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

Natural Disasters

News Item: Frankfurt—“Natural disasters caused at least 25,000 deaths worldwide in 2001, more than double the previous year, the world’s largest reinsurer said on Friday.

“Putting total economic losses at \$36 billion, Munich Re said catastrophes related to extreme weather were a result of continued global climate change.

“It said the 2001 figures—with 14,000 people killed in an earthquake in India in January alone—compared with 10,000 deaths the previous year and losses of around \$30 billion. . . .

“Munich Re—which faces \$1.85 billion in claims resulting from the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York—said losses from extreme natural disasters would be even bigger than those arising from the attacks on the United States.” Reuters, December 28, 2001.

End-Times Perspective: As God withdraws His Spirit from this world, we can expect wilder vagaries both in the weather and in man’s conduct.

Burning Books

News Item: Alamogordo, N.M.—“As hundreds protested nearby, a church group burned Harry Potter [books] and other books.

“Jack Brock, the Christ Community Church founder and pastor, said the books burned Sunday were ‘a masterpiece of satanic deception.’

“‘These books teach children how they can get into witchcraft and become a witch, wizard or warlock,’ Brock said. Members sang ‘Amazing Grace’ as they threw Potter books, plus some other books and magazines, into the fire.

“Across the street, protesters chanting ‘Stop burning books’ stretched in a line a quarter of a mile long. . . .

“A letter to the Alamogordo Daily News inviting the community to attend the fire sparked debate in the town of 36,000. On Tuesday, protesters held signs reading ‘Book burning? Shame on our town’ in front of the public library. Inside was a display highlighting the books.” *The Associated Press*, December 31, 2001.

End-Times Perspective: Most sincere, truth-seeking Christians recognize the Harry Potter books for what they are: instruments of Satan as we near the end to more overtly lead the innocent and unwary, regardless of age, deeper into his realm. But as we combat this evil, we must be mindful of the counsel of the Word of God to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Matthew 10:16. ✠



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Hovering Over the Churches

Colin Standish

The whole purpose of church organization is to facilitate the mission and destiny of the church. This includes the following goals:

1. To facilitate the spiritual growth of the members of the church;
2. To retrain the members of the church in effective soul-winning witness;
3. To prepare a people to receive the latter rain;
4. Under the power of the Holy Spirit to take the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people; and
5. To prepare a people who will stand unflinchingly during the time of Jacob's trouble.

The mission of the church is here demonstrated to be soul winning in focus. To accomplish these goals God has entrusted His end-time truth exclusively to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and He has ordained an organizational structure that, rather than hampering these soul-winning goals, provides the fullest opportunities for their perfect implementation. It is impossible to accomplish the church's mission

without following the God-given organizational structure. Thus it is essential that we constantly review our church's organization, at all levels, in the light of Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy directions.

The divine plan is that the ministry should concentrate its efforts on the spreading of the gospel in those places where there is little or no witness to the everlasting gospel. However, following the faulted principles of the fallen churches of Babylon, we have chosen rather to concentrate the effort of the ministry upon nurturing those who already have been long exposed to the truth. This has led to two catastrophic consequences—(1) the members of the church have tended to become man-dependent, spiritually indolent, and ineffective witnesses; and (2) we have largely left those areas without a Seventh-day Adventist presence, to continue in ignorance of the three angels' messages.

The Apostolic Model

The apostles (ministers), while not neglecting the flock that they had raised up in various places,

nevertheless, continued to press forward bringing the gospel into new regions. Once established, they set up elders from the congregation to nurture the flock, and to lead the flock in soul-winning efforts in the city, town, village or district in which the community of the faithful lived.

This then gave the minister freedom to move to another region where truth had not been established to raise up yet another company of believers. The amount of time spent in each area depended upon the establishment of local leadership who understood God's truth, and the speed with which the minister was able to train the members of the new church in effective witnessing so that they could fulfill, in their sphere of influence, the continuing progress of the gospel within range of the location of the church.

Church members who attended the church closest to where they lived provided the fabric for a strong outreach, with the church acting as a lighthouse in that area to attract others to the gospel truth. Too often today members travel long distances

to go to the church of their choice, far removed from their local habitation. Therefore, they are largely unable to play the role that God has ordained the church members to fulfill in the local community.

With these alarming developments, both the ministry and the laity have, to a great extent, lost their direction, their vision, their purpose, and their soul-winning ministry. While the pastor "baby-sits" the church members, there is little time left to prosper the soul-winning objectives of the pastoral ministry. The members also fail to grow and develop in their personal ministry.

In this article we will see that the Lord gave much counsel urging the pastors to leave the churches after thoroughly preparing the members for their role in spreading the gospel in the local community. The pastors were then to be free to launch out in new fields where God's work can be prospered.

When we review the many counsels that Sister White presented to the church, urging ministers against hovering over the church, it is sad to realize just how our insubordination in organizational structure has hindered, rather than facilitated, the entire mission of God's church.

God's Counsel

(1) Ministers are to direct their ministry to those who know not the truth:

"Oh, what a work there is before us! Our ministers are not to hover over those who have received the message. With Christ's love burning in their hearts, they are to go forth to win sinners to the Saviour. Beside all waters God's messengers are to sow the seeds of truth. Place after place is to be visited; church after church is to be raised up. Those who take their stand for the truth are to be organized into churches, and then the minister is to pass on to other equally important fields." *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 24, 1902.

"We feel pained beyond measure to see some of our ministers hovering about the churches, apparently

putting forth some little effort, but having next to nothing to show for their labors. The field is the world. Let them go out into the unbelieving world and labor to convert souls to the truth." *Testimonies*, vol. 3, 406.

"The world is to be warned. Ministers should work earnestly and devotedly, opening new fields and engaging in personal labor for souls instead of hovering over the churches that already have great light and many advantages. In view of the fact we are living so near the close of this earth's history, there should be greater thoroughness in labor, more vigilant waiting, watching, praying, and working." *The Indiana Reporter*, January 20, 1904.

"Brethren and sisters, why hover about the churches? Study the parable of the lost sheep, and go forth as true shepherds, seeking the lost one who is in the wilderness of sin. Rescue the perishing." *Christian Service*, 178.

the regions beyond, calling upon the members of the churches to send their prayers as sharp sickles into the harvest field." *Review & Herald*, December 1, 1896.

(2) Above all else, the calling of a minister is enthusiastic soul winning:

"Our ministers should plan wisely, as faithful stewards. They should feel that it is not their duty to hover over the churches already raised up, but that they should be doing aggressive evangelistic work, preaching the Word and doing house-to-house work in places that have not yet heard the truth. . . . They will find that nothing is so encouraging as doing evangelistic work in new fields." *Evangelism*, 382.

