

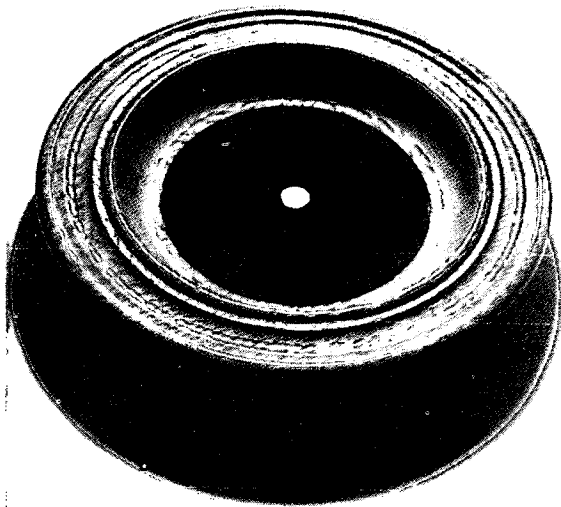


Adult Sabbath School Lessons

GIVE GLORY TO GOD



Here is a picture of a fortune.



The widow's mite. It wasn't much. Yet it was everything. God isn't preoccupied with the amount we give but He is concerned with what's going on in our heart as we give. The widow's love made her gift a fortune!

God has chosen to advance His work through you and your gift. But not by twisting your arm. He knows that if you've really given Him your heart, you'll also give your dollars.

When you reach into your purse or wallet to support the Sabbath School offering this week, reach into your heart also. That's where God is looking when you give.

Open Heart

Let God's love show through your giving.

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

NORTHERN EUROPE - WEST AFRICA DIVISION

TELEPHONE: ST. ALBANS 60331

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HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND. AL1 3EYTELEGRAMS/CABLES:
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January 1, 1977.

Fellow Sabbath School Members Around the World,

Once more the thoughts of the world Sabbath Schools are turning toward the Northern Europe - West Africa Division. Sabbath Schools in nine European and nine African countries join in sending Christian Greetings to their brothers and sisters everywhere!

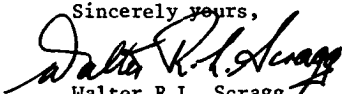
So much that is good and fruitful has come from Sabbath School offerings. We thank you for helping make Newbold a strong and effective training college. Our high schools and colleges in Europe and West Africa rejoice in the 13th Sabbath overflows received.

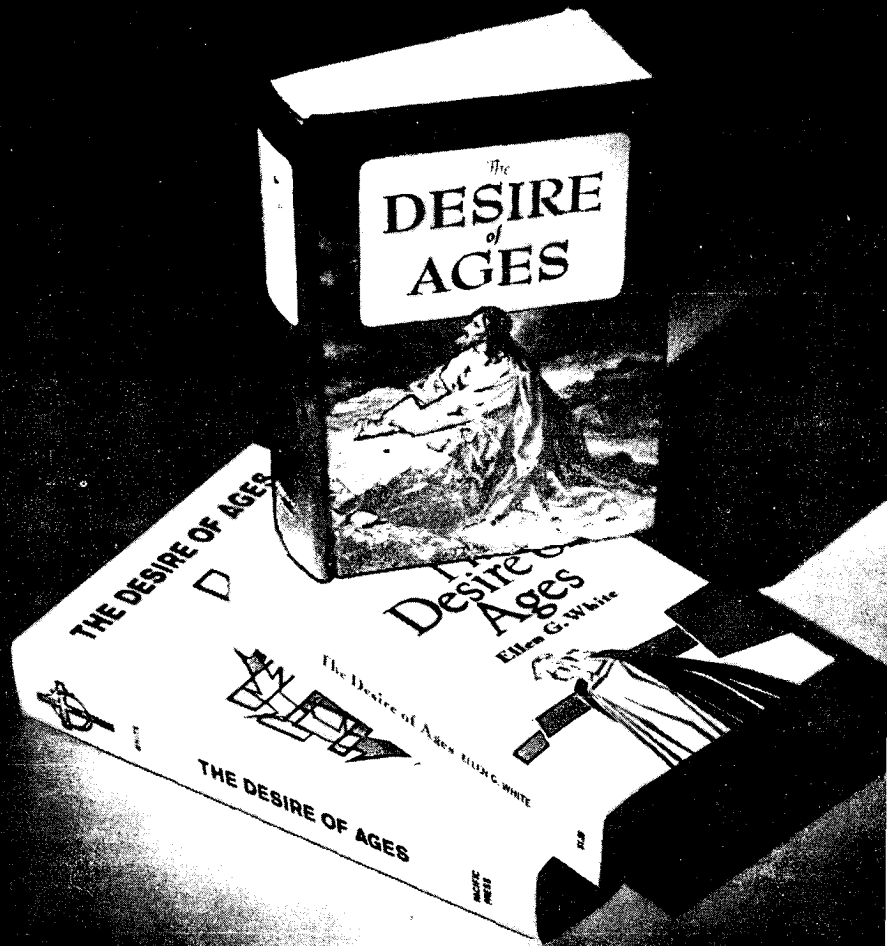
The Adventist Seminary of West Africa represents the accomplishments and hopes of the church in this region. Staffed by a mix of highly trained national and overseas workers, ASWA recently entered into an affiliation programme with Andrews University. This will enable our African students and workers to continue their advanced education within the church educational system. And now with your help we are building ASWA a brand new library and auditorium building.

Severe overcrowding, the leasing of facilities in different parts of Oslo and restrictions on the use of more efficient equipment are among the reasons for rebuilding the Norwegian Publishing House. Another project which benefits this 13th Sabbath is in Finland where our Junior College at Toivonlinna desperately needs new buildings. We have already done some rebuilding. With your gifts to swell the funds available even more will be possible. The training of our Finnish workers depends on Toivonlinna, and the provision of adequate facilities at Toivonlinna depends on you.

A mix of publishing and Christian education institutions seems a typically Adventist celebration of the Advent cause this coming 13th Sabbath. We thank you for past blessings shared with us and look for added expansion and success for the work of God in Northern Europe - West Africa through your support in March.

God bless you.

Sincerely yours,

 Walter R.L. Scragg,
 President



HERE IS A WORK OF INSPIRATION.

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Brought to you by Pacific Press





Adult Sabbath School Lessons / No. 327, January-March, 1977

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Have You Ever Tried Living On One Meal A Week?

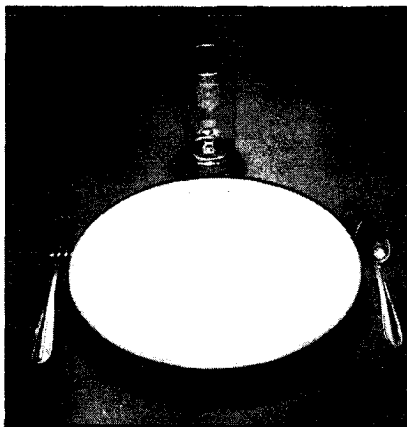
It's possible to survive on one meal a week. For a few weeks. But within a short time you'll discover you are suffering a loss of physical strength. Likewise, your spiritual strength depends on a regular consistent diet of spiritual food.

