

Our Firm Foundation



Gospel Gimmicks

Volume 17, Number 11

November 2002

The Seventh-day Sabbath

Christ Our Righteousness

The Immutable Law of God

The Non-Immortality of the Soul

The Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary



Four Causes of Persecution

It is with great sadness we recognize that many of God's faithful people around the world, who love the truth and are obedient to it by the power of the Holy Spirit, are now subjected to church discipline. Yes, some are even disfellowshipped for giving the straight testimony to the church. The causes of this tragic situation are: worldliness, liberalism, legalism, and fanaticism.

For 6,000 years, Satan has successfully used these four detours to destroy millions of souls. The first two are closely related. Worldliness always generates liberalism. Legalism and fanaticism are many times also related. All four can be summarized in these verses of scripture:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John 2:15-17.

The remedy for all of the four causes is true conversion accompanied by ongoing study of the Word of God.

What is conversion?—The Spirit of Prophecy gives the answer to this very important question:

"Conversion is a work that most do not appreciate. It is not a small matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace, and the excellency of God, so that the soul shall be imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. When he understands these things, his

former life appears disgusting and hateful. He hates sin, and, breaking his heart before God, he embraces Christ as the Life and Joy of the soul. He renounces his former pleasures. He has a new mind, new affections, new interest, new will; his sorrows, and desires, and love are all new. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which have heretofore been preferred before Christ, are now turned from, and Christ is the Charm of his life, the Crown of his rejoicing. Heaven, which once possessed no charms, is now viewed in its riches and glory; and he contemplates it as his future home, where he shall see, love, and praise the One who hath redeemed him by His precious blood.

"The works of holiness, which appeared wearisome, are now his delight. The Word of God, which was dull and uninteresting, is now chosen as his study, the man of his counsel. It is as a letter written to him from God, bearing the inscription of the Eternal. His thoughts, his words, and his deeds are brought to this rule and tested. He trembles at the commands and threatenings which it contains, while he firmly grasps its promises and strengthens his soul by appropriating them to himself. The society of the most godly is now chosen by him, and the wicked, whose company he once loved, he no longer delights in. He weeps over those sins in them at which he once laughed. Self-love and vanity are renounced, and he lives unto God, and is rich in good works. This is the sanctification which God requires. Nothing short of this will He accept." *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 294-295.

Faithful, obedient Christians have been persecuted,

disfellowshipped, yes, martyred during Satan's 6,000-year reign of terror by civil and religious leaders who were not converted, and who led the church into worldliness, liberalism, legalism, and fanaticism. See Isaiah 30:9-11; Micah 3:9-11.

Therefore, many Seventh-day Adventist leaders and members have adopted worldly methods and evangelical doctrines which are an abomination to our loving Creator and Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Several articles in this issue of *Our Firm Foundation* address this problem. I highly recommend a careful study of this issue, especially the article, "Gospel Gim-micks" by Judi Wentland.

In the light of the existing apostasy, how many Seventh-day Adventists will be saved?—Jesus gives the sobering answer in Matthew 22:14: "For many are called, but few are chosen."

Let us see how Ellen White responds to this important question:

"God now calls upon you to repent, to be zealous in the work. Your eternal happiness will be determined by the course you now pursue. Can you reject the invitations of mercy now offered? Can you choose your own way? Will you cherish pride and vanity, and lose your soul at last? The Word of God plainly tells us that few will be saved, and that the greater number of those, even, who are called will prove themselves unworthy of everlasting life. They will have no part in heaven, but will have their portion with Satan, and experience the second death." *Ibid.*, 293-294.

Let us devote ourselves to be among the few who heed the call of Christ to follow Him. ❀



It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of *Our Firm Foundation* to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days remaining for this world are few, and we must work quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.

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Gospel Gimmicks

Judi Wentland

As I studied my Sabbath school lesson today (July 21, 2002), I read about the downfall of Israel. "It is not hard to imagine the rationale used by those who started bringing these gods into the Hebrew worship: *We need to be progressive. We need to keep up with the times. We need to advance in faith. Times are changing. We should not be so closed-minded. What makes us think that we have a monopoly on truth? Let us try to draw as close to these people as we can; that way we can better reach them.*" *Rebellion and Reformation* Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (July-September 2002, 31, italics in original). Have you heard any of these things recently?

Right Observation, Wrong Analysis

Over and over I hear about how *dead and boring* our church has become. "All the youth are leaving" they say. "What we need is to have a more up-beat contemporary worship style. We need more gospel-skits, gospel-clowns, gospel-magicians, gospel-rock, gospel-puppets and, oh yes, more entertaining gospel(?) sermons." By the way, does putting the label "gospel" in front of something mean that it came from God? ("gospel sin"?)

As is many times the case, the observation may be correct while the analysis is not. The example is used of the dishwasher that broke when the whistle blew with the conclusion being drawn that blowing whistles cause dishwashers to break. Similarly, when we observe many bored church members slipping out the back door, we may inaccurately conclude that the church is not exciting enough. It is important to determine the true cause of the *boredom* before applying a remedy. Therefore, let us look at several possible causes:

- It might be due to a **lack of conversion** (love of the world). See Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 John 2:15; James 4:4; Ezekiel 36:26-27.

Our desire for an entertaining worship style may be due to an unregenerate, world-loving heart that has no appetite for straight truth. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 13:5 that we need to have routine heart checkups. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

The Faith I Live By, 139, gives the following insight into the boredom

issue: "Conversion is a work that most do not appreciate. It is not a small matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace, and the excellency of God, so that the soul shall be imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. When he understands these things, his former life appears disgusting and hateful. He hates sin, and, breaking his heart before God, he embraces Christ as the Life and Joy of the soul. He renounces his former pleasures. He has a new mind, new affections, new interest, new will; his sorrows, and desires, and love are all new. . . . Heaven, *which once possessed no charms*, is now viewed in its riches and glory; and he contemplates it as his future home, where he shall see, love, and praise the One who hath redeemed him by His precious blood. The works of holiness, which appeared *wearisome*, are now his delight. The Word of God, which was *dull and uninteresting*, is now chosen as his study, the man of his counsel. It is as a letter written to him from God, bearing the inscription of the Eternal. His thoughts, his words, and his deeds are brought to this rule and tested. He trembles at the

commands and threatenings which it contains, while he firmly grasps its promises and strengthens his soul by appropriating them to himself." (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

Analysis: If the boredom is due to lack of conversion, the answer is not a more entertaining approach.

- It might be due to **legalism**.

What is *legalism*?—Webster tells us that it is the doctrine of salvation by good works. If *worldliness* is one ditch, *legalism* is the other. However, contrary to popular belief, *legalism* is not synonymous with *obedience*.

We know, of course, that we do not get to heaven by our good works—nor, by the way, do we get to heaven without them: "While good works will not save even one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works." *Selected Messages*, book 1, 377. Let us make sure we understand what legalism really is.

An excellent definition of legalism can be found in Matthew, chapter 23. The Pharisees were reproved by Jesus, "But all their works they *do for to be seen of men*." Verse 5. "Even so ye also *outwardly appear righteous* unto men, but *within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity*." Verse 28. Basically, legalism is acting out a lie.

It is no more possible to look at someone and diagnose legalism than to determine that someone needs a heart bypass operation by just looking at them. Legalism is indeed a heart problem and only God can read the motives of the heart. When the heart is not in agreement with the actions (or works) you may have a critical, dry, harsh religion. A legalist, for example, may strictly keep the Sabbath while all the time checking his watch, anxiously waiting for the Sabbath to be over. He is *legally* keeping the law, but in his heart he hates it. The Bible tells us that obedience takes place in the heart. By the same token, we can be held accountable for sin committed only in the heart. See Matthew 5:28; Proverbs 23:7; 1 John 3:15.

Analysis: If legalism exists in your church, conversion, not entertainment, is the answer. Dead formalism must be replaced by vital godliness. Dead formalism, by the way, can be found in both ditches—not just on the legalism side. The presence and power of God will be found with humble worshipers, who are willing to obey the teachings of the sacred Word. A Christian who is alive with love for God and who longs to obey Him—both in his heart and in his actions—will do more to attract the unconverted than all the entertainment that the world has to offer.

A Christian who is alive with love for God and who longs to obey Him . . . will do more to attract the unconverted than all the entertainment that the world has to offer.

- It might be due to a **lack of unity**.

Lack of unity will discourage many who are not grounded. This is an agonizing issue of the Church Militant. The wheat and the tares are struggling (see Ephesians 6:12)—locked in mortal combat.

Unification is often thought to be reached by compromise. We have been told, however, that "if unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war." *The Great Controversy*, 45.

Unity is the state of God's purified Church Triumphant. We are always to seek unity. What if, however, the divisive issues represent two different paths: one leading to eternal life; and one leading to eternal death?—"I am instructed to say to our people, 'Unify, unify.' But we are not to unify with those who are departing from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." *Selected Messages*, book 3, 412.

Analysis: Many churches have become divided and even split over

worship issues. On the surface this seems silly. The "politically correct" solution that is frequently put forward is *tolerance*. It is deemed a sure sign of Christian maturity if an individual can tolerate sin.

God, on the other hand, tells us that the real solution to our unity problem is just the opposite: "Unity is the sure result of *Christian perfection*." *The Sanctified Life*, 85.

As we steadfastly behold Christ, we will be changed into His image (see 2 Corinthians 3:18) and will operate in His *simple* ways without any sensational or entertaining props. Paul tells us that the spiritual gifts are for the perfecting of

the saints: "Till we all come in the *unity of the faith*, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13.

- It might be a problem of **mixing common with sacred fire**.

There may be spiritual confusion caused by imagining that we must compete with the world, using the world's entertaining techniques in order to keep our members.

God is very particular about His worship services. For an example, see Leviticus 10:1-11 and Numbers 26:61 regarding Nadab and Abihu. When secular methods are mixed with sacred, not only is God dishonored, but the truth of God is not magnified in His people. No wonder many do not understand the joy of the Christian walk. No wonder they leave.

"The truth of God has not been magnified in His believing people because they have not brought it into their personal experience. They conform to the world and depend upon it for their influ-

ence. They allow the world to convert them and introduce the common fire to take the place of the sacred that they may, in their line of work, meet the world's standard." *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, 557.

Analysis: "Conformity to worldly customs converts the church to the world; it never converts the world to Christ." *The Great Controversy*, 509.

The world already has *worldly things*. Searchers want something that they do not already have. 1 Corinthians 3:19 says, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." See also Proverbs 14:12; Proverbs 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:13.

- It might be due to a **lack of discernment**.

darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20.

Analysis: Lack of discernment can cause confusion and insecurity. The safety of *right* and *wrong* has been removed. There are no more boundaries, and everything is "relative," a view that has been popularized by the New Age philosophy that "what is wrong for one may not be wrong for another," or, more simply stated as "I'm okay; you're okay."

