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The Church in Today's World



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Meet the Principal Contributor to This Guide's Lessons

Enrique Chaij was born and reared in a Seventh-day Adventist home in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. While growing up, he had the opportunity to become acquainted with the secular mind and nonreligious people. In later years, this experience would become the inspiration for influencing his choice of higher studies and his ministry, which is oriented to evangelizing the secular world.

As a preacher, Elder Chaij founded and directed, for 33 years, the radio program *Una Luz en el Camino* ("A Light on the Way"), which, after many years, was instrumental in leading thousands to Jesus Christ and into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He also pioneered and directed the TV program *Encuentro con la Vida* ("Encounter With Life"), which is being broadcast via a thousand cable channels today.

Enrique Chaij served as a departmental secretary in the Austral Union. He was also an editor for a publishing house in South America. As a writer, he created scripts for a radio and TV program with an audience of 9,000. He also authored 16 books, 3 Bible courses by correspondence, and many other editorial works.

He participated in many evangelistic campaigns and taught courses on radio and TV production, human relations, and family counseling. He has a B.A. degree in theology, a M.A. in Communication-Broadcasting, and a Ph.D. in Communication. His doctoral dissertation was on a mass-communication methodology, targeted to reach the secular society.

Dr. Chaij is now retired, but he is very busy writing new books. He and his wife, Nelda, have two children, with whom they enjoy an active and happy Christian family.



Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion book to the Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.

The Church in Today's World

Beginning in 1996, the Seventh-day Adventist Church embarked on a worldwide program of emphasis on the "Message and Mission" of the church. The idea is to focus each year, through the year 2000, on a particular theme or topic that is vital to the life of the world church. As the title of the program indicates, the themes chosen revolve around the message of the church and how that message relates to its mission.

One of the message-and-mission annual emphases is on Christian community, the reason for the existence of the remnant church and its role in today's world.

The two fundamental beliefs 11 and 12 are the focus of the lessons presented in this Bible Study Guide. (See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, pp. 134-169.)

This quarter we will seek answers to the following questions:

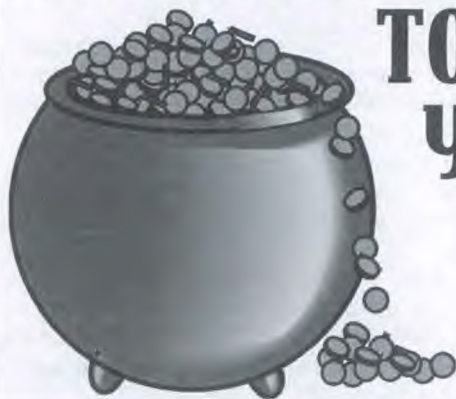
1. How is God's church not only a mere congregation but a loving fellowship with a purpose to reach the world?
2. What does it mean to be a new person in Christ?
3. How can we build a united church whose members maintain a solid spiritual life?
4. How can the church cultivate Christian love?
5. What should our attitude be toward people who are not yet members of God's family?
6. How can God's diverse family maintain unity as a worldwide church?
7. How is it possible for Christians to live in the world without being of the world?
8. How is it possible for the church to be a group of holy people?
9. What does it mean for the church to be salt and light? How do we become such agents?
10. How does a Christian home benefit both society and the church?
11. How can each church and each member reach a higher level of spirituality and avoid being absorbed by the worldly current of life?
12. What is the final crisis? How does it involve God's church? And how can we come through it victoriously?
13. How does the church prepare for Christ's second coming? What will we as individuals do? How will the Second Coming motivate our decisions and the way we live, both as a church and as individuals?

While we stay in the world, we will continue to endure temptations and Satan's destructive intents (Rev. 12:12). But we do not need to fear (Ps. 46:1, 2). "Nothing else in this world is so dear to God as His church. Nothing is guarded by Him with such jealous care."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 42.

**“GIVE, AND IT
WILL BE
GIVEN
TO
YOU....”
AND**



**“WITH THE
MEASURE YOU
USE, IT WILL
BE MEASURED**



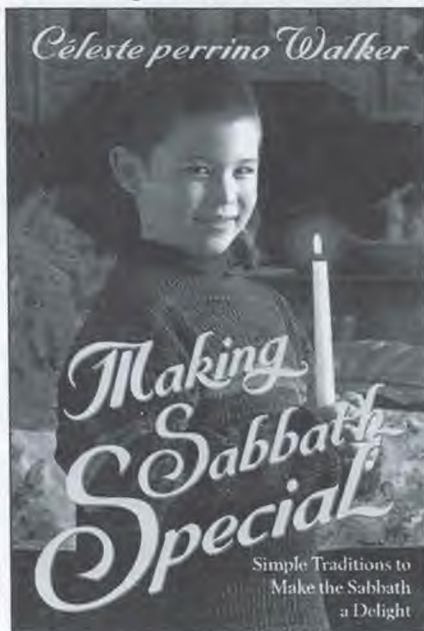
**TO
YOU.”
LUKE
6:38**

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We Are a Family



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Pss. 27:10; 34:8; Isa. 41:10; Jer. 31:3; John 3:16; Rom. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9.

MEMORY TEXT: “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:49, 50, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: As you study this week, search for the answers to these questions: How does God's love make a church not merely a congregation but a loving fellowship of brothers and sisters? How does God use such fellowship to spread His love and truth in the world?

WE ARE NOT ISLANDS. In God's family, we neither are distant nor isolated from one another. We form a united group, bound together by the same ideals and spiritual principles. Such unity is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts and is noted especially for its Christian love. Such love and unity provide a brilliant contrast to the chaos of the secular world contrasted in the chart below:

SECULAR SOCIETY

Fathers often neglect children
Spiritual orphans
Loneliness/Despair

GOD'S FAMILY

Ps. 27:10
Isa. 41:10
John 13:35

Pray that with the Holy Spirit's guidance you will be able to help make God's family a fitting example of His love.

MORE THAN A CONGREGATION (Matt. 12:49, 50; 7:21).

Upon what two conditions does Jesus establish His spiritual family? Matt. 12:49, 50; 2 Cor. 6:17, 18.

How are these conditions related to each other?

The family of God is not merely a social club that gets together now and again to have a good time. Neither is it just a congregation, meeting once or twice a week in a church building. Instead, it is a group of people who are happy to do their heavenly Father's will. There is no greater evidence of our love for Christ and His church than choosing His will over our own. As David prayed, so will we, "Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness" (Ps. 143:10, NKJV).

Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:21 that being His true disciple is not a mere profession, but a doing of His will.

"Lord, Lord. To address Christ as 'Lord' is to profess the belief that He is indeed the Messiah, and implies that the speaker has assumed the role of disciple.

"He that doeth. That is, he who performs the will of God when he learns of it. Faith in God must accompany the doing, or the doing is only a form. It is true that 'faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone' (James 2:17), but it is equally true that works unaccompanied by a sincere and living faith are also 'dead' (Heb. 11:6). Those who do not know the will of God are not held accountable for it (Luke 12:47, 48), but those who have heard God's voice speaking to their hearts and yet persist in ways of their own choosing 'have no cloke for their sin' (John 15:22) and are in danger of presumption."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 358.

How does doing God's will relate to prayer? 1 John 5:14 (compare Matt. 6:9, 10; 26:39, 42). How does this make the church a force in the world?

"Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfil our own desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of his will."—C. H. Dodd. What power we, as God's family, would have to transform the lives of people living in a secular society if our prayers would match this one condition!

In what ways has God taught you to do His will? Share with someone what you have learned about following God's will.

GOD SETS THE TONE (1 John 3:1; John 3:16).

All Scripture is a revelation of God's love. Even among our trials and personal difficulties we can perceive the helping hand of our loving Father. (How has this been so in your life?)

Divine love reaches every member of our spiritual family. It reaches us individually in the hours of temptation, loneliness, adversity, and persecution. It also reaches us corporately as we work together around the world to spread the gospel.

What assurance do we have for those times when we do not sense the reality of His love? John 3:16; 1 John 4:8. What difference does this make to God's family if its members do/do not understand this truth about God?

Because of His love, what claim can God make on us? Ps. 24:1.

We belong to God. This sense of belonging reminds us that we should always trust Him and depend on Him as our Creator, Father, and Lord. What a great lesson to be learned: to depend always and in everything on our loving Lord. Jesus tells us, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me You can do nothing" (John 15:5, NKJV).

"Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His 'little ones,' dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327.

The more we depend on God, the more spiritual power we will receive from Him (2 Cor. 12:9). We can grow in our friendship with Him. We can improve our family life. Also we can be wiser in our decisions and stronger in our faith.

How do you give thanks to God for His love? How do you respond with your love to Him?

List six ways you can share His love with someone this week. Do at least three of these and be prepared to share your experience with the class on Sabbath.

WE ARE MEMBERS OF ONE FAMILY (1 John 4:21; John 13:34, 35).

Being united in love helps us to develop a sense of family. As a result, we can call each other “brother” or “sister” and treat one another as such. This was the practice in the apostolic days (see Acts 1:15,16; 2 Thess. 1:3). Even Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters (Heb. 2:11).

How does Matthew 6:9 reinforce the fact that we are sisters and brothers in Christ?

How do Christ and the Holy Spirit create a united church family? Eph. 2:13-16; Rom. 8:14; 5:5.

Christ _____

The Holy Spirit _____

We are brothers and sisters in God the Father, in God the Holy Spirit, and also in God the Son. God abolished all barriers among His followers through the cross of Christ. New life in Christ brings union instead of division; love instead of hate; cooperation instead of selfishness; humility instead of pride. In summary, “We have passed from death to life because we love one another” (1 John 3:14, NRSV).

God pours out His love in our hearts through His Spirit. As a result, we can love, understand, and forgive one another.

“When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action. . . . A profession of Christ without this deep love, is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 44, 45.

How do people around us recognize that we are disciples of Christ? Is it because we say we love one another? John 13:34, 35. Explain.

If we would have the Holy Spirit poured out on our church family, what would the Spirit change in us? How could that change the way we relate to one another, the way we witness? How will I tell others about His family?

WE ARE NOT ALONE (Matt. 28:20; Isa. 41:10).

Just a few minutes before starting an overseas trip, a man went to a little boy standing on the dock and told him, "In a moment my ship will depart, and I do not have any friends to tell me good-bye. Would you take my handkerchief and wave it as a sign of farewell while the boat is leaving?" The man could not bear his loneliness. As the ship set sail, he felt happy seeing the boy wave that big white handkerchief.

Like this lonely traveler, too many women and men feel alone in the journey of life! We lack the sensitivity, companionship, and warmth of genuine human contact. Truly, loneliness is one of the most common conditions of our time. It is not necessarily the absence of company, but the sense of estrangement and abandonment. We live with people, yet feel alone. Even among Christians this is a common problem. Often, we can become so busy doing good works and volunteering for the church that we neglect genuine fellowship and recreation.

How can we overcome or prevent this problem? Ps. 68:4-6.

"'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age' " (Matt. 28:20, NKJV). What a marvelous prescription for loneliness we find in Christ's promise to us! The Lord is at our side always, every day, every moment, without any break or vacation. We can renew this divine company at the beginning of the day, at any moment in need.

Explain what the Lord promises to do for us in one of His most beautiful promises. Isa. 41:10. How has He fulfilled this promise in your life?

Are we sick? Jesus stays by our bed.

Are we far from home? He travels with us.

Have we lost a close relative or friend? He gives us strength and consolation.

Do we have fears? He comes to us and takes them away.

Are we in danger or under threat? He protects us against our enemies.

Psalm 68:6 tells us that "God sets the solitary in families" (NKJV). Think of someone in your church or neighborhood who has little or no family nearby. Plan three ways you can include this person in your family's activities and initiate one of these ways within the month.

A FAMILY WITH A PURPOSE (Gen. 12:2, 3; 1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 28:19).

Every earthly family needs to have goals and plans to reach those goals. Such goals might include the size of the family, the future of the children, the style of the house, the spiritual prosperity of the family, etc.

God's family has goals and plans. Our heavenly Father Himself has specific aims for His church and its members and has the plans to fulfill them.

What purpose did God have for His people from the very beginning? Gen. 12:2, 3.

“The people of God are His representatives upon the earth, and He intends that they shall be lights in the moral darkness of this world. Scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, they are God's witnesses, the channels through which He will communicate to an unbelieving world the knowledge of His will and the wonders of His grace.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 134.

“His [Christ's] followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints. The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

How does Peter declare God's objective for His people? 1 Pet. 2:9 (compare Matt. 28:19).

All the descriptions by which Peter calls God's family have one purpose: to communicate in different ways the love of Christ and His salvation. To do something else, or to profess only a creed, is to misunderstand the true religion of Christ.

Are your goals and plans as a Christian consistent with God's goals and plans for His family? Why are deeds of kindness and acts of mercy good ways for meeting God's goals for the church family? How well did you fulfill God's goals yesterday? Pray that today God will help you to be a more loving sister or brother to “sinners as well as to saints.”

FURTHER STUDY: How does the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) help you to answer the Key Questions in Sabbath's lesson?

Read *Steps to Christ*, chapter 1, "Christian Service."

"The NT has 2 words for love, *agape*, with its associated verb *agapao*, 'to love,' and the verb *phileo*, 'to like,' 'to have affection for,' 'to love.' . . .

"*Agape* is a principle, and may be described as a love of respect and esteem, a love bringing into play the higher powers of the mind and intelligence. It is this kind of love that the Christian is to exercise even toward his enemies (Mt. 5:44)." —*SDA Bible Dictionary*, on "Love," (1979 edition), p. 682.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe what your church would be if all the members were like you. How does a loving attitude allow you to disagree sometimes with your brothers and sisters in the church without being disagreeable?
2. Contrast the blessings of belonging to God's family with the loneliness a secular person might suffer.
3. How can we enjoy being a part of God's family? One answer is given for you. Think of at least three others. Answer: We can always count on our Father's love, presence, and protection.
4. What would you do to improve the situation if you belonged to a lukewarm church?
5. Design a "Family Crest" for your church that would represent:
 - a. how you show love for/to Christ;
 - b. how you share the gospel with your community;
 - c. how you show love to the poor in our church/community;
 - d. what you value above all else;
 - e. how you want others to describe your church;
 - f. your major goal.

SUMMARY: God is the Father of a great church family on earth. He loves this family with an everlasting love. Because of this love, we can depend on Him and be happy doing His will. Through Him, members of this family are sisters and brothers in Christ.



Pentecost's Flames Touch India, Part 1

J. H. Zachary

During late 1996 and early 1997 nearly sixty Protestant pastors in eastern India were baptized into the Adventist Church. But many wondered if they would be faithful to the new Bible truths they had accepted. Recently I heard some of these pastors share how God is working in their lives. Let me introduce a few of them.

Pastor P. Ponda is a third-generation pastor. He was leading 30 independent congregations when he met some Adventist pastors. As the pastors discussed Bible truths, Pastor Ponda began to understand the Bible basis for Adventist teachings. He requested baptism. "I want the Adventist Church to shepherd my nearly four thousand people," he said. To date, nearly half of his members have been baptized.

When Assish Missal completed his seminary training, he felt a burden to reach the tribal people living in the mountains near his home. Then he attended a revival meeting conducted by Adventist evangelist Bhasker Rao. As he understood and accepted the Bible basis for Adventist teachings, he requested rebaptism. When word of his conversion reached his home town, he was expelled from the village and church officials canceled plans for a village marriage for his sister. Undaunted, Missal has formed three Adventist congregations in his community.

Absalom Maik was a priest before he accepted the Sabbath message and was baptized. He became a lay preacher. An angry crowd surrounded his family's house and threatened to take his life, but Maik's brother persuaded the mob to leave. However, Maik was excommunicated from the village and is not permitted even to draw water from the village well. His converts have lost the privilege of being buried in the village graveyard. But Maik continues to witness. Within a year Brother Maik had prepared 120 persons for baptism.

Pastor Vijaha Lima attended *The Quiet Hour* revival and was baptized. He went from home to home in his village, sharing the Bible-based teachings he had learned. Eighty persons accepted the truth and requested baptism. The new believers were told to leave the village. When one of the believers died, the village refused to allow the Adventists to bury him in the village cemetery. They buried him in a lonely spot near the river.

(continued next week)

J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for *The Quiet Hour* in Redlands, California.

Produced by the General Conference Office of Mission Awareness
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New Persons in Christ



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 55:6, 7; Eph. 2:1-10; 4:17-24; Gal. 5:16-26.

MEMORY TEXT: "God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4, 5, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: As you study this week's lesson, look for answers to these questions: Before people find Christ, what are they like? What can we become *after* we accept His salvation? And how does such a transformation take place?

A TIME OF CHANGE. People have been talking about the changes and new ideas they hope to see during the new millennium. Some look for changes in the industrial world while others crave new ideas in communications. Still others are eager for advancement in standards of living, family life, education, and moral customs. But no change could be as important as the change only God can make in one's life.

What is this change? It is the transformation made by God in the human mind and heart (Ezek. 36:26, 27; 2 Cor. 5:17).

"In the heart renewed by divine grace, love . . . modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 59.

Last week, we looked at being members of God's family. This week we will see how that helps us become people with a new future and a new hope.

B.C.—BEFORE CHRIST (Eph. 2:1-3, 12; Rom. 1:28-32).

How does Paul describe life before Christ? Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:28-32.

No matter how good we may appear to others, sin takes possession of our lives if Christ does not dwell within. Sinful acts weaken and destroy the integrity of the soul. Indeed, when life is empty of Christ's love, it is filled with sin. How were you before you met and accepted Christ as your Savior? You may not have been a liar or an adulterer. But were you proud, angry, bitter, legalistic, or unforgiving?

Consider people in ancient times who did not acknowledge God (Rom. 1:21-32). They "became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (v. 21, NKJV).

What did Paul think about himself both before and after he encountered Christ? Phil. 3:4-8.

Before Christ _____

After Christ _____

"We have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

Paul's story can also be ours when we give our lives to Christ. "If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Savior, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

"More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

The words translated *sin* and *trespasses* in Ephesians 2:1-3 mean to "miss the mark" and a "fall" respectively. Take some time to examine your life. How have you "missed the mark" or "fallen" (taken the wrong road) where God is concerned? Pray that He will help you get back on course.

A.C.—AFTER CHRIST (Eph. 1:7, 8; 2:8, 9; 1 John 1:9, 10).

The wide and deep grace of God reaches even the worst sinner. He offers forgiveness to all without distinction. Certainly, God abundantly pardons (Isa. 55:7).

What is the basis of our assurance regarding God's pardon? Eph. 1:7, 8.

"As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but—O wondrous love!—God in Christ is 'reconciling the world unto himself' (2 Cor. 5:19)."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 35.

"It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin. When we see the length of the chain that was let down for us, when we understand something of the infinite sacrifice that Christ has made in our behalf, the heart is melted with tenderness and contrition."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 36.

What three things must we do to receive God's forgiveness? Define each one. Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9.

	Action	Definition
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____

"The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means that sin is taken away, and that the vacuum is filled with the Spirit. It means that the mind is divinely illumined, that the heart is emptied of self, and filled with the presence of Christ."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 10, 1902.

Be honest with yourself. When have you rationalized away a sin or blamed it on someone or something else? Ask God to help you confess, repent, and turn to Him for forgiveness and freedom from that sin.

A NEW CREATION (Eph. 2:12, 13; 5:8; John 3:8; Ezek. 36:26).

What two contrasts does Paul use to describe life before Christ and life after Christ? Eph. 2:12, 13; 5:8.