A Sabbath morning sermon and a Sabbath School class discussion once a week are not enough to provide the strength needed for a life of spiritual victory.

Daily Bible study is not an option to spiritual life; it is basic—not dessert but the main course. Regular Sabbath School lesson study is also essential spiritual food; it is your opportunity to follow an organized program, covering

the broad scope of Biblical truth.

Why not decide that your spiritual diet deserves at least the attention you give the physical. God's table is the place to feast.



Daily Feast

An invitation to dine at God's table

GIVE GLORY TO GOD

Studies in Christian Behavior

Introduction

“To give glory to God is to reveal His character in our own, and thus make Him known. And in whatever way we make known the Father or the Son, we glorify God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 979.

The first angel's message calls on God's people to “give glory to him [God].” Jesus indicated that glory is given to God as a result of the good works of believers. These lessons on Christian behavior are a study of how to give glory to God in our everyday experience. By believers' Christlike behavior the character of God is held up before the world, and the true Christian will give to God all the glory that results from it.

This behavior of the Christian by which God is glorified results from faith in Jesus Christ. These two—faith and behavior—must always be united. Ellen White, in *Steps to Christ*, pages 57-61, discusses the danger of either behavior or faith standing alone. Of behavior without faith she wrote:

“The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on?

“Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.”—Page 58.

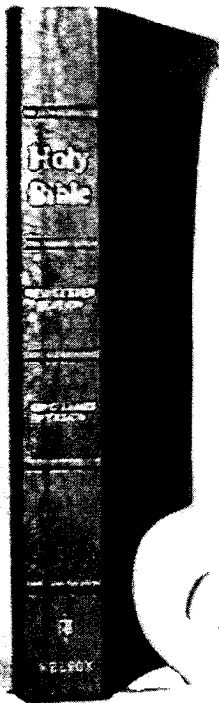
Of faith without behavior she wrote:

“That so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption. ‘By grace are ye saved through faith.’ But ‘faith, if it hath not works, is dead.’ Ephesians 2:8; James 2:17. Jesus said of Himself before He came to earth, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.’ Psalm 40:8. And just before He ascended again to heaven He declared, ‘I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.’ John 15:10. The Scripture says, ‘Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. . . . He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.’ 1 John 2:3-6.”—Page 61.

These two dangers, behavior without faith and faith without corresponding behavior, should not frighten us off from a study of Christian ethics. These lessons on Christian behavior must be seen as faith seeking to know and to do God's will. Ellen White has urgently counseled the church about maintaining deportment distinct from the world:

“As the truth is brought into practical life, the standard is to be elevated higher and higher to meet the requirements of the Bible. This will necessitate opposition to the fashions, customs, practices, and maxims of the world. Worldly influences, like the waves of the sea, beat against the followers of Christ to sweep them away from the true principles of His meekness and grace; but we are to stand as firm as a rock to principle. It will require moral courage to do this, and those whose souls are not riveted to the eternal Rock will be swept away by the worldly current. We can stand firm only as our life is hid with Christ in God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 146.

1. MORAL PRINCIPLES



All principles upon which moral action is based begin with God's revelation through His Word.

MORAL PRINCIPLES

LESSON 1 December 26 to January 1

"The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just" (Isa. 26:7).

The principles that are concerned with right and wrong ways of behaving are often called *moral* principles. In order for behavior to be distinctly Christian it must be based on Christian moral principles.

These principles are revealed in the Bible. In practice there is always the danger that biblical moral principles will be diluted with standards from other sources, such as non-Christian religions, human philosophies, or the examples of worldly people. There is constant danger that members of Christ's family on earth may do this. Therefore it is always appropriate that we reexamine the Bible principles of behavior in relation to how we are actually conducting ourselves.

Ellen White clearly states the value of the Scriptures as the standard of conduct:

"God has not only revealed to us the doctrine of the atonement, holding out the hope of eternal life, but His words are the manna from heaven for the soul to feed upon and receive spiritual strength. The Bible is the great standard of right and wrong, clearly defining sin and holiness. Its living principles, running through our lives like threads of gold, are our only safeguard in trial and temptation.

"The Holy Scriptures were the essential study in the schools of the prophets, and they should hold the first place in every educational system, for the foundation of all right

education is a knowledge of God. Used as a textbook in our schools, the Bible will do for mind and morals what cannot be done by books of science and philosophy. As a book to discipline and strengthen the intellect, to ennoble, purify, and refine the character, it is without a rival.

"God cares for us as intelligent beings, and He has given us His word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Its teachings have a vital bearing upon our prosperity in all the relations of life. Even in our temporal affairs it will be a wiser guide than any other counselor. Its divine instruction points the only way to true success. There is no social position, no phase of human experience, for which the study of the Bible is not an essential preparation."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 422.

This first lesson of the quarter points out the source and need of Christian moral principles for the believer.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Ethics and Morality (Micah 6:8)**
2. **Sources of Morality (Ps. 33:4, 5; 1 John 2:29)**
3. **Decision (Prov. 1:10; Gen. 39:9)**
4. **Need of Guidance (Ps. 32:8; 25:9)**
5. **Some Christian Virtues (2 Peter 1:5-7)**
6. **A Call to High Standards (Prov. 4:23-27)**

Part 1
ETHICS AND
MORALITY

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8). (See James 1:27.)

Ethics is the study of the rightness or wrongness of human conduct or judgment. It includes the organization and analysis of moral principles, and is thought of as the science of morals and of moral conduct. Morality is the practice of right conduct by a person, a community, or a nation. The moral person makes a discrimination between right and wrong resulting in rectitude of life and thought. Morality has to do with righteousness, virtue, and justice.

What are some examples of how spokesmen for God endeavor to point out wrongdoing and to lift the moral standards of the people? Jer. 22:3; 1 Cor. 6:6-10.

Systems of ethics have been developed by philosophers. These may have a certain intellectual appeal, but they cannot be accepted as the norm for Christians who live in the world but are not of the world. (See John 17:15, 16.)

“Morality cannot be separated from religion. Conservative tradition received from educated men and from the writings of great men of the past are not all a safe guide for us in these last days; for the great struggle before us is such as the world has never seen. The brethren who have not acted a part in this work in the past need to move with far greater caution in regard to that which they accept and that which they refuse.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 99.

One who has met and accepted Jesus as his Lord must ever follow where He leads.

To stand approved of God is the highest goal of life.

“Of Job, the patriarch of Uz, the testimony of the Searcher of hearts was, ‘There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.’ ”—*Education*, p. 155.

THINK IT THROUGH

What examples of high ethical principles can you recall from your observation of the lives of people?

“Now is the time to obtain a moral fitness for heaven. . . . God requires His followers to be men of good report, as well as to be pure, elevated, and honest; kind, as well as faithful. . . . The principles of the law of God must be developed in the life and character. An amiable temper, combined with firm integrity and faithfulness, will constitute a moral fitness for any position.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 367.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 366-368.

Part 2
SOURCES
OF MORALITY

“For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord” (Ps. 33:4, 5).

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (1 John 2:29).