"In all lines of ministerial work there is need of greater earnestness. Time is passing, and work that should be far advanced is almost at a standstill. Ministers are not to spend their time hovering over the

*Brethren and sisters, why hover about the churches?
Study the parable of the lost sheep, and go forth as true
shepherds, seeking the lost one who is in the wilderness
of sin.*

"Our ministers are not to be encouraged to hover about the churches to repeat to the believers week after week the same truths. We have a truth that is saving and precious. The Word of God must be planted in many hearts; the bread of life must be dealt out to many hungry souls. . . . It is a blessed work to lift up Christ before the world." *The Upward Look*, 264.

"The great object of our work is to carry the light to those who are in darkness. Our work is worldwide. God's delegated messengers are not to hover about the people who have been long in the truth. Altogether too much labor is devoted to the churches. God's people are not to depend on others to do their work for them. Let the Lord's messengers carry the triumphs of the cross into

churches, laboring for those who have already accepted the truth. They are to go forth to proclaim the message to those who have not heard it. They must sow the seeds of truth in fields that have not yet been sown." *Australasian Union Conference Record*, July 15, 1902.

"Our work is aggressive; there must be no halting. There must be less, far less, hovering about the churches, and far more lifting the standard in new fields. Our ministers must give the trumpet a certain sound, lifting up Jesus and saying: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' John 1:29." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, 8-9.

(3) The servant of the Lord is very specific that the regular churches are not the dominion of the ministers:

“Our ministers are not to hover over the churches, regarding the churches in some particular territory as their special care. The members of our churches are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear fruit to His glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object—the saving of souls.” *Ibid.*, vol. 20, 126.

“The idea that our ministers must hover over the churches might just as well be given up now as later. The members of the churches must be taught to keep themselves at

while thousands are perishing out of Christ.” *The General Conference Bulletin*, April 12, 1901.

“My heart has been filled with sadness as I have looked over the field and seen the barren places. What does this mean? Who are standing as representatives of Jesus Christ? Who feels a burden for the souls who cannot receive the truth till it is brought to them. Our ministers are hovering over the churches, as though the angel of mercy was not making efforts to save souls.” *Ibid.*, April 16, 1901.

to leave the ninety and nine and hunt for the lost sheep. Your experience is to be a lesson for all who are hovering over the churches—consumers and not producers.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, 227–228.

“The ministry is becoming weak and feeble, and under their tame service the churches also are becoming weak. The ministers of our Conferences have very little to show in the conversion of souls as a result of their labors. These things are depriving God of the glory which belongs to Him. The truth is not carried into the barren places of the earth. God calls for workers who will be producers. There is a world to be warned. Why are the ministers who should be laboring in special service earnestly to open new fields and raise up new churches, hovering over the churches which have already received great light and many advantages which they do not appreciate?” *Ibid.*, vol. 13, 208–209.

“The ministers who are hovering over the churches, preaching to those who know the truth, would better go into places still in darkness. Unless they do this, they themselves and their congregations will become dwarfed. Our religion has become weak and sickly because the members of the church have left their first love. They might be strong men and women in Christ if they would obey the Lord’s directions.” *Review & Herald*, February 9, 1905.

“Just as soon as the workers in California stop doing aggressive work, and hover over a few churches, treading on one another’s heels, their light will go out.” *The General Conference Bulletin*, April 5, 1901.

It will be noted that the dire results have especially infected the churches in the western world.

What Should We Do?

There is urgent, immediate need to restructure the role of the minister and of the laity. Educational programs for both will be necessary to bring them into line with the only infallible way to finish the gospel commission. Let the laity from the churches be trained to be effective

*The ministers who are hovering over the churches,
preaching to those who know the truth, would better go
into places still in darkness.*

work, showing the intelligence and spirituality God requires in those who claim to be members of His church.” *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, 156.

The Minister’s Duty

What must the ministers do for the church members?

(1) They must train the laity for successful service:

“Ministers are not to spend their time hovering over churches, laboring for those who have already accepted the truth. They are to go forth to proclaim the message to those who have not heard it. They must sow the seeds of truth in fields that have not yet been sown. Work is to be done in various ways. Humble men, willing to make sacrifices, to work as Christ worked, are needed. And church members are to be taught to work in the Lord’s home vineyard.” *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 31, 1902.

(2) They are to work earnestly for new converts to the faith:

“As I traveled through the south on my way to the Conference, I saw city after city that was unworked. What is the matter? The ministers are hovering over churches, which know the truth,

“There are important fields to be worked. We shall not hover over the churches but press into new territory and raise the standard in places where the message has not been proclaimed.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, 124.

What will happen if we follow God’s counsel?

“If our ministers, instead of hovering over the churches to keep the breath of life in them, would go forth to work for those outside the fold, those in the churches would receive the vital current from Heaven as they hear that souls were drawn to the Lamb of God. They would pray that God would give power to the workers, and their prayers would be as sharp sickles in the harvest fields.” *The General Conference Bulletin*, April 5, 1901.

What are the consequences if ministers continue to hover over churches?

Most clearly the answer to this is that both members and ministers will become impotent in their work:

“The time that has been used in preaching to our churches has not strengthened them, but has made them weak and helpless, to be fed with milk and not with meat. God has been calling upon His ministers

workers in the regions where they belong. The pastors are to go into new territory to lead men and women to the kingdom and restore God's people to be active, fervent workers for God.

When looked at objectively, this is the only plan that will succeed in spreading the gospel to the world. If our ministers continue to hover over the churches, the laity will depend primarily on them for missionary outreach, and those in areas where there is no church will never hear the gospel commission!

The laity already have become impotent in the western world. In the less affluent countries, that lack of affluence has been a tremendous blessing in disguise, for it has meant that pastors have been placed in charge of many churches—rather than in charge of one, or at the most two, churches. Therefore, the laity have had to move forward in their missionary endeavors. But this has not been because of divine counsel nor wise planning, it has been simply a fiscal decision.

The pastors continue to be frustrated in trying to meet the multitudinous needs, if not whims, of their church members. Many have become dispirited. Many have chosen to leave the ministry. Many who continue in the ministry have not been forced into deep clear study of the pillar truths of the faith which is so necessary to be successful in evangelism and soul winning.