What brings a church back into unity is not more *freedom from condemnation* but, conversely, *freedom from sin*. Discernment comes to a consecrated heart from God (see 1 Corinthians 2:13)—not from any university.

"Conformity to worldly customs converts the church to the world; it never converts the world to Christ."

Since I was out of the church for more than 20 years, my perspective of the big picture seems to be somewhat different from that of those who have never left—and have subsequently been *conditioned* to the gradual changes—and those who have come into the church in its current condition.

When I came back to God in 1991, I did not recognize the church as the same one that I had left in the late 60's. It seemed that everything had changed. The line of demarcation that had once proudly separated the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the world was now blurred. In the place of "right" or "wrong," today those classed as either *liberal* or *conservative* are often described by words like "tolerant" (a politically correct stance of turning a blind eye to sin) and "legalistic" (a term expressing disapproval of those who condemn sin).

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put

"What's Wrong With It?"

Satan has a way of turning things around. Sometimes, it seems that by using his methods (and we must concede that he often mixes *much that appears to be good* with even his worst ideas) we can attract the most people, and then, the end justifies the means. However, the reality is, more is less and less is more. It is a paradox. You can attract thousands of people with entertainment, fill all the seats, appeal to their senses, yet, when the entertainment is done, the thousands are gone. With a diet of entertainment they lose their appetite for straight truth.

When questions come up, the tendency seems to be to focus on "What's wrong with it?" rather than "What is God's ideal?" We are losing our discernment. God says, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15.

Joe Crews wrote a compelling book called *Creeping Compromise*, which addresses this concept. The devil is very subtle. The changes that have taken place in the church have been gradual. They are like the frog in the pot of water. If he is thrown into a pot of boiling water, he will recognize the danger and jump out. If, however, having been put into comfortable, warm water, then the heat of the water is turned up very slowly, he will adjust and simply *change his definition of what is "right."* Each degree that he compromises costs him more discernment. If he focuses on '*what is wrong with one more degree*' instead of '*what is the ideal temperature*,' he will eventually become totally deceived and end up being cooked. It is a process, not an event.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Principles To Consider

Along with the technological advances of this age has come increased hunger for sensory stimulation. The world—and, sad to say, a large portion of the church—have subsequently become mental dyspeptics. Those who live vicariously—absorbed mindlessly in movies, novels, video games, and competitive sports—lose their spiritual appetite for truth and their capacity for deeper, soul-searching thought. *Gospel gimmicks* came about to accommodate the dulled intellect and appeal to the already overstimulated emotions. "Harmless" little adventures in gospel entertainment began parading into the Sabbath school, the divine service and personal ministries—*gospel-skits, gospel-clowns, gospel-magicians, gospel-rock, gospel-puppets*. Voices raised to question their appropriateness were hushed and labeled as *narrow minded*.

Let us seek counsel that God has given us to ferret out the principles involved. "Those who make use of

devices that are theatrical in nature, to hold the attention of the people, *lose the realization of the presence of Christ*. Those who use so much *time* in preparing for their meetings, *depending* to a large extent on *outward appearance* to impress the people, give Jesus no opportunity to work on hearts. They *minge the common with the sacred*." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, 387.

- The *time* utilized to prepare for the theatrical effects is wasted.

"Our time belongs to God.

Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 342.

- The *focus* is on the human instrument rather than Jesus.

The more entertaining the presentation, the less truth that is "fastened upon the mind. . . . It has a stimulating effect, but does not transform the character." *The Voice in Speech and Song*, 284.

- *Strange Fire*: Sacred and common are not to be mixed.

"Some ministers make the mistake of supposing that success depends on drawing a large congregation by outward display, and then delivering the message of truth in a theatrical style. But this is using *common fire* instead of the *sacred fire* of God's kindling. The Lord is not glorified by this manner of working. Not by startling notices and expensive display is His work to be carried to completion, but by following Christlike methods. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." Zechariah 4:6. It is the naked truth, which, like a sharp, two-edged sword, cuts both ways, arousing to spiritual life those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Men will recognize the gospel when it is brought to them in a way that is in harmony with God's purposes." *Evangelism*, 136.

- *Theatrics* of any nature trivialize the message, stimulate the senses, and distract from the truth.

"Too many illustrations do not have a correct influence; they

belittle the sacred dignity that should ever be maintained in the presentation of the Word of God to the people." *Ibid.*, 209.

"Unless men are led to value the truth as a choice possession, to receive it as that which will sanctify the soul, no lasting good has been accomplished. He who presents eloquent words simply causes the people to forget the truth that is mingled with his oratory. *When the excitement passes away, it is found that the Word of God has not been fastened upon the mind; nor have the simple gained in understanding. . . .* People should not be encouraged

"When the excitement passes away, it is found that the Word of God has not been fastened upon the mind; nor have the simple gained in understanding."

to prize oratorical display. This kind of sermonizing has the same kind of effect upon the mind as does the reading of an exciting story. It has a *stimulating effect*, but *does not transform the character*." *The Voice in Speech and Song*, 283–284.

- God's way of reaching people is through the mind; Satan's way is through the *emotions*.

"It is through the *Word*—not feeling, not excitement—that we want to influence the people to obey the truth. On the platform of God's Word we can stand with safety. The living Word is replete with evidence, and a wonderful power accompanies its proclamation in our world." *Selected Messages*, book 3, 375. (Emphasis in original.)

- Fiction encourages habits of *lazy thinking* and destroys the power of deep thought.

"Even fiction which contains no suggestion of impurity, and which may be intended to teach excellent principles, is harmful. It encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading, merely for the story. Thus it tends to destroy the power of connected and vigorous thought;

it unfits the soul to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny." *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 383.

- Entertainment is *addictive*.

"If the Sanitarium shall retrograde as rapidly in the future as it has done in the past, in introducing worldly amusements and theatrical performances, *the Lord will withdraw His protecting care from that institution*. His frown is upon all these things. They are not essential for the prosperity of the Sanitarium or for the health of the patients. The more they have of this kind of amusements, the less will they be

pleased, unless something of the kind shall be continually carried on. The mind is in a fever of unrest for something new and exciting—the very thing it ought not to have." *Testimony for the Physicians and Helpers of the Sanitarium* (Pamphlet 100), 69.

If God would "withdraw His protecting care" from a sanitarium because of amusements, how must he view the presence of such amusements in our churches?

- Success depends on *simplicity without display*.

"Our success will depend on carrying forward the work in the simplicity in which Christ carried it forward, without any theatrical display." *Evangelism*, 139.

- God said, "I have a message for those in charge of our work. Do not encourage the men who are to engage in this work to think that they must proclaim the solemn, sacred message in a theatrical style. *Not one jot or tittle of anything theatrical is to be brought into our work*. God's cause is to have a sacred, heavenly

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A Protest and Appeal



Harvey Steck

Dear Seventh-day Adventist church leaders and members:

Since the time our General Conference introduced the new GraceLink Sabbath school children's curriculum, I have been made aware of parents, teachers, and other loyal church members that are concerned that the new materials do not rightly reflect the character of the gospel God has given us to proclaim to the world. Many of these concerns have been communicated to the leaders at the General Conference and the North American Division, and many parents and local churches have recognized their duty to safeguard the salvation of their children and have rejected the new materials.

After some letters of concern were circulated by mail and by the Internet, the General Conference requested that all letters of concern be addressed through one person at the North American Division Children's Ministries Department (Sharon Wright / NAD Children's Ministries Dept. / 12501 Old Columbia Pike / Silver Spring, MD 20904). She would then share them with the appropriate responsible parties.

Since the time that concerns began to circulate, I have noticed that a few pictures have been

changed—apparently in response to objections. Some may plead that it is a complex process to produce Sabbath school materials for a worldwide church. In view of the gravity of the problems that still exist, however, I am disappointed to see how little has been corrected thus far. I continue to hear of churches that are wrestling with the decision whether or not to continue using the GraceLink materials.

It is past time that each responsible church member should evaluate the GraceLink materials in the light of the principles and guidelines found in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. It is my prayer that this open letter will help to identify the problems that exist in this new Sabbath school curriculum.

Our Responsibility

As a church member, elder, Sabbath school teacher, and parent of two young girls, I believe it is my responsibility to present concerns that extend beyond mere human imperfections. These materials will influence many of our children and youth to take the broad road to destruction.

Please consider the responsibility that God has given us to feed

our flock the pure spiritual food from Heaven:

"There is a wide field for the elders and the helpers in every church. They are to *feed the flock of God with pure provender, thoroughly winnowed from the chaff, the poisonous mixture of error*. You who have any part to act in the church of God, be sure that you act wisely in feeding the flock of God; for its prosperity much depends upon the quality of this food." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 942. (All emphasis supplied by the author unless otherwise noted.)

"The papers that have so wide a circulation should contain more precious instruction than appears in the ordinary publications of the day. 'What is the chaff to the wheat?' Jeremiah 23:28. *We want pure wheat, thoroughly winnowed.*" *Testimonies*, vol. 7, 153.

"When existing evils are not met and checked, because men have too little courage to reprove wrong, or because they have too little interest or are too indolent to tax their own powers in putting forth earnest efforts to purify the family or the church of God, they are accountable for the evil which may result in consequence of neglect to do their duty. *We are just as accountable for evils that we might have checked in*

others, by reproof, by warning, by exercise of parental or pastoral authority, as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves." Ibid., vol. 4, 516.

Even if all who are involved in preparing the GraceLink materials are sincerely, prayerfully doing what they believe is the best, we must still evaluate the materials for ourselves.

I encourage each reader to review *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* to see what the Lord has told us should characterize our Sabbath school materials. There are at least four major areas in which the GraceLink materials fall short:

1. The Bible stories should be free from fiction and speculation.
2. Illustrations must not cheapen the stories.
3. They should make a balanced, correct presentation of Bible facts and theology.
4. They should recommend activities that show proper reverence for the Sabbath and for God's house.

If our materials fail in these areas, the materials should be rejected until they are brought up to the standard.

1. Biblical Stories, Free From Fiction / Speculation

We often use our imagination to describe a scene from the Bible. We might say, for example, "Jesus smiled at the children as He placed them on His knee" — even though the Bible may not specifically mention His smile. Such a minimal use of imagination may be quite appropriate in relating Bible stories to the children.

When whole lessons are written around an imaginary character, however, or when fictitious passages are interwoven with Bible facts, we must ask ourselves how the children will discern what is fact and what is fiction. Following is a portion of what God has said on this subject:

We are to follow Paul's example, not "handling the word of

God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." 2 Corinthians 4:1-2.