	Before Christ	After Christ
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____

“When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

Mary was an alcoholic. She drank several bottles of wine every day, plus other strong drinks. When her husband arrived home in the evenings, he frequently found her drunk with a broken bottle at her side. This family drama lasted 25 years. Every source of help proved useless. Every treatment ended without results. In terms of money, her husband wasted the amount of three good houses trying to cure his wife. But the Lord began to work when they sought His divine help. And what they were looking for during 25 years without results, the Lord did spectacularly in a moment! Soon after her liberation, Mary became a noble and respectable member of our church. The Lord is changing lives every day, everywhere.

How did Nicodemus respond when Jesus told him, “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above”? John 3:3-6, NRSV. What do you think motivated his response?

“The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 18.

These transformations are made only by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:6-8; Ezek. 36:26, 27).

Recall the changes the Lord has made in your life. In what areas are you still changing and growing?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTION (Rom. 8:9, 14; Eph. 4:22-32).

As we mentioned yesterday, we obtain the new life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. No one can make such changes through his or her own strength. Review Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus about his need to be born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:6-8).

What does Joel 2:28-32 teach us about who may receive the Holy Spirit? (Compare Acts 2:17, 18.)

"The Spirit awaits our demand and reception. Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it?"—*Christian Service*, p. 252.

The new person in Christ has an entirely new attitude regarding all aspects of life. Below is a list of certain attitudes people may have before they accept Christ. Using Ephesians 4:22-32, write next to them the new attitudes in Christ that replace them. What is our motivation for developing these new attitudes? Verse 32, last part.

falsehood _____

anger _____

thievery _____

unwholesome talk _____

bitterness, slander, malice _____

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

Which of the above aspects of the new self in Christ do you think you need to work on? Have you tried to change by yourself? How much did you gain under your own willpower? Remember, it is the new self in Christ!

LIKE JESUS (1 Cor. 2:16; 1 Pet. 2:21; Heb. 8:10).

Once we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are ready to imitate Jesus. The way we talk, feel, and act will reveal that we are new persons, with the desire to be like Jesus in every way. We will long to please and glorify Him in all that we think and do. As His faithful followers, we will long to walk with Him wherever He leads us and will rejoice to lovingly obey His commandments.

What is the key to being like Jesus? 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 3:16.

When we dedicate even our thinking to Christ, He will help us resist bad and impure thoughts. Thus, we can have “the mind of Christ,” with thoughts that reflect His character. Both sin and holiness begin in the mind. Even though it is the battlefield where the enemy wants to have dominion, it is also where Christ can gain the victory for our salvation. The decision is ours. Who will be the master of our minds?

“The Christian life is a life of constant conflict. It is a battle and a march. Every act of obedience, every deed of self-denial, every trial bravely endured, every temptation resisted, every victory gained, is a step forward in the march to eternal triumph.”—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*^{*}, October 29, 1902.

If we have the mind of Christ, and if we look to Jesus as “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2, NKJV), we shall be qualified to “follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21, KJV). But we also shall be humble enough to depend constantly on the Lord. And we shall prove the truth of this statement:

“Nothing can be more helpless and yet more invincible than the soul that feels its nothingness, and relies wholly upon the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of the one who places his whole dependence on Christ, rather than allow him to be overcome.”—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*^{*}, October 29, 1902.

As we seek through God’s grace to follow in Christ’s steps, what covenant promise will He Himself keep? Heb. 8:10.

What societal influences are preventing you from developing “the mind of Christ”? Draw up a plan that will help you eliminate these influences from your life. Make sure your plan provides for specific times of Bible study and prayer.

FURTHER STUDY: The Ten Commandments (Exod. 20) reflect God's character and the new person each of us is to become in Christ. The first four commandments reflect our love for God, while the last six reflect our love for others. For each commandment, think of a positive statement that reflects the attitudes and behavior a new person in Christ is to have.

Read *Selected Messages*, book 2, chap. 48; *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 5.

"The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

However, not all church members are transformed persons. Some of them have placed themselves a long way from the transforming influence of the Spirit. But, "we should remember that the church, enfeebled and defective though it be, is the *only object on earth on which Christ bestows His supreme regard*. He is constantly watching it with solicitude, and is strengthening it by His Holy Spirit."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 396, italics supplied.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Based on the lesson this week, how would you answer the Key Questions in Sabbath's lesson?
2. A co-worker of yours is leading quite a life of sin. But now this person wants to accept Christ as his Savior. However, he is afraid he will not be able to give up certain bad habits. How will you help him in becoming a new person in Christ? The first step is given below. Fill in steps 2-4. Then provide scriptural references for all four steps.

1. Recognize your sins, and desire to be free from them.

Text: _____

2. Step: _____

Text: _____

3. Step: _____

Text: _____

4. Step: _____

Text: _____

SUMMARY: God's love in action secures our salvation and builds up a church with converted and renewed people. Thanks to His love and power, God forgives us for our sins and transforms our lives.



Pentecost's Flames Touch India, Part 2

J. H. Zachary

When 60 Protestant pastors were baptized in eastern India, many wondered whether they would remain true to their new beliefs. Recently some of these pastors shared how God is using them to fan the flames of Pentecost in India.

Vijaya Maik lives in a non-Christian village. After accepting the Adventist message, he actively shared his new faith with fellow villagers. But some villagers complained and had him arrested and imprisoned in an effort to stop the spread of the gospel.

Word of his imprisonment caused even more people to want to hear the basis for his faith. Soon 40 persons requested baptism. Several of these new believers also were imprisoned.

The mission president, concerned that Brother Maik's preaching methods might stir up the community unnecessarily, suggested he try different approaches. But Maik responded, "I must share this message before Jesus comes. God will take care of me."

When Raju Purty accepted the Adventist message, he was determined to take the gospel to his friends. After several months, 25 persons requested baptism. Other villagers threatened the converts, "You have one week to change your minds or be driven out of the village!" The new converts refused to change their minds. Barred from drawing water from the village well, they must walk seven miles for water. They cannot bury their dead in the village cemetery and must find a new location for a graveyard. Brother Purty is looking for a new place where the believers can live.

Another pastor, Vijaya Kumar Maik, climbs steep mountain trails to share his new faith with tribal people. Thus far 131 persons have been baptized as a result of his work.

After Pastor Bipin Khilo was baptized, the Lord gave him a burden for a very cruel tribe that lives in a remote mountain valley. Strangers entering their territory are met with bows and arrows. At great personal risk, Brother Khilo is attempting to make friends with this tribe and tell them about Jesus and His soon return.

Prior to 1997, fewer than 160 persons were baptized in any one year in the Orissa Mission. But during 1997, 3,000 persons were baptized, many as a direct result of the work of these newly baptized pastors. *The Quiet Hour* pays the pastors a small stipend which allows them to work full time in evangelism.

J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for *The Quiet Hour*, located in Redlands, California.

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A People With the Same Faith and Hope



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:6; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:16; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 9:28.

MEMORY TEXT: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6, NKJV).

KEY QUESTION: How can we build a united church whose members maintain a solid spiritual life in Christ and who share the same faith and hope?

SECURITY AMID CONFUSION. We live in a world of religious confusion. Many people are without any kind of faith or hope. Many others, while believing they are Christians and members of God's family, suffer from religious distortion owing to the neglect of God's word and believing Satan's lies (Matt. 22:29; Mark 12:24; John 8:44).

“The truth of God is found in His word. Those who feel that they must seek elsewhere for present truth need to be converted anew. They have wrong habits to mend, evil ways to be abandoned. They need to seek anew the truth as it is in Jesus, that their character building may be in harmony with the lessons of Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 192.

In last week's lesson, we studied how to become new persons in Christ. This week, we will learn how to validate our faith and hope and affirm our convictions in the “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6).

AN ETERNAL GOSPEL (Rev. 14:6; Gal. 1:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:3-5).

In today's world, people suffer from drastic changes and instability. How crucial, then, is the everlasting and reliable gospel of Christ!

Based on what you read in Galatians 1:7-9, what one word best describes the nature of Christ's gospel? (This word does not necessarily have to come from the text given.)

The world is constantly changing. The newest computer software on the market today will be obsolete tomorrow. With or without a reason, people conclude that we must have change. Such a conclusion often means that people even desire to change God's teachings.

But what does Scripture say about this?

Heb. 13:8 _____

Heb. 9:22 _____

1 Pet. 1:25 _____

Think of at least two ways people have tried to change the Bible, God's method of salvation, and even God Himself:

The Bible	God's Method of Salvation	God Himself

“Let not erroneous theories receive countenance from the people who ought to be standing firm on the platform of eternal truth. God calls upon us to hold firmly to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 298.

“[Satan] causes men and women to doubt God's love and seeks to deprive them of the power to choose the right. He occupies their minds with anything and everything that will crowd out time, and the desire, for Christ, for His righteousness, and for His kingdom (Luke 21:34-36).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 909.

What has been occupying your mind lately? How can you clean out the clutter to make room for Christ?

A MESSAGE NOT OF HUMAN INVENTION (2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:13).

What kind of gospel did Peter and Paul teach to their listeners? 2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:13.

There were some “Christians” at the time Peter wrote his second letter who no longer believed in the Second Coming. But Peter claims the right to preach this divine truth because of what he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5).

Both Peter and Paul were moved by the Spirit to preach God’s truth. They taught and wrote about ideas that were not their own.

“The gospel will be revealed as a living power and not as cunningly devised fables or idle speculations. It will be revealed as a reality, not the result of imagination or enthusiasm. This will be of more consequence than sermons or professions or creeds.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 264.

What two things should we do with the divine message? 1 Cor. 9:16; James 1:22-24.

1. _____
2. _____

“Christianity does not help people live their everyday lives.” So said one woman who practices a Far Eastern form of religion. Yet according to James 1:22, this is exactly what Christianity was meant to do. It is not enough to read the Bible or sit in a pew on Sabbath and listen to a sermon. The essence of Christianity involves letting what we have studied and heard influence our lifestyles and habits. The powerful gospel transforms people and leads them to reflect the character of Christ.

“If Christians were to act in concert, moving forward as one, under the direction of one Power, for the accomplishment of one purpose, they would move the world.”—*Christian Service*, p. 75.

What is the most important contribution you believe the divine gospel has made to your daily life? Be ready to explain why to your Sabbath School class.

How can you share with a friend, a neighbor, or a colleague this week the difference the gospel has made in your life?

ONLY ONE (Eph. 4:3-6; 2 Cor. 13:8; Titus 2:11-14).

In what seven areas is the church to achieve a special unity? Eph. 4:3-6.

1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____ 6. _____
7. _____

“The apostles and early Christians considered Christ’s return ‘the blessed hope.’ . . . They expected all the prophecies and promises of Scripture to be fulfilled at the Second Advent . . . for it is the very goal of the Christian pilgrimage. All who love Christ look forward eagerly to the day when they will be able to share face-to-face fellowship with Him—and with the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the angels.”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 334.

Explain what happens when people try to have more than one Lord. Matt. 6:24; Gal. 1:10. How is worrying similar to trying to serve two masters? Matt. 6:25-34.

Have you ever tried to think of several things at a time? Do several things at once? Or focus your eyes on two different objects at the same time? How much success did you have? Trying to serve God while clinging to a favored opinion or prejudice is just as big a failure. He cannot be just one influence among many. He must be our one regard in all aspects of life in order for us to live His life.

“‘Mammon’ is a Chaldean word for the money-god. It is a word which speaks of the systems of materialism which are so very dominant in human experience. The disciple is to give undivided loyalty to the Master; mammon is to take a very inferior place.

“Jesus is not teaching a withdrawal from the material world. Rather, He calls for a decision which is necessary for His disciples to live freely in the world.”—Myron S. Augsburger, *The Communicator’s Commentary: Matthew*, Lloyd J. Ogilvie, ed. (Word Books: Waco, Texas, 1982), pp. 92, 93.

How can hope in Christ’s return lead to a transformed life and a transformed church? Explain how focusing on the “blessed hope” can prevent us from serving two masters and help us to live freely.

THE SUSTAINER OF OUR HOPE (Rom. 5:1, 2; Col. 1:27).

The secular person has worldly dreams and can develop some hope for a better future. But all these expectations often will end in bitter frustration. More and more the people of our generation recognize human impotence when it comes to building a better world.

But as we learned in yesterday's lesson, as God's children we have the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) of Christ's return. We are not adrift. We know where we are going! When life is full of distress, the Second Coming gives us hope. "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken" (Ps. 62:5, 6, NIV).

"Feelings are not a safe criterion. We are not to look within for evidence of our acceptance with God. We shall find there nothing but that which will discourage us. Our only hope is in 'looking unto Jesus.' . . . There is everything in Him to inspire with hope, with faith, and with courage. He is our righteousness, our consolation and rejoicing."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 199, 200.

Explain the relationship between grace and hope. Rom. 5:2, KJV.

Grace and hope bring joy to our faith. We live both by faith and by hope. One secures the other. Ask yourself: Does the advent hope bring joy and certainty to my life? If not, why not? Decide that no matter what others may do or say, you shall not lose faith in the God who sustains your hope.

Explain how Christ in us is the "hope of glory." Col. 1:27.

When the Lord abides in us, His transforming power renews our inner life, and a new vision regarding the future enlightens all our being. Christ becomes the glorious hope that improves our present and secures our eternal future.

"All the way up the steep path leading to eternal life are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary. The true, strong joy of the soul begins when Christ is formed within, the hope of glory."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 169.

How has the "blessed hope" sustained your courage and faith in the hour of trial? Be prepared to share one such experience with your Sabbath School class.

“I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED” (2 Tim. 1:12; James 1:2-12).

Of what is Paul convinced? 2 Tim. 1:12.

Notice that Paul did not say in *what* he believed, but in *whom* he believed. His certainty came not from a creed or a theology, but from a personal experience with His Savior. That is why, after doing the work God had asked him to do, he could entrust the results to Him. Paul did not have any doubt about his faith and his Lord. Doubt can produce spiritual weakness and inconsistency. But faith in God brings power to the soul, conviction to the mind, and holiness to the Christian life.

“Faith is trusting in God—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 259.

One day, while visiting a well-known Christian author, a young man asked: “Are all the books you’ve written the foundation of your faith?”

The writer answered as he pointed to various books in his library: “These six volumes are my first work on faith. But after the death of my son, I wrote these four volumes on the subject. Then after yet another severe trial, I wrote these two.”

Next the writer took down a small book and said: “This is my very last book. But when my wife passed away, I understood that faith is simply to trust in God.”

“He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord” (Ps. 112:7, NIV).

What counsel do we find in James 1:2-12 regarding stability, perseverance, and growth in faith and hope?

“Perplexities will increase; but let us, as believers in God, encourage one another. Let us not lower the standard, but keep it lifted high, looking to Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.”—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 406.

According to your observations, what things are most likely to weaken a person’s Christian convictions?

How often do you feed your faith and hope with the study of God’s Word? What difference does this make?

FURTHER STUDY: Use a concordance to look up the words *faith* and *hope*. After reading a few of the verses you find, analyze the relationship between the two.

Read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 608-612; *Last Day Events*, chap. 2; *Selected Messages*, book 2, chaps. 6, 50.

“God’s people are not to be in confusion, lacking order and harmony, consistency and beauty. The Lord is greatly dishonored when disunion exists among His people. Truth is a unit. The unity that God requires must be cultivated day by day if we would answer the prayer of Christ. The disunion that is striving for existence among those who profess to believe the last message of mercy to be given to the world, must find no place; for it would be a fearful hindrance to the advancement of God’s work. His servants are to be one, as Christ is one with the Father; their powers, illuminated, inspired, and sanctified, must be united to make a complete whole. Those who love God and keep His commandments are not to draw apart; they are to press together.”
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 174, 175.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. After studying this week’s lesson, make a list of items that answer the Key Question in Sabbath’s lesson. One answer is provided for you: We can build a united church whose members share one faith and one hope by adopting a sincere and humble attitude, without preconceptions or prejudices, when we do not understand a particular Bible passage.
2. Do we need to modernize the essence of the gospel in order to make it more agreeable to the secular world? What about methods of presenting the gospel? Explain your answers.
3. Discuss the spiritual benefits of belonging to the family of God, with the same faith and hope, in contrast to the confusion and alienation we find in this world.

SUMMARY: We are God’s family with the same faith and hope. We are called to keep and preach only biblical truths free from any favored opinions and prejudices. This way, we can be “united in love and action,” as we shall study in the next week’s lesson.



I Was Blind, But Now I See

As told to B. Wiafe

My name is Mtalimanja Njobvu. I am quite old, though I do not know when I was born. I live in a farming village in the South Luangwa game reserve in Zambia. My wife died several years ago, and my 10 children have grown and moved into town.

One day I noticed that my eyesight was growing dim. Soon it became impossible to hunt and work on my farm. Without any family members nearby to help me, I lived by the mercy of kind neighbors.

During the dry season, some health workers from Kamoto Hospital came to my village. They examined my eyes and told me that if I did not get help, I would lose the little bit of sight I still had in my right eye. I did not take them seriously at the time, but a few months later I realized that the vision in my right eye was growing dimmer.

My only hope was to get to the hospital at Kamoto, a four-day walk from my village. But I was old and nearly blind. I did not know how long it would take me to get there. Maybe I could not even make it, but I decided to try.

I asked my neighbors to take care of my hut, in which were stored all my earthly belongings. I put on my best attire and started for Kamoto. My journey took me through the game reserve, where I heard the elephants, birds, and monkeys. But I could not see them.

Sometimes I missed the path and had to turn back to find it again. At night I slept in villages along the way. Some of the people I talked to encouraged me to go on, and others told me to go home. But I had made up my mind to press on.

On the ninth day I finally reached Kamoto only to learn that the doctor was away. I was so disappointed! But the people there were wonderful; they took me to Mwami Hospital in Chipata by ambulance! That was my first ride in a vehicle in 25 years.

The doctors in the hospital at Mwami operated on my eyes. Within 10 days I was given a pair of glasses to wear. Behold! Now I can see with the eyes of a young man! I can hunt and farm, and I do not have to rely on my neighbors to feed me. Thank you for helping me receive my sight again.

Dr. B. Wiafe is the medical director and chief ophthalmologist of the Mwami Adventist Hospital in Chipata, Zambia. He performed the surgery on Mr. Njobvu's eyes.

United in Love and in Action



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Eph. 5:2; John 13:34, 35; Matt. 22:37-40; John 17:26; 21:15-17; Col. 3:12-14.

MEMORY VERSE: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What is Christian love? Why is it the highest of all Christian virtues? As God's children, how can we cultivate this virtue? How does Christ's love help us to live in the world but not be of the world?

“IN DEED AND IN TRUTH.” Think about the many evils, afflictions, and disgraces that exist in our world and in the church because people do not understand or care about Christian love. Then think about the disunity and coldness that occur as a result.

Christian love does not consist only of words. It should be manifested “in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

“Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will gain the victory when argument and authority are powerless.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 135.

“Unless we daily cultivate the precious plant of love we are in danger of becoming narrow, unsympathetic, bigoted, and critical, esteeming ourselves righteous when we are far from being approved of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 605.

This week, learn how Christ's love can motivate and inform Christ's family and reaffirm its position and commission in the world.

“WALK IN LOVE” (Eph. 5:1, 2; John 13:34, 35; 15:12; Phil. 2:1-3).

Explain what it means to “walk in love.” Eph. 5:1, 2.

How will people who are not Christians know we are true followers of Christ? John 13:34, 35. Compare this text with Ephesians 5:1, 2.

People are watching to see whether we treat one another with kindness. If they do not see that the spirit of service and forgiveness motivates our behavior toward each other, we will disappoint them, and they will view us as hypocrites. If, however, they see that we truly emulate Christ’s love within the church family, they will recognize that we are truly His disciples.

Analyze the connection between love and humility in Philippians 2:1-3.

“Attitudes of selfishness, pride, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, superiority, prejudice, criticism, denunciation, and faultfinding among believers contribute to disunity in the church. Often a loss of the first love in the Christian experience lies behind these attitudes. A fresh look at God’s gift in Christ at Calvary can renew love for one another (1 John 4:9-11).”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, pp. 178, 179.