Clubs, associations, family traditions, newspaper editorials, and philosophical treatises are among the influences that purport to provide wisdom on how to behave. But the Christian's thoughts are tuned to another guidance system from which he derives his ideals and inspiration. These are the same sources from which he received his Christian faith at his conversion and from which he draws daily strength to live. These sources are not inherent in his nature or generated within himself but come to him from above by interaction with God and His Holy Spirit. They originate in the character and will of God as revealed to man in the Bible and the inspired testimonies of His servant.

The idea of righteousness is ever associated with God, His law, and all of His acts. (See Ps. 145:17; 19:9; Rev. 16:5.) Jesus exhorted His listeners to be perfect even as their Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48). In the Bible God has made a self-disclosure of His nature, and to Him we can look for a knowledge of the good and the right.

THINK IT THROUGH

Give a summary of God's nature as revealed in the Bible. How does divine nature contrast with unconverted human nature?

“Many need to take frequent lessons from the life of Christ, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. . . . You are to show a growth in the Christian graces. By manifesting meekness under provocation and growing away from low earthliness you give evidence that you have an indwelling Saviour, and every thought, word, and deed attracts men to Jesus rather than to self.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 597.

“All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 330.

“The character of God, His love manifested in giving His Son to die for the world, and the beauty of holiness, are exalted themes for contemplation. These will strengthen the intellect, and bring man into close communion with the Infinite One.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 49

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 541, 542.

Part 3 “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Prov.
DECISION 1:10).

“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God” (Gen. 39:9)?

God has made man free in a very real sense. He is free to make choices that involve every aspect of life—clothing, food, recreation, thoughts, work, marriage, religion, friends, hobbies, education, money, and his relation to society.

When we have made a wrong decision, what does David's experience teach us should be our attitude toward our mistake and toward God? 2 Sam. 24:10. (Compare 2 Cor. 7:9-11.)

There could be no moral meaning to life if humans did not have this power to make choices. If they were made by nature so that they acted rightly automatically, there would be no ground to consider duty, conduct, or any standard of right; they would only be responding to an unchosen impulse. But God has made us with the power to decide, and herein lies responsibility for our actions.

THINK IT THROUGH **When discussing a situation, what does the use of the word “ought” imply?**

“In *Pilgrim's Progress* there is a character called Pliable. Youth, shun this character. Those represented by it are very accommodating, but they are as a reed shaken by the wind. They possess no will power. Every youth needs to cultivate decision. A divided state of the will is a snare, and will be the ruin of many youth. Be firm, else you will be left with your house, or character, built upon a sandy foundation.”—*My Life Today*, p. 73.

“In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

FURTHER STUDY *Christ's Object Lessons*, “Friends by the Mammon of Unrighteousness,” p. 374 (p. 378 in 1923 ed.).

Part 4
NEED OF
GUIDANCE

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. 32:8).

"The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Ps. 25:9).

The Bible teaches that man's nature is sinful and depraved. This being the case, how can man hope, unaided, always to discern and choose the right and the good? Without divine aid he is doomed to a life of trial and error and frequent defeat.

The sinner, his nature weakened through transgression, finds that it is "impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17. It is equally true that he cannot, without divine help, make the right choices.

One who endeavors to choose the right on the basis of human reason has no assurance that his choice will be the right one. The very faculties he employs in making a decision are subject to the pride and selfishness of the natural human heart.

What is the source of sinful passions? Mark 7:21-23.

This is why the Christian, understanding the hazards of his sinful condition, admits that he needs a revelation of truth from outside himself and reaches out in faith to understand and follow the will of God.

"The power of a higher, purer, nobler life is our great need. The world has too much of our thought, and the kingdom of heaven too little.

"In his efforts to reach God's ideal for him, the Christian is to despair of nothing. Moral and spiritual perfection, through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all. Jesus is the source of power, the fountain of life. He brings us to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves for the healing of sin-sick souls. He leads us to the throne of God, and puts into our mouth a prayer through which we are brought into close contact with Himself. In our behalf He sets in operation the all-powerful agencies of heaven. At every step we touch His living power."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 478.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 290.

Part 5
SOME CHRISTIAN
VIRTUES

“For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love” (2 Peter 1:5-7, RSV). (Read also verses 2-4.)

Peter gives us herewith a dependable list of moral qualities to be developed in our lives. There are other good lists in the Bible. In Galatians 5:22, 23 is Paul's list of the "fruit of the Spirit," and certainly these will be seen as one grows in Christian "gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

What virtues did Jesus teach would be characteristic of citizens of the kingdom of heaven? Matt. 5:2-12.

The Christian will give evidence of these virtues in his daily work as a craftsman, in carrying on his chosen profession, in his business dealings, in his thoughts and words. Jesus exemplified all of these high qualities in His life, and He is our pattern.

"Who of us is faithfully following the Pattern? Who of us has instituted and continued the warfare against pride of heart? Who of us has, in good earnest, brought himself to wrestle with selfishness until it should no longer dwell in the heart and be revealed in the life?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 18.

THINK IT THROUGH

Which of the following is most important in influencing my choices: church rules, attitude of friends, personal moral responsibility, pastor's sermons? Are my actions always morally right if my motive is good?

"He [Christ] laid aside His glory, His dominion, His riches, and sought after those who were perishing in sin. He humbled Himself to our necessities, that He might exalt us to heaven. Sacrifice, self-denial, and disinterested benevolence characterized His life. He is our pattern. . . . We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 549.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 147, 148.

Part 6
A CALL TO
HIGH STANDARDS

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil” (Prov. 4:23-27).

It is woven into the very fabric of Christianity that one should search to know the right and make that knowledge a pattern for his own personal behavior.

In the striking words of an Old Testament prophet to God’s people, what are they admonished to do? Isa. 1:16, 17.

It is this striving to do the right, to know and follow God’s will, in cooperation with divine grace, that develops character. It is our privilege to realize that whatever people may think of us, God knows exactly what we are. Reputation is what the world thinks of a man or a woman; character is what a person really is. No one can injure one’s character but he himself. Character is the sword; reputation is the scabbard. When the gates of heaven swing open to welcome the victors in life, their reputation will be left behind them; but their characters will be with them through all eternity.

What are the six plus one things God hates? Prov. 6:16-19.

“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?” asks the prophet, and then gives the answer: “He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; . . . and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high” (Isa. 33:14-16).

THINK IT THROUGH

What do you think is the role of Seventh-day Adventists today in the fabric of the community where they live?

“The work of every true Christian is to represent Christ, to reflect light, to elevate the standard of morals, and by words and influences consecrated to God, to compel the careless and reckless to think of God and eternity. The world would gladly drop eternity out of their reckoning, but they cannot succeed so long as there are those who represent Christ in their practical life.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 132.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 294, 295.

2. GOD AND MAN

GOD AND MAN

LESSON 2 January 2-8

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9).

God is the source of the Christian's moral responsibility. The believer's acceptance of this responsibility is based on five points of belief: First, that there is a God; second, that God is and should be in ultimate control; third, that God is concerned with man's behavior; fourth, that God will finally judge man for his response to his duties and privileges in life; and fifth, that the believer has a personal relationship with God.

God has not left us to struggle in ignorance in coping with the great issues of human existence. He has given His Word, the Bible. He has sent His Son Jesus, the Living Word, to teach us, to draw us, and to redeem us.