"Let the teachers show that they have thoroughly learned the lesson, and are intensely interested in it. Let there be *no frivolous or superficial interpretations of the Scriptures*, but let each be prepared to go to the bottom of the subject presented." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, 182.

"*Even fiction which contains no suggestion of impurity, and which may be intended to teach excellent principles, is harmful.* It encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading merely for the story. Thus it tends to destroy the power of

it be because we excite our children with worldly, sensational entertainment during the week?

2. Illustrations

We say we are presenting the gospel to our young people. Do the profuse cartoon-style illustrations used depict the vital nature of Bible truths? Do they convey reverence? What do they "say" to the children about what they are studying? Will not the surrealistic illustrations place the Bible stories on the same level as a cartoon or fairy tale?

Television, video and computer games, and other media offer stiff competition with our own publications. As long as we are feeding our

Even if all who are involved in preparing the GraceLink materials are sincerely, prayerfully doing what they believe is the best, we must still evaluate the materials for ourselves.

connected and vigorous thought; it unfits the soul to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny." *The Ministry of Healing*, 445; see also *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 308-309.

In the current materials, characters and names are added as if factual, making it difficult for the young reader — or new convert — to distinguish truth from fiction. When we nurture our church on these kinds of stories, what will happen to their faith when they discover some time later that some of the "facts" they recall from a story were the product of someone's imagination? Furthermore, what reverence do we show for Scripture — and to its Author — when we add large portions of speculation or imagination to a Bible story, even adding to the words of Christ in His conversation with the disciples? Are we teaching respect for the Scriptures by adding large amounts of speculative details? Cannot our young people think deeper — or must they be entertained by fiction? If the Word of God is uninteresting to our children, could

children a mental diet centered around such empty entertainment during the week, our children will not be interested in learning about the Bible — even if we try to mimic the world in our manner of illustration.

God's way of captivating our interest is not by imitating the world, but by showing something superior to what the world offers. Let us convey through our illustrations that the lessons are not Christian fiction — they are from the holy Word of God.

Regarding illustrations, God says, "Care should be exercised in the matter of illustrating. Much money should not be invested in this line. When there are lessons in the pictures which lead to a study of the book itself, it is well; but when the pictures draw the attention from the truth contained in the book to themselves, the effort to help the book by illustrations is a *failure*. . . .

"Pictures to represent Bible scenes must be *no cheap designs*. . . . The knowledge which God imparts

is not of a character to belittle our ideas of sacred things. The glory of God must be kept before the mind's eye, *not the cheap, earthly representations* that imprint in the memory scenes which give a false conception of Christ and heavenly things. A proper illustration of Bible scenes requires talent of a superior quality. With these *cheap, common productions*, the sacred lessons of the Bible disdain¹ comparison. . . . God forbid that we should please the devil by lowering the standard of eternal truth by using *illustrations that men, women, and children will make sport of.*" *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 167-168.

"Many of the pictures made are grossly false as far as truth is concerned. Do not pictures so far

few passages from the Spirit of Prophecy that illustrate our need to maintain a balance between faith and works, the law and the gospel, and so on:

"Some will not make a right use of the doctrine of justification by faith. *They will present it in a one-sided manner, making everything of faith, and belittling works. Others will seize the points that have a leaning toward error, and will ignore works altogether.* Now, genuine faith always works by love; it supplies a motive power. Faith is not an opiate, but a stimulant. Looking to Calvary will not quiet your soul into nonperformance of duty, but will create faith that will work, purifying the soul from all selfishness." *Review and Herald*, January 24, 1893.

[1 John 3:4 and Romans 7:7 quoted.] . . . *The sinner cannot be convinced of his guilt unless he understands what constitutes sin.* It is impossible for an individual to experience Bible sanctification while he holds that if he believes in Christ it is immaterial whether he obeys God's law or disobeys it." *Faith and Works*, 31.

In the current materials the authors seem to emphasize their understanding of grace and justification, omitting the balance of sanctification and principled living. The philosophy page on "Grace: Jesus Loves Me" (on the www.gracelink.net web site, last accessed September 2002) states, "we want to impart the full impact of a grace orientation. Discussions about salvation will emphasize the actions of God *toward us.*" On the surface, it appears that they are true to their goal. However, I believe that the editors do not present a "grace orientation" that is genuinely Seventh-day Adventist—as God has described it through Inspiration. Of the many inspired passages that illustrate the intimate relationship of grace and obedience, here are just two:

"As we look into the divine mirror, the law of God, we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and our own lost condition as transgressors. *But by repentance and faith we are justified before God, and through divine grace enabled to render obedience to His commandments.*" *The Sanctified Life*, 81.

"While our salvation is wholly dependent upon Jesus, yet we have a work to do in order that we shall be saved. The apostle says, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' *Philippians 2:12-13.* The work that we are to do is not independent of what God is to do, but *a work of cooperation with God. The power and the grace of God is to be wrought into the heart by the divine Worker, but some go astray here, claiming that man has a work to do that is wholly independent of any work of God. Another class take the*

"With these cheap, common productions, the sacred lessons of the Bible disdain comparison."

removed from the truth give voice to falsehoods? We want to be true in all our representations of Jesus Christ. . . . The ideas of many in reference to the matters pertaining to God's work are *too cheap*. In the selection of pictures to illustrate holy things, a deficiency of wisdom has been shown that *God cannot approve.*" *Ibid.*, 171.

"I hope our publications will *not* come to *resemble a comic almanac*. I would not altogether condemn the use of pictures, but let fewer be used, and only such as are good illustrations of the subject. . . . If you choose to have a few pictures and good ones, I do not object. Let illustrations be *choice rather than numerous.*" *Ibid.*, 172.

3. A Balanced Presentation of Bible Facts and Theology

This aspect may be the most difficult area for some to evaluate; however, I believe the GraceLink Sabbath school materials seriously suffer in this area. Following are a

"While God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, *no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties.* God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and *in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.*" *Selected Messages*, book 1, 366.

"While it [spiritualism] formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, it now professes to accept both. . . . Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. *God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.*" *The Great Controversy*, 558.

"The soul must first be convicted of sin before the sinner will feel a desire to come to Christ.

other extreme, and say that man is free from all obligation, because God does the whole work—both the willing and the doing. But the true ground to take is that the human will must be in subjection to the divine will. The will of man is not to be forced into cooperation with divine agencies, but must be voluntarily submitted. Man has no power of himself to work out his own salvation. Salvation must be the result of cooperation with divine power, and God will not do that for man which he can do for himself. . . .

“The work to be done is a united work. The divine and the human are to work together, and *the sinner is to depend upon grace, while rendering willing obedience to the dictates of the Spirit of God.*” *Signs of the Times*, February 12, 1894.

4. Reverent, Appropriate Activities in Teachers’ Quarterly

Chapter 79 of *Child Guidance* teaches us our responsibility to guard the sacredness of the Sabbath while seeking to make it the most delightful day of the week for our children. I urge you to read it prayerfully.

Many of the suggested activities in the GraceLink teachers’ quarterlies (particularly the Junior quarterlies) are shallow entertainment, irreverent, or otherwise inappropriate on the Sabbath or in the Sabbath school classroom. God says, “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” Isaiah 58:13–14.

Other Concerns

Lessons are planned so that children will not study the lesson

in advance. Thus, we are told, all the students will arrive at Sabbath school with no knowledge of the Bible story, so that some children will not know all the answers while the other children are made to feel inferior.

In reality, any primary or junior children who have been properly instructed by their parents will soon be familiar with most of the Bible stories they hear at Sabbath school and will remember much of what happened in the story—even if they did not study it the week before. Therefore, rather than helping all the children to feel good about themselves, we are actually

Many of the suggested activities in the GraceLink teachers’ quarterlies . . . are shallow entertainment, irreverent, or otherwise inappropriate on the Sabbath or in the Sabbath school classroom.

only reducing our expectations of them and decreasing their incentive to study.

Contrary to the above approach, the Lord has told us that we should help our children study their lessons during the week, so that they will have learned the lesson for the *coming* Sabbath:

“As a means of intellectual training, the opportunities of the Sabbath are invaluable. Let the Sabbath school lesson be learned, not by a hasty glance at the lesson scripture on Sabbath morning, but by *careful study for the next week* on Sabbath afternoon, with daily review or illustration during the week. Thus the lesson will become fixed in the memory, a treasure never to be wholly lost.” *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, 43; see also *ibid.*, 54. How much better it would be to encourage parents to help their children study their lessons!

The teacher’s quarterly also recommends that much of the class time be spent in games, dialogue, crafts, role plays, and other exercises, leaving little time for actual study and exploration of the Bible.

Because of this plan, there is a frequent consultation of feelings and personal experience rather than a focus on consulting God’s Word to know His principles. We have much counsel from the Spirit of Prophecy that when we are making decisions between right and wrong, we are *not* to rely upon our own feelings or experience in the place of a “thus saith the Lord.” See *Faith and Works*, 52–53; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1147; *The Upward Look*, 37.

In the GraceLink program, there is little or no expectation that the children will learn their memory text. How sad! Today, it is as

important as ever to fix the Word of God in our mind:

“Parents, set apart a little time each day for the study of the Sabbath school lesson with your children. Give up the social visit if need be, rather than sacrifice the hour devoted to the precious lessons of sacred history. Parents, as well as children, will receive benefit from this study. *Let the more important passages of Scripture connected with the lesson be committed to memory, not as a task, but as a privilege.* Though at first the memory may be defective, it will gain strength by exercise, so that after a time you will delight thus to treasure up the precious words of truth. And the habit will prove a most valuable aid to religious growth.” *Ibid.*, 41–42.

Standing By Principle

I have a great burden for our young people. I am not appealing for us to retain a “tradition;” neither am I one who “thrives on criticism and complaining” (as the GraceLink web site’s FAQs page describes those who oppose the GraceLink material). I look at it this way: if I am aware that someone

has served you a delicious dessert with just a drop or two of strychnine, it does not matter how many positive things that I can say about the dessert, I must warn you that you are in mortal danger if you eat it. See *The Great Controversy*, 587. That is why I have focused on the negative aspects of the GraceLink curriculum.

Our youth need godly parents and teachers, and solid, Bible-based instruction to prepare them for Satan's overwhelming delusions. We need to prepare our youth to receive the latter rain and to stand victorious, without fault before God, in His divine power. It is urgent that our Sabbath school materials contribute to this end. When our church leaders produce

curriculum that we believe meets with God's approval, we will praise the Lord.

Dear reader, if you are convicted that these materials are dangerous to the salvation of our children, I urge you to express your concerns to your local church, conference leaders, and to the General Conference. Let us not be guilty of silence while our children are being led down the broad road to destruction.

I pray that the Lord will guide our leaders and members as each person influences the decisions regarding the Sabbath school materials provided to God's remnant church. ✠

Note:

¹ To deem unworthy.