When the laity are witnessing they will also become extraordinarily well-informed on the message, and some will prove to be just as effective soul winners as the trained ministers. Instead of the church breaking into schismatic groups and disputing over trivia, the members will be on fire, witnessing the wonderful rewards of soul winning in their community. New life will come into these churches as new members are added to the faith. Strength will be multiplied as such a work is accomplished. The opportunities to work in many fields are soon to be closed up, and we must not waste one more moment in flitting away the purposes of God.

The long-time and more experienced members and pastors should be taking others with them in missionary endeavors, training and encouraging them in the work of soul winning.

This is the end of this old sin-blighted earth's history. It is time for God's ministers to do the work that God has called them to fulfill and to refuse to do the work for which God has ordained the laity. How oft repeated is the situation where churches feel hopeless and helpless if they are without a pastor. They

two-edged sword, cuts both ways, will do the churches harm. They will not work for the salvation of souls that are in great peril because they know not the truth, and they will die spiritually themselves, and trouble and discourage those who try to help them." *Manuscript Release*, vol. 6, 65.

Let God's church return to His plan that made the laity wholly responsible for the operation of the churches, and yet united in the body of Christ and loyal to the Conference. Many today would

It is time for God's ministers to do the work that God has called them to fulfill and to refuse to do the work for which God has ordained the laity.

put great pressure upon the Conference to provide one, which only continues to weaken the church. Sister White has a serious message for such churches:

"The churches that have not life in themselves, that have lost their spiritual discernment, call for ministers to come to their help, to bring them the breath of life. But the ministers have other work to do. They must carry the message of truth to those who know it not. Those ministers who hover about the churches, who have not a clear cut message, which, like a sharp,

fear that without a church pastor on the payroll of the Conference to guide the church and to be the liaison officer with the Conference, mutiny and disunity would result. But, on the contrary, when a church is on fire, doing the work of God, the elders, the deacons and the members all uniting together in soul winning and the study of God's sacred Word, a vastly greater unity will be achieved than we find in our churches today. As has oft been said: "God's way is not simply the best way, it is the *only way*." ❖



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God's Love and the Everlasting Gospel

Vernon Jennings

The title for this study is taken from the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the *everlasting gospel* to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.) There are differences among us as to what constitutes the everlasting gospel. The importance of the idea is inherent in the adjective *everlasting*. We all agree that we do not want a gospel that lasts only a few years and is not effective for eternity. Too many zealous believers have failed in a relatively short time to maintain their faith—in spite of their very earnest and determined efforts in the study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, as well as in their devotional prayer life. They were model, earnest believers, and yet they made a shipwreck of faith, causing much doubt in the minds of others.

We also want a gospel that will last for eternity. Why go to heaven if we could fail after we get there? Will our faith last through the millennium? Many people cannot seem to

last more than a few years. We believe earnestly that affliction will not arise a second time. See Nahum 1:9. God is not willing, any more than we are, to go through all of this anxiety just to fail.

The three angels' messages are based upon the everlasting gospel. No one can receive the latter rain and the blessings of the seal of God and yet not have his faith firmly grounded in the true gospel—which is everlasting. We are clearly warned that those whose faith is not grounded in the truth will receive the mark of the beast—with the consequent seven last plagues, the warning of which is the most fearful ever given to mankind. Is the everlasting gospel an integral part of our preaching of the three angels' messages?

To answer this question we must have a very clear and unshakable concept of what the everlasting gospel consists. I truly believe that this question deserves a Bible answer from Jesus Himself.

In the third chapter of John, Jesus had an interview with Nicodemus. Jesus made clear the essential elements of the everlasting gospel.

First, He said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Verse 3. Second, He emphasized that the Son of man must be lifted up—not only as Lord, but also in giving His life for the world of sinners. Third, men must have faith in Jesus, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Verses 16–17. Here we see that the basis of faith in Jesus is the love of God in giving His only begotten Son.

In Matthew 22 a Pharisee lawyer, whose name is not given, attempted to trap Jesus by asking, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Verses

36-40. In John 15:10 it says, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

In preaching the everlasting gospel we are obligated to teach the gospel that Jesus taught. Jesus taught that the keeping of the law is essential, and that the love of God is to be the motivation for obedience in a true and lasting relationship with God. Jesus says, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Verses 12-14.

In verse 17 the thought is reinforced: "These things I command you, that ye love one another." The Ten Commandments, given by God to the children of Israel, all hang on the law of love and are a reflection of the character of God, for God is love.

Does love nullify the law? Some people believe that if love is preached as the basis of obedience, people will think that they do not have to obey the law, because God loves them anyway. They believe that preaching love as a basis of obedience will give rise to backsliding in standards and in showing disrespect for the commandments. They say that only the fear of God can get people to obey. It is then thought proper to threaten people so that they are, or will be, obedient. Some people with this idea do not believe in using the word *love* when giving the three angels' messages, because in the Bible the messages do not contain the word, *love*. However, the first angel's message has in it the words the *everlasting gospel* in which the concept and the preaching of the agape love of God are the essence.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-8 we read, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And 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. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." There is no other way to raise children that will be successful than to diligently teach them the everlasting gospel. That includes, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," as the good song says. To not teach the love of God in the context of the three angels' messages is counterproductive. Only the love of God will last forever and will be the basis of overcoming the beast and his image!

Ellen G. White tells us that we need to read 1 Corinthians 13 every day. Those who expect to receive the latter rain need to be especially diligent in so doing: "The Lord desires me to call the attention of His people to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Read this

of lords and King of kings. Hope will be consummated. Only love will remain as a motive for eternal obedience.

It was Satan's charge that God was tyrannical, and that He demanded obedience out of fear (terror). However, it was to make plain to the whole universe that God is a God of love that He allowed Satan to work out his plans and thus to demonstrate his true nature. The first sentence in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* is "God is love." The last sentence in the book *The Great Controversy* is "God is love." So from the beginning to the end, the love of God is emphasized.

"I state truth. The souls who love God, who believe in Christ, and who eagerly grasp every ray of light, will see light, and rejoice in the truth. They will communicate the light. They will grow in holiness. Those who receive the Holy Spirit will feel the chilling atmosphere that surrounds the souls of others by whom

It was to make plain to the whole universe that God is a God of love that He allowed Satan to work out his plans and thus to demonstrate his true nature.

chapter every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength. Learn from it the value that God places on sanctified, Heaven-born love, and let the lesson that it teaches come home to your hearts. Learn that Christlike love is of Heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless." *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1904.

Charity is translated from the Greek word *agape* that means *the divine love of God*. That is a gift of grace which does not equate to other kinds of love. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." 1 Corinthians 13:13. *Faith* is defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1. After Jesus returns to this world it will not be a great act of faith to believe that Jesus is Lord

these great and solemn realities are unappreciated and spoken against. They feel that they are in the council of the ungodly, of men who stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful." See Psalm 1:1. *Testimonies to Ministers*, 90.