“Christian love is that unconquered goodwill which never knows bitterness and never seeks anything but the good of others. It is not a mere reaction of the heart, as human love is; it is a victory of the will, achieved by the help of Jesus Christ. It does not mean loving only those who love us; or those whom we like; or those who are lovable. It means an unconquerable good-will, even to those who hate us, to those whom we do not like, to those who are unlovely. This is the very essence of the Christian life; and it affects us in time and in eternity.”—William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 33.

Take a hard look at your local congregation. How has it succeeded in displaying Christian love? How has it failed? How can it improve? In what ways have you contributed to the successes or failures? How can you contribute to any improvements that might be necessary?

THE PERFECT LAW OF LOVE (John 15:9, 10; Matt. 22:37-40).

Many people view Seventh-day Adventists as legalistic simply because we emphasize the permanence of the Ten Commandments and the need to obey them. Furthermore, some church members present the mistaken concept that the law is the key to salvation rather than Christ. But nothing could be farther from truth. Let us reaffirm now that He is our only Savior (Eph. 2:8, 9; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

How does John 14:15 and John 15:9, 10 help us understand 1 John 3:18?

All of us know someone who professes love for another, yet then does whatever she or he pleases regardless of the pain or consequences it may cause the beloved. But according to Christ, love is shown only through obedience—"in deed and in truth."

An impossibility? Yes, if we depend upon our own strength. But immediately after His command in John 14:15, Christ says, "'And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever'" (v. 16, NKJV). The meaning of the word we translate as *Helper* is "one called to the side of." There the Holy Spirit is willing to stay forever, guiding and directing us along the path to victory. Christ's love inward flows in action outward.

In your own words, how does Matthew 22:37-40 summarize the Decalogue? Explain the meaning of "'with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind'" (v. 37, NIV). What does it mean to "'love your neighbor as yourself'"? (v. 39).

"How little do we enter into sympathy with Christ on that which should be the strongest bond of union between us and Him—compassion for depraved, guilty, suffering souls, dead in trespasses and sins! *The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin.* Many think that they are representing the justice of God while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love. Often the ones whom they meet with sternness and severity are under the stress of temptation. Satan is wrestling with these souls, and harsh, unsympathetic words discourage them and cause them to fall prey to the tempter's power."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 163, italics supplied.

What does 1 John 2:3-5 say about those who confess Him but do not keep His commandments? What does it say to *you*?

CONTROLLED BY CHRIST'S LOVE (2 Cor. 5:14; John 21:15-17).

What does it mean to be *controlled, ruled, or constrained* by the love of Christ? 2 Cor. 5:14.

This verse places Christian love far above a mere feeling. Christ's love is a power, a force that elevates our thoughts, modifies our attitudes, and transforms our whole life. It is God's life injected into our inner life, then revealed in our behavior.

How much stronger our spiritual life would be if Christ's love controlled us! Are we praying for this? *Lord, give us the power of Your love and Your Spirit.*

Why do you think Jesus asked Peter the same question three times? John 21:15-17.

What did He mean by the command "Feed my sheep"?

Jesus hoped that Christian love would motivate His disciples to take care of His flock. True love is always active, useful, practical, and dynamic. It is a way to serve others while at the same time edifying and uniting the church.

"Knowledge, benevolence, eloquence, gratitude, and zeal are all aids in the good work; but without the love of Jesus in the heart, the work of the Christian minister is a failure."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 815.

The fountain of love. The story is told of a missionary translator who could not seem to find in a particular African dialect a word that corresponded to love. He sensed he could not translate the story of God's love for the people without such a word. After he had talked to many people about it, a man who was standing with his small daughter said, "Yes, there is a word. *Ok'efe* means 'I care for this little girl so much, that when I think of what is going to befall her when she grows up, it hurts me.'" That is what God's love for us is like. He loves us so deeply that it is hard for us to comprehend it. How can such a measure of love fail to inspire us to love God and our neighbor?

What can you do today to express God's love in your heart? How would you explain God's love to someone who has not experienced it? To help you do so, how would you finish the following sentence? God's love is like . . .

SINCERE LOVE (Col. 3:12-14; 1 Cor. 4:20, 21).

What does Paul say about the loving attitude we should have as God's chosen ones? Col. 3:12-14.

We feel faulty before this teaching, because we recognize how far we are from such an ideal. But we can be "conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). We can ask ourselves, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16). The answer is, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

"If our hearts are softened and subdued by the grace of Christ, and glowing with a sense of God's goodness and love, there will be a natural outflow of love, sympathy, and tenderness to others."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 606.

"If we possess the humility of our Master, we shall rise above the slights, the rebuffs, the annoyances, to which we are daily exposed, and they will cease to cast a gloom over the spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 301.

What contrast does Paul point out in 1 Corinthians 4:20, 21? Explain how love can equal power.

To talk about love, to condemn others because they do not have love, and to pretend that we have love when we really do not—these are all easy to do. But Christian excellence does not consist in words, no matter how beautiful they might be. The core of Christ's gospel "is not a matter of words" (1 Cor. 4:20, TEV) but a matter of what we are. It is what people see in us, not what they hear us say. While words can inform, they also can deceive. Only our behavior can convince another person that we are faithful.

We must be careful, however, that the love we display to any one particular individual does not blind that person to his or her faults. Christian love must at times come in the form of discipline, just as God found it necessary to at times discipline His people. "For the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts" (Heb. 12:5, 6, NRSV).

When John and Darla's son, Jeff, went to get his learner's permit to drive a car, the officer smelled alcohol on his breath. As Christians who want to emulate their Savior's love toward their children, what should Jeff's parents do to discipline him?

JESUS' DESIRE FOR US (John 17:26; Rom. 13:8-10).

According to Jesus' prayer, what measure of love should we have? John 17:26.

It is impossible for us to comprehend the fathomless depths of God's love for His Son. Nevertheless, Jesus declares that He wants us to have such love! In divine love there is unity, harmony, and concerted action to spread the gospel. When we are "knit together in love" (Col. 2:2), we are able better to understand "the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ" (NKJV). In contemplating this love, we are drawn nearer to Christ and become filled with Him.

How does Paul express the goodness of love and its relationship to God's law? Rom. 13:8-10.

Have you ever thought of Christian love as a debt we owe each other? Yet in verse 8, this is exactly how Paul describes it. Just how do we pay that debt? How is love the fulfillment of the law? Love never seeks what it can get, only what it can give. Therefore, we will not steal. Love is selfless, not selfish. Therefore, we will not covet our friends' and neighbor's spouses. Love does not seek to destroy. Therefore, we will not commit murder or bear false witness. And so it goes. If we honestly seek to pay this debt of love, we will want to obey God's law. Thus there is no contradiction between love and law. On the contrary, the love that leads to obedience brings us joy, helps with our difficulties, and secures church unity.

"Greater attention should be given to the subject of unity. What is the recipe for the cure of the leprosy of strife and dissension? Obedience to the commandments of God."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 159, 160.

Why should love be the impelling motive of all our actions? (1 Cor. 16:14). How do your daily attitudes harmonize with this principle of love? When somebody says something wrong or negative about you, what is your natural reaction? How would you react if Christ's love motivated your thoughts and actions? Read Matthew 5:44-48.

"Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? Ask yourself the question, 'What has Christ given for me?'"
—*Steps to Christ*, p. 45.

FURTHER STUDY: As you read 1 Corinthians 13, use it as a mirror to analyze the real motives and feelings of your heart.

Also read *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 167-177; 341-348; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 548-552.

“Read this chapter [1 Corinthians 13] every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength. Learn from it the value that God places on sanctified, heaven-born love, and let the lesson that it teaches come home to your hearts. Learn that Christlike love is of heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1904.

“The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God’s government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. After studying this week’s lesson, how would you answer the Key Questions in Sabbath’s lesson?
2. How can we love or accept others as they are, even though they may be wrong in their thinking and attitudes?
3. How can we increase our Christian love toward one another? Make a list of at least four ways. One is given for you here: We can increase our Christian love for one another by doing things that are for the benefit of someone else.
4. More than anything else, genuine love can bring healing and restoration. Exert a special effort today to manifest His love to a hurting person.
5. Contrast the blessings we receive through Christian love with the consequences of the heart’s natural selfishness.

SUMMARY: God wants to have a united church on this earth. Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples, which includes each one of us. It is through love that we can “dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1). But it must be an active and sincere love, “in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).



The Peacemaker

J. H. Zachary

Theology students at Mountain View College in the Philippines serve as student pastors in local churches. Jerry Fernandez was assigned to a large church near the campus. Although the church had four hundred members, it was not growing.

As Thirteenth Sabbath approached, Jerry prepared for the Communion service. He learned that two of the local elders were involved in a dispute over a strip of land that lay between their farms. The disagreement had become heated, and one man called the other a liar and a thief. The second man stopped attending church. How could he worship with the man who had attacked him?

Jerry felt that he had to visit the men. But he was barely twenty years old, and the two men were in their sixties. Jerry knew that he needed the help of the Holy Spirit in order to reconcile these brothers.

Jerry visited the first elder and counseled him to surrender the disputed land to his neighbor and to wash his brother's feet on Sabbath. Finally the elder agreed. "Jesus will be waiting for you at church," Jerry promised.

Then Jerry visited the second man and made a similar appeal. But the man resisted, "He called me a liar and a thief! He should make this right first." Jerry gently pleaded with the man to forgive his brother and come to the Communion service. "Jesus wants you to come," Jerry said. But the man would not promise.

On Sabbath morning Jerry hiked the three miles to his church. He found the first elder waiting for him. But as time for church neared, Jerry became concerned. The second elder had not come.

Jerry borrowed a bicycle and rode to the home of the second elder. "Brother," he pleaded, "we are waiting for you. Today is the day to make things right." The older man repeated his reasons for not coming, but Jerry kindly persisted. "The Lord Jesus will be disappointed if you do not come."

Finally the elder agreed. The man got on the bicycle, and Jerry pedaled back to the church. When they arrived, Jerry took the two men into the banana patch behind the church. While the two men faced each other, Jerry took their hands and prayed for them.

The reconciliation sparked a revival in the church, and soon the church was crowded with worshippers. The congregation built a larger church around the old building. The membership continues to grow, in part because of a peacemaking young pastor.

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An Open Community



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 7:24-30; Luke 10:30-33; John 4:7-15; Acts 17:26; Rom. 10:5-11; James 2:1-9.

MEMORY TEXT: "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:8, 9, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What should our attitude, as Christians, be toward nonbelievers and people who belong to other religious groups and classes? How should we look upon those people whom we find most disagreeable and unpleasant?

WITH PREJUDICE TOWARD NONE. Last week we studied about the importance of Christian love in the church and home and its influence over the unity of both. This week we will study Christian love in relationship to *all* people, no matter who they might be.

"Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. . . . Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 485.

The only way for us to have a loving heart, free from prejudice and discriminative attitudes, is through the indwelling Holy Spirit. He empowers us to emulate Christ's example in relating to and reaching out to others all around us.

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS (Mark 10:45; John 13:15-17; Matt. 7:12).

What kind of spirit did Jesus manifest while He was on earth? Mark 10:45; John 13:15-17.

“It is not the length of time we labor but our willingness and fidelity in the work that makes it acceptable to God. In all our service a full surrender of self is demanded. The smallest duty done in sincerity and self-forgetfulness is more pleasing to God than the greatest work when marred with self-seeking.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 402.

The story is told about a church that was destroyed during the heat of a mighty battle. Workers clearing the rubble found a statue of Christ with the hands missing. When a famous sculptor offered to restore the hands, the church officers declined, saying that the statue of a handless Christ had become to them a symbol of the Lord’s use of the hands of His followers to serve Him through loving deeds for others.

Yes, the Lord uses our hands to serve others; our lips to preach to others; our feet to reach others; and our warm hearts to revive the sinner’s cold heart.

Serving means to do something good for others. But it also secures our joy in the Lord. Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), the well-known physician and philanthropist who served in Gabon, Africa, once told a group of students: “I do not know which will be the destiny of each one of you; but one thing I know—the only ones among you who will be really happy will be those who have sought and found the way to serve.”

Explain the golden rule in your own words. Matt. 7:12.

There is no greater principle regarding human relations than these simple yet profound words of Christ. But how easy they are to understand without putting them into practice.

“The standard of the golden rule is the true standard of Christianity; anything short of it is a deception.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 136, 137.

What have you done lately for someone that required a sacrifice of time, money, or some other commodity you have little of? If it has been a while, how can you be Christ’s hands, feet, lips, and heart today?

WITHOUT PARTIALITY (Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 2:5-11).

What do the following verses say about God's attitude toward all peoples? Acts 10:1-35; Rom. 2:5-11. What is our attitude toward the different peoples of the world in view of His?

When it comes to relations with people, the word *partiality* means "respect of persons;" that is, "to make a difference in the treatment given from one person to another," or to respect one and disrespect another. That was the valuable lesson God taught Peter through the vision He gave him. There is no distinction between people and their need for salvation. Christ died for all people, and He paid for each one with the same precious price, His blood. He has no preference for one above another. He loves all, no matter how low they may have fallen. Because of His impartial grace, we may all be encircled by His welcoming and reconciling arms.

"Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. The Saviour has a boundless love for every human being."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 225.

How does James illustrate the sin of partiality? James 2:1-9.

The early church was at first composed largely of humble, common people. Therefore, when rich people did attend or join, it must have seemed logical to the members to treat them with great favor. But the early church also was the only institution at that time that did not recognize pre-existing social distinctions. Here slaves and masters could be seen sitting together. Or perhaps the slave was even leading out. But as it is in the arms of God, so He intends for it to be among His family members.

Are you conscious that partiality is a sin? What damage can it do? Where does it exist in the church today? In your local congregation? In your own life?

If you believe partiality exists in any one of these areas, where should you start to eradicate it, and why? Pray that our impartial God will open your heart and arms to all of His children as they cross your path.

JESUS' EXAMPLE (John 4:7-39; Luke 10:25-33; Mark 7:24-30).

Today we will study three cases in which Jesus manifested a special consideration to people who were not Hebrews. First, read each case from the Bible. Then read the lesson comments regarding the case. Finally, answer the following questions for each case: What was the nature of the service rendered? What was the outcome? What do the answers to these two questions teach me in general about serving people who do not share my beliefs and lifestyle?

First case: John 4:7-15. "The Jews and the Samaritans were bitter enemies, and as far as possible avoided all dealing with each other."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 183. Nevertheless, Jesus talked to the woman by the well. Their memorable conversation brought salvation not only to her but others in the nearby city.

"The Saviour is still carrying forward the same work as when He proffered the water of life to the woman of Samaria. Those who call themselves His followers may despise and shun the outcast ones; but no circumstance of birth or nationality, no condition of life, can turn away His love from the children of men."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 194.

Second case: Luke 10:25-33. The Samaritan "did not question whether the stranger was a Jew or a Gentile. If a Jew, the Samaritan well knew that, were their condition reversed, the man would spit in his face, and pass him by with contempt. But he did not hesitate on account of this."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 503.

In telling this story, Jesus showed consideration for a traditional enemy of the Jews. He exalted the behavior of the one who had compassion in his heart.

Third case: Mark 7:24-30. Jesus performed this miracle for one reason. Yes, He had compassion for the girl with an unclean spirit. But He also had in mind another purpose.

"He wished to relieve the afflicted woman, and at the same time to leave an example in His work of mercy toward one of a despised people for the benefit of His disciples when He should no longer be with them. He wished to lead them from their Jewish exclusiveness to be interested in working for others besides their own people."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 402.

Examine your own life honestly. Do you find yourself helping only those who are in your church or who think and act like yourself? If so, what can you begin doing to remedy this situation?

How does reaching others not of our persuasion help to fulfill Christ's command as given to us in Matthew 28:19, 20?

THE EXPERIENCE OF ISRAEL (Luke 13:34, 35; Matt. 21:33-43).

God had chosen Israel to be His ambassadors to a lost world. Through them, people everywhere were to hear about God's plan of redemption. Their dependence on and worship of God would be the lesson book from which other nations could learn about the Creator and Redeemer.

But Israel lost its dependence on God and its sense of mission. They viewed themselves with a proud exclusivism. God had told them, "Arise, shine; for your light has come! and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you" (Isa. 60:1, NKJV). But they "loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). So they ceased to be God's chosen people, because they rejected "the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world" (John 1:9).

What words of condemnation did Jesus pronounce upon Jerusalem? Luke 13:34, 35; Matt. 23:33-43.

"Jesus wept in anguish over the doomed city, but He could not deliver her. He had exhausted every resource. In rejecting the warnings of God's Spirit, Israel had rejected the only means of help. There was no other power by which they could be delivered."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 587.

And so God called the church to do the work that Israel refused. With a new vision, Jesus' followers were to take the gospel to all the world. It is still our vision today.

"Christ commissioned His disciples to proclaim a faith and worship that would have in it nothing of caste or country, a faith that would be adapted to all peoples, all nations, all classes of men."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 819.

"For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 819.

Truly ours is a global mission. Gary Krause, Global Mission communications director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, states, "Global Mission . . . confronts us with the unreached millions. It pulls our focus onto the 'dangerous' unknown—outside our areas of comfort. For most of us it's the danger of trying something new, sacrificing precious time, or giving more than we've budgeted."—*Adventist Review*, August 1997, p. 15.

What special aspects of the gospel are we as Seventh-day Adventists called to share with the world? Think of two or three things you can start doing in your part of the world.

“MADE FROM ONE BLOOD EVERY NATION” (Acts 17:26; Rom. 10:12).

Analyze Paul’s statement concerning the equality of individual members within the human family. Acts 17:26.

During Paul’s time, there was a strong division of classes. Because rich people believed they were a superior class, there was a deep separation between one class and the other. But after so many centuries, the same problem still prevails. Fortunately, “no distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption.”—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 486.

“Without distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege, all are invited to come unto Him and live. ‘Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference’ (Rom. 10:11-13).”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.

How does Romans 10:12 explain why the Christian faith does not maintain a class distinction? Consider the significance of the word *whoever* in the context of Romans 10:13, and then compare it with John 3:16.

All this week, we have been studying the need to have open minds in order to overcome our prejudices so that we might treat our neighbors with Christian love. As Christians, we always should remember that God loves each of us the same. Jesus died for all, even for the supposedly insignificant and miserable. What a boundless love!

Moreover, we are called to follow Christ’s example. What does the Decalogue say about loving our neighbor? (Matt. 22:39; Rom. 13:8-10). What is the teaching of the golden rule? (Matt. 7:12). Is it possible for a Christian to get enough spiritual strength to practice this noble behavior? Human selfishness is so big, the secular influence is so subtle, and our tendency to excuse our personal indifference is so common that only through the Holy Spirit can we follow Christ’s example.

Contemplate this promise in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (NKJV). How does believing in this promise encourage and empower us to love as Christ loves? Share with the class how God helps you “through Christ” to do the seemingly undoable?

FURTHER STUDY: What does Matthew 25:31-46 teach us about loving others, regardless of their situation in life?

Read *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 19, 43, 54. Also read Appendix 3 of *Selected Messages*, book 2. This material offers practical advice on preaching the gospel to the whole world, without distinguishing between countries, races, classes, cultures, or tongues.

“No question of policy influenced His [Jesus’] movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life. . . .

“He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. . . .

“[People] longed to become worthy of His confidence. . . . New impulses were awakened, and to these outcasts of society there opened the possibility of a new life.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 25, 26.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. After studying this week’s lesson, how would you answer the Key Questions in Sabbath’s lesson?
2. The religion of Christ calls us to serve others. Why is it so difficult to develop a spirit of service? In what practical ways can the Holy Spirit help you apply Christ’s example of not being served, but serving others? (See Mark 10:45.)
3. How can we keep the church an open, loving community? Discuss at least five ways. One is given here to get you started: Having programs of Christian service for the community in which your congregation resides.
4. Contrast the blessings of impartial Christian love with the negative features of prejudice.