This open letter is adapted from a letter that was sent to the General Conference March 17, 2002, which listed examples of the various problems. A copy of the full letter is available upon request.

While we await the needed changes in the GraceLink materials, some churches have chosen to use appropriate alternative materials in their Sabbath schools. Some time ago someone shared with us a list of more than a dozen sources of children's Sabbath school lessons, teachers' aids, and other helpful resources. If you would like a copy of this list, please request it from Hope International.

continued from page 7...

mold. Let everything connected with the giving of the message for this time bear the divine impress. Let nothing of a theatrical nature be permitted, for this would *spoil the sacredness of the work.*" Ibid., 137.

Looking For Answers in Wrong Places

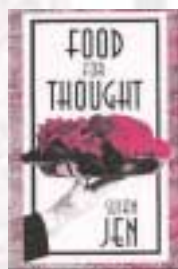
"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold

water." Jeremiah 2:13, NIV. "Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the River?" Verse 18.

Why do we go to the world to learn how to preach the gospel? Do we not have counsel from God? — As a matter of fact, we have fabulous counsel — and an abundance of it! You really would not have to look any further than the book *Evangelism*, but the many other Spirit of Prophecy books also address every issue in principle — if not specifically. Yes, times have

changed, but the principles God gave Moses are still valid today. Likewise, the Spirit of Prophecy, inspired by God, has life-giving information that, if internalized, would transform our lives and subsequently our worship services, our evangelism techniques and our personal ministries.

"When Christ is in us the hope of glory, we are constantly directed to think and act in reference to the glory of God. The questions will arise, 'Will this do honor to Jesus? Will this be approved of by Him?' " *That I May Know Him*, 193. ✠



Food for Thought

Susan Jen

Hartland Publications

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The Exodus and the Latter Rain

Ron Spear

After Israel wandered almost 40 years in the wilderness, God called them to enter the Promised Land. The call was identical to the one given to the church in the wilderness at Mount Horeb more than 38 years before. It was time for the test to be repeated.

“The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.” Deuteronomy 1:6-8.

It is evident that God was ready to cut short the 40-year sentence.

“Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days. And the

LORD spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.” Deuteronomy 2:1-3.

38 Years of Preparation

Let us remember, it took 40 years in the wilderness to prepare Moses for his work as a leader and prophet:

“Moses did not merely think of God, he saw Him. God was the constant vision before him. Never did he lose sight of His face.

“To Moses faith was no guess-work; it was a reality. He believed that God ruled his life in particular; and in all its details he acknowledged Him. For strength to withstand every temptation, he trusted in Him.

“The great work assigned him he desired to make in the highest degree successful, and he placed his whole dependence upon divine power. He felt his need of help, asked for it, by faith grasped it, and in the assurance of sustaining strength went forward.

“Such was the experience that Moses gained by his forty years of training in the desert. To impart such an experience, Infinite Wisdom counted not the period too

long or the price too great.” *Education*, 63-64.

“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.” Deuteronomy 34:10.

The Test Repeated

Israel returned to Kadesh, where they had rebelled 38 years before, and, shortly before their arrival, God tested them by drying up the river of water that had supplied their needs:

“And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.” Numbers 20:2.

Before God would allow them to possess the land, they must show their faith in His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They must walk by faith rather than by sight.

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Isaiah 41:17.

“Just before the Hebrew host reached Kadesh, the living stream ceased that for so many years had gushed out beside their encampment. It was the Lord’s purpose

again to test His people. He would prove whether they would trust His providence or imitate the unbelief of their fathers.

“They were now in sight of the hills of Canaan. A few days’ march would bring them to the borders of the Promised Land. They were but a little distance from Edom, which belonged to the descendants of Esau, and through which lay the appointed route to Canaan. The direction had been given to Moses, ‘Turn you northward. And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you. . . . Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy

“Before God permitted them to enter Canaan, they must show that they believed His promise.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 413–414.

Israel must first thirst for the spiritual water. They had no desire for the Water of Life. This was the cause of the first rebellion at Kadesh. Had the 38 years of wandering in the wilderness given them the understanding of God’s requirements—His conditions—for their entry into Canaan?

The Second Failure

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his

should have been a sign to them that their wandering was over. This sign should have brought great rejoicing in the camp; however, they were blinded by their unbelief. In their spiritual blindness they had lost all hope of the vision of their inheritance. In their blindness, they now clamored for the wilderness, the river of water, and the manna to supply their physical needs. “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Proverbs 29:18.

“The water ceased before they had reached Edom. Here was an opportunity for them, for a little time, to walk by faith instead of sight. But the first trial developed the same turbulent, unthankful spirit that had been manifested by their fathers. No sooner was the cry for water heard in the encampment than they forgot the Hand that had for so many years supplied their wants, and instead of turning to God for help, they murmured against Him, in their desperation exclaiming, ‘Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!’ (see Numbers 20:1–13); that is, they wished they had been of the number who were destroyed in the rebellion of Korah.” *Ibid.*, 414.

Because of the second failure at Kadesh, Israel must suffer further delay. They must make a long detour around Edom. God’s church must now wait the full 40 years.

The Advent Movement

The tragic history of the Exodus movement has a counterpart—in the Advent movement. The same test given in the Exodus movement came to our beloved church at Minneapolis in 1888. Our rejection of the Laodicean message in 1888 resulted in a long delay:

“The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God’s unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay. But the coming of the morning to the faithful, and of the night to the

Israel must first thirst for the spiritual water. They had no desire for the Water of Life. This was the cause of the first rebellion at Kadesh.

water of them for money, that ye may drink.’ Deuteronomy 2:3–6. These directions should have been sufficient to explain why their supply of water had been cut off; they were about to pass through a well-watered, fertile country, in a direct course to the land of Canaan. God had promised them an unmo- lested passage through Edom, an opportunity to purchase food, and also water sufficient to supply the host. The cessation of the miracu- lous flow of water should therefore have been a cause of rejoicing, a token that the wilderness wander- ing was ended. Had they not been blinded by their unbelief, they would have understood this. But that which should have been an evidence of the fulfillment of God’s promise was made the occasion of doubt and murmuring. The people seemed to have given up all hope that God would bring them into possession of Canaan, and they clamored for the blessings of the wilderness.

water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.” Numbers 20:7–13.

As we noted earlier, the cessa- tion of the flow of the river of water

unfaithful, is right upon us. By waiting and watching, God's people are to manifest their peculiar character, their separation from the world. By our watching position we are to show that we are truly strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. The difference between those who love the world and those who love Christ is so plain as to be unmistakable. While worldlings are all earnestness and ambition to secure earthly treasure, God's people are not conformed to the world, but show by their earnest, watching, waiting position that they are transformed; that their home is not in this world, but that they are seeking a better country, even a heavenly." *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 194.

Only as we repent, confess, and walk in humility before the Lord will He heal our spiritual blindness and purify the Advent movement.

"God takes men upon trial; He proves them on the right hand and on the left, and thus they are educated, trained, disciplined. Jesus, our Redeemer, man's representative and head, endured this testing process. He suffered more than we can be called upon to suffer. He bore our infirmities and was in all points tempted as we are. He did not suffer thus on His own account, but because of our sins; and now, relying on the merits of our Overcomer, we may become victors in His name.

"God's work of refining and purifying must go on until His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory. He will then accept their efforts; they will not move rashly, from impulse; they will not rush on and imperil the Lord's cause, being slaves to temptations and passions and followers of their own carnal minds set on fire by Satan. Oh, how fearfully is the cause of God marred by man's perverse will and unsubdued temper! How much suffering he brings upon himself by following his own headstrong passions! God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing

the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves." *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 86.

Will the Advent movement fail another test as did Israel at Kadesh? The Seventh-day Adventist Church has again arrived at their Kadesh. Our long wandering in the wilderness of this sinful world is about over. The faithful and loyal Seventh-day Adventists can now see the hills of the Promised Land. The evidence in the world and in the church is overwhelming. We are almost home!

by sea. The great I AM is speaking to those who make void His law. When God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, who will then be able to stand? Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few – this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of

Again God is offering the leaders, pastors, and laity of the church the opportunity to prepare for and to receive the latter rain. Who will respond?

Let us remember, only the faithful in Israel could enter Canaan, and only the faithful, loyal, and obedient Seventh-day Adventists will enter the heavenly Canaan.

The Latter Rain

The experience God offered the church in the Laodicean message – righteousness by faith – in 1888 was the opportunity to receive the latter rain. See *Testimonies to Ministers*, 89-104; *Selected Messages*, book 1, 234-235, 363; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 985.

Instead of entering the heavenly Promised Land soon after 1888, we have been wandering in the wilderness. Again God is offering the leaders, pastors, and laity of the church the opportunity to prepare for and to receive the latter rain. Who will respond? Jesus said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:14.

"Already the judgments of God are abroad in the land, as seen in storms, in floods, in tempests, in earthquakes, in peril by land and

others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. The nation will be on the side of the great rebel leader.

"The test will surely come. Thirty-six years ago I was shown that what is now transpiring would take place, that the observance of an institution of the papacy would be enforced upon the people by a Sunday law, while the sanctified rest day of Jehovah would be trampled underfoot. . . . Now is the time when we should closely connect with God, that we may be hid when the fierceness of His wrath is poured upon the sons of men. We have wandered away from the old landmarks. Let us return. If the Lord be God, serve Him; if Baal, serve him. Which side will you be on?" *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 136-137; see also *ibid.*, 77-83.

God has offered us another call after our long delay in the wilderness of the world. Will we respond? The latter rain is coming soon. Let us prepare now to meet our loving, patient Redeemer, Jesus Christ! ❀

The Omega of Apostasy

Robert Pierson

During the first decade of this [twentieth] century, the Seventh-day Adventist Church experienced the Kellogg apostasy. It was described by Ellen White as “the alpha of deadly heresies.” *Selected Messages*, book 1, 200. Assessing not only the damage wrought by this subtle insurrection, but also an even more devastating one yet to come, the servant

study the subtle plans of the apostate “angel of light” as he seeks to thwart the triumph of the Advent movement. Get out your Bibles and the Spirit of Prophecy (especially *Selected Messages*, book 1, 193–200). On your knees consider these startling facts faithfully chronicled by the Lord’s servant. By following the warnings of the Spirit of Prophecy the church was

By following the warnings of the Spirit of Prophecy the church was saved some seven decades ago. Following the same inspired counsel may well save the church again before the work is finished.

of the Lord wrote: “Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature.” *Ibid.*, 197.

In the August [1977] issue of *The Ministry* we restated some of the identifying marks of the alpha with its “deadly heresies.” It perhaps was somewhat of a prototype of what we may expect will threaten the unity of the church again in the not-too-distant future. It would be well for every Seventh-day Adventist leader to prayerfully

saved some seven decades ago. Following the same inspired counsel may well save the church again before the work is finished.