In commenting on the loud-cry message, Ellen White says, "It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine Person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless

human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure." Ibid., 91-92.

"We are to manifest the love of Christ through the indwelling of His quickening Spirit. Those who differ with us in faith and doctrine should be treated kindly. They are the property of Christ, and we must meet them in the great day of final account. We shall have to face one another in the Judgment, and behold the record of our thoughts, words,

as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' John 13:34-35. These are the credentials that Christ's followers bear, showing to the world that they are true disciples. By their unity and love for one another, they reveal to the world the love wherewith Christ has loved them. God would have us cherish love for one another, that He may be glorified in us. Love like Christ's will bear the stress of circumstances. It will never abate nor change. As He loved us, even so are we to love one another.

the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates the affections. This love is not contracted, so as merely to include 'me and mine,' but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven. It is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the entire life, and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown. And if we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the Spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul, and assimilates our life to that of the Master." Ibid., December 23, 1897.

When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action.

and deeds, not as we have viewed them, but as they were in truth. God has enjoined upon us the duty of loving one another as Christ has loved us. He has exhorted us to be one, as Christ is one with the Father; and every true Christian should seek to answer the prayer of Christ." *The Youth's Instructor*, December 9, 1897.

"The Word of God is surrounded by an atmosphere of inspired love. But this Word is dimly comprehended and feebly appreciated. During every hour of the Saviour's sojourn upon earth, the love of God was flowing from Him, repeating its gift in irrepressible streams. Every hindrance He received in His work of revealing God's love, every obstruction placed in His way, every talent that was not used to advance the work of God, inflicted a wound on Christ, and strengthened Satan's kingdom. Even so, by cherishing malice and hatred in our hearts toward those who have been bought with an infinite Price, we may crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

"As His disciples, Christ says to us, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;

"Religion is founded upon love to God, which also leads us to love one another. It is full of gratitude, humility, long-suffering. It is self-sacrificing, forbearing, merciful, and forgiving. It sanctifies the whole life, and extends its influence over others. Those who love God cannot harbor hatred or envy. When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action, and modifies

One last thought from the beloved disciple is found in 1 John 4:7-10, 17-18: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." ❖



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1 Peter 3:15. We need to be able to give an answer for our faith. Marking your Bible can give you the edge you need. It takes work, but the rewards are worth all the effort.

We pray that you will be blessed by these studies. As you mark them, may you be encouraged to spend more time in God’s Word and to search out the hidden things of God. Always be sure to look for opportunities to share them with others.

The Editors

Bible Marking Directions

- On a blank page in the front or back of your Bible, write the study title, the code, and the first reference. This month’s entry would appear as follows: **The Divinity of Christ, 1DC: John 1:1, 14.**

- Turn to the first verse and write the comment (if you wish to use the comments), and the next reference in the margin near it. If the comment is long, you can write it at the top or bottom of the page, with an asterisk or the code of the study to refer you to it.

- Turn to the next text and repeat the process until you reach the end. Beside the last text, write “End DC.”

- Go through the study to check for broken links.

- Share the study with someone!

1DC: John 1:1, 14.

Jesus Christ (the Word) is truly God.

2DC: Micah 5:2.

Christ existed long before His birth in Bethlehem. See also John 17:5, 24.

3DC: Matthew 1:23.

The title given to Jesus was Emmanuel “God with us.”

4DC: Isaiah 9:6.

The prophet Isaiah identified the child to be born for us as “the mighty God.”

5DC: Hebrews 1:5-9.

God the Father acknowledged the divinity of the Son.

6DC: John 8:56-58.

Jesus asserted His Own divinity. See also Exodus 3:14.

7DC: Mark 14:61-64.

Another time Jesus identified Himself as “I AM.”

8DC: Luke 5:20-21.

Jesus revealed His divinity in His acts.

9DC: John 14:7-9.

One of the purposes of Jesus’ incarnation was to show us the Father.

10DC: Matthew 11:27.

We cannot know the Father except through Jesus.

11DC: 1 Timothy 3:16.

Paul understood that Jesus Christ is divine. See also 1 Timothy 6:15-16.

12DC: Acts 3:14.

Peter expressed his belief in the divinity of Christ.

13DC: John 20:28.

Thomas expressed his conviction of Christ’s divinity.

14DC: Revelation 1:18.

Jesus was, is, and will be, forever.

15DC: Philippians 2:9-11.

All created beings will one day acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

For more information on Bible marking, or for a greater selection of studies, go to <http://www.biblemarking.com> or refer to “Mark Your Bible!” in the August 2001 issue of *Our Firm Foundation*.



Surrender:

Drudgery or Delight?

Tom Waters

The old familiar hymn says, “I surrender all, All to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.”

We love the song and believe the message, but are we really surrendered? As you read this article, pause and reflect, Are you really surrendered, completely surrendered to Christ? If not, why not? Maybe it is because the kind of surrender you have learned does not connect you with the power of a living Saviour.

David was called “a man after God’s own heart.” See 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22. What a statement! Doing the will of God became David’s highest delight. That is why he said, “I delight to do thy will, O my God.” Psalm 40:8. He learned something that I am finding to be a great blessing in my own life—real surrender brings *real* peace, *real* power to obey, and *real* joy in obedience.

You see, real surrender is a choice to connect my weakness with Christ’s enduring might. The other option—which I experienced for too many years—is trying to do God’s will in my own willpower and strength. I call this *drudgery*, which

is not surrender at all. You compare the difference: Real surrender brings enabling power and *delight*, but trying hard in my own strength brings *drudgery*, dry formality, the “I have to” attitude with the gritting of teeth and no joy.

Motivation

One day a mother and her two sons sat at the kitchen table home schooling. The children had completed a math lesson, but it was not done right. Mother asked them to do it over again correctly, but the boys did not want to. They began to debate and argue with Mother. She then faithfully called to their hearts. Finally, one of them began to yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit. His countenance changed as he chose to surrender to God and honor his mother’s request. Cheerfully he redid the math lesson.

However, the other boy continued to debate, entrenching himself in stubbornness. In desperation Mother finally said, “You wait until your father gets home.” Then the situation instantaneously changed. The authority of the father influenced the boy to submit. He chose to

do the lesson over, and this time he did it right. Yet his countenance had no joy in it. He gave outward compliance, but there was no inward change of heart. His surrender was drudgery. The first boy found peace. The second boy found no peace. Can you relate to this scene? This is not just a school problem; this happens to adults also.