SUMMARY: As a church and as individual members, we should keep in mind (1) our global mission to reach all nations and (2) Christ’s example of treating everybody with the same understanding and consideration.



Coming Home

Beverly Herbrandson Koester

Chinsisi of Malawi is the eldest in a family of nine brothers. It was Chinsisi's influence that inspired his next-younger brother, Yami, to become a Christian. But during his later teen years Chinsisi dropped out of school before he graduated. His church attendance became sporadic, and he began smoking and drinking.

When his parents died in 1993, Chinsisi turned even more to drinking to help him forget the troubles at home and the needs of his younger brothers.

That left Yami, 18 and just out of high school, to take on the role of parent to his brothers. Yami found a job and began supporting his brothers. Chinsisi, ashamed of the problems he was causing the family, left town.

For the next three years Yami struggled to support and nurture his brothers. He taught them to love Jesus, and he trusted in the Lord to do for them what Yami could not do. During this time Yami never forgot his older brother.

When the young adults in his church in Blantyre called for a day of fasting and prayer on behalf of one of their members who was facing Sabbath problems at work, Yami joined in. The young people sang and prayed. But as the Holy Spirit moved upon their hearts, they began sharing and praying for one another's burdens as well. As members of the group expressed personal needs, others in the group prayed for them by name.

During this time of sharing, Yami told the group of his burden for his brother Chinsisi, who had been the spiritual influence that had brought him to Christ. He related how Chinsisi had drifted from the Lord and from his family. He asked his friends to pray that Chinsisi would come home. Yami was comforted as his friends took his burden to God.

A few months later, during Christmas, Chinsisi returned to Blantyre and was reunited with his joyful brothers. During the long conversations that followed, Yami learned that within two weeks of the day of fasting and prayer, Chinsisi had given up smoking and drinking. He quit his job and began attending church.

Chinsisi had come home.

Beverly Herbrandson Koester and her husband recently returned from Malawi, where they had served as missionaries for eight years. She works at the General Conference.

United in Diversity



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:1-3, 11-16; John 17:17-23.

MEMORY TEXT: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20, 21, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: There are millions of Seventh-day Adventists in many parts of the world. They worship God in places such as Chad, Russia, Sweden, Canada, Mexico, India, Australia, China, Peru, and Namibia. How can such a diverse group of people maintain unity as a worldwide church family? What does unity do for the church?

CALLED TO BE UNITED. Last week we saw the need to be an open church, without discrimination toward anyone. Such an attitude of love and impartiality enables us to fulfill our global mission (Matt. 28:19, 20). This week we shall consider how unity in the church also helps us do to so. We must remember, however, that when Jesus prayed for the disciples to be one in Him and with one another (John 17:21), He also prayed for their sanctification in the truth of His word (v. 17).

“Union is strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 236.

MANY MEMBERS, ONE BODY (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

An analogy compares two items to show how they are similar. What analogy does Paul use in Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 to help us understand the concept of unity within the church?

Paul's comparison teaches us the following about unity:

1. *The church needs all of its members.* We are not to act in isolation, but in concert with one another.

2. *The work of each member is important.* Try having a church without Sabbath School leaders or teachers. Without deacons or deaconesses. Without elders or a pastor. How could your church function without hostesses or hosts? It does not matter whether you sweep the floors, change the light bulbs, preach the sermon, teach a class, or set up tables for fellowship dinners. Whatever you do is vital to the unity of the church.

3. *God gives each of us a gift to use on behalf of His church family.* Because of this, people do not need to be jealous of a gift they do not have. The gift God has given us may not be a highly visible one, but it is nevertheless a useful one, and we are to use it cheerfully and willingly.

What other things about church unity does Paul's comparison teach us? Plan to share one or two ideas with your Sabbath School class. Provide specific verses from Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 to support your ideas.

"Union with Christ and with one another is our only safety in these last days. Let us not make it possible for Satan to point to our church members, saying: 'Behold how these people, standing under the banner of Christ, hate one another. We have nothing to fear from them while they spend more strength fighting one another than in warfare with my forces.'"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 240.

All bodily functions depend upon the head. Who is the head of the church? Eph. 4:15. What difference does it make?

"May have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18, NKJV) is rendered as "might have the first place" (TEV) and "be in all things alone supreme" (NEB). When Christ has *first place* in our lives, there will be unity in the church.

ONE IN CHRIST (Gal. 3:28; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:1-3).

Explain the key that enables us to prevent or to heal disunity among Christ's disciples. Gal. 3:28.

Since all virtue in the church is the result of the Christian's new life, we all should be daily born again in order to build church unity in Christ.

"We should seek for true goodness rather than greatness. Those who possess the mind of Christ will have humble views of themselves. They will labor for the purity and prosperity of the church, and be ready to sacrifice their own interests and desires rather than to cause dissension among their brethren."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 242.

How do you understand the admonition to "be of one mind"? 2 Cor. 13:11 (NIV). Does it mean that we all must think and act alike? Why, or why not?

"Have the same feeling;" "agree with one another; live in harmony;" "think in the same direction." These are some other good expressions to say what Paul had in mind in his last letter to the Corinthians.

What relationship exists between being "of one mind" and the rest of Paul's counsel in 2 Corinthians 13:11?

"Strive earnestly for unity. Pray for it, work for it. It will bring spiritual health, elevation of thought, nobility of character, heavenly-mindedness, enabling you to overcome selfishness and evil-surmising, and to be more than conquerors through Him that loved you and gave Himself for you."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 188.

Church unity was a priority of Paul's. In his letter to the Ephesians he writes again on this topic, this time in connection with other Christian virtues. List and comment on each of these virtues. Eph. 4:1-3.

"Divisions in the church dishonor the religion of Christ before the world. . . . What are we doing to preserve unity? . . ."
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 239.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR UNITY (1 Cor. 12:4-6, 28-31; Eph. 4:11-16; Rom. 12:4-8).

Explain how unity can function harmoniously in diversity. 1 Cor. 12:4-6; Rom. 12:4-8.

Spiritual gifts are different in each member of Christ's body according to God's will. But His power can perform the miracle of unity in making such gifts complementary and unifying to serve His ideals and purposes.

"The vine has many branches, but though all the branches are different, they do not quarrel. In diversity there is unity. All the branches obtain their nourishment from one source. This is an illustration of the unity that is to exist among Christ's followers. In their different lines of work they all have but one Head. The same Spirit, in different ways, works through them. There is harmonious action, though the gifts differ. Study this chapter [1 Corinthians 12]. You will see from it that the man who is truly united with Christ will never act as though he were a complete whole in himself."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1090.

What goals should we have in mind as we use our spiritual gifts? Eph. 4:11-13. How do the goals relate to each other?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The word translated "equipping" (NKJV), "perfecting" (KJV), or "to prepare" (NIV) is used in Matthew 4:21 in relationship to mending nets, and in Galatians 6:1 in relationship to restoring a person who succumbs to a fault. Thus, the spiritual gifts "were for the purpose of 'mending' the saints and uniting them. The 'perfecting' involves, as the context suggests, an ordered ministry and government of the church."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1023.

Consider your spiritual gift(s) or something you know you do well. Think of at least two ways you can use that ability according to each of the goals Paul outlined in Ephesians 4:12, 13. Then with God's help, fulfill one of those goals this week.

“NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU” (1 Cor. 1:10, NIV; Rom. 15:5, 6).

Again and again Paul wrote about unity. He wanted to be sure his readers understood the importance of this subject. How can the church be strong if its members are divided, are jealous of one another, have selfish ambitions, or fight one against the other? (Mark 3:24, 25).

What does Paul plead for in 1 Corinthians 1:10?

Paul’s pleading is a result of a report that there was strife within the Corinthian church (v. 11). Based on verse 12, this strife must have involved different members of the church supporting or following one teacher or another. Thus the Corinthians focused on human teachers instead of Christ the Master Teacher. The result? Disunity. Then they needed to relearn that “Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 259.

Plutarch, a Greek historian of the first century, tells how Scilurus, on his deathbed, gave a bundle of darts to each of his children and told them to try to break the darts as a unit within the bundle. When none of the children could do so, he separately withdrew each dart and easily broke them all one by one. Thus he taught them that if they held together they would remain strong. But if they became divided, they would be weak.

What does Paul mean when he says we should be “like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus” (Rom. 15:5, NKJV)?

“Paul is not praying for identity of opinion on inconsequential matters, but for a spirit of unity and harmony, in spite of differences of opinion. Mere unity or unanimity is not what Paul desires for his fellow Christians, but a spirit of unity patterned after the perfect model of whose whole purpose was to do . . . the will of Him who sent Him (John 6:38)”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 643, 644.

Christ is our model of such unity. He desired not to do His will, but the will of the Father who sent Him (John 6:38). If this were truly the goal of each church-family member, unity would prevail.

Over what issues is your church divided? What could be done corporately to bring about unity? What could you do as an individual to help unite the church?

UNITY REVEALS THAT GOD SENT THE SON (John 17:12, 20-23).

Jesus wanted the world to know that the Father had sent Him. He wished for people to accept Him as God's Son, the Messiah and Christ (John 17:3). In order for this to happen, what picture must Christ's followers present to the world? John 17:20-23.

We find the model for Christian unity in the perfect oneness that exists between the Father and the Son (John 17:21). We should also note that we may be one in Them. Jesus' prayer places unity in its proper perspective: first we must each be united with God. Then, as a result, we will be united as a church family. (This is exactly as it is with the Ten Commandments. The first four stress our relationship with God. When our relationship is as it should be, then our relationships with others—the last six commandments—will be as they should be.)

Our personal union with Christ and unity among the believers are still the best evidence that He was sent by the Father.

"Let each one who claims to follow Christ esteem himself less and others more. Press together, press together. . . .

"Let everyone seek to answer the prayer of Christ: 'That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee.'"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 488, 489.

"The disunion that is striving for existence among those who profess to believe the last message of mercy to be given to the world, must find no place; for it would be a fearful hindrance to the advancement of God's work."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 174, 175.

What attitudes should we cultivate that will in turn cultivate Christian unity? Phil. 2:1-5. Examine yourself before these attitudes as if they were a mirror.

1.

2.

3.

When Jesus prayed His famous prayer in John 17, He prayed for each one of us. How will you be a part of the answer?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Psalm 133. How do David's analogies in this Psalm help us to understand the blessings of church unity?

Read *Selected Messages*, book 3, chap. 2; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, chap. "Unity of the Church"; vol. 5, chap. "Christian Unity."

"The testimony of every believer in the truth must be as one. All your little differences, which arouse the combative spirit among brethren, are devices of Satan to divert minds from the great and fearful issue before us. The true peace will come among God's people when through united zeal and earnest prayer the false peace that exists to a large degree is disturbed. Now there is earnest work to do. Now is the time to manifest your soldierly qualities; let the Lord's people present a united front to the foes of God and truth and righteousness."—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 20.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. After studying this week's lesson, how would you answer the Key Questions in Sabbath's lesson?
2. What personal benefits have you received as a result of the spirit of unity within your church or Sabbath School class?
3. Paul compared church unity to the human body. What other comparisons could you use to explain church unity?
4. How can we help to maintain unity within the church? Think of at least six ways. Try to support the various ways with a Bible text. One is given here: Focus on the positive features of the church instead of the negative (Phil. 2:3, 4; 4:8).
5. Contrast the blessings of being a member of a united church with the division and discord of the secular world.

SUMMARY: To have a united church despite the diversity that exists in it is a miracle of God. This miracle is possible only when Christ dwells in our hearts. Only then can we (1) be one in Christ, (2) build church unity, (3) use our spiritual gifts for God's glory, and (4) grow as a church, revealing to all that the Father sent His Son to save us.



The Power of Influence

J. H. Zachary

Mori Emeri and her husband owned a dance hall and beer parlor next door to their home in Papua New Guinea. Then Mori met Jesus and accepted Him as her personal Lord and Savior.

She rejoiced in her new life as a Christian and was determined to live for Christ. But her former lifestyle was making it difficult, and the dance hall and beer parlor were their only source of income.

Mori knew that her young children were being influenced by the people who frequented their establishment next door. She pleaded with her husband to find different work. What would become of their children as they grew up with this bad influence? What future would they have?

Although her husband is not a Christian, he agreed to try to find work in Port Moresby. While he was gone, Mori tore down the dance hall and built a bush church from woven bamboo walls and a grass roof.

With tender love she decorated the church. She arranged the backless benches, placed a clean decorated cloth over the table at the front, and placed jungle flowers on the front walls. The simple building was an inviting and lovely place to worship God.

Mori's decision to follow Christ has made a large impact on her community. Instead of the noises of dancing and carousing, songs of praise fill the air. The neighbors appreciate having the church in their neighborhood instead of the dance hall that attracted less-than-desirable patrons. And Mori's children now live in a more peaceful environment, where she can teach them to love the Savior as she does.

Attendance at the new church is growing as Mori Emeri visits her neighbors and shares with them the joy she has found in serving the Lord Jesus. But her most earnest prayer is that her husband will find the same joy, the same new life, that she has found in Jesus.



Mori Emeri (left). J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for *The Quiet Hour*, located in Redlands, California.

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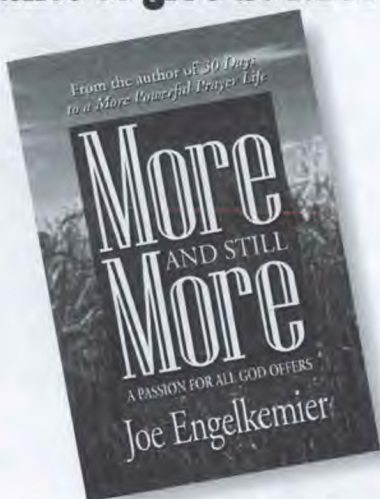


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In the World but Not of the World



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 3:17-19; John 17:14-16; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17; Gal. 5:18-25.

MEMORY TEXT: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: How is it possible for Christians to live in the world without being of the world? How does Christ's life inform our answer?

SIN IS GROWING EVERYWHERE. Listen to the evening news on television or radio, or read the newspaper to see how sin is corrupting the human heart in every corner of the world. We will not find any place without the stain of iniquity.

But we do not need the media to convince us of Satan's work in the degradation of this world. Paul wrote, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23, NKJV). Ellen White penned these words, “I was shown the state of the world, that it is fast filling up its cup of iniquity. Violence and crime of every description are filling our world, and Satan is using every means to make crime and debasing vice popular.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 471.

This week's lesson will highlight the stark contrast between the church and the world, holiness and sin, between God's children and people under Satan's dominion. May the Lord help us to be always on the right side of these contrasts.

MINDS SET ON EARTHLY THINGS (Phil. 3:17-21; 1 John 4:1-3).

How does Paul contrast the end of those who are faithful disciples of Christ with the end of those who are not? Phil. 3:17-21.

The apostle is referring to professed followers of Christ, whose behavior contradicted the truth in which they claimed to believe. They called themselves Christians, but they had set their minds on the sinful things of this earth. Examining today's world, we discover the same kind of nominal religion and moral degradation that existed in Paul's days. The evil one is intensifying his deceitful work. Through the secular mind he leads people by the millions to profanity, hedonism, materialism, and spiritual indifference. Or he wins many others through spiritualism, paganism, and New Age philosophies.

Since there are so many mistaken beliefs, what wise advice does John give us? 1 John 4:1-3. What is the significance of the phrase "in the flesh"?

How subtle are Satan's efforts to deceive and destroy us? 2 Cor. 11:14.

"The experience of the past will be repeated. In the future, Satan's superstitions will assume new forms. Errors will be presented in a pleasing and flattering manner. False theories, clothed with garments of light, will be presented to God's people. Thus Satan will try to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Most seducing influences will be exerted; minds will be hypnotized."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 293.

In John 17:14-16, Jesus prays, not that the Father will remove His small band of disciples from the world, but that His Father will keep them from the evil in the world. He never meant for His followers to withdraw from this life, but to face it triumphantly with Him by their side. The religion of Christ, if rightly practiced, equips us with those things necessary to meet the world straight on. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:10-12, NIV).

How have you seen error presented in a pleasing and flattering manner within the past few months? How did you recognize it for what it was? How did you deal with it?

“PERILOUS TIMES” (2 Tim. 3:1-5, NKJV; Phil. 2:14-16).

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Then list the sins he mentions in the following categories. Be able to explain why you placed them where you did.

Sins against God

Sins against humankind

Weaknesses of character

Verse 5. The people described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 “are not people who make no profession of religion, or who repudiate religion. Nominally they are religious folk, **holding the form of religion but denying the power of it.** They go through the practices which are associated with religion but neither experience nor expect to experience any transforming power.”—*The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 11, p. 499.

Contrast the description Paul gives of God’s true children in Philippians 2:14-16 with his description in 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Here we find one of the greatest contrasts in Scripture. In the midst of spiritual darkness we can “shine as lights.” We can speak the truth amidst deception. We can practice integrity amidst corruption. We can obey God amidst rebellion. We can fill our hearts with Jesus’ presence amidst the emptiness of the world.

“The glory of this light, which is the very glory of the character of Christ, is to be manifested in the individual Christian, in the family, in the church, in the ministry of the word, and in every institution established by God’s people.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 11.

Both 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and Philippians 2:14-16 are mirrors in which we can see ourselves. What strikes you the most when you compare or contrast yourself to these two descriptions? Ask God to fill your heart with Jesus’ presence so, gazing into the mirror, you will see only Him.

THE SIN OF IMITATION (1 Sam. 8:4-9; 1 Cor. 2:12; James 4:4).

What did the Israelites ask the prophet Samuel to do? 1 Sam. 8:4-9.

God's people wanted to be "like all the nations." Falling into the sin of imitation, they got just what they asked for. They turned from God. They failed in their mission. They became scattered. They almost lost their own identity as a nation. Finally, they lost their privileged position as God's people. In summary, they became like the heathen nations around them.

"The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their King—when the laws and the government which He had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 605.

"But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen! And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.

No matter how attractive a worldly lifestyle might be, the tragedy is always the same. To buy the world, one must "sell" God. The result? An empty, weary life, ending with eternal loss.

What contrasts appear in the following verses to help us understand the dangers of imitating the world?

1 Cor. 2:12 _____

2 Cor. 6:14-18 _____

James 4:4 _____

Adulterers and adulteresses. In many places, the Old Testament compares the relationship God has with His people to marriage (see Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:14, 20; the book of Hosea). Therefore, to be unfaithful to God, to have an intimate relationship with the world, is to commit spiritual adultery. Just as physical adultery breaks the heart of the innocent spouse, so a person's spiritual adultery breaks the heart of God.

What parts of a worldly lifestyle tempt you to commit the "sin of imitation"? How can you imitate Christ instead?

PURITY AMID IMPURITY (1 John 2:15-17; John 1:43-46).

The world is God's creation. And Jesus constantly presented His message using illustrations from nature. So what does 1 John 2:15-17 mean when it advises us not to love the world? Define the following:

Lust of the Flesh	Lust of the Eyes	Pride of Life

Here the apostle John points out the need to have clean thoughts and pure motives. The carnal mind and coveting eyes, along with "the pride of life," are common sins in the world. But, as God's children, we should reject them. Otherwise they will corrupt our lives.

"Choose poverty, reproach, separation from friends, or any suffering rather than to defile the soul with sin. Death before dishonor or the transgression of God's law should be the motto of every Christian."
 —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 147.

What example does Joseph give us regarding such a choice? Gen. 39:9. Read the whole story in the chapter. Who is the greatest example of purity? John 1:43-46.