Note well what Ellen White warns could mark the work of the omega:

1. “The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded.” *Ibid.*, 204.

2. “The truth will be criticized, scorned, and derided.” *Ibid.*, 201.

3. It will “make of no effect the truth of heavenly origin.” *Ibid.*, 204.

4. “Our religion would be changed.” *Ibid.*

5. “The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God Who created it.” *Ibid.*, 205.

6. “The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years [1850–1900] would be accounted as error.” *Ibid.*, 204.

7. There would be a “supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith.” *Ibid.*

8. “A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced.” *Ibid.*

9. The new philosophy would “rob the people of God of their past experience, giving them instead a false science.” *Ibid.*

10. It would seek to weaken the preaching of the Second Advent by teaching “that the scenes just before us are not of sufficient importance to be given special attention.” *Ibid.*

11. “Books of a new order would be written.” *Ibid.*

12. “A new organization would be established.” *Ibid.*

13. “Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement.” *Ibid.*, 205.

Now go back over these thirteen points. Study them carefully and prayerfully. You may have to meet them sooner than you expect. The seeds of such apostasy are in the churches of Christendom all around us. Before Jesus returns, the Seventh-day Adventist Church may well be confronted with a crisis that will exceed in magnitude the Kellogg alpha apostasy. It “will be of a most startling nature.”

Knowing what is ahead for the people of God should keep us as leaders on our knees and alert for every subtle move of the evil one. This is God’s church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, but God’s leaders must be eternally vigilant. ❖

Originally published in *The Ministry*, October 1977.



Evangelism and the Holy Spirit

John Korponay

By the time Jesus gave the disciples the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20, they all believed and understood the prophecies relating to Jesus, His ministry, and His being the Lamb of God to take away our sin. We can imagine that they were eager to go and share the good news (the gospel) with everyone.

Jesus gave the eager disciples direction, followed by a mild caution: they were to wait for "power from on high." Luke 24:49. "The Saviour knew that no argument, however logical, would melt hard hearts or break through the

crust of worldliness and selfishness. He knew that His disciples must receive the heavenly endowment; that the gospel would be effective only as it was proclaimed by hearts made warm and lips made eloquent by a living knowledge of Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The work committed to the disciples would require great efficiency; for the tide of evil ran deep and strong against them." *Acts of the Apostles*, 31.

When the power of the Holy Spirit came, they preached so that He could convict the listeners' hearts; and success followed

because they cooperated with the Spirit. "In Jerusalem were many who secretly believed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, and many who had been deceived by priests and rulers. To these the gospel must be proclaimed. *They were to be called to repentance.* The wonderful truth that through Christ alone could remission of sins be obtained, was to be made plain. And it was while all Jerusalem was stirred by the thrilling events of the past few weeks, that the preaching of the disciples would make the deepest impression." *Ibid.*, 31-32.

Normally the Spirit speaks to all through the conscience and other avenues such as the Bible or nature. See Romans 2:15. However, when someone is unwilling to listen through these avenues, the Spirit does not abandon the sinner right away. He continues to try to warn him of his condition some other way, often using words from somebody they cannot claim not to hear. Thus, God sent prophets so that people could not claim ignorance and therefore place the blame upon God, saying they were not warned about coming events.

The First Step

According to Jesus, the first work of the Holy Spirit is to convict of sin: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8.

"The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. 'Sin is the transgression of the law.' 1 John 3:4. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' Romans 3:20." *The Great Controversy*, 467.

Why is it necessary to follow this order?—The answer is really simple: because sin is what causes

tion without the aid of a human preacher. However, the case of many people is different—as with the woman at the well. She thought she was all right, as good as any others she saw in her "church;" but she needed conviction of sin. Jesus had to point out the specific sins in her life so that she could see her true condition—*sinful*. She then knew what she must do to accept and live Christ's *righteousness*, in order to be ready for the *judgment*.

According to Paul, it is through the law that we become aware of the sinfulness of sin, hence our lost condition. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Romans 7:7. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Verse 12. Also in Galatians 3:24, he says that the law is to "bring us unto Christ." See above reference, margin NKJV. And after the sinner is convicted of his *sin*, he truly desires the salvation that God offers, and has the initial incentive to walk in the Spirit, doing *righteousness*, making him ready for the *judgment*. See Romans 7:24–25; 8:1.

So, we see that God's way to get the attention of sinners is by helping them to see the sinfulness of their ways and their condemnation in the judgment; then He offers His love, mercy, and grace to all who will repent. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." 2 Corinthians 7:10.

For another example in this way of evangelizing, read the story of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, which was blessed with great success, in Acts 2:22–40.

Skipping the First Step

However, Satan has thwarted this process in a very cunning way. To short circuit or bypass the steps the Holy Spirit uses to get people's attention, he offers another way, a counterfeit of the real.

The voice of the Spirit, who is trying to bring conviction to the hearer, is quieted by a soothing message that is true, but which is given at a wrong time.

Two examples from the gospel of this way of working by God to save sinners are: 1. Jesus opening up to Nicodemus the real need of his life; and 2. Jesus exposing the rich young ruler's well-concealed sin of the heart. We have also been given this counsel:

"And because the Spirit is to come, not to praise men or to build up their erroneous theories, but to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, many turn away from it. They are not willing to be deprived of the garments of their own self-righteousness. They are not willing to exchange their own righteousness, which is unrighteousness, for the righteousness of Christ, which is pure, unadulterated truth. The Holy Spirit flatters no man, neither does it work according to the devising of any man. Finite, sinful men are not to work the Holy Spirit. When it shall come as a reprover, through any human agent whom God shall choose, it is man's place to hear and obey its voice." *Testimonies to Ministers*, 65.

the separation between God and us. The worst part of the separation is that we do not even recognize a breach being there! "The soul must first be convicted of sin, before the sinner will feel a desire to come to Christ." *Review and Herald*, March 8, 1881.

"Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. . . .

"When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin." *Steps to Christ*, 37–38, 40.

"If men would only give up their spirit of resistance to the Holy Spirit—the spirit which has long been leavening their religious experience—God's Spirit would address itself to their hearts. *It would convince of sin*. What a work!" *Testimonies to Ministers*, 393.

Sometimes the Spirit is able to convict a person of his lost condi-

In contrast to the biblical way of witnessing, some are telling us we should get attention another way — by only presenting how much God loves us and that He died for us just as we are. Now, these are very wonderful truths, but human nature being how it is, when we do not have a changed heart, we hear this and think, “I really should try to be better, but I can’t; but Jesus loves me as I am anyway, so all I have to do is believe, which I do, so I am ready for Jesus to come.” You hear this way of preaching, more or less, by the other denominations, and sadly, even in our own Seventh-day Adventist churches.

This is how the voice of the Spirit, who is trying to bring conviction to the hearer, is quieted by a soothing message that is true, but which is given at a wrong time. That which should have been a certain, trumpet-sound of warning, Satan managed to turn into a “peace and safety” message, settling people into a deadly, carnal security when destruction is about to come upon them. “Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God’s justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight. The people are taught to regard the Decalogue as a dead letter. Pleasing, bewitching fables captivate the senses and lead men to reject the

Bible as the foundation of their faith. Christ is as verily denied as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned.” *The Great Controversy*, 558.

Suppose you are sick and need a doctor to diagnose your problem, but you are told to see a lawyer first. Although this advice could be very sincere and good, if followed, by the time you get to a doctor you might be dead if the condition needed immediate attention. This is an example of good counsel given at the wrong time, and in this same way the false prophets of the churches of Babylon have been advising people for a long time.

“The office of the Holy Spirit is distinctly specified in the words of Christ: ‘When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.’ John 16:8. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts of sin. *If the sinner responds to the quickening influence of the Spirit, he will be brought to repentance and aroused to the importance of obeying the divine requirements. . . .*

Having brought conviction of sin, and presented before the mind the standard of righteousness, the Holy Spirit withdraws the affections from the things of this earth and fills the soul with a desire for holiness. ‘He will guide you into all truth’ (verse 13), the Saviour declared. If men are willing to be molded, there will be brought about a sanctification of the whole

being. The Spirit will take the things of God and stamp them on the soul. By His power the way of life will be made so plain that none need err therein.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 52–53.

It is obvious by the state of Christianity today what the fruits of such deceptive “soul winning” bring. This is why Jesus warned us that “if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Matthew 24:24.

It is very disheartening that we as Seventh-day Adventists, who have been called to preach the third angel’s message — to warn people of impending doom, and to come out of Babylon — have adopted the same methods and theology of evangelism and preaching. The fruits of this methodology and way of thinking are also very apparent in our church’s inability to stand as a peculiar people, as we once were.

The reason I write this is to encourage you not to be afraid to call sin by its right name, then offer the salvation Jesus has to experience the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome, making us ready for judgment. And in this way, you can cooperate with the Holy Spirit to give the third angels’ message; and as it swells into a loud cry, you will be prepared and ready to give the final call out of Babylon.

May God help us to do this for our lost world and our wayward church. ✠



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How to Meet Discouragement

Ellen G. White

“**O**ur light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. If our minds are fixed upon the things that are eternal, and not on the things of earth, we shall grasp the hand of infinite power, and what can make us sad? What can make us doubt? What can separate our souls from the Lord? Paul says, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39.

I am thankful that we need not be left a prey to Satan’s power. We need not be left to be driven this way and that. We need not be blinded by the delusions of Satan, but may have our eyes anointed so

that we may see things as they really are. The children of God should not permit Satan to place himself between them and their God. If you permit him to do this, he will tell you that your troubles are the most grievous, the sorest troubles that any mortal ever bore. He will place his magnifying glasses before your eyes, and present everything to you in an exaggerated form to overwhelm you with discouragement.

You should have your eyes anointed with the heavenly eye-salve. You should take the Word of God as the man of your counsel, and humble your doubting soul before God, and with contrition of heart say, “Here I lay my burden down. I cannot bear it. It is too heavy for me. I lay it down at the feet of my compassionate Redeemer.”

We must not think that we shall escape trials; for the apostle says, “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the

appearing of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:7. Gold is tried in the fire, that it may be purified from dross; but faith that is purified by trial, is more precious than refined gold. Then let us look upon trials in a reasonable way. Let us not come through them with murmuring and discontent. Let us not make mistakes in getting out of them. In times of trial we must cling to God and His promises.