Fear of the Cost

Often the reason that we are unwilling to truly surrender to the will of God is because we are afraid of what it is going to cost us—what we might have to give up. What if God asks me to stop surfing the internet? What if God tells me to stop studying prophecy, and to start studying how to be a better husband and father? What if I have to give up my career and be a full-time parent for my children?

The Desire of Ages, 330, says it this way, “Many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink

from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.”

A husband and wife counseled with us about contention in their home. We asked them if they were willing to yield a full surrender to God. The woman turned to us and said, “I’m afraid that if I give a full surrender to God He will ask me to love my husband just the way he is.” She was being very honest—for which I was thankful. I could understand that she was upset and did not like her husband the way he was then. But we helped her understand that wholehearted surrender brings Christ’s power and Christ’s perspective.

Two days later they walked into the meeting while I was speaking. I knew instantly that she had given herself to Christ in full surrender. Her countenance just glowed! As soon as I finished the message I went right up to her and said, “You have given all, haven’t you?”

She said, “Yes. I have freedom; I have power; I have peace. I love my husband for who he is.” She was not seeing him with her own eyes anymore. She had connected herself with the power of Jesus, and she saw her husband differently than ever before.

The husband said, “There is hope in this kind of gospel for me.” Before they left that Week of Prayer, the husband, too, began to change.

In Everything

One evening I knelt beside my bed to pray before retiring early. My schedule called for me to be up at 3:30 a.m. in order to meet a plane for a weekend of meetings in Arkansas. I needed a good night’s sleep. As I began to pray, I heard the sound of a raging torrent of water just outside the window! I knew that this was not the usual sound of the little creek located about 100 feet from our house. With my ear to the window I knew that there was a big problem outside of our house which required my attention. I did not want to go out and deal with it, yet I had to.

I pulled on my clothes and waterproof boots in drudgery. When

I got outside, I groaned at what I saw. It was February, and the weather was supposed to be cold. But the air was warm. A chinook, a warm front, had come in that afternoon and was melting all the snow which was piled high around my house and on the roof. The ground was still frozen so the water could not soak in. The snow was melting so quickly that the water could not get around the house and down the hill fast enough. It was rising toward the windows, and pouring down into the root cellar.

The Lord called to my heart. I recognized that my surrender in coming out to face the problem was only compliance so far. What I still wanted was to be in bed so that I could be rested for the meetings. But now a late night of work faced me.

I needed a good night’s sleep. As I began to pray, I heard the sound of a raging torrent of water just outside the window!

The Spirit called to my heart with the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” *No exceptions?—“Everything.”* And the call was *now!*

With flashlight in hand, I faced a decision: Would I continue in drudgery—which is not surrender? Or would I choose to thank God even for this trial? I made the decision to surrender fully to God and experience the power of His Word. Immediately the peace that passes understanding flooded through me. I then went in and recruited my whole family, who had also been preparing for bed. For hours in the darkness we dug trenches into the frozen ground with picks and shovels. Some bailed water out of the root cellar as others bucketed it away from the front of the house. We actually had a good time together as a family working through this emergency! Because I had surrendered, I could lead my whole family to surrender. We

encouraged each other, instead of giving way to irritation, anger, frustration, chafing, and so forth.

Quench Not

The next verse after “In every thing give thanks” says, “Quench not the Spirit.” Verse 19. Then verse 24 follows with, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” God says to us, “If you will not quench My Spirit, if you will heed My call, I will do it.” What will He do?—He will empower us to live above circumstances. And not only that, He will empower us to face them in delight, rather than in drudgery. In choosing to give thanks in each situation, we demonstrate trust in the Power outside of ourselves that is bigger than the situation. We are allowing the Spirit to

work in us, rather than quenching it. The result is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27. I went to the weekend series with a testimony of God’s power. And that power is found in *real* surrender.

One morning I was having a beautiful time with the Lord when a gentle prompting came to me to miss breakfast. *Miss breakfast! But I really like breakfast.*

The Lord simply said, “Would you be willing to miss your breakfast just this morning to have more time with Me?” A wrestling went on in my heart. Intellectually knowing that I would not starve, but wanting to have my breakfast, I had a choice to make. To say, “No, I don’t want to miss breakfast” would have been to quench the Spirit. Or to say, “Okay, if I have to, but I don’t want to” would have been drudgery—not surrender. Done with that attitude it would not have accomplished the purpose the Spirit had in calling me to do this. It would be “having a form of godliness, but denying the

power thereof." 2 Timothy 3:5. The third choice could be willing surrender—*real* surrender.

I said, "Lord, I don't really want to miss breakfast, but I really *want* to do Your will. I know that You can put the desire in me to *delight* to do Your will." Then I missed breakfast and had a wonderful time with the Lord! While preparing a message to share, the thoughts just flowed from my heart. What a tremendous blessing! Again, I had found the *real* power that brings *real* joy in *real* obedience.

My daughter asked me later, "Did you feel bad because you did not get to eat breakfast?"

I thought of the words of Jesus when His disciples came to Him at the well, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:32). I said, "No. I had a wonderful time with the Lord!"

fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:6-7.

God knows what our characters need. I needed to have Him put forgiveness in my heart toward someone who was not even asking for forgiveness. That is a *work of grace*, friends!

As I yielded a surrender of faith and received that grace, I then realized that His work in me was why I could *greatly rejoice!*

Friends, our rejoicing is in the great grace and power we receive to take us above ourselves—above self and sin. We rejoice that our choice to connect to a Power outside of and above us, frees us from the power of our human emotions and fleshly reactions.

Apart from real surrender to Christ and real dependence upon Him for power, we cannot love and

than to go through it with self and the Devil?

Trials

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 10, says, "The trials of life are God's workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our character." "If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing."

If we can see how the trial is going to turn out, no faith is necessary. But when we are going through a bitter trial, we may choose to make the right kind of surrender by *faith*. It seems impossible—and it is impossible in our own strength. However, in the power of Jesus and in the power of surrender to His holy will, in the power of His gospel, it is possible. That is the gospel that saves us to the uttermost.

I love being a Christian, and that is because I am finding the "delight" in surrender that David found. God's way is better; His power is better, and His joy is better!

Our way does not work, and it never will. Let us give God the opportunity to allow His way to make us be like Him—through *real* surrender, *real* power, and a *real* delight to do His will. ✨

Please do not give up on God! Rather, give up on yourself—stop trying to do it your way, and find the real peace, power, and joy that real surrender and real dependence bring.