Christ grew up in Nazareth, a small town known for its sinfulness. This explains why Nathaniel exclaimed, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" The fact is that, as a child, youth, and adult, Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He left us an example, that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

"Jesus was placed where His character would be tested. It was necessary for Him to be constantly on guard in order to preserve His purity. He was subject to all the conflicts which we have to meet, that He might be an example to us in childhood, youth, and manhood."
 —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 71.

We live in a sinful world. But we do not need to be a part of its impurity and degradation (Eph. 5:11). The key to victory is in Jesus and His two-part formula in Matthew 26:41. How can you apply this formula to your life today?

THE DIRECTION OF THE SPIRIT (Gal. 5:18-25; 2 Chron. 7:14).

Read Galatians 5:18-25. Then fill out the chart below. As you do so, analyze one by one the virtues in the second column, and vow to have the Holy Spirit develop them in you.

Works of the Flesh	Fruit of the Spirit

“When a man is converted to God, a new moral state is supplied, a new motive power is given, and he loves the things that God loves; for his life is bound up by the golden chain of the immutable promises to the life of Jesus.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 336.

What divine promise made to Solomon and his people can God’s people of today claim? 2 Chron. 7:14. List and explain the four conditions of this promise.

Those who obstinately disobey God are not prepared to receive the guidance of the Spirit. But the humble soul who wants to do God’s will discovers that the Spirit of God works in the believer’s soul, enabling him to advance from one line of obedience to another, reaching on from strength to greater strength, from grace to grace in Jesus Christ.

A young man approached a holy man of India sitting on the bank of the Ganges River and asked him how he could find God. The guru responded, “When you want God as much as a drowning man wants air, you will find Him.”

When was the last time you followed the progression in 2 Chronicles 7:14? Is there something in your life you could improve by meeting these conditions?

FURTHER READING: Read *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 471-482. These pages will help you to understand your spiritual need and the way to overcome sin.

The great thought of William Shakespeare in his work *Hamlet* was, "To be or not to be. That is the question." We could paraphrase these words saying, "To be or not to be a Christian." "To be a good son or daughter of God, or to be of this world." Every day we decide what we want to be, and we reap accordingly (Gal. 6:7). The Lord tells us with love through Moses, "Choose life" (Deut. 30:19).

"We must not, as a people, become careless and look upon sin with indifference. The camp needs purging. All who name the name of Christ need to watch and pray and guard the avenues of the soul; for Satan is at work to corrupt and destroy if the least advantage is given him."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 476.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. After having studied the lesson of this week, are we willing to walk with Jesus and to be faithful to Him? Are we always conscious that we only live in this world but we are not of it?
2. By the way we behave, are we revealing that our love is for Christ and not for the things of the world?
3. How can we live in the world but not be of the world? One answer is to reject all forms of sin and depend on God (James 4:7).
4. Contrast the world that surrounds us with the blessings of living in purity and friendship with Christ.

SUMMARY: According to Jesus' prayer, His desire is not to take us out of the world but to keep us from the evil one (John 17:15). Sin is everywhere, and it is growing. We don't need to imitate the world. Instead, we are called to be pure amid impurity, through the ministry of God's Holy Spirit.



A Single Act of Kindness

Zoravko Stefanovic

Rina Videnia needed help. She and her brother were visiting Singapore, and her visa would soon expire. She did not know where to go to get it extended.

By chance Rina met Mabel Ngui, who took her to the embassy to extend her visa. Rina was grateful to Mabel and wanted to thank her. So when Mabel invited Rina to attend a Bible study at the home of a friend, Rina accepted. She was an active member of her church in the Philippines, and she enjoyed Bible study. Since she could remain in Singapore longer, she agreed to attend the Bible study again with her new friend.

At the Bible studies, Rina met other church members and Mabel's pastor as well. The pastor visited Rina and her brother several times during their stay in Singapore.

When Rina returned to the Philippines, she told her family about the Bible studies she had attended with the Adventists. She wanted to worship with Adventists in the Philippines, but she did not know where an Adventist church or Bible study group met. Soon she was back in her busy life of teaching, medicine, and working in her own church.

Then one day she discovered the Adventist church on the campus of the International Institute of Advanced Studies, the Adventist theological school near Manila. She began attending and once again enjoyed deep Bible study.

Word reached her pastor that Rina was attending the Adventist church on Sabbaths. He did not want to lose her from the congregation and tried to involve her even further in church activities. But Rina recognized God's truths and made her decision to become a Seventh-day Adventist. Soon her husband and children joined her in the Adventist church. Then a Bible study group was organized in Rina's home as well.

Today, as her entire family worships together in the Adventist Church, Rina thanks God for the simple act of kindness from a Christian woman in a distant country, for that kind act led Rina and her family to a more complete knowledge of Bible truth.

Zoravko Stefanovic is professor of biblical studies at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines.

“Zealous for Good Works”



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Titus 2:11-14; 3:8; Eph. 2:8-10; 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; Rom. 6:12-14.

MEMORY TEXT: “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:13, 14, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What is the relationship between our faith in God and our behavior? Why is it necessary for the church to be a group of holy people?

CHRIST, THE SECRET OF A NEW LIFE. There is a world-wide tendency to think that it is possible to change or to behave in a righteous manner through mere human effort. But the more we trust in ourselves, the more we deceive ourselves. Let us consider the following statement regarding this subject:

“In this season of conflict and trial we need all the support and consolation we can derive from righteous principles, from fixed religious convictions, from the abiding assurance of the love of Christ, and from a rich experience in divine things.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 105.

This week we will study holiness as the practical demonstration of our faith. We also will see that the external aspects of our religion are the result of our connection with God (James 2:14-26).

CREATED FOR GOOD WORKS (Titus 2:7, 11-14; 3:8; Eph. 2:8-10).

Paul wrote to Titus while Titus was working with the Christians who lived on Crete, a large island in the Mediterranean Sea. During the early years of Christianity, the citizens of Crete were known for their dishonesty and other sins (Titus 1:10-12). Therefore, Paul considered it necessary to write to Titus about “good works,” that is, Christian behavior as the visible result of faith in God and His transforming power.

According to Paul’s letter to Titus, what is one of the reasons Christ redeemed us? Titus 2:14. What should we “be careful to maintain”? Titus 3:8.

If we would take into account the moral condition of today’s world, we would agree that Paul’s words to Titus are appropriate for us also. Titus 2:8, 14 are clear enough to help us understand the relationship that exists between faith and behavior (or daily deeds). The NEB renders the text of Titus 2:14 this way: “Make us a pure people marked out for his [Christ’s] own, *eager to do good*” (italics supplied).

Explain why being “created in Christ Jesus for good works” does not contradict being saved by grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-10).

Notice the preposition *for* used in our text: We become new creatures in Christ *for* good works **not** *by* good works. “We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. . . . If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 61.

What did Paul mean by a pattern of good works in Titus 2:7? Think about your behavior yesterday in regard to the following: (1) your co-workers, (2) your family, (3) your friends, (4) the cashier at the checkout counter, (5) the family pet, (6) an ongoing, troublesome situation. Ask yourself, What did my behavior in any one of these areas say about my faith in God? What is the only way to change my behavior in an area where it might be wanting?

A CHURCH WITHOUT WRINKLE (Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Tim. 3:15).

Explain what Jesus did for His church and why. Eph. 5:25-27.

From the very beginning of the human race, God wanted to have a holy people. But sin produced great frustration. Even though there was no earthly antidote, God had an effective cure already prepared. His only Son, Jesus Christ, giving His life for the justification and sanctification of all repentant sinners. Through the offering of His life, Christ cleansed and sanctified His church, making it holy and without blemish.

What are you doing, as a member of Christ's body, to keep holy and pure the beloved church for which Jesus gave His life? How can the church be holy if its members are not holy? Explain your answer.

How does Paul refer to the church in 1 Timothy 3:15? What does this tell us about one of the church's functions?

Our text in the RSV refers to the church as "the pillar and bulwark of the truth." The NIV refers to it as "the pillar and foundation of the truth." These translations reveal one of the most outstanding functions of Christ's church. It must sustain and preserve God's truth amidst the false teachings of our day. If the church were not holy, how could it fulfill such a sacred commitment? Our slogan should be "Holiness to the Lord" (see Exod. 39:30) instead of "Faithfulness to the world"!

What has just been said about the church in general must be applied to every one of its members. Christ calls each one of His professed disciples to be a "pillar," "support," "bulwark," or custodian of the truth, not only through words of defense but through deeds of example.

"I lift my voice of warning to all who name the name of Christ to depart from all iniquity. Purify your souls by obeying the truth. Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 475.

What types of thought occupied your mind the most yesterday? Were they thoughts motivated by the love of Christ as displayed in the price He paid for the holiness of His church and each of its members? How does His love motivate you?

OUR SANCTIFICATION (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:14-23; 2 Cor. 7:1).**How does Paul define sanctification, or holiness? 1 Thess. 4:3.**

We can grow in holiness through prayer and reading the Bible. We can maintain holiness by developing a humble spirit and a pure mind. We can express our holiness by doing something good for others. But the only way to *live in holiness* consists in *doing God's will*.

"Excitement is not sanctification. Entire conformity to the will of our Father which is in heaven is alone sanctification, and the will of God is expressed in His holy law. The keeping of all the commandments of God is sanctification."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 204.

"Holiness . . . is an entire surrender of the will to God. . . . It is . . . trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 51.

What parts of our life does God sanctify? 1 Thess. 5:23.

After mentioning various aspects of true Christianity in verses 14-22, the apostle Paul tells us in verse 23 how we can reproduce these aspects in our own lives. "The God of peace" is our Sanctifier through Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

Look upon Jesus. The Duke of Milan commissioned Leonardo da Vinci to paint "The Last Supper." Da Vinci worked for several years on what would become a masterpiece, paying attention to every detail of the disciples' faces, the grouping around the Lord's table, the chalice, and, of course, the face of Jesus. Finally, da Vinci was ready to share his labor with a friend. As the friend marveled at the beautiful work of art, he exclaimed, "Oh, what a beautiful chalice! I cannot take my eyes off it."

Upon hearing those words, da Vinci immediately took his brush and painted through the chalice, exclaiming in return that nothing ever should divert one's eyes from Christ!

Consider your interests and concerns. How might they be diverting your "eyes" from Christ? Are you as willing to "paint" through them as da Vinci was to paint through his beautiful chalice? Our lives can be compared to an empty canvas on which a self-portrait is painted. When Christ enters into the heart, how can His love turn even the most broken soul into a "masterpiece"?

“BE HOLY, BECAUSE I AM HOLY” (John 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:13-16, NIV).

After our conversion, with all its spiritual changes, what are we called to be? 1 Pet. 1:13-16 (compare Lev. 11:44, 45).

God’s call has not changed during the centuries. What a loving Father we have! He places before us the highest ideal of conduct, then helps us to reach it (Phil. 2:13).

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached.”—*Education*, p. 18.

“We shall attain to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus only as the result of a steady growth in grace.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 105.

Read Hebrews 12:14. Why will no one see the Lord without being holy?

No one will be saved practicing sin. Our lives must be “hidden with Christ in God” so that His Holy Spirit will be able to work His good will through us (Col. 3:3, NIV). Then our names will be “written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27).

Read John 17:17. Explain the relationship between sanctification and God’s Word dwelling in our hearts.

“The prayer of Christ was, ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’ Therefore the sanctification of the Spirit of God upon the heart, leads men to walk in the way of God’s commandments. The very test that God brought upon Adam in Eden, will be brought upon every member of the human family. Obedience to God was required of Adam, and we stand in the same position that he did to have a second trial, to see whether we will listen to the voice of Satan and disobey God, or to the Word of God and obey.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1146, 1147.

Matthew 25:31-46 basically states that we will be judged (measured) by how we have treated one another. Read this passage. Then explain why the above quotation is *not* a contradiction of these verses. Are we meant to understand the thirst, hunger, loneliness, and nakedness literally, as symbols, or both?

CONSECRATION TO GOD (Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:58; Josh. 3:5).

Why will sin no longer dominate the lives of sincere and genuine Christians? Rom. 6:12-14. How would you explain to someone that verse 14 does not mean we do not have to obey God's law?

Sin is our worst enemy. If we tolerate it in our lives, or if we hide it in our hearts, as Achan hid the spoils of Jericho in his tent (Josh. 7:19-21), sooner or later disaster will strike (James 1:15).

By God's grace and the Holy Spirit's work within us, we can be sanctified. Apply 2 Corinthians 3:17 to this concept of spiritual liberty.

The opposite of sin is obedience, loyalty, faithfulness, integrity, consecration, holiness, and communion with God. All heaven is ready to help us live such a life. Do we always remember this? If so, we shall be able to "overcome evil with good" instead of being "overcome by evil" (Rom. 12:21, NRSV). The children of Israel were faithful to God only for short periods of time. Their periods of repentance from spiritual adultery were like "morning cloud[s]" and "the early dew" (Hosea 6:4, NRSV). How would you rate your fidelity to the Lord? By God's grace, is it firm and constant? "My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58, NRSV). Pray that it may be so!

"If you will only watch, continually watch unto prayer, if you will do everything as if you were in the immediate presence of God, you will be saved from yielding to temptation, and may hope to be kept pure, spotless, and undefiled till the last."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 148.

Why did Joshua tell the Israelites to sanctify themselves? Josh. 3:5.

We are about to cross the spiritual Jordan into heaven—our promised kingdom of God. As God commanded the Israelites, He commands us also to become sanctified through grace. What wonders will He do among us who surrender our lives fully to Him? In preparing to be in His presence in heaven, are we experiencing His presence here? We will walk with Him there if we, like Enoch, walk with Him here.

FURTHER STUDY: Read *Steps to Christ*, chap. 7; *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, chap. 60; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 19-29.

A trapeze performer was explaining how he executed a breathtaking triple somersault: "To catch the swing," he explained, "you must time your dive perfectly. It takes a lot of practice and courage. The secret is to throw your heart over the bar. And when you do that, your body will follow." In the same manner, when we give our heart to Christ, our whole life will follow (Prov. 23:26).

"He [Jesus] is not only the author but the finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, 'I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' . . .

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, 'Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.' This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. . . . Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 69, 70.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The Lord calls us to be holy, "zealous for good works." Explain how this is possible.
2. List a number of ways a person can resist the degrading influence of today's society.
3. After studying this week's lesson, how would you answer the Key Questions in Sabbath's lesson?
4. Contrast the blessings of living a holy life through Jesus with the life of those who live without Him.

SUMMARY: As God's children, we have the honor of being holy by virtue of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we will be able to do "good works." It is clear that the Sanctifier, the One who makes us holy, is the Lord (1 Thess. 5:23) through our faith and our consecration to Him.



The Priest Changed Gods

J. H. Zachary

"Lamungia is a pagan village with about 200 people," Pastor Punda explained as the taxi in which we rode struggled along a rough trail in this remote section of Orissa State in India. Normally the pastor walks from the highway to the village, a journey that takes him all day.

We arrived in the village and stepped inside the humble mud-brick home of Dinabandha Pradhan, a former pagan priest. His wife was preparing a meal over an open fire in the smoke-filled room.

For most of his adult life Pradhan had led the villagers in worshipping their idols. Then Adventist Christians came to share the gospel. Pradhan drove the Christians from the village and urged villagers to have nothing to do with Christianity.

But the Adventist pastor returned in spite of taunts and threats. Little by little the message of Christ touched the heart of the pagan priest. He was deeply impressed that the great Creator God would die for him. Eventually 25 members of the village gave their lives to Jesus and joined the Adventist church. Pradhan got rid of the village idols. With a smile spreading across his face, the former priest said, "We have lived all our lives without the knowledge of the true God. But we are happy that now we have a new life!"

Not everyone in the village is happy that some have become Christians. The 175 villagers who are not Christians persecute the new believers. A mob tried to kill the once-respected pagan priest. He has been dragged off to jail, beaten, and threatened. Opposition to Christianity, which he once led, continues.

"No matter how the villagers treat us," Pradhan said, "we are happy to worship the true God." He prays that one day the entire village will come to know Jesus.



We walked out to a large field adjacent to Pradhan's home. "I have dedicated this land to God," he said. "One day we will have a church here." But the villagers are poor, and do not have the money to build even a simple church. At present the new believers must walk several hours to worship in another village.

Dinabandha Pradhan (left). J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for *The Quiet Hour*, located in Redlands, California.

Salt of the Earth, Light of the World



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 5:13-16; Mark 9:50; John 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:6.

MEMORY TEXT: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What does it mean for the Christian to be salt and light? How do we become such agents?

OUR WORLD'S NEED. Wherever we live, we see around us many empty hearts, many sad faces, and many people without any reason to live. They merely grow, reproduce, suffer, and die. They do not really live, because they are not connected with the Source of life.

"He who seeks to quench his thirst at the fountains of this world will drink only to thirst again. Everywhere men are unsatisfied. They long for something to supply the need of the soul. Only One can meet that want . . . Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

Every one of us can bring people to Christ, "the way and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, NIV). "The love of Christ, revealed to us, makes us debtors to all who know Him not."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 81.

This week, we shall study how, by word and deed, we can add spiritual flavor and light to the blandness and darkness of today's world. Let us remember that Christ is the real salt and ultimate light of this world. We can become the salt and light to people around us only if we allow Christ to "salt" and "brighten" our lives with His life.

THE VITAL POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN (Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50).

A metaphor compares two objects to show how they are alike. What metaphor does Jesus use to explain our Christian mission? Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50. Why does He use this metaphor?

Jesus used the most common elements of everyday life to illustrate the deepest lessons regarding salvation, and people listened to Him with intense interest (Matt. 7:28, 29). In this particular case, almost at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses this particular metaphor to emphasize the influence of a good Christian life.

Salt is used to purify, preserve, and flavor. How can Christians in a sinful world purify, preserve, and flavor? Put your thoughts regarding this in the chart below.

Purify	Preserve	Flavor

“The savor of the salt represents the vital power of the Christian—the love of Jesus in the heart, the righteousness of Christ pervading the life. . . .

“Unless the Holy Spirit can use us as agents through whom to communicate to the world the truth as it is in Jesus, we are as salt that has lost its savor and is entirely worthless.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 36, 37.

How do we become the salt of the earth? Acts 4:13.

To be an effective flavoring agent, salt must be thoroughly mixed with food. What does this tell us about how we should live as Christians? Does it conflict with the concept of being in the world but not of the world? Explain. How can we mingle with others in order to fulfill our global mission without being negatively affected?

GLORIFYING GOD (Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5; 2 Cor. 4:6; John 8:12).

After referring to salt, what other metaphor did Jesus use to explain our work as a church and as individuals? Matt. 5:14-16. Why are we to “shine before men”? Verse 16.

“As the sun goes forth on its errand of love, dispelling the shades of night and awakening the world to life, so the followers of Christ are to go forth on their mission, diffusing the light of heaven upon those who are in the darkness of error and sin. . . .

“No other light ever has shone or ever will shine upon fallen man save that which emanates from Christ.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 39.

Explain what Paul means in Ephesians 5:8 when he counsels us to “walk in the light.”

While *darkness* is a symbol of sin in its various manifestations, *light* is a symbol that represents the Christian virtues. Only by displaying such virtues are we able to illuminate the world.

“Our profession of faith may proclaim the theory of religion, but it is our practical piety that holds forth the word of truth. The consistent life, the holy conversation, the unswerving integrity, the active, benevolent spirit, the godly example—these are the mediums through which light is conveyed to the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 307.

Since Jesus is the Source of light, what should be our attitude toward Him? John 8:12; 12:35, 36.

The very God who said in the beginning, “Let there be light; and there was light,” is equally powerful today to remove any darkness from our hearts and guide us to walk side by side with Jesus, “the light of the world.” He promised, “He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12, NKJV).