Some have said to me, “Do you not get discouraged at times when you are under trial?” And I have answered, “Yes, if by discouragement you mean sad or cast down.” “Didn’t you talk to anyone of your feelings?” “No; there is a time for silence, a time to keep the tongue as with a bridle, and I was determined to utter no word of doubt or darkness, to bring no shade of gloom upon those with whom I was associated. I have said to myself, I will bear the Refiner’s fire; I shall not be consumed. When I speak, it shall be of light; it shall be of faith and hope in God; it shall be of righteousness, of goodness, of the love of Christ my Saviour; it

shall be to direct the minds of others toward heaven and heavenly things, to Christ's work in heaven for us, and our work upon earth for Him."

Christ is cleansing the temple in heaven from the sins of the people, and we must work in harmony with Him upon the earth, cleansing the soul temple from its moral defilement. If we will work thus, we shall find that the sweet influence of God's Spirit will be wrought into our life. Grace and peace and strength will take the place of strife and weakness, and instead of talking of discouragement and gloom, we shall speak of God's light and love and joy. We shall be looking at the things that are not seen, which are not temporal, but eternal. When we engage in this work, the angels of God will draw near to communicate divine power, and combine heavenly strength with human weakness. Then we shall grow into the image of our Lord.

We shall be learning how to believe in Him, learning how to commit our souls to Him, as unto a faithful Creator. The apostle says, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:13. And as a result, our mental and spiritual powers increase. As we learn of Christ, we shall understand how to keep our spiritual strength, we shall feed on the Word of God, and we shall have the blessed experience described by the apostle in these words: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1:8.

The children of God may rejoice in all things and at all times. When troubles and difficulties come, believing in the wise providences of God, you may rejoice. You need not wait for a happy flight of feeling, but by faith you may lay hold of the promises, and lift up a hymn of thanksgiving to God. When Satan tempts you, breathe not a word of doubt or darkness. You may have your choice as to

who shall rule your heart and control your mind. If you choose to open the door to the suggestions of the evil one, your mind will be filled with distrust and rebellious questioning.

You may talk out your feelings, but every doubt you utter is a seed that will germinate and bear fruit in another's life, and it will be impossible to counteract the influence of your words. You may be able to recover from your season of temptation, and from the snare of Satan, but others that have been swayed by your influence may not be able to escape from the unbelief you have suggested. How important it is that we speak to those around us only those things which will give spiritual strength and

and if our mental powers are dedicated to God, our talents will improve, and we shall have more and more ability to render to the Master. We shall become channels of light to others.

We can have a close connection with God and with our Saviour; and when we are connected with God, we shall be all light in the Lord, for in Him is no darkness at all. But if we connect with Satan, we shall have only darkness, for He is the ruler of the darkness of this world. We shall be filled with murmuring and complaining and evil surmising. You will have only the spirit of accusation against your brethren, and your soul will be separated from the Source of your strength.

You may talk out your feelings, but every doubt you utter is a seed that will germinate and bear fruit in another's life, and it will be impossible to counteract the influence of your words.

enlightenment! Let us seek to lift souls to Jesus, whom having not seen we may love, and be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Memory's hall should be hung with sacred pictures, with views of Jesus, with lessons of His truth, with revealings of His matchless charms. If memory's hall were thus furnished, we would not look upon our lot as intolerable. We would not talk of the faults of others. Our souls would be full of Jesus and His love. We would not desire to dictate to the Lord the way that He should lead. We would love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves.

When the joy of the Lord is in the soul, you will not be able to repress it; you will want to tell others of the treasure you have found; you will speak of Jesus and His matchless charms. We should devote all to Him. Our minds should be educated to dwell upon those things that will glorify God;

We should be thankful that it is not too late in the day to make wrongs right. We still have the privilege of coming to the Source of light and power. We still may grow up unto the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. But in order to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, you must meditate upon His love, you must talk of His power and extol His grace.

While I was in England, one day there was a great parade in the streets. It was the Queen's Jubilee. Everyone was talking about it. The shop windows were filled with her pictures, and all were extolling the Queen of England.

Could we have taken from the shop windows the pictures of the queen, and the signs of her glory, and placed instead expressions of the glory and majesty of Jesus, would not the people have regarded us as religious fanatics?

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John Korponay

Another Triumph for John Paul II—12 Million Cheer Pope in Mexico City

News Item: “I saw the Pope with an amazing inner strength—an invincible willpower—but at the same time he was very serene and peaceful, in a manner which only someone close to God can be,” [David] Margáin said. “After the Pope’s testimony, we cannot be afraid of the things life throws at us. We have to keep going, fight till our last breath to fulfill God’s plan.” . . .

“I felt as if I could breathe the spirituality in the air,” he [Gerardo González Cantú] added. “There were people who stood on their knees for the whole ceremony. The group my wife and I were with was praying the rosary. I’m absolutely sure Our Lady of Guadalupe was right there with us.” . . .

“Amid the millions of faithful trying to be near the Holy Father, cheering and applauding for him, there was a sense of spirituality and hope, a sensation of peaceful energy to strengthen Mexico’s faith.” *National Catholic Register*, August 11–17, 2002.

End-Time Perspective: “And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” Revelation 13:4. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Verse 8.

“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and *they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life* from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” Revelation 17:8.

What Wages and Benefits Satan’s Kingdom Offers

News Item: “Fifty-five-year-old Sandy Cox of Hernando, Miss., stands silently with her young nieces and nephews over the grave adorned with plastic roses, a ‘Love Me Tender’ votive candle and a headstone that reads ELVIS AARON PRESLEY. Cox figures she’s made the pilgrimage to Graceland ‘at least 200 times.’ . . .

“Even as 70,000 fans descend on Memphis, Tenn., this week for the 25th anniversary of Elvis’s death Aug. 16, the corporate types who view the late King as a \$35 million annuity can’t get away from a haunting reality: Presley’s biggest admirers now qualify for Graceland’s senior discount.” *Newsweek*, August 19, 2002.

End-Time Perspective: These days, more than ever it seems, Satan comes as an angel of light. He claims to be a good paymaster—that those who serve in his cause will receive fame, popularity, power, money, looks, and talent. Elvis is the best example of this in our lifetime. He had all the above in one package. He is one of the first notable stars who “had it all.” We must keep in mind what the scripture says in Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin is death.”

At the age of about 42, he reportedly died of a drug overdose—an illustration of the deceptive glitter Satan puts on his kingdom to allure us. Let us watch, anoint our eyes with eyesalve, and be painfully honest with ourselves, lest, not seeing through the glitter and money, we fall for his

deceptions and receive his final wages, *death*.

Feminism’s Victims

News Item: “Feminism has created a generation of lonely, childless women. So argues Australian TV reporter Virginia Haussegger in the Australian newspaper *The Age*. She contends that feminist role models steered her down the wrong path: ‘The point is that while encouraging women in the ‘70s and ‘80s to reach for the sky, none of our purple-clad, feminist mothers thought to tell us the truth about the biological clock.’

“By putting career above everything else, Ms. Haussegger says women gave up more than they realize. ‘We are the ones, now in our late 30s and early 40s, who are suddenly sitting before a sheepish doctor listening to the words: ‘Well, I’m sorry, but you may have left your run too late. Women at your age find it very difficult to get pregnant naturally.’ ” *World*, August 10, 2002.

End-Time Perspective: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Romans 1:21. Contrary to the world’s philosophy of learning by *trial and error*, in the Christian walk we learn by *trusting and obeying*. One of the great blessings in trusting and obeying is that we are saved from looking back with sorrow and disappointment on how it could have been. It keeps us from the kinds of mistakes that many times cannot be reversed. By consistently trusting and obeying, we can, by the Lord’s grace, see what sorrow and trouble we were able to avoid.

When worldly success, honor, and respect are held up as incentives to depart from God’s statutes and principles, you can know for certain that it is not the way the Lord would have you

proceed in your life. Remember Jesus' temptations in the wilderness!

On the Broad Road

News Item: "There's no question that the seventh day is *holy time*. But when you're hungering for something more, there's nothing wrong with worshiping on Sunday too. Just don't give up one for the other. Plus, it's a great way to witness to others about the Bible truth you've found." *Adventist Review*, May 2002.

End-Time Perspective: Has it really come to this? This advice was given by Kay Kuzma to

someone who was not getting the lift they were looking for in the Adventist Church they attend. Here is the advice given to us by the servant of the Lord:

"I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has

delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness." *Early Writings*, 124. ❄

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They would have thought that we were carrying religion too far, and that we did not know what we were about. But did not our Master lay aside His royal robes, His crown of glory? Did He not clothe His divinity with humanity, and come to our world to die man's sacrifice? Why should we not talk about it? Why should we not dwell on His matchless love? Oh, that our tongues might lose their paralysis, that we might speak forth His praise! Oh, that the spiritual torpor¹ which has come upon the souls of men, might be removed, that we might discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

We are to be the representatives of our Lord upon earth. Is it not time to change the order of things? You who have lived only for self, will you not make haste to connect with Christ, the light of the world? He can communicate heaven's light through you to those who sit in darkness. You that have claimed to know the Lord, you who profess to have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, reveal it to those around you. Show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

If men can make so much ado over the Queen's Jubilee, if they can manifest so much enthusiasm over a finite being, can we not speak to the glory of the Prince of Life, who is soon to come in

majesty to take His weary, worn followers to Himself; to unlock the prison bars of death, and set the captives free; to give His loved ones who sleep, a glorious immortality?

Why cannot Christ be introduced into our conversation? We are almost home. Let us speak courage to the weary soldiers of the cross. Let us cheer the toiling travelers. Let us tell the pilgrims and strangers of earth that we shall soon reach a better country, even a heavenly. ❄

Note:

¹ Inactivity; lethargy; apathy

Review and Herald, February 11, 1890.



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Feeding Sheep *or* Amusing Goats

Charles H. Spurgeon

An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most short-sighted can hardly fail to notice it. During the past few years it has developed at an abnormal rate, even for the evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has

why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye . . ." into all the world and speak the gospel to every creature. See Mark 16:15. That is clear enough. So it would have been if he had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel." No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to

the salt" (Matthew 5:13), not the sugar candy—something the world will spit out, not swallow. Short and sharp was the utterance: "Let the dead bury their dead." Matthew 8:22. He was in awful earnestness!

Had Christ introduced more of the bright and pleasant elements into His mission, He would have been more popular when He and His disciples went back, because of the searching nature of His teaching. I do not hear Him say, "Run after those people, Peter, and tell them we will have a new kind of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick, Peter; we must get the people somehow!"

Jesus pitied sinners, sighed and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them. In vain will the epistles be searched to find any trace of the gospel of amusement. Their message is, "Come out, keep out, keep clean out!" Anything approaching fooling is conspicuous of its absence. They had boundless confidence in the gospel and employed no other weapon. After Peter and John were locked up for

"Ye are the salt," not the sugar candy—something the world will spit out, not swallow.

seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of her mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them. From speaking out as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church. If it is a Christian work,

occur to Him. Then again "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers . . . for the work of the ministry." Ephesians 4:11. Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused? The concert has no [place in the] honor roll [listed above].