The more God has revealed to us of His nature and will, the more responsibility falls upon us to respond and to seek His way. We could never find our way without God's help; and with His help there is no excuse for not finding it. In this fact lies the great burden of moral responsibility that rests upon each soul on our planet.

To those who are lost in the moral wilderness of this evil world, the first needful step is to acknowledge that God is sovereign and that He deals justly. To do so clears away immediately a multitude of hesitations

and bickerings and gives men a firm foundation on which to approach all their moral judgments. The ultimate issue then becomes very clear, that is man's relationship to His God.

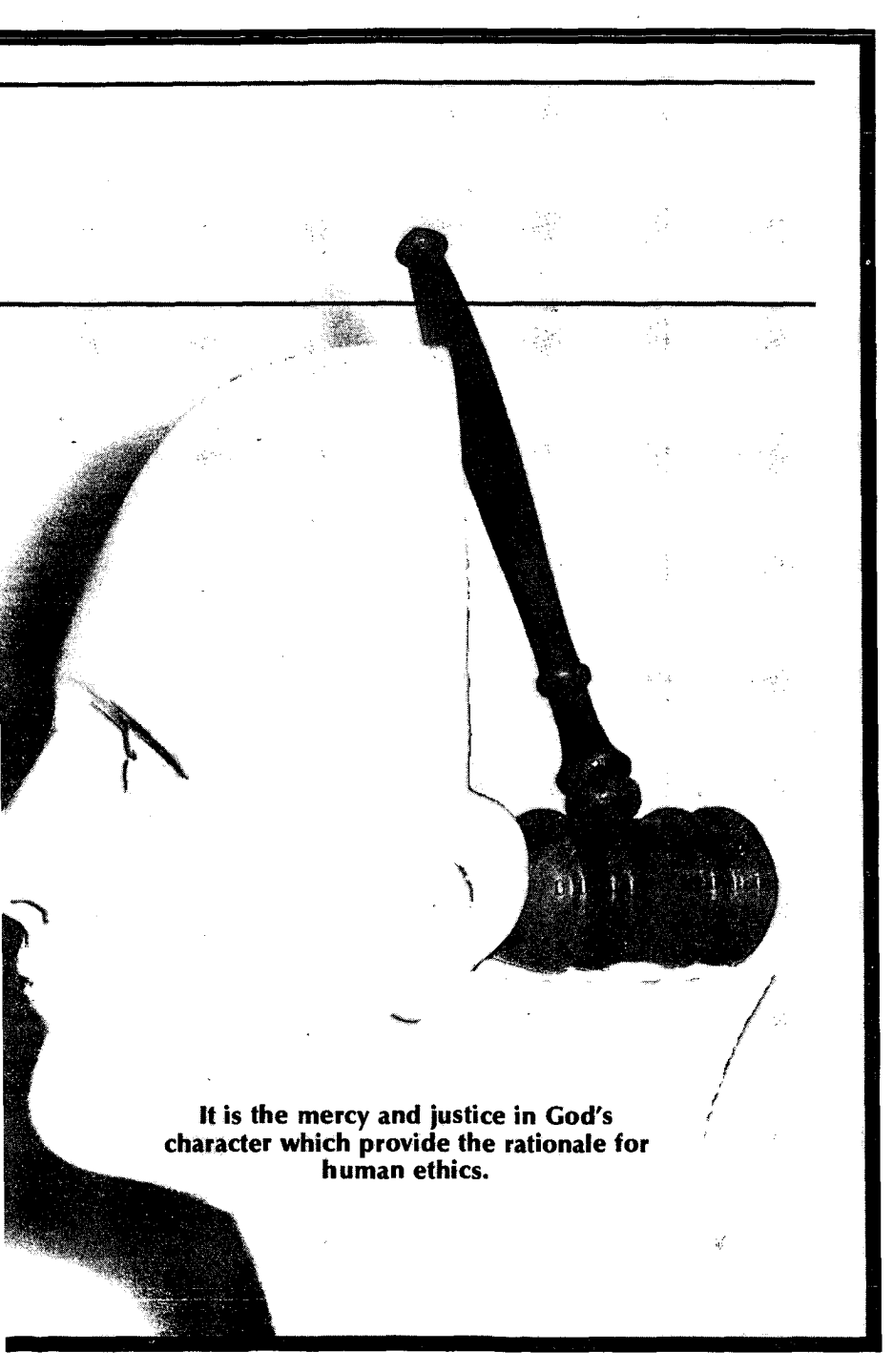
There are two ways of writing history. One is the secular, which ignores the existence of God and His presence in human events. The secular writer hears no divine voice and acknowledges no divine force in the rise and decay of nations. To him the flow of human history has been determined by such things as geography, economics, and human ambition.

It is true that these have greatly influenced the growth and development of peoples; but in the Christian view of history God must always be taken into account. Bible prophecy helps us see God's action in history. The Christian acknowledges the truth stated so aptly by Ellen White:

"To every nation and to every individual of today God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being measured by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes."—*Education*, p. 178.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. God Created Man (Ps. 8:5, 6)
2. God Came to Redeem Sinful Man (Rom. 5:8).
3. God Will Judge Man (2 Cor. 5:1)
4. God Is Ruler (Dan. 4:17)
5. Man's Need of God (Ps. 23:1-3)
6. Man's Response to God (Rom. 12:1; Ps. 95:6)



**It is the mercy and justice in God's
character which provide the rationale for
human ethics.**

Part 1
GOD CREATED
MAN

“For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Ps. 8:5, 6).

The Bible affirms that man was created by God in a special act at a given time. It lends no support to the theory that man slowly developed in response to the operation of natural law.

How is the God of the Bible distinguished from the gods of the nations? 1 Chron. 16:26; Acts 17:24, 29.

God made man with a superior order of intelligence. The brain in man is most mysterious and wonderful. The cortex, which is the seat of thinking, judgment, speech, and memory, if ironed out flat would be as large as a newspaper page, yet it is far more than a clever computer.

“The most sophisticated cybernetic device is still a primitive instrument when compared with the human brain.”—*Time*, book review of *Man and Memory*, Nov. 30, 1970.

God planned for man to be deeply involved in his earthly environment points to the wisdom shown by God who created man and the earth to be together. And it was all good; it exhibited the vast intelligence of our great God, as Creator and Sustainer of all.

The process of creation is something that we cannot understand. We come closest to catching a glimpse into it as we listen to the physicists tell us how matter can be converted into energy. Creation is the reverse of this.

When we accept the fact of our creation by God, it is reasonable also to accept as best His plan for the order of our lives. It means listening to His voice, thinking His thoughts after Him, and not only depending upon Him, but admiring Him, learning from Him, yes, loving Him.

THINK IT THROUGH

As you think of man and his world as given to us by our Creator, try to show from the Bible or your own observation how our created world gives evidence of divine (1) purpose, (2) wisdom, and (3) design.

“As regards our responsibility and influence, we are amenable to God as deriving our life from Him. This we do not obtain from humanity, but from God only. We are His by creation and by redemption.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 422, 423.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 50, 51.

Part 2
GOD CAME TO
REDEEM SINFUL MAN

“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

In the middle of human history stands the cross of the crucified One. He is both God and Creator, yet joined in compassion to the human race to redeem it.