A light is: (1) meant to be seen, (2) often used as a guide, or (3) used as a warning. Apply each of these to the duty a Christian has as a light to the world.

How can you be a light in each one of these areas?

TWO SUCCESSFUL LIGHTS (2 Kings 5:1-15; Acts 8:26-39).

We read about two successful lights in 2 Kings 5:1-15 and Acts 8:26-39. As you study these passages, ask the following questions of each story: Who? What? Where? When? How? and Why? What can you conclude from your answers about being lights to the world?

2 Kings 5:1-15**Acts 8:26-39**

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

How?

Why?

Conclusions

We do not know the name of the captive girl nor her age. But we know that she had a great faith in the true God and His prophet and that her employers respected her. Because she was a light in the darkness of a pagan home, a miracle occurred. "The parents of that Hebrew maid, as they taught her of God . . . were faithful to their trust; and in the home of the captain of the Syrian host, their child bore witness to the God whom she had learned to honor."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 246.

While traveling back home, the Ethiopian read Isaiah 53. But he could not understand it. So the Lord sent him Philip, who gave him a Bible study right then and there. As a result, the Ethiopian accepted Christ as his Savior.

Because Philip had the Light of the world in his heart, he could share it with others. "There are many who are reading the Scriptures who cannot understand their true import. All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. . . . Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109.

Think of at least three ways you can let your light shine in a manner similar to the witness of Philip and the young Israelite woman. Then let it shine!

THESE WERE LIGHTS IN THE WORLD (Heb. 11:4-27, 32-39; Dan. 2:48; chap. 6; Luke 4:16-19).

Throughout the centuries, God has had human instruments shedding His light in the world. Review Hebrews 11 to see what some of these lights did by faith in Him.

These people did not allow circumstances to dim their lights. They allowed God to let His light shine through them. That is exactly what the Lord wants us to do today. We do not need to subdue kingdoms or harbor “spies” from a foreign nation. But we can meet the needs of the many people around us who live in darkness.

“God calls not only for our gifts for the needy, but for our cheerful countenance, our hopeful words, our kindly handclasp. When Christ healed the sick, He laid His hands upon them. So should we come in close touch with those whom we seek to benefit.

“There are many from whom hope has departed. Bring back the sunshine to them. Many have lost their courage. Speak to them words of cheer. Pray for them. There are those who need the bread of life. Read to them from the word of God. Upon many is a soul sickness which no earthly balm can reach nor physician heal. Pray for these souls, bring them to Jesus.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 418.

How was Daniel’s experience a light in Babylon and Medo-Persia? Dan. 2:48; chap. 6. Consider how you can imitate him.

How great is the example Daniel left us! How much we need to be like him in humility, wisdom, fidelity, and trust. These are the virtues that help make us lights in the world.

As the Light of the world, what “job description” did Christ proclaim was His? Luke 4:16-21.

“When those who profess to serve God follow Christ’s example, . . . then will the church have power to move the world.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 340.

Make a list of the people you deal with every day. Even if they profess to be Christians, ask yourself how you can be a light to them. The sun shines on us all, the good and bad alike. How does this fact help you to understand your job description as a light to the world?

THE GREATEST LIGHT (Luke 15:1-24; Matt. 9:9-13; Rom. 5:7-9; Isa. 53:4, 5).

What did the Pharisees and scribes say regarding Christ's attitude toward sinners? Why did He answer with a series of three parables? Luke 15:1-24 (compare Matt. 9:9-13).

Christ's enemies criticized and condemned His behavior. "If Jesus were the Messiah," they muttered amongst themselves, "He should not receive sinners, eat with them, or be friends with them." Yet Christ did all these things. And the criticism of His enemies actually became the best commendation of His love for humanity. That was precisely the reason He came to this fallen world: to seek and save the lost, the ones who saw their need for Him.

The fact that Jesus received sinners, ate with them, and befriended them shows His love for even the most despised person. What Jesus did in the past, He does today. He loves each and every one of us with an eternal love. He gives us His company when we feel alone. He cures our inner wounds when we are spiritually sick. He brings us back when we are lost in sin. And He fulfills each and every one of our true needs.

As He sheds His light on us and we receive His abundant mercy, we accept the sacred privilege to do the same for our neighbor. Otherwise, how could we be the salt and the light of this world?

What was the highest manifestation of Christ's love and light for sinners? Isa. 53:4, 5; Rom. 5:7-9.

In giving His life for us, Jesus revealed the depth of His divine love. Certainly He was with sinners at the table eating with them. But He also was with them at the cross offering them eternal life. Where could we find a greater Light that at the cross? He is the true Light "which enlightens everyone" (John 1:9, NRSV). He launched His ministry by giving of Himself to others, and He continued such giving of His life until He finally gave all at Calvary. Doesn't this move us to give of ourselves in love and service to others?

Take time to read carefully Isaiah 53. As you do, involve yourself as a saved sinner in this description of how Christ became the Light of the world. Then give thanks to Him for such a bright light shed in your life. In what ways can He help you reflect His light in your daily life and witness to others?

FURTHER STUDY: Read the following texts. How do they shed light on Matthew 5:14-16? Pss. 18:28; 27:1; 37:6; 119:105; Prov. 4:18; Luke 1:76, 79; John 8:12; Eph. 5:14; 2 Pet. 1:19.

Read *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 33-40; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 454-467; and *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 273-280.

The moral and spiritual darkness of this time demands our consecration to God. What people need today is the Light of the world. We can reflect Him by means of our Christian character.

“Trials patiently borne, blessings gratefully received, temptations manfully resisted, meekness, kindness, mercy, and love habitually revealed, are the lights that shine forth in the character in contrast with the darkness of the selfish heart, into which the light of life has never shone.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 44.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List at least five ways we can be spiritual salt and light. One way is given to get you started: Using our gifts and talents to bless others.
2. Think of one or two other metaphors that would help explain our duty as Christians to be witnesses for the Lord. Compare them with the two metaphors that Christ used.
3. The Memory Text for this week counsels us to “walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8, NKJV). Explain what it means to do so. What does it mean to be the children of light?
4. Contrast the blessings of being a light for Christ to the moral and spiritual darkness so many people live in today.
5. How may you be hiding your light under a bushel? If you are, think of ways you can let your light shine on others.

SUMMARY: We have the privilege of being the salt of this insipid earth and the light in this dark world. But we cannot have true spiritual flavor or brilliant light by ourselves. Jesus is the Source. He is the One who enables us to penetrate people’s hearts so they will see and accept Him as their Savior.



Surfing for Jesus, Part 1

as told to Lynn Rose

The sun was just coming up over the horizon as the fishing boat neared the point of land where the sheltered sea met the open ocean. Gary Bauer* leaned against the rail and studied the line of waves breaking on the shore. The smell of the sea reminded him of his teenage years working as a deck hand on a deep-sea fishing boat and of surfing every chance he could.

He reached for his surfboard. Who would have thought that his love for surfing would ever bring him an opportunity to share Jesus Christ with people who had never heard the name before?

Bauer was a "tentmaker" (a self-supporting missionary) in a closed Middle-Eastern country. He had been studying the language for months and was eager to try speaking without an interpreter. When he heard that the waves along this stretch of ocean were a surfer's delight, he decided to try them out for himself. This little vacation adventure would provide an opportunity to surf as well as practice his new language skills on people who almost never saw outsiders.

He found a fishing boat captain who was willing to take him to the area, but the captain pointed out that there were no ports where he could dock. When Gary indicated that he planned to jump ship and surf to shore, the captain insisted on being paid in advance. Gary smiled as he pondered what the captain must have thought about him right then.

The boat slowed as it neared the point where Bauer would take his leave. As he studied the shoreline, he noticed a few masonry homes framed by a row of mountains. But no city was in sight.

The captain signaled that he was turning around. Suddenly Bauer wondered if it was such a great idea to jump off the boat and surf to shore. But he could not back down now. He tightened the straps on his backpack and checked the strap that tethered his surfboard to his ankle. The sea seemed so much farther down than when he had boarded the ship, and the water was rougher than he had anticipated. But the captain held the gate open, so he took a running leap and sailed into the water.

(continued next week)

Lynn Rose is an accounting clerk at the General Conference. *Gary Bauer is a pseudonym; for security reasons his exact location is not identified.

Christ, the Center of Our Homes



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 2:1-11; Eph. 5:21-31; 1 Cor. 7:2-6; Exod. 12:3, 5-7, 13, 26-28; Luke 10:38-42; 19:1-10.

MEMORY TEXT: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: With so many opposing forces at work in our lives, how is it possible to establish a Christian home? How do such homes benefit society and the church?

A CHRISTIAN HOME IS GOD'S WORK. With a divorce rate of nearly 50 percent in some countries, perhaps the time is long overdue to reevaluate the blessings of a Christian home. In previous lessons this quarter, we have studied the differences between many contrasting entities:

1. The world and the church
2. The old person and the new
3. Selfishness and love
4. Dissension and unity
5. Sin and holiness
6. Darkness and light
7. The devil's work and God's

In this week's lesson, we will study yet another two contrasting entities—a secular family and a Christian home. In fact, marriage is one of the two institutions that remain from Eden.

THE BLESSINGS OF A CHRISTIAN HOME (Ps. 127:1; John 2:1-11).

According to this week's Memory Text, how can we successfully build a Christian home? Ps. 127:1.

Only the One who created the first home can help us build a blessed Christian home today. To forget this fact would be to "labor in vain."

"The first work to be done in a Christian home is to see that the Spirit of Christ abides there, that every member of the household may be able to take his cross and follow where Jesus leads the way."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 20.

"Angels delight in a home where God reigns supreme and the children are taught to reverence religion, the Bible, and their Creator."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 28.

What spiritual lessons about the home can we draw from some of the important facts regarding the miracle Jesus performed in Cana? John 2:1-10.

Important Fact	Spiritual Lesson About the Home

When Christ becomes the center of the family, parents and children experience true love, joy, harmony, and a high level of spirituality. With Christ as their center, when problems or temptations come to them, they can claim the promise of protection: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 59:19).

Consider the decisions and activities your family, church family, or friends took part in recently. How was Christ the focus of the decisions taken or the activities participated in?

LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS (Eph. 5:21-31; 1 Cor. 7:2-6).

Although it might seem unnecessary to talk about love and faithfulness in a Christian home, it is sad to realize that even among God's children, selfishness and infidelity are common sins.

Selfishness appears as indifference, coldness, rudeness, even physical aggression. And infidelity includes more than adultery. It also is an impure, lustful imagination (Matt. 5:27, 28).

What does Paul say about the loving relation between husband and wife? Eph. 5:21-31 (compare 1 Cor. 13:4-8).

Paul describes a superior, pure love, such as the love Christ manifested toward the church to sanctify and redeem it. It is a love of generosity, self-denial, and fidelity; a love that "never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8, NIV), if it is fed with respect, courtesy, and prayer. How much did Christ love the church? Enough to die for it!

"Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse [communication], showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are homes where His principle is carried out—homes where God is worshiped and truest love reigns."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 144.

How does the apostle express the mutual obligation of love in marriage? 1 Cor. 7:2-6.

These verses point out the need to demonstrate love in a marriage. Following the counsel in these verses would help to prevent adultery. The physical expression of love between husband and wife is a part of God's plan for their happiness and unity (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5; Eph. 5:31). Nevertheless, this intimate relation is not just the union of two bodies, but of two hearts. It is not merely a pleasant physical activity, but a deep joy to be so loved. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled" (Heb. 13:4). How does our focus on and trust in Christ keep us undefiled? Remember, "one steadfast look to the Saviour uplifted upon the cross will do more to purify the mind and heart from every defilement than will all the scientific explanations by the ablest tongue."—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, p. 108.

How can loyalty (both sexual and otherwise) between spouses translate into more stable societies and churches?

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME (Isa. 39:1-4).

“The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349.

It is a shame Hezekiah did not realize the truth in the above quote when representatives of the Babylonian king delivered a letter to him upon hearing that he had been sick (see 2 Kings 20:1-11). As you read verses 12-15, decide what Hezekiah should have done.

Despite the fact that Hezekiah was giving the Babylonians a grand tour of his palace, Isaiah’s keen question, “What have they seen in your house?” is a thought-provoking question for us. Which of God’s blessings do we most appreciate? Our *house* with all its treasures, or the godly love, loyalty, and fidelity that reside in our Christian *home*? When people visit our home, are they more impressed with the things we own, or with our Christian demeanor?

Isaiah warned Hezekiah that a day would come “‘when all that is in your house . . . shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left’” (2 Kings 20:17, NKJV). The only thing that would serve Hezekiah well would be his faith in God. Yet God was not what the Babylonians saw during their guided tour.

In principle, Isaiah’s warning is for us also. There will come a time when all that we own will be worthless. In light of the last days and Christ’s second coming, the only thing that will serve us well will be our faith in Him.

How strong can the influence of a Christian home be? Zech. 8:23.

Speaking of the spiritual recovery and the future of His ancient people, the Lord foretold the day when people of other nations would be greatly attracted to them.

In our “personal lives . . . [we] are to make the religion of Jesus Christ so attractive that others will be drawn to surrender their lives to the Saviour. God’s church is now to be a blessing to the world.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1104.

Whom are you influencing? What type of influence are you? Think of at least two things you and your family can do to witness to your neighbors and friends this week.

CHRIST, THE SALVATION OF OUR HOMES (Exod. 12:3, 5-7, 13, 26-28; Luke 10:38-42).

How did the Israelites preserve their families during the last plague? Exod. 12:3, 5-7, 13, 26-28. What did the lamb symbolize? 1 Cor. 5:7. What application can you make of the first Passover to your family?

What does an incident in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus teach us about communion with Christ? Luke 10:38-42.

Jesus was a friend of all three siblings. His presence blessed their home. But in a special way, Mary appreciated that Friend for His wisdom, forgiveness, and salvation. Consider the words Jesus spoke to Martha about her and Mary. There was no condemnation in His choice of words or voice, but rather a clear emphasis on spiritual values (vs. 41, 42).

What kind of communion do we have with Christ? Although we might be extremely busy, do we dedicate time for Him in our homes?

Imagine Christ visiting your home. If He came to spend a couple of days with you, what would you do? Certainly you would give Him your best room and serve Him your best food. But would you have to change the course of your conversations, turn off your favorite TV programs, or hide your favorite books? Would your family be able to continue with the same types of activity in which you have always been engaged? Or would you have to adopt a lifestyle artificial to your normal routine?

In one sense, these verses are really dealing with life goals. "What has our attention most of the time? Martha is focused on her own goals. She is so busy being gracious and polite and a good hostess that she has no time to be with the Lord. We may say that all we have—time, life, money—is the Lord's, but does He have our attention? Martha's social proprieties kept her from focusing her attention on Jesus and His agenda for her life.

"You and I can lose sight of who we are and whose we are very easily. The good things in life . . . can begin to choke out God's life in us. As we make God and His presence in our lives our primary focus, we find He is the key to everything."—Bruce Larson, *The Communicator's Commentary: Luke*, Lloyd J. Ogilvie, gen. ed. (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), p. 186.

What has your family been focusing on during the past month? Do your family priorities prevent you from focusing on Christ?

IN JESUS' PRESENCE (Luke 19:1-10).

What did Jesus say about Zacchaeus's home? Luke 19:1-10.

Zacchaeus was a sincere man. He wanted to have an encounter with Jesus because he was not satisfied with himself. He was looking for a better life that no material gain or riches in this world could ever provide.

"No sooner did Zacchaeus yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit than he cast aside every practice contrary to integrity."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 555.

Like Zacchaeus's home, many families today could find salvation if they only had the desire to change and turn their lives over to Christ. When we seek and find the Lord, old things will pass away, and all things will become new (see 2 Cor. 5:17).

"Today salvation has come to this house," said Jesus. His divine presence performed yet another miracle. "Salvation has not come just to Zacchaeus, but to his entire household. When the head of the household commits his or her life to the Lord, the whole house is blessed. Salvation had come that very moment to Zacchaeus's house."—Larson, *The Communicator's Commentary: Luke*, p. 271.

How is your home? A great number of Christian homes suffer the typical problems associated with secular influences: a lack of spirituality; disregard for the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy; marital infidelity; rudeness, aggression, and disharmony; lack of discipline in rearing children and keeping the house in order.

These and many other problems undermine Christian values in the home. However, God can make profound changes in our homes just as he did in Zacchaeus's.

Difficulties, however, will still haunt your doorstep. But when they find their way inside the four walls of your house, bringing sorrow and discouragement to your family, the divine Helper, the Holy Spirit, will give you strength, hope, wisdom, and support. When Christ is the center of our homes, we can draw love, wisdom, and support from Him to fulfill our needs and resolve our seemingly impossible problems.

What activities are you involved in that influence your family members (or church family members) for or against Christ? Recall a time when focusing on Christ helped you resolve a difficult problem in your home. In what ways can you depend on Christ from now on to be the constant Helper in any family problem you may face?

FURTHER STUDY: What does the Bible teach us about the Christian's relationship toward children? Exod. 20:12; Deut. 30:1, 2; 1 Sam. 1:11, 24; Ps. 127:3-5; Prov. 29:15; Matt. 18:4, 5, 10; Mark 9:36, 37; 10:13-15; Eph. 6:1-4.

What responsibilities do parents have toward their children? What responsibilities does the church have toward children both within and without its walls?

Read *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, chapter 22. Also read the first three chapters of *The Adventist Home*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. After studying this week's lesson, how would you answer the Key Questions in Sabbath's lesson?
2. What kind of influence does your home have on your children, your church, and your neighborhood? How much influence do you receive in your home from your church in contrast with what you receive from the world?
3. How can Christ become the center of our homes? List at least five ways. One is given here to get you started: Make God's Word the norm for the behavior of all family members, including the parents.
4. Contrast the blessings of a Christian home with the secular families of our day.
5. Read Psalm 68:6. What can you do if you miss being in a "traditional" family setting? How can your "traditional" family, church family, or family of friends include people who presently have no family to call their own?
6. Think of one thing you can do during the next week in each of the following areas to improve the spiritual life of your family: secret prayer, the family altar, Bible study, Christian service.

SUMMARY: In this sinful world, it is possible to establish a family with Christ as the center. Such homes are a blessing to both society and the church. Plus they are the best school to prepare ourselves for the heavenly home.



Surfing for Jesus, Part 2

As told to Lynn Rose

Gary Bauer,* a self-supporting missionary in a Middle-Eastern country, grabbed his surfboard and jumped overboard. After the jolt of hitting the water, his fear was replaced by a sense of adventure, and he paddled toward the shore.

As he spread his wet clothes out on the sandy beach to dry, he noticed two boys watching him from one of the houses farther up the beach. Bauer grabbed his surfboard, turned toward the surf, and paddled out beyond the breakers. He found a wave and steadied himself on the board, letting the wave carry him toward shore. He had no time to notice the growing crowd of children gathering on the beach to watch him. They had never seen a surfer before.

As his wave died, Bauer paddled to shore. He waved at the children and greeted them in Arabic. Two of the children turned and ran toward home but soon returned with their parents. A crowd gathered, and Bauer decided to try his Arabic, a few words at a time.

He noticed that the people called him by a name he had never heard before. (Later he learned that it means "man from the sea.")

Bauer continued surfing all morning, and the crowd on the beach shouted and clapped when he successfully rode the big waves in to shore. While he rested, he let some of the boys paddle around on his surfboard. They loved it!

Someone invited Bauer home for a meal, and he gladly accepted. After dark he built a fire on the beach and invited the villagers to gather around and tell stories. He had studied the Koran and knew that it taught that Isa, Jesus, was a prophet, a kind and loving miracle worker. But the Koran did not say that Isa is the Son of God or that He came to die to redeem humanity from sin. Bauer told the villagers the rest of the story, including what Isa had done for him.