Chastening

One of the hardest areas for us to surrender in is when we are misunderstood, maligned and misrepresented by someone whom we care for.

On one such occasion Alane and I were misrepresented and falsely accused. I asked God for permission to set the record straight, but He did not give me permission. He assured me that He could deal with my reputation, but I must be concerned with my character.

Then the Lord gave me some straight counsel for character building in circumstances like we were going through: "*Greatly rejoice!*" Now that is not what I felt like hearing. Rejoice about what?—Here is the answer: "*Greatly rejoice*, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith . . . though it be tried with

forgive someone who hurts, maligns, and misrepresents us.

Hebrews 12:11 says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

So what about you and your present circumstances? Are you surrendered? Is God in control of you in this present moment, or are you gritting your teeth, trying to look like a Christian while in reality you are living a life of drudgery?

Please do not give up on God! Rather, give up on yourself—stop trying to do it your way, and find the *real* peace, power, and joy that *real* surrender and *real* dependence bring.

I am often reminded of my need to surrender with this thought: Since I will have to go through the trial anyway, why not go through it with God, governed by His grace, rather

Hear the entire presentation from which the above article was taken!

In Times Like These

Waters, Tom



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Diligence

This month we share with you the next in a series of articles that discuss how we can cultivate Christian character traits in the hearts of our children. "The Garden of the Heart," in the February 2001 issue of Our Firm Foundation, laid the foundation for this series. It is available upon request.

The Editors

In a recent lesson we looked at perseverance, and how important it is in the development of a child's character. In this study we will consider diligence. Diligence and perseverance are like twin brothers; they are very closely related. Diligence is defined as working carefully and steadily, applying the mind attentively until the job is done. It refers to the accuracy with which something is done, whereas perseverance has more to do with continuing until the job is completed. In Proverbs 10:4, we are told, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand [is slothful]; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."

How do we develop slothfulness in our children? We can cultivate this undesirable trait in several ways: 1) when we do things for them that they should be doing for themselves, 2) when we do not follow through with our expectations of them, and 3) when we pamper a lazy attitude. Do we want our children to have real happiness? Do we want them to have a life of rich experience, a pleasant adulthood, a fulfilling life as a Christian? If this is our desire for our children, then we must help them to develop diligent hands with willing hearts. To allow slothfulness is to train them to become poor in their own self-respect and handicapped for the

responsibilities of real life in a difficult world. Diligence is necessary for success in every aspect of our day-to-day lives, and it is vitally important for a Christian in the race for eternal life. See Hebrews 12:1-2.

Use Motivators to Encourage Diligence

Positive motivators can be very helpful in teaching children to be diligent. If there is a task that needs to be done, give your child encouragement by offering something that will motivate him to action. For example, if you wish to have the child clear the table, you might say, "When you have cleared the table then you may take your ball and play outside." Then, when the task is done completely and thoroughly, he should be given his reward.

Teach Thoroughness As Vital to Diligence

Thoroughness is a very important part of diligence. It is not enough for a child to clear all but the last two dishes off the table. The job must be completed well, or it has not really been done at all. If the towels need to be put away after the laundry is folded, they should be stacked neatly in the cabinet. How easy it is to get into the habit of just hurriedly tossing the folded towels in a pile in the cabinet! How much time is really saved this way if three weeks later we need to have our child spend ten minutes reorganizing everything in the cupboard when he could have taken 30 seconds to put the towels in correctly the very first time? Diligence means that we take the time necessary to do our task well, and then we (both parent and child) will experience self-respect because we have done our best.

Another example of an activity that you can use to teach your children diligence is in washing the family vehicle. In the summer, this is a really pleasant job that everyone can enjoy, but there are several steps to the process. To teach diligence, our children must gather the needed supplies—a bucket, soap, and a sponge—even before they turn on the water. When the supplies are ready, they need to hose down the car, wash it carefully with the sponge, and then hose off the suds. Now is the job done?—Not quite. When the vehicle is dry, they should look it over to see if there are any spots on it they have missed. If we teach them to be diligent and there are still some spots on the car, they must get out the sponge again and wipe off the missed area and rinse the car again. Then they can put the hose away, take care of the bucket and sponge, and experience the genuine satisfaction of a thoroughly, diligently, well-done job!

I hope you can see, through these examples, ways in which you can teach your children to be diligent through the little tasks of daily life. I encourage you to make these jobs fun and enjoyable, and look for opportunities to motivate your children in a positive way.

Last, but not least, invest yourself with them in this teaching and training. Make life and its tasks enjoyable. Let your young ones see by your example to them in your own tasks, and as you participate with them in their tasks, that in companionship with Christ, diligence equals happiness and satisfaction.

Let us be diligent as parents to seek Christ for the best ways to motivate diligence in the varied needs and personalities of our young people. ✨

Dating Services,
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SINGLE

Should Christians Dance?

Ellen G. White

The following expression of my views on the subject of dancing, was written in answer to a letter asking counsel upon this point. As the principles stated are of general application, I here give my reply, for the benefit of other inquirers:

Dear Sister in Christ,

You inform me in your letter that you have been recently converted from error to truth. You now see and acknowledge the claims of God's law. You see the true Sabbath plainly brought to view in the fourth commandment, and have begun to keep it. You feel a joy that you never experienced before. In all this I rejoice with you. Then you ask if it is sinful to attend dancing parties. You say that this amusement possesses great attractions for you, but if sinful you will relinquish it.

Before answering this question directly, I ask you to consider briefly the position and work of God's people at the present day. John the Revelator, looking down the stream of time, beheld the third angel flying

in the midst of heaven, crying: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. From the prophecies we learn that this heavenly messenger represents a class of religious teachers who are instructing the people to obey the law of God and to look for His Son from Heaven. The solemn message of the third angel must be given by those who see and feel its truthfulness. The world are going on careless and Godless in the way of error. Ministers are saying from their pulpits: "Be not troubled. Christ will not come for thousands of years. All things continue as they were from the beginning." Others pour contempt upon the law of God, declaring that it is a yoke of bondage. But while professed Christians are asleep, Satan is manifesting intense earnestness and persevering zeal. His hellish work will soon be ended, his power be chained; therefore he has come down in great wrath, to "deceive, if possible, even the very elect." See Matthew 24:24. Is this a time for us to unite with the ungodly

in levity and worldly pleasure? Will they be more inclined to accept the solemn truths we hold, when they see us in the theater or the ballroom?