Surely no study of ethics and morality can escape the lessons and the judgments of that cross. The world had been beguiled away from righteousness into sin, and because of that had come under the sentence of death.

Were all men to die? Had they crossed a line, passed a point of no return? Was their future hopeless? God had an answer full of hope for all sinners. That plan culminated in Christ's cross, on which He paid the penalty for our sins and made it possible for us to receive by faith the merits of His sinless life record. What more could He have done?

The redeeming sacrifice of Jesus draws us away from defiance and revolt toward submission and obedience. It woos our rebellious hearts with its message of love. It shows how the hard sentence of judgment against sin may be diverted from the repentant sinner, and he may step into that glorious freedom awaiting all who repent and accept Jesus as Saviour.

In what way can we attain true freedom? John 8:36. What result awaits those who ignore or neglect the proffered grace? Heb. 2:2, 3.

In a world where cynicism of motives prevails, and skepticism closes the prejudiced mind, the cross of Christ cries to us inviting us to try to understand God's mind, His thought, His will; and to turn to Him for redemption.

Jesus condemns all kinds of immoral behavior. He holds up a pure, sinless pattern. Through Him we can attain an incorruptible crown that endures forever.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what sense is Jesus the “desire of all nations” (Hag. 2:7)? “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6)?

“Men hate the sinner, while they love the sin. Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 316, 317.

Part 3
GOD WILL
JUDGE MAN

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Read also Eccl. 12:13, 14; Ps. 96:13; and Matt. 3:12.

Sin and evil always stand under the judgment of God. God never condones what He has declared to be sin. He will never accept sin as a viable way of life. He cannot be in favor of or on the side of sin.

How is the one described who fails to take sin seriously? Prov. 14:9. (Contrast Ps. 4:4.)

Christ's death “was the means through which an end was to be finally made of sin and Satan, and his host to be vanquished.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 209.

Thus God has the moral right to destroy sin and those who cling to it, and still be a righteous, loving God. But Hē is long-suffering toward the sinner and wants him to escape the judgment that finally falls upon those who refuse to separate from sin.

When an individual consciously takes his stand with Christ and identifies with His righteous life and His law, he must also join Christ in His righteous judgment against sin. The mind of Jesus with respect to sin must be our mind as well.

We must see God's judgment against sinners primarily as a judgment against sin. If we are not agreeable to that the door of redemption and reconciliation cannot open to us.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why did Jesus say to the people of His time: “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it” (Matt. 12:41)? Have we any excuse if we also are condemned in the judgment?

“The expectation of Christ's coming is to make men fear the Lord, and fear His judgments upon transgression. It is to awaken them to the great sin of rejecting His offers of mercy. Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 634.

“The One who has stood as our intercessor; who hears all penitential prayers and confessions; who is represented with a rainbow, the symbol of grace and love, encircling His head, is soon to cease His work in the heavenly sanctuary. Grace and mercy will then descend from the throne, and justice will take their place. He for whom His people have looked will assume His right—the office of Supreme Judge.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7. p. 989.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 486, 487.

Part 4
GOD IS RULER

What was the purpose stated by the Holy One for Nebuchadnezzar's predicted loss of reason and kingship?

"To the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17).

A scientist cited the orderly operation of the universe as evidence that there is a big Engineer that operates the universe. But he was thinking only of God's regulation of the heavenly bodies that hang and move in space.

God claims rulership in another sphere, the area of human events. We may neglect Him, or overlook Him, or ignore Him, or even doubt His presence; but He is nevertheless very much present, and we need to take into account His sovereign authority in all our thoughts and plans. He is referred to in the Bible as the God of heaven and the God of the earth (Gen. 24:3; 2 Kings 19:15; 2 Chron. 20:6).

To one who has chosen the way of God, He becomes an ever present companion and guide. The life is yielded to His lordship; He takes His place as King; His followers are His subjects. And the relationship is not forced and harsh, but willingly accepted and cherished.

Here in this rebellious planet God wants His people to acknowledge Him before the world. He wants them to witness to the excellency of His rulership. They are to give evidence that their lives are not prey to the shifting tides of human opinion, but are anchored to eternal power and authority.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are we sensitive and fearful lest we let others know that we respect and obey a higher power? Do we show that we are out of date when we acknowledge and honor God as our personal Ruler?

"That which God purposes, man is powerless to disannul. Even amid the working of evil, God's purposes have been moving steadily forward to their accomplishment."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 720.

"As the wheellike complications are under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim guides the affairs of the earth."—*Education*, p. 178.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 499-502.

PART 5
MAN'S NEED OF GOD

Reflect on the Bible passage below. What does the symbol of the shepherd teach about God in His relation to men?

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Ps. 23:1-3).

Without God man is incomplete, and spiritually and intellectually lost. God has revealed Himself through His Written Word, in nature, in Jesus Christ, and in His presence through the Holy Spirit. How ignorant and how subject to deception we would be without this revelation!

We live in the midst of enemies—diseases that threaten our physical lives, and temptations that threaten our spiritual lives. We are "made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17. Sin is man's mortal enemy, not his friend. The truth concerning God and our world illuminates our minds and dispels the darkness, showing us what we really are and what we may become. The truth, God's truth, and not our own human theories and judgments, makes us free.

Those who have traveled widely in the world know how people seem to want to worship, to reach out to a power above themselves. The animist in the jungle, offering some food on a banana leaf to the spirits, may be worshiping out of wonder, perhaps out of fear. How precious the knowledge of God is to him as he learns of God's power and love and receives Jesus as his Saviour.

Recall how the apostle Paul, visiting Athens, stood on Mars' Hill and proclaimed the existence of the true God to his audience (Acts 17:22-31). The response was typical of the attitude of the world in every time: "Some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. . . . Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed" (verses 32-34).

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways does your knowledge of and faith in God give you strength and hope? Can you imagine how you would face life without Him?

"God dwells in every abode; He hears every word that is spoken, listens to every prayer that is offered, tastes the sorrows and disappointments of every soul, regards the treatment that is given to father, mother, sister, friend, and neighbor. He cares for our necessities, and His love and mercy and grace are continually flowing to satisfy our need."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 105.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "The Sinner's Need of Christ," pp. 17-22.

**Part 6
MAN'S RESPONSE
TO GOD**

"O Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Ps. 95:6).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

Here the relationship between God and us is outlined. He is our Creator. He gives us life. He created us for a purpose. "In the creation it was His purpose that the earth be inhabited by beings whose existence should be a blessing to themselves and to one another, and an honor to their Creator. All who will may identify themselves with this purpose."—*Education*, p. 174.

Man's ideal response to God is to cease rebelling against Him and to cooperate with Him. These two responses combine in a person's acceptance of Jesus Christ.

"We are to surrender our hearts to God, that He may renew and sanctify us, and fit us for His heavenly court. We are not to wait for some special time, but today we are to give ourselves to Him, refusing to be the servants of sin. Do you imagine you can leave off sin a little at a time? Oh, leave the accursed thing at once! Hate the things that Christ hates, love the things that Christ loves. Has He not by His death and suffering made provision for your cleansing from sin?"—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 327.

What effect will this close relationship with God have upon our purposes, our judgments, our actions?

We come to Him in faith—Heb. 11:6.

We turn to Him in repentance—Ps. 38:18.