Bauer made friends during his short surfing vacation. When the time came to leave, he gave his surfboard to the village children who had admired it. He said farewell to his new friends and caught a ride back to the city with a truck driver.

No one was baptized during Bauer's surfing vacation, but he had introduced the people to his close friend, Isa, and had planted seeds of truth for a later harvest.

Lynn Rose is an accounting clerk at the General Conference. *Gary Bauer is a pseudonym; for security reasons his exact location is not identified.

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How Are We Today?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 24:4, 5, 11-13, 24; 7:15-20; Rom. 8:35-39; 13:11-14; Rev. 3:15-20.

MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20, NKJV).

KEY QUESTION: How can each church reach a higher level of spirituality and avoid being absorbed by the worldly current of life?

FAITHFUL TO THE END? “There is a church which sends in its annual statistical statement, year after year, as follows:

Number of members added by baptism	0
Number of members dismissed by letter	5
Number of members who have died	3
Amount raised for home missions	0
Amount raised for foreign missions	0

Pray for us, brethren, that we continue faithful unto the end.”

—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, Paul Lee Tan, ed. (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers, 1985), p. 766.

While it is true we can jiggle statistics to prove almost anything, it is also true that this church had a problem. It was not their poor showing in the numbers so much as it was the fact that they truly believed they were being faithful and therefore had need of nothing!

Are you, is your local congregation, like this? If so, how would you know? As you study this week's lesson, take time to examine your own heart. Can you hear the Savior knocking?

NO OTHER FOUNDATION (Matt. 24:4, 5, 11-13, 24; 7:15-20).

Summarize Jesus' "prophecy" concerning false prophets and their teachings. What do you think Christ wanted us to know about such prophets, considering His statement that they will come in sheep's clothing but be as ravenous as wolves? Matt. 24:4, 5, 11-13, 24; 7:15-20.

This is the time Jesus foresaw just before His second coming. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13, NKJV). How could we recognize the false prophets and beware of them? By their fruits and their behavior. Are they obedient to *all* of God's word, or not? (Matt. 7:15-20). Do they teach Bible truth? (Isa. 8:20). This is the key to identifying and repelling their teachings.

Many sincere people belong to different churches that teach what is not in the Bible. Thus, truth remains hidden and unknown to them. But the day will come when they will seek and find the truth.

"Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His word."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 464.

What is the only foundation of our faith? 1 Cor. 3:11.

While Satan is enlarging his kingdom through false teachings, he also is working inside the heart to weaken the faith of God's children. Then doubt, religious uncertainty, and indifference can invade the inner life until the foundation of faith loses firmness and begins to tremble.

But we must remember that "the solid foundation of God stands" (2 Tim. 2:19). We can trust in the Lord because He never changes (Heb. 13:8). He fulfils His promises (2 Cor. 1:20) and loves us "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3).

Read Matthew 7:24-27. Compare Proverbs 10:25. How do these verses help you to understand the importance of a firm spiritual foundation?

Describe what type of material, skill, and crew are needed to build on the rock. Then do the same for a house built on the sand. On what foundation are you now building?

FREE FROM WORLDLINESS AND APOSTASY (1 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 8:35-39; 13:11-14).

What do we learn about events in the last days from 1 Timothy 4:1?

“As the storm approaches, a large class who professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

Sadly, a good number of our members, after some years of meaningful fellowship, will abandon the church, the faith, and the Lord. This will show that we are living in the last days of history. What a sad experience for the body of Christ!—to lose friends and family members because of a lack of spiritual perseverance and faithfulness. What can each of us do personally to reduce this painful loss? What can the church do?

Summarize the assurance Paul gives us in Romans 8:35-39 regarding such events.

“Paul lists ten items that cannot separate us from the love of God [vs. 38, 39]. The tenth is broad enough to include anything that may have been omitted. All the terms are perhaps to be taken in their most general sense. Their very indefiniteness serves to emphasize Paul’s point that there is nothing that one can think of in all the created universe that can put a distance between a Christian and his loving Saviour.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 580.

Neither height nor depth. Some Bible scholars believe that Paul here is referring to the fact that, during his time, many people believed that the destiny of each individual was governed by the star under which he or she was born. The word he used for height was the time when any star was at its highest and therefore most powerful. The word he used for depth is the period when the star was at its lowest and least powerful stage.

Think about the other eight categories of things Paul says can never separate us from Christ. What specific items could you put in each of them? Knowing the time in which we live, what attitude and behavior should we keep before the Lord? Rom. 13:11-14. Define the “works of darkness” we are to “cast off” and the “armour of light” we are to put on in their place.

LESSONS FROM LAODICEA (Rev. 3:15-17).

The historic church of Laodicea symbolizes the church in our day. There is no other church in Revelation after this one. Therefore, the message to this church is not only *about* us but *for* us.

Christ's first words to Laodicea are recorded in Revelation 3:15, 16. What does being neither cold nor hot symbolize? (see Matt. 15:8; Luke 6:46). Why does He wish this church were either one or the other?

Neither cold nor hot. "It has been suggested that this figurative expression must have been particularly meaningful to the Christians at Laodicea. One of the chief landmarks of that vicinity was a waterfall over which a stream from the hot springs at Hierapolis flowed, leaving mineral deposits. Laodicea's water source was not these hot springs or a cold one, but a water tower filled by an aqueduct that shows deposits from similar mineral water, probably warm."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 761.

Summarize in your own words the spiritual condition of the Laodecian church (see Rev. 3:17). What *one* word do you think describes their condition best?

The Laodiceans had a very high concept of themselves (see Rom. 12:3). Because they *believed* they were fine, they were satisfied with who they thought they were. As a result, they depended on themselves instead of on God, and more and more they became victims of the enemy.

"Of itself wealth is not wrong. However, the possession of wealth subjects its possessor to temptations to pride and self-complacency, and against these his only protection is spiritual humility. . . .

"The possession of important truths held only on the level of intellectual acceptance but not allowed to permeate the soul, leads to spiritual pride and religious bigotry. Even the church of God, strong in the structure of its organization and rich with jewels of truth, can easily become a doctrinal bigot and immorally proud of its riches of truth."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 761, 762.

Consider the parable in Luke 18:9-14. Which character in the story is like the Laodicean church? What happened to each character, and why? Which character is most like you?

THE DIVINE REMEDY (Rev. 3:18, 19).

Yesterday, in seeking to answer the question How are we today? we began studying God's words to the Laodicean church. Take a few minutes now to review God's admonition to this church.

We will continue our study as we take a look at God's remedy for the Laodiceans' spiritual condition.

What does each ingredient of God's remedy symbolize? Rev. 3:18 (the verses following each ingredient provide clues for your answer).

gold (Gal. 5:6; James 2:5; 1 Tim. 6:18) _____

white raiment (Gal. 3:27) _____

eyesalve (John 16:8-11) _____

God's three-part cure for Laodicea's spiritual ailment was a vivid one for three reasons:

1. Laodicea was one of the great banking and financial cities of its time. Reportedly, when the city was struck by an earthquake in A.D. 60, its resources enabled it to rebuild without accepting government assistance from Rome.
2. Laodicea was famous for the production of outer garments made from the wool of black sheep.
3. The Laodicean temple honoring the Phrygian god, Men Karou, supported a reknowned medical school, which dispensed throughout the world an ointment for the eyes.

After chastening the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:15-18, what reassurance does God give them? Verse 19.

Repent. "The verb is in the singular, stressing the personal, individual nature of this admonition. Repentance, like salvation, can never be accomplished en masse. . . . This new attitude of sorrow for the past and zeal for the future is Christ's purpose for the Laodicean church." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 763.

As we saw earlier, the Laodiceans had replaced God's gold, raiment, and eyesalve with poor substitutes of their own. What things in your life might be replacing God's three-part cure for spiritual ill-health?

AT THE DOOR OF OUR HEART (Rev. 3:20, 21; Eph. 3:14-19).

In Revelation 3:20, Christ continues His conversation with the Laodicean church. What kind of relationship is symbolized by Christ's desire to dine with us? Explain your answer.

What significance lies in the fact that Christ knocks rather than just opens the door and comes in?

The Greeks usually ate three meals a day. Breakfast (*akratisma*) most likely consisted of a piece of dried bread dunked in wine, while the midday meal (*ariston*) was a snack hastily eaten along the roadside or in the city square. But the evening meal (*deipnon*) was the main meal. Because it was eaten when the day's work was completed, it was a meal over which the people could linger. *Deipnon* is the original word John used in verse 20.

Jesus desires to abide with us as we linger in His presence. The real therapy for Laodicea comes from Him, the divine Healer of souls. He only can put an end to our spiritual lukewarmness.

"Jesus is going from door to door, standing in front of every soul temple, proclaiming, 'I stand at the door, and knock.' . . . If the voice of Jesus is not heeded at once, it becomes confused in the mind with a multitude of other voices, the world's care and business engross the attention, and conviction dies away. . . . The heavenly Guest is standing at our door, while you are piling up obstructions to bar His entrance. Jesus is knocking through the prosperity He gives you. He loads you with blessings to test your fidelity, that they may flow out from you to others."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 965-967.

What promise does Revelation 3:21 give to those who overcome?

We must overcome as Jesus overcame. Explain how Jesus overcame. In your explanation, provide biblical references.

What a beautiful promise! "The work of overcoming is not restricted to the age of the martyrs. The conflict is for us, in these days of subtle temptation to worldliness, to self-security, to indulgence of pride, covetousness, false doctrines, and immorality of life."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 966.

How does Paul invite us to welcome Christ into our hearts? Eph. 3:14-21. Won't you welcome Christ into your heart now, or if you have already, thank Him for abiding with you?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Matthew 22:1-14 and relate it to Jesus' message to the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14-19.

Read *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 121-128 and *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 84-94.

After Jesus' resurrection, Mary said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him" (John 20:13). By observing the spiritual condition of unfaithful and nominal Christians, could we also say, "Where is Christ? They have taken Him away"?

Yes, the Lord is in heaven. He is also in the Bible, among His beloved people, and we can read His love in the wonders of nature. But, is Jesus where He especially wants to be: in our heart? (Rev. 3:20; Eph. 3:17).

"We must have the buyers and the sellers cleared out of the soul temple, that Jesus may take up His abode within us. Now He stands at the door of the heart as a heavenly merchantman; He says, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' . . . Oh, shall we not open the heart's door to this heavenly visitor." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 964.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to Revelation 3:17, what is the most deceitful spiritual condition a person can be in? Why is this condition the most deceitful?
2. The Laodicean message at first appears to be quite harsh. But where in the message do we discover Jesus' love?
3. After studying this week's lesson, how would you answer the Key Question in Sabbath's lesson?
4. Contrast the blessings of being a fervent, consecrated child of God with the lukewarm Christian who is neither strong nor happy in her or his faith.

SUMMARY: The Lord knows His church very well and is able to advise us regarding our spiritual condition (Rev. 3:15). But along with such advice, He offers us His guaranteed remedy to cure our spiritual condition. As a result, we shall inherit a place beside the throne of God.



Myanmar Messengers

J. H. Zachary

Joy Tan hung on tightly as the logging truck bounced over the rough mountain roads of Myanmar (Burma). Riding on the truck's trailer, which had no sides or floor except for two metal cross beams and four upright beams that held the logs in place, Tan and her team of lay evangelists knew that one unexpected bump could jar them loose and throw them under the wheels of the huge truck. But this is how the ministry team traveled to the remote villages of Myanmar where they held evangelistic meetings. And often traveling this way was not the only danger they faced.

One trip took them to Nat Mon village, a part-Christian, part-Buddhist community where residents earned money by selling jade and opium. In Nat Mon, religion takes second place to money.

Most of the people of Nat Mon were not interested in the gospel. But some of the Buddhists were impressed by the team's health emphasis and stayed to hear the Bible stories. Others in the city resented the evangelists' work and demanded their death. They even hired 50 men to kill them. The evangelists had come a long way to share the gospel with these people, and they were not eager to leave before the job was done. They prayed that God would protect them as they shared their faith with these people. Some villagers intervened and convinced the would-be killers to send the gospel workers out of the village instead.

Attendance at the meetings grew. Many Buddhists were impressed by the spirit of the team members and rallied around the missionaries. The evangelistic team finished its work without harm.

In 1996 Tan led a team of evangelists to Pa Doh village. "This place was so different from Nat Mon," Tan said. "The people were eager to hear about the truth of the gospel." Tan's face beamed with joy as she remembered Pa Doh. One of the persons preparing for baptism fell ill with a high fever the day before the baptism. The young woman was told that she was too sick to walk to the river. She might become chilled and die. But when the baptismal candidates lined up at the river, the sick girl stepped into line. "I must be baptized," she said. "I want to be ready to meet Jesus." Instead of becoming more seriously ill, the girl was healed.

With faith such as Tan and her fellow workers exhibit, the gospel work in Myanmar will continue to grow.

J. H. Zachary is international coordinator for evangelism with *The Quiet Hour*, located in Redlands, California.

Strong and Active for the Final Crisis



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Pet. 1:5-11; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Cor. 10:12, 13; Heb. 2:18; John 5:39; Acts 2:1, 2.

MEMORY TEXT: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What is the final crisis? How does it involve God's church? And how can we come through it victoriously?

MISSION AND CRISIS. Israel was to represent God to the Gentiles in such an attractive way that the Gentiles would be drawn into their fold (Isa. 56:8). Sabbathkeeping would play an important role in the success of this mission (vs. 1, 2, 6, 7). To this end, the Lord became more specific in Isaiah 58:12-14. Take time to read these verses now.

The church's mission today is no different. God's law was breached when the Sabbath of His fourth commandment was changed by the little horn power (Dan. 7:23-25). But God will have a remnant people who will restore this breach, especially through the proclamation of the gospel as it is found in the three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6-12).

The proclamation of these messages will arouse a worldwide crisis over whether people should obey God's law or human tradition. This week's lesson will focus, not on the crisis, but on Christ and how He can help us be a successful part of the remnant.

GROWING AND WORKING (Eph. 2:19-22; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

What assurance do we have that the church is built on a solid foundation and therefore cannot be shaken, even during a crisis? Eph. 2:19-22.

In whom. “That is, in Jesus Christ. This expression, the key phrase of the epistle. . . expresses a mystic but real experience, as does the phrase ‘in the Lord’ at the end of the verse. Christian growth takes place by our being ‘in him.’ ”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1011.

How does Peter express the progressive experience of a true Christian? 2 Pet. 1:5-11. Why does he begin with faith and end with love?

Peter’s marvelous ladder helps us climb toward a fruitful spiritual life. “There is no place in the school of Christ where we graduate. We are to work on the plan of addition, and the Lord will work on the plan of multiplication.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 379.

Growing in faith equips us to work for God. In 2 Corinthians 5:18, 20, Paul states that this work involves being ambassadors for Christ, reconciling others to Him. Compare the following aspects of being an ambassador to a foreign country with Christians’ being ambassadors for Christ: (1) Ambassadors live in a country foreign to them, among people who usually do not speak their language and who observe different customs, traditions, and laws. (2) Ambassadors speak for the country they represent. They are the voice of that country. (3) Countries are often judged by the behavior of their ambassadors. So they can bring either honor or disgrace to their country.

We grow in order to be useful instruments in God’s hands. As His ambassadors, we become instruments of reconciliation. What a privilege to be God’s representatives on this earth! To recognize that God has given us such a ministry of reconciliation should draw us together as a united front to bring the world to Him in these last days.

How does the work of reconciliation relate to the church’s mission as outlined in Sabbath’s lesson? How can the Sabbath assist in the reconciliation process?

How can the Sabbath help us to maintain a growing Christian experience?

“THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD” (Eph. 6:10-18; 5:15-17).

We are at war against the evil one. And we want to triumph over him. Paul advises that we do so by putting on the whole armor of God. Read Ephesians 6:10-17. In the chart below, list each piece of God’s armor and what it symbolizes. Then explain why it is a fitting symbol. (For example: The shield is a good symbol for faith, because faith protects us from the fiery darts of temptation.)

Piece of Armor	What It Symbolizes	Why Is It a Fitting Symbol?

“The whole armor of God” (v. 11). “The Christian is vulnerable at many spots, and often that characteristic he thinks is his strongest turns out, under temptation, to be his weakest. As a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, so the Christian is no stronger than his weakest element of character. In view of the variety of foes that must be met and the various weaknesses of the flesh, nothing less than the entire armor will suffice.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1044.

Along with the use of God’s armor, what else should we do in these evil days? Eph. 5:15-17. What does Paul mean by “redeeming the time” in verse 16?

This is the time when we must be wise, because our adversary “the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8, NKJV). He is using these final hours to tempt, deceive, weaken, and destroy as many people as possible.

In Ephesians 6:18, Paul adds that to our walking circumspectly and wearing God’s armor, we should pray. What three things about prayer does he stress in this verse? Consider your own prayers carefully. Are they characterized by these three things? What steps can you take to improve?

VICTORIOUS IN TEMPTATION (Heb. 2:18; James 1:12; Rev. 3:10).

The tempter does not rest. He works everywhere and against everyone. We need to remember this fact in order to resist him through Christ, with the help of His holy angels. If we become self-confident and begin to neglect our relationship with God, we will fall victim to our enemy. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12, NKJV).

It is encouraging to know that God will not allow us "to be tempted beyond" our strength, "but with the temptation will also make the way of escape" (v. 13).

"We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken or rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

What is Jesus able to do for those who are tempted, and why? Heb. 2:18.

"As an overcomer He has given us the advantage of His victory, that in our efforts to resist the temptations of Satan we may unite our weakness to His strength, our worthlessness to His merits."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 480.

What beatitude (blessing) and promise does James express for those who endure temptation? James 1:12. What is significant about the promised gift God will give to those who love Him?

In this week's lesson we are exalting God's great blessings to His faithful children: (1) He helps us to grow and work for Him; (2) He gives us His whole armor to overcome the enemy; (3) He makes us victorious over temptation; and (4) He encourages us with this beatitude and promise. Through the Holy Spirit, God gives us our personal victories, as well as victory for His church (Zech. 4:6).

How does the Lord promise to keep us "from the hour of trial" which shall come to the earth? Rev. 3:10. Put your name in the following part of the verse: "Because you, (your name), have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you, (your name), from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world" (NKJV).

IN COMMUNION WITH GOD (1 Thess. 5:17; John 5:39).

What concise counsel does Paul give us? 1 Thess. 5:17. How would you suggest a person follow this advice?

Prayer is the source of spiritual power. It is impossible to have a relationship with God without prayer. If we love Him, we shall feel a special pleasure in seeking His presence and talking with Him. He is our best Friend. How, then, can we even think of living without constant communion with Him?

When a Christian homemaker commented that she prayed all the time, a friend asked, "How can you get any work done if you're praying all the time?" The first women responded this way: "While I do the laundry, I ask God to wash my soul. While I iron the clothes, I pray that the Lord will take out the wrinkles of my character. And when I sweep the floors, I ask Jesus to clean the chambers of my heart."

Besides prayer, how else can we have communion with God? John 5:39.

We cannot feed our spiritual life without food from the Word. Through Bible study, we can learn how to triumph over the enemy. Read in Matthew 4:1-11 how Jesus overcame temptation. Our strength comes from knowing and practicing the Word of God. "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22, NKJV).

"Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 600.

It is in the silence of the soul that we can often find the fountain of a powerful Christian experience. Read Isaiah 30:15; Mark 1:35; 6:31; Luke 5:15, 16; 6:12. In these verses, we find examples of how to fulfill the need for prayer and for creative spiritual meditation.

"While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, for prayer, and for the study of the word of God. Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 362.

Examine your daily Bible study habits. Make a list of ways to improve. Plan to put into practice at least one of those ways.