Infidelity runs riot. Professed Christians not only disclaim all faith in the warnings of future judgments upon the world, but they deny the record of past judgments. There are not wanting those who declare that the Flood is a myth and the book of Genesis a fable. But not so did our Saviour. He refers to Noah as a real person, to the Flood as a fact, to the characteristics of that generation as prefiguring the characteristics of ours. See Matthew 24:37-39. In the days before the Flood, it is written that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Verse 11. Here is a picture drawn by one inspired of God; and such, it is declared, will be the state of the world prior to Christ's second coming. In the days of Noah, men found their highest

enjoyment in the gratification of sensual desires. This world was their all. "Eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19), was the cry echoed from lip to lip. The same insane love of pleasure, the same all-absorbing spirit of worldliness, characterize the people of this age. How little do they consider that their deeds and words are passing into judgment, and that every sin must have its retribution in the future!

There was a God to call to account the inhabitants of the antediluvian world. There is a God to try the deeds of the men of this generation, and to give every man according to his works. The faithful sentinels for God have a work to do, to keep these things vividly before the people. Every lay member of the church has also a duty, to show that there is a reality in the truth, that we are indeed living in the last days, and the Lord is at the door. The words of the great apostle are addressed directly to us: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6. The great question for us to settle is, What part are we to act in this fearfully important period? Shall we yield to the indulgence of worldliness and pride, or engage in mirth and revelry?

The true Christian will not desire to enter any place of amusement or engage in any diversion upon which he cannot ask the blessing of God. He will not be found at the theater, the billiard hall, or the bowling saloon.¹ He will not unite with the gay waltzers, or indulge in any other bewitching pleasure that will banish Christ from the mind. To those who plead for these diversions, we answer, We cannot indulge in them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The blessing of God would not be invoked upon the hour spent at the theater or in the dance. No Christian would wish to meet death in such a place. No one

would wish to be found there when Christ shall come. When we come to the final hour, and stand face to face with the record of our lives, shall we regret that we have attended so few parties of pleasure? that we have participated in so few scenes of thoughtless mirth? Shall we not, rather, bitterly regret that so many precious hours have been wasted in self-gratification—so many opportunities neglected, which, rightly improved, would have secured for us immortal treasures?

It has become customary for professors of religion to excuse almost any pernicious indulgence to which the heart is wedded. By familiarity with sin, they become blinded to its enormity. Many who claim to be children of God, gloss over sins which His Word condemns, by linking some purpose of church charity with their Godless

wide contrast between the better class of select parties and the promiscuous and degraded assemblies of the low dance house [hall]. Yet all are steps in the path of dissipation.

The amusement of dancing, as conducted at the present day, is a school of depravity, a fearful curse to society. If all in our great cities who are yearly ruined by this means could be brought together, what histories of wrecked lives would be revealed! How many who now stand ready to apologize² for this practice, would be filled with anguish and amazement at the result! How can professedly Christian parents consent to place their children in the way of temptation, by attending with them such scenes of festivity? How can young men and young women barter their souls for this infatuating pleasure?

The blessing of God would not be invoked upon the hour spent at the theater or in the dance. No Christian would wish to meet death in such a place. No one would wish to be found there when Christ shall come.

carousals. Thus they borrow the livery of Heaven to serve the devil in. Souls are deceived, led astray, and lost to virtue and integrity by these fashionable dissipation.

In many religious families, dancing and card playing are made a parlor pastime. It is urged that these are quiet home amusements, which may be safely enjoyed under the parental eye. But a love for these exciting pleasures is thus cultivated, and that which was considered harmless at home will not long be regarded dangerous abroad. It is yet to be ascertained that there is any good to be obtained from these amusements. They do not give vigor to the body nor rest to the mind. They do not implant in the soul one virtuous or holy sentiment. On the contrary, they destroy all relish for serious thought and for religious services. It is true that there is a

The great mass of mankind are engrossed in the things of this life, and divine truth can find no abiding place in their hearts. And yet all the blessings which the world can give fail to satisfy the wants of the soul. There is a nameless longing for something which they have not, a peace and rest that is not born of earth. It was thus with the worshippers in the temple of old; amid the imposing ceremonies, the dazzling display, the music and rejoicing, they were still unsatisfied. Then how welcome the call that fell upon their ears: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." John 7:37. It was the same message that had gladdened the heart of the Samaritan woman, at Jacob's well: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water

springing up into everlasting life." John 4:13-14. Christ alone can satisfy that sense of want in the human soul. His gracious invitation reaches down even to our time. From the Fountain of life the cry still goes forth to a lost world: "Come unto me, and drink."

Thousands of our race would compass sea and land to gain possessions which at best must soon perish, and yet they turn away with indifference from the proffer of eternal riches. The Saviour's loving invitations, His earnest pleadings and faithful instruction, fall upon dull ears and hard hearts. To many who have time and opportunity to gain a knowledge of the truth and of its Author, Christ will say: "Ye would not come to me, that ye might have life." See John 5:40.

My sister, when you carefully study the life of Christ as recorded in Bible history, and when He is

forted, there is not one to console Him in this dreadful hour. He is betrayed into the hands of a murderous mob. Faint and weary, He is dragged from one tribunal to another. His own nation are His accusers, the Romans His executioners. And thus He who knew not the taint of sin, pours out His life as a malefactor upon Calvary.

This history should stir every soul to its depths. It was to save us that the Son of God became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions, and with His stripes we are healed. God holds us each responsible for the soul estimated of such value. Let a sense of the infinite Sacrifice made for our redemption be ever with you, and the ballroom will lose its attractions.

Not only did Christ die as our Sacrifice, but He lived as our Example. In His human nature He

My sister, when you carefully study the life of Christ as recorded in Bible history, and when He is revealed to you as He is, by the Holy Spirit, then you will be convinced for yourself that dancing has no place in the Christian's life.

revealed to you as He is, by the Holy Spirit, then you will be convinced for yourself that dancing has no place in the Christian's life. When you feel a desire to engage in this amusement, go in imagination to Gethsemane, and behold the anguish which Christ endured for us. See the world's Redeemer wrestling in superhuman agony, the sins of the whole world upon His soul. Hear His prayer, borne upon the sympathizing breeze: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." See Matthew 26:39, 42. The hour of darkness has come. Christ has entered the shadow of His cross. Alone He must drink the bitter cup. Of all earth's children whom He has blessed and com-

stands, complete, perfect, spotless. To be a Christian is to be Christlike. Our entire being, soul, body, and spirit, must be purified, ennobled, sanctified, until we shall reflect His image and imitate His example. My sister, such is the work before us as Christians. We need not fear to engage in any pursuit or pleasure that will aid us in this work. But it is our duty to shun everything that would divert our attention or lessen our zeal. In this light, is it hard to decide on which side dancing should be placed? ❖

Review and Herald, February 28, 1882.