Again, providing amusements is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all His apostles. What was the attitude of the church to the world? "Ye are

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Consulting With God

Tom Waters

Most likely any professing Christian would heartily agree that we need to consult with God a lot. We say that we love God and want to do His will, yet, one of the greatest hindrances to our real walk with God is our tendency to leave Him out of our decisions in real, daily life. Too often when making decisions we use all the normal resources we can find; we make phone calls, weigh circumstances, consider the pros and cons; then, if we are still having trouble deciding, we ask God.

Do not get me wrong. God gave us our mental capacity to think and reason. But the problem is, we too often leave God out of the process too long—or sometimes completely. Our heavenly Father wants an ongoing, unbroken consultation with us through the day. Our “devotions” or “quiet time” should be the special beginning of an all-day commitment, not just something we do as part of a routine.

One day I was going through the process of making a decision regarding a special arrangement for my daughter Emily. Our family was going to be conducting meetings in California, and Emily had been invited to spend a few days with a pastor and his family where we had previously conducted a seminar. She was excited about the

opportunity to help out with their children and at the same time receive some personal Spanish tutorage from the pastor’s wife.

The problem was getting Emily from the location where our meetings were to be held to the pastor’s home. We had narrowed the choices down to either having her take the Greyhound bus or having the pastor make a long, tedious drive in California traffic to pick up Emily, only to turn around and repeat the drive. I knew the pastor was very busy and the bus would save time as well as the drive. However, I did not really like the thought of my daughter riding the bus either. So, I was weighing these options, pondering the pros and cons, and trying to come up with a reasonable solution.

While I was going through this typical human thought process, the Lord prompted me with, “Why don’t you ask Me?” Why had I not thought of that earlier? That was a great idea! So, I got up from my desk, walked into my prayer closet, and began to talk with the Lord about the situation. The Lord wants us to consult with Him about big things and little things. He wants us to discuss our real-life perplexities and decisions with Him. So I asked, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” He impressed me, “Do not have her take the bus.” I said,

“Thank you, Lord.” I had my answer and could now make the arrangements with the pastor with the assurance of the clear counsel of my heavenly Father.

The Danger of Self-Reliance

Our counseling with God does not mean that we stop the process of thinking things through and weighing decisions. Neither does it mean that we will always, immediately get a clear answer to every question that we may pose to the Lord. But notice that the Lord prompted me to come to Him and consult with Him. The important point is that God wants to participate in our decision-making process. He wants to help us avoid needless, and in some cases, costly mistakes in our decisions.

Even God’s great men, like Joshua, struggled in the same way we do, sometimes consulting God and other times falling into self-reliance. When there were humanly impossible problems, like crossing the Jordan and overthrowing Jericho, Joshua was in steady consultation with God. The result was a complete accomplishment of the will of God for His people. But when it came to taking a little city like Ai, or making a league with the Gibeonites, who had cunningly disguised themselves to look like distant travelers, Joshua felt he could handle these situations

without consulting with God. The results were the unnecessary loss of life and a permanent treaty with another nation that was not in harmony with God's purpose.

Could things have been different? – Yes! However, self-confidence, a lack of dependence upon God, along with forgetting His promise that they would inherit the land, led Joshua to lay his plans without counsel from God.

personal intimacy with God, therefore, it is more of a mechanical, religious transaction to “say my prayers.”

However, what does the omnipotent God, our heavenly Father, say to us? – “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Isaiah 1:18.

us is accepted as our will, we are letting this mind be in us that was also in Christ Jesus. See Philippians 2:5. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he said, “Work out your own salvation. . . . For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Verses 12–13.

When we are truly consulting with God, allowing His will to become our will, His power to become our power, then it is God working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. So, in reality, working out our salvation is our choosing to cooperate with God as He guides and transforms us.

When Joshua commanded the sun to stand still in the heavens, he was operating in the mind of Christ. It was God working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Joshua boldly commanded the sun to do something that it was impossible for a man to make it do. But the Bible says, “And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man.” Joshua 10:14. That is powerful; it is inspiring! But friends, the power in the man was the power of God. It was God – with whom Joshua had consulted before he went to battle, and was continuing to stay in communion with during the battle – that inspired the bold request.

That same powerful, loving God wants to consult with you and me. He wants to guide us continually.

We may never be inspired to ask the sun to stand still; however, I know that the other day I was definitely directed to have my mouth stand still. Has God consulted with you about your mouth? You see, I had asked God to put a watch upon my lips – to really be my God for the day. I still marvel at how His Spirit is able to flash those kinds of messages through the avenue of the mind.

I was having quite a lively, face-to-face conversation with someone. We were not arguing, we were not angry; however, this individual had some strong opinions that I

Do we believe that the God who opened the Jordan and toppled the walls of Jericho has the solutions to our present questions, perplexities, or crises?

While it can be an encouragement to us that even the great men and women of Bible history struggled with the same weaknesses that we have and then became victorious, let us be sure we are really gleaning for ourselves the practical lessons that they teach.

Often, as we look back on poorly-made decisions, we can recognize that God was trying to get through to us in some way. If decisions are made based upon circumstances, the way things appear, or in haste, without consulting God, we are liable to create needless trials and difficulties for ourselves and others.

This is why Joshua ended up getting into the league – or peace agreement – with the Gibeonites. Their shoes were worn out, their bread was moldy, their wineskins were cracked; therefore, they must be telling the truth, right?

If Joshua had consulted with God, everything would have been revealed very quickly and simply.

Is God Really Interested in Me?

Some people do not consult with God because they do not really believe that they will get answers from Him. Some feel inadequate, unworthy, and discouraged. For many there is no

How far He reaches down to us – right to where we are! Even while our sins are as scarlet He offers to reason with us and transform us. Do we not have sufficient evidence that He loves us, and that we can put our trust in Him?

When we come to God to consult with Him we must believe that He is God. Oh, yes, we might say we believe that He is God. Yet, do we believe that this theoretically all-powerful God is really able to take care of each of us in our situations right now? Do we believe that the God who opened the Jordan and toppled the walls of Jericho has the solutions to our present questions, perplexities, or crises? We must believe that He is God, and that He will personally reward us if we diligently seek Him. See Hebrews 11:6.

Surrendered to God's Direction

When we consult with God we are really allowing Him to open our understanding and adjust our thinking and perspective. That is why the more we consult with God the more His will and His way make sense to us, and we become more willing to allow Him to work in us. When our wills are surrendered to His will, when His will for

could not entirely agree with. The perfect opportunity came for me to share my perspective – at least I thought it was the perfect opportunity – when the Lord clearly broke through my train of thought and said, “No, this is not the time.” Oh, but everything inside of me (I think that is spelled SELF) just wanted to say it, and I thought it needed to be said, and you know how that story usually ends. Yet, I knew that God was doing just what I had asked Him to do that morning, so I chose to maintain my connection with Him. I know that when by faith I accept His counsel I am always blessed in the yielding and confirmed in my reflection. The point here is not that we cannot ever share our perspective. Rather, are we really willing to let God have us, direct, and keep us? Are we really willing to obey when God says this is not the time?

Counseling With Our Best Friend

Friends, are you taking time to consult with God? Do you only consult with Him on the things that are obviously too big for you? Remember, Joshua thought Ai was such a little city, and that league he entered into with a heathen nation – their story just had to be true. God wants to have us consulting with Him about everything that has to do with our daily decisions, not because He is controlling and

dictatorial; rather, because He really longs to restore us and help us live more productive and fulfilling lives.

Our daughter Allison is nearly 20 years old; yet, she loves to consult with us on the decisions and transitions she is making in life. She highly regards our experience and respects our judgment. She is making important decisions, and, although she is very self-

dence upon God in our interactions with them.

I want to challenge you today to commit yourself to truly seek counsel from God in everything. Ask Him to call often to your heart and to remind you that He is calling because you have asked. Take the next 30 days, and start developing a new habit. Start consulting with God about your choices, and do not give up if you

God wants to have us consulting with Him . . . because He really longs to restore us and help us live more productive and fulfilling lives.

motivated and mature, thankfully she has not picked up the attitude of superior wisdom and resistance to parental guidance and instruction so prevalent among the youth today.

Parents, what a responsibility we have to be there for our young people, to provide them with support, godly counsel, and encouragement! We need to be careful that we ourselves do not harbor the self-sufficient, do-it-my-way attitude toward our need of counsel from our heavenly Father. If we want our children and youth to have confidence to come to us, they need to recognize our depen-

fail. As you read His Word, ask the Holy Spirit to bring the stories and principles into practical application to fit your daily needs. Today, make your response to God as you wish would be your child’s response to your loving instruction. Respond to Him just as you long for some friend or loved one that you have been praying for to respond to Him.

God is the Mighty Counselor. Let us choose to take His personal counsel for us today. We will be glad we did at the end of today – and we will be especially glad in the judgment day! ✨

continued from page 24...

preaching, the church had a prayer meeting, but they did not pray, “Lord, grant unto Thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation we may show these people how happy we are.” If they had ceased not for preaching Christ, they had not time for arranging entertainments. Scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. They “turned the world upside down.” Acts 17:6. That is the only difference! Lord, clear the church of all the rot and rubbish the devil

has imposed on her, and bring us back to apostolic methods.

Lastly, the mission of amusement fails to effect the end desired. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and scoffers, who thank God because the church met them halfway, speak and testify. Let the heavy-laden who found peace through the concert not keep silent! Let the drunkard to whom the dramatic entertainment had been God’s link in the chain of his conversation, stand up! There are none to answer.¹ The mission of amusement produces no converts. The need of the hour for today’s ministry is

believing scholarship joined with earnest spirituality, the one springing from the other as fruit from the root. The need is biblical doctrine, so understood and felt that it sets men on fire. ✨

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) was a Baptist preacher in England.

Notes:

¹ Today someone might stand up and claim that he can trace his conversion to a form of empty entertainment. However, just because one of Satan’s methods arrested us in our downward course does not mean that God places His stamp of approval upon that method. — EDITORS.

The Heavenly Friend



Ellen G. White

“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Psalm 16:8. “Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” Psalm 73:23–25. “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” Psalm 32:8.

We are living in an age of peril, when ungodliness is common. Even professed Christians do not believe their Bibles. The truth of the Word of God is too plain and pointed for them, and they say to their teachers, “Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the gate, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” Isaiah 30:10–11. They do not wish to retain the thoughts of God in their knowledge. We are now at the

ebb-tide of faith in the world. Antichristian ideas, customs, and practices prevail, and they are even construed to be Christian; but that which is of most value, that which God esteems most highly, is treated with contempt. Well may the God-fearing inquire, What shall the end of these things be? Love for Christ and love for one another is fast dying out of the hearts of men.