SEARCHING OUR HEARTS (Acts 2:1-8; 1:8; Rev. 18:1).

Describe the early church's experience with the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1, 2. What was the Holy Spirit able to do for them, and why?

Note that (1) Christ's followers were united, (2) they were praying, (3) the Spirit came upon them with a visible manifestation that included a mighty wind and tongues of fire, (4) they began to speak the languages of people from other nations who were dwelling in Jerusalem.

"For the outpouring of the Spirit every lover of the cause of truth should pray. And as far as lies in our power, we are to remove every hindrance to His working. The Spirit can never be poured out while variance and bitterness toward one another are cherished by the members of the church. Envy, jealousy, evil surmising, and evil-speaking are of Satan, and they effectually bar the way against the Holy Spirit's working."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 42.

Like the primitive church, how much we need the guidance and outpouring of the Holy Spirit! "A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. . . . Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 128.

What will the Holy Spirit enable us to do? Acts 1:8.

This verse gives us four outstanding items:

1. *A promise*: the coming of the Spirit.
2. *A power*: the divine power to do God's work.
3. *A commission*: to be witnesses to the Lord.
4. *A territory*: the whole world, from our community to the end of the earth.

The Spirit sanctifies our lives and gives us power to share the gospel and finish God's work. The day will come when the Lord will fulfill His promise to illuminate all the earth with His glory.

Examine your own life carefully. What hindrances might there be that could prevent the Holy Spirit from doing His work? Ask God to help you remove whatever they might be.

FURTHER STUDY: Read the following promises regarding God's help. Choose one or two of your favorites to memorize during the coming week. Pss. 9:9; 27:5; 37:39, 40; 56:3; 91:1, 2; Isa. 33:2.

Read *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 367-375.

We are not living in just any time. This is *the* time in which the Lord is calling us to be filled with His Spirit's fire and power.

"God calls upon us to awake, for the end is near. Every passing hour is one of activity in the heavenly courts to make ready a people upon the earth to act a part in the great scenes that are soon to open upon us. These passing moments, that seem of so little value to us, are weighty with eternal interests. They are molding the destiny of souls for everlasting life or eternal death. The words we utter today in the ears of the people, the works we are doing, the spirit of the message we are bearing, will be a savor of life unto life or of death unto death.

"My brethren, do you realize that your own salvation, as well as the destiny of other souls, depends upon the preparation you now make for the trial before us?"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 716, 717.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Contrast the blessings of being strong and victorious in these final days through the work of the Holy Spirit with the negative aspects of neglecting spiritual preparation and living for the world and oneself.
2. After studying this week's lesson, how would you answer the Key Questions in Sabbath's lesson?
3. What is the best way to tell someone about the final crisis? Would it depend on the person you want to tell? The type of person you are? The part of the world in which you live?

SUMMARY: This is not a time for weak Christians. The Lord wants us to be anchored solidly in Him, strong in our faith, strong to repel temptations, and strong to testify for Christ. This is possible only if we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and to empower us to reflect our Savior's character.



From Komsomol* to Christian

Barbara Huff

The young man studied the telephone number on the piece of paper, then looked at the young woman who had given it to him. "Are you Larisa?" he asked in disbelief. "I am Michael, the former Komsomol leader! I've been trying to call you for two months!"

Larisa Cholopova had first heard of Michael several months before when she was examining records at a factory. One of the workers there had told her that a former Komsomol leader had quit his job to become a Christian. The news had surprised Larisa. She wondered what could have made the man quit a steady job to become a Christian. The factory worker offered to introduce Larisa to the former Komsomol leader, so Larisa left her name and telephone number.

But before she could meet the man, Larisa became seriously ill and was hospitalized. A friend visited her in the hospital and told her about a study group she was attending. The study group sounded interesting, so when Larisa was strong enough, she went. It was at this meeting that she met Michael. At first Larisa had argued nearly every point the group discussed. But as she became better acquainted with the members of the group, she found that Christianity made sense.

Larisa's health problems persisted. When the doctors gave her a grim prognosis, she accepted it as God's punishment for her past deeds. But she asked her Christian friends to pray for her.

Some members of the study group invited Larisa to evangelistic meetings being held in nearby Tashkent. She went with them and felt the Holy Spirit touch her heart. She responded to the call to follow Christ. Later when she returned to the doctor, her blood tests came back negative. God had not only healed her soul, but her body as well.

Larisa accepted God's call to study theology, and today she serves as women's ministries director in a largely Muslim region of the former Soviet Union. Many of the church's converts in this area are young people who have been shunned by their families when they became Christians. Larisa understands their needs, and she can testify that "God shall provide," for He has proven that to her.

Barbara Huff is an administrative secretary of the Euro-Asia Division.

***Komsomol was the young-adult organization of the Communist party.**

The Heavenly Family



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 24:29-44; 2 Cor. 5:1; Rom. 8:18-23; Rev. 21:1-5; 22:1-5; Isa. 65:17-25.

MEMORY TEXT: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What must the church do to prepare for Christ's second coming? What must we as individuals do? How will the anticipation of the Second Coming motivate our decisions and the way we live?

"WE SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD" (1 Thess. 4:17, NKJV). The first lesson of this quarter had to do with the family that God has on this earth. What a blessing to belong to this family and have a loving Father who cares for us and gives us "all His benefits"! (Ps. 103:2).

In this last lesson, we will consider the glorious condition of this family in heaven. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

The anticipation of such joyous and glorious union with the Redeemer and the redeemed should fill us with hope and courage in the present. It should fill us with gratitude that soon we will join our heavenly family and become citizens of God's country for eternity.

This is a unique time! What a privilege it is to live during this hour of history, to prepare for eternity.

CITIZENS OF A NEW COMMUNITY (Phil. 3:20, 21; 2 Cor. 5:1).

What does Paul say about our true citizenship? Phil. 3:20.

This earth, contaminated with sin and wickedness, is not our true home. The Lord has promised us “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). Clearly, the present condition of this world shows us that we are near the end of all human sorrows. The day is coming when everything will become new forever. Even today we see many signs announcing that the “new earth” is near.

“The Christian needs a constant awareness of the fact that he is a citizen of heaven. Attachment to one’s country leads him to be loyal to it. Wherever he may be living he will conduct himself in a way that will honor the good name of his country. Keeping in mind the kind of life we expect to live in heaven, serves to guide us in our life on earth. The purity, humility, gentleness, and love we anticipate experiencing in the life to come may be demonstrated here below. Our actions should disclose that we are citizens of heaven. Our association with others should make heaven attractive to them.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 172.

Why does Paul compare our earthly body to a tent and the body we will have in heaven to a “building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”? 2 Cor. 5:1.

Himself a tentmaker, Paul makes an accurate illustration of our earthly body. Just as a tent is made of earthly materials, so is the body. Just as a tent is a temporary dwelling, so is the body. And just as a tent can be easily destroyed, so can the body.

In John 1:14, we read that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (NKJV). The original word translated “dwelt” literally means “tented” among us.

Peter also compares our earthly body to a tent in 2 Peter 1:13, 14: “Yes, I think it is right as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me” (NKJV).

As our body grows older or becomes diseased, we become increasingly conscious of how wonderful it will be to have “a building from God, a house not made with hands . . .” (2 Cor. 5:1, NKJV). What about this “building” from God will you be most grateful for?

WAITING FOR THE ETERNAL DAY (Rom. 8:18-23; Heb. 10:35-37).

Why do we “groan within ourselves” (NKJV) in relation to the day of our salvation? Rom. 8:18-23. What phrases in these verses highlight the deep longing Christians have to regain the original perfection of humankind and creation?

The Lord knows our needs and longings. For this reason He does not want to delay His coming. The promise says, “He will finish the work and cut it short, . . . the Lord will make a short work upon the earth” (Rom. 9:28).

Earnest expectation (Rom. 8:19). The original word for this phrase means “awaiting with the head outstretched.” The prefix of the original word means “away,” and implies “a turning away from all else and a fixing of the eyes upon a single object. It suggests waiting with the head raised and the eye fixed on that point of the horizon from which the expected object is to come.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 569.

Groans (Rom. 8:19, 23). Just as an expectant mother groans with labor pains yet joyfully anticipates the delivery of her child, so Christians joyfully anticipate being delivered to heaven even as they groan with physical and spiritual pain inflicted upon them by sin.

What does God promise about the Second Coming of Christ? Heb. 10:35-38. Coupled with the subject of the Second Coming, what is the significance of verse 38?

What assurance! We do not need to say, “My master is delaying his coming” (Matt. 24:48, NKJV). “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). We can be sure that Christ would like to come as soon as possible. The delay is not His. *It is ours!*

“For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.”—*Last Day Events*, p. 38.

PERFECT HEALTH, PERFECT JOY (Isa. 35:5-10; Rev. 21:1-5).

Summarize how Isaiah 35:5-10 describes the wonders of the new earth in regards to humans, nature, and activities.

humans _____

nature _____

activities _____

“The eyes of the blind. This promise will be true both literally and figuratively. Men who are spiritually blind . . . will have the eyes of their spiritual vision opened and the ears of their moral understanding unstopped. In the earth made new all physical infirmities will likewise be healed.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 232.

What did John see and hear in vision regarding the new earth?
Rev. 21:1-5; 22:1-5.

Can we even imagine a life so perfect and joyful? Even the best we have now is less than a pallid reflection of what we shall have then.

But by far the best of all is that “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be” there. And we “shall see His face, and His name shall be on their [our] foreheads” (22:4). The very Savior who taught, healed, and preached in Palestine; the very Lamb of God who gave His life for our salvation will be with us. And we shall be with Him for eternity! In His holy hands we shall see the signs of His sacrifice on the cross. And we will shout, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” (Rev. 19:6, NKJV).

Read Revelation 21:1-5 and 22:1-5 again. As you do, imagine that you are seeing what John saw. What do you see, hear, smell, feel, and sense? How does it all contrast to what you have on this earth? By God’s grace, determine that absolutely nothing will deprive you of this glorious inheritance.

HOLY AMNESIA (Isa. 65:17-25).

How does Isaiah 65:17-25 describe other aspects of the new heaven and earth?

In these verses, Isaiah describes what things would have been like on earth for Israel if they had obeyed the messages of the prophets and fulfilled the mission to which God had called them. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 38, 332.) But because they failed, this description failed to occur. When viewed accordingly, certain verses in this passage cease to be a problem, and we can view it in light of its secondary application—a description of the new heaven and the new earth after Christ returns.

“We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the City of God. No wail of sorrow, no dirge of crushed hopes and buried affections, will evermore be heard. Soon the garments of heaviness will be changed for the wedding garment. Soon we shall witness the coronation of our King.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 542, 543.

“Days of a tree. A tree is a symbol of fixity and permanence. Compare ch. 40:6 [Isa.].

“Work of their hands. Life in the new earth will not be an idle existence. Men will labor and they will enjoy the fruits of their labors. Work there will be a comfort and a source of endless delight. The saints will plan homes and gardens and they will have the time and the means to carry out their plans.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 334.

“All the perplexities of life’s experience will then be made plain. Where to us have appeared only confusion and disappointment, broken purposes and thwarted plans, will be seen a grand, overruling, victorious purpose, a divine harmony.”—*Education*, p. 305.

Think about some of the perplexities you have faced and are facing now. Does it seem impossible now to view them as part of “a grand, overruling, victorious purpose”?

How can you view from God’s perspective the many perplexities and trials that beset you? What difference does this make in your daily life?

CERTAINLY JESUS IS COMING (Matt. 24:29-44; 25:1-13; James 5:7, 8).

Explain what Jesus said about the signs of His coming and our preparation for that day. Matt. 24:29-44. What is the recurring theme of the chapter? Which one of these verses best summarizes that theme?

Will be taken (v. 40). The teaching of the “secret rapture” is based on this verse. This teaching states that “the saints are to be secretly snatched away from this earth prior to the visible return of Christ. . . . But these verses teach no such thing. The “coming” of ch. 24 is always, without exception, the literal, visible appearance of Christ (see vs. 3, 27, 30, 39, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50).

“What Jesus meant by being ‘taken’ and by being ‘left’ is made clear by the context. Those who are left are the evil servants, who instead of continuing in their normal pursuits after a supposed secret rapture, are cut asunder and assigned their portion with the hypocrites (vs. 48-51).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 504.

Jesus emphasized the recurring theme of chapter 24 with two parables. Read the second one in Matthew 25:1-13. What do the following elements of the parable symbolize? (a) the five wise virgins; (b) the five foolish virgins; (c) the bridegroom; (d) the lamps; (e) the oil; (f) the time of waiting; (g) the arrival of the bridegroom; (h) midnight; (i) the light from the oil.

“Three of the saddest sayings in the parables of Jesus are found here: (1) ‘*Our lamps are gone out*’; (2) ‘*The door was shut*’; and (3) ‘*I do not know you*.’ This is illustrative of God’s judgment which is unequivocal and irreversible. We cannot know Christian assurance without the Spirit (illustrated by the oil), and we cannot succeed on borrowed religion.”—Augsburger, *The Communicator’s Commentary*, pp. 278, 279.

To prevent accidents, captains of overseas ships will relinquish their stations to a harbor pilot as they approach their destination. Their ships also will fly a flag announcing, “Harbor pilot on board.”

We are near the harbor of eternity. Are you submitted to Jesus? Do you have Him, the divine Harbor Pilot, on board to secure a safe arrival? How does your behavior tell others that Jesus is leading your trip to heaven?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Matthew 24:45-51. What does this parable teach us about how we should live while we are waiting for Christ to return?

Read any or all of the following: the last two chapters of *The Adventist Home*; the last two chapters of *Last Day Events*; the last two chapters of *The Great Controversy*; the last chapter of *Christ's Object Lessons*.

"Belief in the near coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven will not cause the true Christian to become neglectful and careless of the ordinary business of life. The waiting ones who look for the soon appearing of Christ will not be idle, but diligent in business. Their work will not be done carelessly and dishonestly, but with fidelity, promptness, and thoroughness. Those who flatter themselves that careless inattention to the things of this life is an evidence of their spirituality and of their separation from the world are under a great deception. Their veracity, faithfulness, and integrity are tested and proved in temporal things. If they are faithful in that which is least they will be faithful in much."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 309.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the "blessed hope" of the Second Coming motivate us to be more faithful to the Lord?
2. How is the kingdom of grace working in your heart to make you a citizen of the kingdom of glory?
3. How can we prepare ourselves for heaven? Think of at least five ways, and give scriptural references to support your idea. One is given here to get you started: Watching and praying so we do not enter into temptation (Matt. 24:42; 26:41).
4. Contrast the great blessings that will be ours as citizens of heaven with the ending that belongs to sinners and nominal Christians who are not prepared to meet Jesus at His second coming.

SUMMARY: May the Lord keep us from the evil one, and help us to be holy. Then, in the day of His coming, we will not say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" (Jer. 8:20, NKJV). Instead, we will triumphantly shout, "This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isa. 25:9).



Below, the Crocodile; Above, the Tiger

Scott Griswold

A man was lost in the jungle when he heard the terrifying roar of a tiger. The man raced for his life, not daring to stop. Ahead, the pathway dropped into the river.

With the tiger nearly upon him, the man leaped for a vine hanging down from the trees overhead. He clung desperately to it while the tiger paced back and forth below him. With his heart still pounding, the man carefully inched down toward the river.

Suddenly he stopped. What was that noise—a quiet swishing in the water below? He looked down, and to his horror he saw an immense crocodile staring hungrily at him. Hand over hand he pulled himself up the vine and away from the grasp of the crocodile's jaws, only to see the tiger still watching him. Below, the crocodile; above, the tiger!

His hands burned; he did not know how long he could hold on. Would the tiger or the crocodile ever go away? He wrapped the vine around his waist and prepared to wait. Surely they would not stay forever.

But in the quiet another sound struck horror in his heart. Two rats, one black and one white, were gnawing on the vine above his head. He shouted at the rats, but they did not go away. Now it was only a matter of time until he and the vine would crash into the water below.

So ends this Khmer folk tale that illustrates the inevitability of death. No one escapes; there is no hope for rescue.

Thank God that the story does not have to end there! Thank God that Jesus came from heaven to rescue us from the jaws of hopelessness and certain death through His own death. He did it "so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb. 2:14, 15, NIV).

Surely the time is short before Christ will return to take His children home. How many people have you told, through your words, your life, your gifts to mission, that they do not have to wait and wonder whether death will come from the crocodile below or the tiger above?

Scott and Julie Griswold are church planting among the Khmer people in Cambodia. They serve under the auspices of Adventist Frontier Missions.

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Bible Study Guide for First Quarter, 2000

The first quarter adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, entitled *Assurance of Salvation*, by Hans LaRondelle, seeks to answer the question, How can I be sure I am saved?

Lesson 1: The Foundation of Our Assurance

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 2:16, 17; Deut. 30:11-14; Ps. 146:5; Matt. 19:4, 8; Rom. 15:4; Eph. 6:17; 2 Tim. 3:15.

MEMORY TEXT: John 17:17, NKJV.

KEY THOUGHT: Understanding God's message for us and accepting it wholeheartedly brings with it the gift of assurance of salvation.

OUTLINE:

- Assurance and the Word of God (Gen. 2:16, 17 6:13, 14)
- Assurance and the Written Word (Ps. 65:5; Deut. 4:1, 2, 8)
- The Creative Power of Scripture (Eph. 6:17; John 14:16-18)
- The Clarity of Scripture (Deut. 30:11-14; Rom. 10:8-13)
- The Sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Rom. 15:4)

Lesson 2: The Person of Christ: Our Assurance

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 4:16-21; John 3:16; 17:3; Exod. 6:1-3; Mark 8:31-33; Rom. 5:8.

MEMORY TEXT: John 5:39, 40, NKJV.

KEY THOUGHT: We are redeemed from sin, death, and Satan by Christ as revealed through the Scriptures.

OUTLINE:

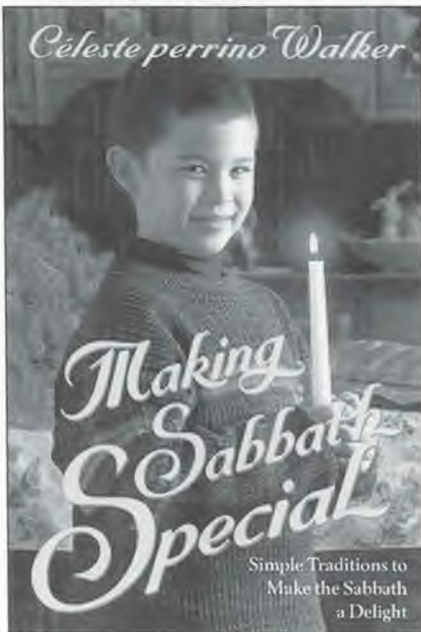
- The Christ of the Scriptures (Luke 4:16-21; 24:25-27)
- Christ's Deity: Our Assurance of Eternal Life (John 3:16)
- Jesus the Great "I AM" (John 8:58; 13:19; Matt. 16:16)
- Jesus "the Son of Man" (Mark 8:31-33; John 12:32-34; 1:51)
- Jesus Christ: The Object of Faith (Rom. 10:9-13, 17)

Lessons in Braille

The regular adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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Unions	Churches	Companies	Membership	Population
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Chile	451	185	90,544	14,623,000
East Brazil	654	648	119,702	36,000,000
North Brazil	566	1,102	275,237	14,900,000
Northeast Brazil	577	1,017	163,276	40,000,000
Peru	1,110	1,956	392,978	24,400,000
South Brazil	536	639	117,831	25,000,000
North Ecuador Mission	32	132	13,230	4,900,000
South Ecuador Mission	36	65	14,933	7,101,000
Totals 12/31/97	5,446	7,451	1,533,436	263,492,000