References:

- ¹ alley
- ² advocate

Continued from page 14

themselves of it. They know a remedy for sin, but do not use it. They know the right, but have no relish for it. All their knowledge will but increase their condemnation. They have never tasted and learned by experience that the Lord is good.

To become a disciple of Christ is to deny self and follow Jesus through evil as well as good report. Few are doing this now. Many prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so; but what will be done in the end thereof? What will be the decision when their work, with all its results, shall be brought in review before God?

The watchmen are responsible for the condition of the people. If they open the door to pride, envy, doubt, and other sins, there will be strife, hatred, and every evil work. Jesus, the meek and lowly One, asks an entrance as our Guest, but many are afraid to bid Him enter. He has spoken to us in both the Old and the New Testaments; He is speaking to us still by His Spirit and His providence. His instructions are designed to make men true to God, and true to themselves.

Jesus took upon Himself man's nature, that He might leave a Pattern for humanity, complete, perfect. He proposes to make us like Himself, true in every purpose, feeling, and thought—true in heart, soul, and life. This is Christianity. Our fallen nature must be purified, ennobled, consecrated by obedience to the truth. Christian faith will never harmonize with worldly principles; Christian integrity is opposed to all deception and pretense. The man who cherished the most of Christ's love in the soul, who reflects the Saviour's image most perfectly, is, in the sight of God, the truest, most noble, most honorable man upon the earth. ❖

Signs of the Times, January 11, 1883.

letters to the editor

Have a letter to share?

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

The valuable information in your *Our Firm Foundation* magazine is the very thing that our people need to know. All articles are so timely, and accurately portrayed. I look forward to *Our Firm Foundation* every month. Can hardly wait! I share the articles with many Seventh-day Adventists who do not receive your magazine.

Thank you again for the great and noble work you are doing. May God bless your entire staff as you continue to instruct, warn, reprove, and guide those who are searching for the truth.

PD, North Carolina

Thanks be to God, our Father, for the wonderful, faithful, pure ministry you provide.

May your work be blessed abundantly, and good health to each of you.

BT, California

Although God considers wizardry, sorcery, and magic to be "abominations," we pronounce Harry Potter and other spiritualistic stories "harmless fun," and read books, or watch movies about them. Murder, immorality, and violence are highly offensive to God, but when it's in movies, on TV, or in video games, we call those sins "entertainment," and actually pay to see or play them. Then afterward, we pray "God bless America." Have we forgotten Psalm 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"?

JH, email

From Overseas

I thank you for the good work you are doing for our Maker. Please go forward; don't be discouraged by the effort from the 'division party' on counteracting the three angels' messages. Remember that He promised not to leave us nor forsake us. We can do all things through Him! Your publication—*Our Firm Foundation*—is inspiring a lot of reformation in the willing servants of God.

I am also giving a special thanks to the editor and his associates. You have

allowed the light to shine in this darkened world through upholding the Spirit of Prophecy. Only a few editors these days run Mrs. White's articles in their publications. I believe I now have a clear understanding of the Spirit of Prophecy after reading an article entitled – "A Sign of the Remnant." May the Spirit of God "confirm you until the second advent."

CM, South Africa

I am with much gratitude to express my appreciation and thanks to you for your magazine, *Our Firm Foundation*. When I read it I was shocked, so I asked myself what Adventists are doing today to spread the gospel. I am a student of an Adventist Institution.

I would like to read many books written by Ellen White—the Spirit of Prophecy—but I do not have money to buy all these books. Also, I have decided to share the Word of God about our faith with other people who are not Adventist, but I do not have enough books to present these messages to others. I think about this and become very sad.

I have found that the church here is unproductive because members do not know much about Adventism and so they find it difficult to share the Word of God with others.

Moreover, when I was reading your magazine, I reached the topic, "Why Me, Lord?" I learned that God has a purpose for everyone in life. I know that Jesus has a purpose for me and I have decided to become a pastor in the future. I would like to thank the Almighty God for your ministry.

FO, Ghana

Since I became an Adventist, I have never been exposed to the full knowledge of the Spirit of Prophecy—Sister E. G. White's writings. I have been hoping to find books that could help me explain to others about my church's origin and how the Spirit of Prophecy is one of the most important features for the last-day church. Those who come to church every Sabbath

miss the meaning of most of the lessons because we have little knowledge about our church and lack material for our people of all ages. As you know, time is running out and many souls are perishing.

In other words, as someone who has been called to serve in the field of evangelism, I'll be grateful if some brethren with extra copies of the Spirit of Prophecy books could send some to me. I don't have any of them, or any other literature to distribute to the people we are meeting, who live as far as 12 kilometers from my village, and we are hoping to go even farther than that.

I pray for your success in all that you do and that the Lord will bless you.

KK, Zambia

I really thank you very much for the books ordered for me by a woman named ——. I have written to thank her.

Thank you for making it possible for her to reach me. May God bless you!

We have planted a new church at a village called ——— and we have to send the books to them. They have requested some books and Bibles. Therefore, could you send some Bibles for them?

SK, Ghana

I am a newly converted Seventh-day Adventist from the Roman Catholic church. I am requesting a few King James Version Bibles with concordance and reference material.

I am requesting these Bibles because we are newly converted and we have Bibles which we bought in Roman Catholic bookshops and most of them have been tampered with, and some don't even have the books of Daniel and Revelation. I am also requesting any literature that could help me and others understand Daniel and Revelation.

If I could be able I would purchase many Bibles for the many souls here in Africa who are ignorant of the Word of God, but I am unable since my meagre salary is not even enough to sustain myself and my family. May the Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, bless you for whatever you may send me.

JO, Kenya

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White, Ellen G.

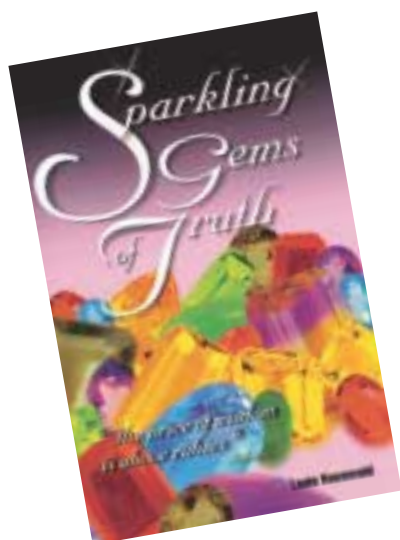
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