We confess and are forgiven—1 John 1:9.

He makes us new creatures in Christ—2 Cor. 5:17.

THINK IT THROUGH

Has there been a tendency lately in your life to think less frequently of God or to be forgetful of Him? What is the basis of your faith in God? Check those that apply: the Bible () nature () your father told you () world events () your conscience () reason () moon walks () personal experience () other ().

"If you will seek the Lord and be converted every day; if you will of your own spiritual choice be free and joyous in God; if with gladsome consent of heart to His gracious call you come wearing the yoke of Christ,—the yoke of obedience and service,—all your murmurings will be stilled, all your difficulties will be removed, all the perplexing problems that now confront you will be solved."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 101.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "True Motive in Service" (Matt. 6:33, 34), pp. 98-101.

3. STANDARDS AND



Within the general principles of the Ten Commandments are encoded the roots of all moral issues for our relationship with man and God.

A high-contrast, black and white profile of a person's face is visible on the right side of the page, looking towards the left. The face is partially obscured by the heart shape and the text block.

PRINCIPLES

STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

LESSON 3 January 9-15

"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently" (Ps. 119:4).

Various of God's precepts are found scattered throughout the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. When God was leading the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage to the Promised Land, He gave His law as the basic governing document and standard of personal conduct for His people. We call that law the Ten Commandments. Many of the Bible writers have referred to these statutes. These writers often have called the people to follow standards of conduct based upon these ten.

In Jesus' teaching He called attention to the broad meaning of the commandments. His hearers saw them in a new light. He called attention to the two duties of the Ten Commandments, love to God and love to fellowmen.

Throughout the experience of the many Bible characters one sees the tension between human weakness and the requirements of God's law. The law mirrors conduct, exposing the wrong and confirming the right. It is silently bearing its witness and calling those who will listen to a life of obedience. Obedience to God's commandments is most natural for those who know God and live close to Him. Those who choose God's will reduce the world's rebellion and increase the loyalty to Him. But there is a personal result also.

"The laws of God have their foundation in the most immutable rectitude, and are so framed that they

will promote the happiness of those who keep them."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 267.

Speaking of Abraham's faithfulness in training his family, Ellen White says: "There is no betraying of sacred trusts, no hesitating between right and wrong. The Holy One has given rules for the guidance of all—the standard of character from which none can swerve and be guiltless. God's will is to be diligently and conscientiously studied, and it must be made paramount in all the affairs of life. The laws which every human agent is to obey flow from the heart of infinite love."—*Selected Messages*. bk. 2, p. 217.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Law (1 John 3:4; Rom. 3:20; Ps. 119:172)
2. God Speaks in His Precepts (Ps. 119:15, 128)
3. Holy and Eternal Standards (Rom. 7:12; Ps. 111:7, 8)
4. The New Testament and the Law (Matt. 5:17, 18)
5. Love Is Commandment Keeping (1 John 5:2, 3)
6. Law in the Heart (Heb. 10:16)

Part 1 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law"
LAW (1 John 3:4).
 "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).
 "All thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:172).

Satan would like to see God's law defamed. He would like to see the whole plan of redemption perverted by bringing about a misunderstanding of the relation of the law to the gospel.

If there were no law, there would be no sin. Then the gospel would lose its meaning, for it announces salvation from sin. Then Christ would have died in a purposeless sacrifice, for His death was to save people from sin, which would not exist without the law.

What does the New Testament teach about God's Ten Commandment law in relation to faith in Jesus? Rom. 3:31.

But what is the purpose of God's law? It is God's standard of what is right and true. It expresses the mind of God (Ps. 40:8). It declares the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13). The law ordains to life those who keep its precepts (Rom. 7:10, 12). But man is not standing where he was when created. He has left his original relation to the law and the will of God. He is now under the law in a relationship that makes it a ministration of death.

The law is an expression of God's character. To change the law would mean either a change in God's character or a disassociation of the law from His character. God will never do either in order to extricate man from the dilemma of being condemned by the law. The sin of disobedience must be dealt with in another way. Obedience to God's law must continue to be the standard of life for this world and the universe.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it possible for Christians actually to love God's law? Is it possible to have love for the very precepts that measure our lives and point out our sin? If we reach the point where we love God's law, can sin have power over us?

"The law was not spoken at this time exclusively for the benefit of the Hebrews. God honored them by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 467, 468.

Part 2
GDD SPEAKS IN
HIS PRECEPTS

"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (Ps. 119:15).

"I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:128).

It is hazardous for us to substitute our unguided choice for what God teaches in matters of morals and conduct. Nor is it safe to look for guidance to our human reason in these matters. Human reason has proved to be not always dependable. If reason is to be the sole guide in moral problems, then only the trained reasoner could know the right.

Jesus Himself illustrated how we should apply the teachings and requirements of God's law to human situations. He showed that the spirit and not just the letter should govern behavior. (See Matt. 5:27, 28; 43, 44.) Human beings, finite and sinful, need guidance in decision making. This guidance they can find in the Bible; and the Spirit will enlighten them to know how to apply the instruction to their living.

What is the key to true and ready obedience to the statutes of God? Ps. 40:8; 119:77.

Many people associate the thought of law with unpleasant restrictions on their actions, or maybe as something that will get them into trouble. How shortsighted a view of the true nature of the law! God's law provides the great guidelines of life, as the compass at sea, or the map on the road.

THINK IT THROUGH

Into what two sections are the Ten Commandments divided? What do you think is the difference, if any, between the laws of God and the laws of your city or state?

"It is as true now as when the words were spoken to Israel of obedience to His commandments: 'This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations.' Deuteronomy 4:6.

"Here is the only safeguard for individual integrity, for the purity of the home, the well-being of society, or the stability of the nation. Amidst all life's perplexities and dangers and conflicting claims the one safe and sure rule is to do what God says. 'The statutes of the Lord are right,' and 'he that doeth these things shall never be moved.' Psalms 19:8; 15:5."—*Education*, p. 229.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Spirituality of the Law" (Matt. 5:48), pp. 76-78.

**Part 3
HOLY AND
ETERNAL
STANDARDS**

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12).

“All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness” (Ps. 111:7, 8).

Ellen White wrote the following pertinent statement:

“Vice and crime, and iniquity of all kinds, are steadily on the increase. The penetrating power of Bible truth must show the contrast between truth and error.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 529.

It is amazing how people will try to accommodate standards to fit the things they want to do. They rationalize concerning what is right and what is duty so that a given type of conduct will be socially approved. It is man’s way of pandering to his lowered standards and easing his conscience over his ethical shortcuts.

A holy and righteous God has established laws and standards of conduct. God’s laws do not change with each passing generation, sinking to a lower and still lower level as humankind moves farther from Creation Day when God made man perfect. Rather His statutes remain as beacons to give a steady, dependable light pointing the direction man should take.

How are children and grandchildren to learn correct principles? Deut. 6:6, 7.

God’s laws do not deviate or shift as one goes from country to country or from one type of civilization to another. With Him truth is always truth; purity is ever purity; idolatry does not cease to be idolatry; integrity is unchangeable.

THINK IT THROUGH

Analyze Psalm 19:7-9, gathering out the various adjectives that describe God’s law. How can law be said to rejoice the heart? Verse 8. Does morality depend on what we feel or on what God declares?