It is true that there are some steadfast souls like Abraham, David, and Daniel, who can say, “I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only one who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds staid upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might.

We may be assured that we need not go into the heavens to bring Jesus down to us, neither into the deep to bring Him up; for He is at our right hand, and His eye is ever upon us. We should ever seek to realize that the Lord is very near us, to be our Counselor and Guide. This is the only way in which we may have confidence toward God.

We need to educate and train the mind so that we shall have an intelligent faith and have an understanding friendship with Jesus. Unless we continually cherish friendship between God and our souls, we shall separate from Him, and walk apart from Him. We shall make friends of those around us, and place our trust in humanity, and our affections will be diverted from the true object of worship. We must not allow coldness to chill our love for our Redeemer. If we have fellowship with Him, we must ever set the Lord before us, and treat Him as an honored Friend, giving Him the first place in our affections. We should speak of His matchless

charms, and constantly cultivate the desire to have a better knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then His Spirit will have a controlling power upon life and character. But how often is the Lord neglected for the society of others, and for things of no value!

Jesus says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." John 7:37. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14. Never let amusements, or the companionship of others, come between you and Jesus, your best Friend. Set the Lord always before you. When natural inclination draws you in the direction of fulfilling some selfish desire, set the Lord before you as your Counselor, and ask, Will this please Jesus? Will this increase my love for my best Friend? Will this course grieve my dear Saviour? Will it separate me from His company? Will Jesus accompany me to the pleasure party, where all will be lightness and gaiety, where there will be nothing of a religious nature, nothing serious, no thought of the things of God? If Jesus sends me there as a missionary to warn some soul of his danger, then I am sure Jesus will not separate from me; but if I go simply to please myself, I cannot be sure of my Saviour's presence. If I choose to go where Jesus cannot enter, where He cannot make His abode, where the hearts of those present are saying, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," I choose another counselor than Jesus.

The great aim and purpose of this life is to form characters so that we shall be accounted worthy of eternal life. We shall act as rational beings, and make religion a practical matter. We need to keep our Saviour ever before us, and educate ourselves in such a way that our desires shall continually flow out toward Him, that we shall meditate upon His promises, and address Him in confiding faith. Before you engage in any important work, remember that Jesus is your

Counselor, and that it is your privilege to cast all your care upon Him; for He invites you to do so, and is at your right hand, that you shall not be moved. Each day be determined that you will keep nigh to God, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. Do not neglect and slight Jesus; for this you would not do to any of your cherished friends. Do not keep Jesus in the background and never mention His name, never call the attention of your friends to Him who is at your side to be your Counselor. Would not your

nication open between Christ and your soul. Seek every opportunity to be present where prayer is wont to be made, rather than to go to places where the tendency is of a character to make you forget God. We want Bible religion, practical godliness, free from all pretension and sophistry. Unless you maintain Bible religion, you will find yourself separated from Jesus Christ. By unbelief and carelessness, you break up your tender fellowship with Jesus. Why trifle so much with your heavenly Friend? Why feel at liberty to serve God at will, and to

Do not neglect and slight Jesus; for this you would not do to any of your cherished friends.

friends look upon you as disrespectful were they at your side, and you never spoke to them or of them? "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts." Malachi 1:6.

Many complain that Jesus seems a long way off. Who has placed Him a long way off? Has it not been your own course of action that has separated you from Jesus? He has not forsaken you, but you have forsaken Him for other lovers. But the Lord says, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God." Jeremiah 3:22. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:6-7.

Pray in faith, and trust your Saviour. Make every effort necessary to keep the channel of commu-

neglect His worship at pleasure? It is when you wander from His side, and are charmed with the voice of the seducer, and fasten your affections upon some trifling thing, that you are in danger of losing your peace and trust and confidence in God. Then it is that you seem to have lost your wisdom as to how to find Jesus. Then it is that Satan presents to you the thought that Jesus has forsaken you; but is it not that you have forsaken Jesus? Satan will seek still more to alienate your mind from your best Friend by his lying devices; for he wants you to deny Christ.

You have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and have hewed you out broken cisterns that can hold no water. We dare not let His name languish on our lips, and His love and memory die out of our hearts. "Well," says the cold, formal professor, "this is making Christ too much like a human being;" but the Word of God warrants us to have these very ideas. It is the want of these practical, definite views of Christ, that hinders so many from having a genuine experience in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ. This is the reason that many are fearing and doubting and mourning. Their ideas of Christ and the plan of salvation are vague, dreary, and confused. If they had, like David, set the Lord ever before them, keeping Him at their right hand that they should not be moved, their feet would be upon solid rock. Behold Jesus crucified for you. Behold Him grieved with your sins; and when you pray, repent, and earnestly desire to see Him as your sin-pardoning Redeemer, ready to bless you, and to hear your acknowledgment of Him. Keep close to His side; for you need His presence with you.

against him. We need the Captain of our salvation continually by our side. There is, and will continue to be, agitation all around us; for the kingdoms of the world will not be at rest. Never was there a time when the temptation to deny Christ in spirit and in deportment, was stronger, and this temptation will increase in power as we near the end. Strong and overpowering temptations will come upon men. False doctrines and fables will be presented as Bible truth, for men's acceptance; and if it were possible, they will deceive the very elect. But is it a time for our love to grow cold, when iniquity abounds? Is

who live by faith in this probationary life, will be able to stand in the day of test, when everything that can be shaken will be shaken; but they shall dwell in safety and be unmoved. The children of God must place themselves trustingly and quietly in the hands of God, and commit the keeping of their souls unto Him as unto a faithful Creator. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. In the days of Noah, the wickedness of men reached unto heaven, and God sent Noah with a warning that He would destroy the world with a flood of water; but they had so long given themselves up to selfish and demoralizing practices, glorifying themselves, that they had put God and His claims and His honor out of sight and mind. They lived without God and without hope in the world. They mocked at Noah's message, but their unbelief did not prevent him from proclaiming God's words to them. They cared for none of these things; but their indifference and unbelief did not hinder the event that had been foretold. The rain descended in floods, and swept the earth clean of their moral pollution. "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:30. ✠

*Is it a time for our love to grow cold, when iniquity abounds?
Is this a time to be at ease? Is this the time to separate from
God, our Counselor?*

Wickedness prevails on every hand; for Satan has come down having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. He is a persevering, diligent, untiring worker, and if ever there was a time when men needed the presence of Christ at their right hand, it is now, so that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard

this a time to be at ease? Is this the time to separate from God, our Counselor?

The end of all things is at hand. The day of God is hastening on apace. The world is full of crime and anguish and sorrow. There are calamities by land and by sea. Storm and tempest make it unsafe for us to be separated from God for one single moment. Only those

The Youth's Instructor, July 19, 1894.



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JV, New York

I've read your book *Final Conflict* and thought it was very informative.

My two sons are interested also, so I wonder if you could send me two more for them to read, one is a member of an evangelical church so someone there might be interested.

WL, Kentucky

Just wanted to thank you for the King James Bible you sent. It and the book are very much appreciated, and I will treasure it always. I also wanted you to know that I thoroughly enjoy the Bible study and hope there will be others to follow.

KP, Washington

I would like to thank you for letting God use you to speak the truth. When my mother and I saw the ad in our local newspaper, we were ecstatic! We thought, "Finally, someone is telling the truth!" So, I would just like to pray that God would keep on using you to expose the truth and to let him and His Son be seen and known throughout the world. I would love if you would send me the next lessons. If there is anything else you would like for me to do, whether it be to pray, or something else, please let me know and I will try my best to do it.

MK, Missouri

I am writing to say thank you for continuing to send the Bible studies and also for praying for me. I have been Seventh-day Adventist since December 25, 2001. In hearing about the end-times, I have come to know the Lord very quickly. I have a few prayer requests: for my legal work to have a positive outcome, that the Lord may be willing for me to go home to be with my four and a half year old son and wife; also for my walk with the Lord to become very strong in the Lord and in heavenly things; and for my family's salvation—my mom is a Christian, but the rest of my family just know about Jesus, I am the only one that is a Seventh-day Adventist.

FJ, Idaho

Someone sent me a copy of your magazine. I enjoyed it so much. I'm sending you the money for a year's subscription. Use the extra to help someone else with theirs.

CF, Florida

You are in my prayers. I thank God for the years of protection over dear Ron Spear and the ministry. *Our Firm Foundation* becomes more precious all the time. It is so needed to counter the growing apostasy.

Don't have enough flowers to dig and sell to help with God's work. They must multiply again, so I can divide.

KH, Georgia

I have been receiving *Our Firm Foundation* for several years now and love it. I trust in what you are doing so much that I am sending you double my tithe. I will be sending it every quarter. Keep up God's work. I will be praying for you.

BK, Canada

From Overseas

We all thank you so much indeed for your kind sending and generous supports. These magazines and booklets are very, very useful and effective in our ministries. We send some copies to China side, Burma side, Laos side, India side and Thailand side.

I was in Thailand for two weeks and distributed some magazines and booklets there. When I arrived back home from Thailand I had fever with malaria for nearly three weeks and could not eat anything for two weeks. I am better now and can write this letter to you. It is so rainy every day here now. After the rainy season, I will tour to China border for gospel evangelism and literature distribution.

This year I have a great responsibility to sponsor four poor students who are now attending at the Adventist High School. I always need your special prayers that God will provide me some funds for my new vast mission fields.

LB, Kachinland

I'm thankful for good articles in *Our Firm Foundation* magazines. When I opened and read, I was blessed very much. Words fail me to express my heartfelt appreciation.

I'm a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many of us here are in a great crisis. Even though the crisis is a worldwide phenomenon, it is worst in Ethiopia. We have been canceled from the church's records and chased by unfaithful leaders and members because of the straight testimony against their cherished sin. We have scattered here and there as prey—flock which have not a shepherd. But now we are attempting to organize these scattered members and to proclaim the truth for this time. We have great zeal; however, we know not how to advance this ministry. We do not have Spirit of Prophecy references: *Desire of Ages, Great Controversy, Steps to Christ*, large volumes of Spirit of Prophecy, 1888 message. We have heard they are in the hands of some pastors and brothers, but these brothers neither use them nor give them to us. Please, we need these Scriptures. Leave us not in crisis. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the love of the true God, open to us your magazines so as to sustain our spiritual life. Reach us urgently as much as possible.

LB, Ethiopia



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We are excited about our new brochure on "The Law of God." This tract presents the Ten Commandments as found in Exodus 20:2-17 in comparison with the Ten Commandments as changed by man. The simple gospel is also presented to the readers, and they are encouraged to submit their request for a free copy of the book *Final Conflict Between Truth and Error*, a free Bible course, and/or a free *Panorama of Prophecy* CD.

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