“These monstrous doctrines [that the elect can never fall from grace] are essentially the same as the later teaching of popular educators and theologians—that there is no unchangeable divine law as the standard of right, but that the standard of morality is indicated by society itself, and has constantly been subject to change. All these ideas are inspired by the same master spirit—by him who, even among the sinless inhabitants of heaven, began his work of seeking to break down the righteous restraints of the law of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 261.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 262-264.

Part 4
THE NEW
TESTAMENT
AND THE LAW

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17, 18).

It is curious how some Christians have looked upon the Old Testament times as the dispensation of law and the New Testament era as the dispensation of grace, as if the reign of law after Christ had come to an end. Today’s text refutes that concept. So do other New Testament passages.

Notice Paul’s comment on the use of the law, pointing out how the law condemns lawlessness and disobedience. (See 1 Tim. 1:8-10.)

Recall how James argued that the law stands as a unit and we are not at liberty to observe one part and ignore another. (See James 2:10-12; 1:25.) Note that the apostle John taught that followers of Jesus are under obligation to keep the commandments of Jesus. (See 1 John 2:4.)

No release from obedience to God’s law and will exists in the New Testament, though we search it from Matthew to Revelation. Grace is offered, but not release from obedience. Surely every true Christian would want it that way. Certainly as he thinks upon life and duty, he wants his life to be free from sin.

What is the relationship between faith in Jesus and the law? Rom. 3:31.

THINK IT THROUGH

Ask yourself—Do I want to know the right, really desire to follow it, to reject self-justification, to make no excuses for my past conduct?

“God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression, He reveals the principles of righteousness. The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy. When at Jesus’ birth the angels sang,— ‘Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace, good will toward men’ (Luke 2:14), they were declaring the principles of the law which He had come to magnify and make honorable.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, “The Spirituality of the Law” (on Matt. 5:17, last half), pp. 48-51.

**Part 5
LOVE IS
COMMANDMENT
KEEPING**

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:2, 3).

Christian love, as it fills the heart, does not draw the possessor away from keeping God's commandments. Love that pertains to God would necessarily be an upright, obedient, moral love.

Love for a neighbor or associate would never allow us to wrong him, to treat him shabbily, to be less than honest and true with him and faithful to his best interest. Love for God will result in our honoring Him through obedience as well as in singing His praise.

A feeling of love does not make our every act or judgment right without regard to what God teaches us is right. The principle of love is the fulfilling of the law. (See Rom. 13:10.) Sentimentality could lead us astray with regard to our love to our fellowmen and to God, and His love to us. Neither God's love nor our love relieves us from the necessity of having regard for God's precepts.

Is it Paul's intention in Romans 6:14, 15 to teach that keeping God's law is not required? Explain.

Because of their wrong conduct Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden; Satan and one third of the angels of heaven were cast out; Saul lost the kingship of the nation of Israel; and Ananias and Sapphira suffered the sentence of death.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are your motives for obeying God? Love? Loyalty? Fear? Social pressure? Reward?

Notice how Revelation 14:12 reads in the new English Bible: “This is where the fortitude of God's people has its place—in keeping God's commands and remaining loyal to Jesus.”

“God's great object in the working out of His providences is to try men, to give them opportunity to develop character. Thus He proves whether they are obedient or disobedient to His commands. Good works do not purchase the love of God, but they reveal that we possess that love. If we surrender the will to God, we shall not work in order to earn God's love. His love as a free gift will be received into the soul, and from love to Him we shall delight to obey His commandments.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 283.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 668.

Part 6
LAW IN
THE HEART

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them” (Heb. 10:16).

God’s laws written in the hearts of His children is the purpose of the gospel. Without the law written there, the Christian is in danger of being a cold legalist, smug in spiritual blindness.

Who is the power that promotes spiritual blindness in the minds of those that believe not? 2 Cor. 4:4.

A knowledge of the law and of one’s own shortcomings can leave one with a “certain fearful looking for of judgment” (Heb. 10:27). In fact, of ourselves we are unable to keep God’s law and we remain under God’s disapproval. But if we are willing to comply with God’s plan, He has two ways to deal with our human impossibilities:

1. He writes His law in our hearts, making us willing and cooperative as regards the keeping of His holy law. The Holy Spirit does this writing in the “fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor. 3:3).

2. When we do our best in carrying out God’s will and fall short, we still have an advocate in “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

The goal of the plan of salvation is to restore the image of God in man and to bring about righteousness in his life. So the penitent sinner experiences the new birth, submitting to the writing of God’s law in his heart, and constantly growing in grace and a knowledge of God. (See 1 John 2:29.)

“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. . . .

“The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. . . .

“ . . . If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, 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.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 61, 62.

4. OUR WORDS ARE

W
O
R
D
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A Christian's attention to his words implies more than refusing to lie and slander.

WITNESS

OUR WORDS AND WITNESS

LESSON 4 January 16-22

"Lying lips are abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight" (Prov. 12:22).

One of the surest indexes of high moral standards in one's life is trustworthiness in words and witness. Deception is so common that people learn to be on their guard against being led astray. In some situations the plainest lies are used, repeated again and again, as a matter of policy. In other situations a tendency on the part of a speaker to exaggerate lowers the quotient of belief on the part of the average listener. Advertising sometimes verges on the unbelievable or raises false expectations. What man, trying to sell his old automobile, would call attention to its faults and weaknesses? But could a Christian fail to deal truly and fairly with his "neighbor"?

A lie is a statement or action made with intent to deceive. As Christians we must not only avoid deception, but also go the second mile and make sure that the other party is not misunderstanding us and thus being misled. There should be no "credibility gaps" with respect to the words and actions of Christians. If such exist, not only is a grievous wrong done to the other party, but it follows that there could be no foundation of confidence on which to lead others into spiritual truth.

"Let truth telling be held with no loose hand or uncertain grasp. Let it become a part of the life. Playing fast and loose with truth, and dissembling to suit one's own selfish plans, means

shipwreck of faith. 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.' Ephesians 6:14. He who utters untruths sells his soul in a cheap market. His falsehoods may seem to serve in emergencies; he may thus seem to make business advancement that he could not gain by fair dealing; but he finally reaches the place where he can trust no one. Himself a falsifier, he has no confidence in the word of others."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 76.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Truthfulness of God (Titus 1:2)**
2. **The Father of Lies (John 8:44)**
3. **Speaking the Truth (Eph. 4:15)**
4. **Wordiness and Talebearing (Prov. 10:19; 17:9)**
5. **Criticism (Rom. 2:1)**
6. **Messengers of Truth (2 Cor. 6:4-7)**

Part 1
THE TRUTHFUL-
NESS OF GOD

“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2).

Only if God is truthful do we have a firm basis for the hope of salvation. He has said that if we come to Him in contrition He will forgive us (1 John 1:9); if we thirst for righteousness we shall be satisfied (Matt. 5:6); Jesus will provide for His children a home in heaven (John 14:2, 3); the redeemed become heirs of all the gospel promises and benefits (Gal. 3:29; Titus 3:7). God has pledged His word and is fully on record as to His plans for this world and those who believe Him.

How does God describe His own character? Ex. 34:6.

We have every reason to believe that God is truthful, that we can accept His word and put our full trust in Him. It is true that His statements regarding us are often conditional, and the outcome will depend on our response or attitude. The Bible gives abundant evidences of God's truthfulness and dependability. It illustrates how His word has been proved. The most prominent and important of these are the Messianic prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. These prophecies promised the Messiah's coming, even giving time, place, and many other details. One list, gleaned from the Old Testament, gives 46 different aspects of His coming. All of these were exactly fulfilled in the New Testament record. Christ's acts and words made His work and the purposes of His Father in heaven believable to the listeners.

What did Jesus' adversaries acknowledge concerning Him? Matt. 22:16.

How important in our lives are the words "faith," "trust," "belief," "confidence," "assurance" with respect to God!

THINK IT THROUGH

Can you think of incidents in your experience that have led you to the belief that God is trustworthy?

“As a child, Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 68, 69.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Asking to Give," p. 147 (p. 146 in 1923 ed.).

**Part 2
THE FATHER
OF LIES**

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

The description of Satan, the devil, is a very uncomplimentary one, yet not overdrawn. Jesus in heaven had every reason to know the character of Satan, and on earth He branded him a liar. In most societies this is the most insulting term that can be used of an adversary. Yet Christ did not hesitate to use it of Satan.

**In what condition are those who accept the ways of Satan?
2 Tim. 2:26.**

The word "devil" literally means "slanderer." Satan has shown this characteristic again and again. He slandered the character of God and the fairness of His government before the angels of heaven, speaking falsehoods and misrepresenting God's nature and His purposes. In the Garden of Eden the devil lied about God to Eve and Adam and by his insinuations and temptations brought about their moral fall. As a liar Satan was expelled from heaven (Rev. 12:9) and will never regain residence there; nor will his children. (See Rev. 22:15.)

What reason is inferred in Second Corinthians 11:13, 14 why Satan would want to masquerade as an angel of light?

"Disguised as an angel of light, he [Satan] will walk the earth as a wonder-worker. In beautiful language he will present lofty sentiments. Good words will be spoken by him, and good deeds performed. Christ will be personified, but on one point there will be a marked distinction. Satan will turn the people from the law of God."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 471, 472.

THINK IT THROUGH

Can you think of lies that are being circulated today about God to deceive people so they will not turn to Him?

"Now [after Christ's ascension] the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he ruled the children of men, who were under his power, he would have manifested had he been permitted to control the inhabitants of heaven. He had claimed that the transgression of God's law would bring liberty and exaltation; but it was seen to result in bondage and degradation."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 502.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 526, 528.

Part 3
SPEAKING
THE TRUTH

What two traits does Paul link together in Ephesians 4:15?

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph. 4:15, RSV). (Read also Eph. 4:29; 5:4.)

Speaking the truth is a precious Christian virtue and one of the brightest evidences of Christian morality. There is such a lack of it that one who always speaks the truth even to his own hurt becomes marked in a community and becomes known as a person of the highest integrity.

Always to be truthful and honest sets a student apart when, for example, he refuses to cheat in a school examination even when he could easily do so.

There are said to be some cooks who, when asked to give a choice recipe to a friend, leave out an important ingredient rather than to disclose the full truth and the secret of their success.

Children are expected to be truthful with their parents. But are parents always scrupulously honest with their children? Do parents have a freedom to lapse from the truth that is not allowed to children?

Also, what about truthfulness in one's work? In each business or profession there are special temptations to evade the truth. Can you think of a time when someone was grievously wronged by not being told the truth? Should an employer tell the employee the truth, and vice versa? Also, in what spirit? A long list of questions could be compiled covering the subject of truthfulness.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what other ways besides speaking a lie can a person convey an untruth?

“Life's best things—simplicity, honesty, truthfulness, purity, integrity—cannot be bought or sold. They are as free to the ignorant as to the educated, to the humble laborer as to the honored statesman.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 198.

“A slight deviation from truth, a little variation from the requirements of God, is thought to be, after all, not so very sinful, when pecuniary gain or loss is involved. But sin is sin, whether committed by the possessor of millions or by the beggar in the streets.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 311.

“The Lord requires of all who profess His name a strict adherence to truth. This will be as salt which has not lost its savor, as a light amid the moral darkness and deception of the world.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 356.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 309.

Part 4
WORDINESS AND
TALEBEARING

“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (Prov. 10:19).

“He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Prov. 17:9).

While some people by nature are withdrawn and quiet, in contrast some are talking incessantly. What is the nature of all this talking? Much of it may be pointless; it doesn't edify or instruct. Often it is about the individual who is doing the talking and then it can become extremely boring. Again it rambles on about all the common acquaintances and may include a generous amount of gossip.

The Bible states some very clear principles about speech.

1. The mouth discloses what is in the heart (mind) (Matt. 12:34, 35).

2. Corrupt communication is condemned (Eph. 4:29).

3. The tongue needs to be bridled (James 1:26; Ps. 39:1).

4. Speech should be used to communicate our hope (1 Peter 3:15).

5. Our words will be reckoned as a factor in the judgment (Matt. 12:36).

6. Controlling the mouth avoids trouble (Prov. 21:23; Matt. 5:37).

7. Speech should minister grace (Eph. 4:29).

Talebearing (gossip) comes in for special condemnation (Lev. 19:16). Solomon says that a person of “a faithful spirit” conceals rather than reveals an evil report (Prov. 11:13).

There must have been a great deal of this wanton gossip in Israel, for there is so much said against it. It was also pointed out and condemned in the New Testament church (1 Tim. 5:13).

THINK IT THROUGH

“The spirit of gossip and talebearing is one of Satan's special agencies to sow discord and strife, to separate friends, and to undermine the faith of many in the truthfulness of our positions.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 195.

It might be profitable for each one to make some new resolutions about his future exercise of speech.

“Upon every family, upon every individual Christian, is laid the duty of barring the way against corrupt speech. When in the company of those who indulge in foolish talk, it is our duty to change the subject of conversation if possible. By the help of the grace of God we should quietly drop words or introduce a subject that will turn the conversation into a profitable channel.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 337.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, “Talents” (“speech”), pp. 335-339 (pp. 338-342 in 1923 ed.); *The Desire of Ages*, p. 323.

Part 5
CRITICISM **“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things” (Rom. 2:1).**

Whether it is called judging or criticism, it is of the same nature. It reflects one’s own sins and comes under the condemnation of the Bible. Jesus condemned it and labeled the one who practices it a hypocrite (Matt. 7:1-5). Christ’s words sound in our ears today, and we should listen to them: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7).

Especially must we be careful not to put a stumbling block in the path of a brother (Rom. 14:13).

The principal reason Christians should refrain from criticizing and judging is that they cannot understand the heart and read the motives correctly. Therefore judgment must be left to God (Rom. 14:10). Eventually all circumstances both good and bad will be made plain (1 Cor. 4:5).

What was God’s reaction to the criticism of Moses by Aaron and Miriam, his brother and sister? Num. 12:1-10.

Leaders of the church have often been subjected to critical attitudes and unkind judgments. Ellen White penned an admonition worthy of our attention today:

“Let those who have used the talent of speech to discourage and dishearten God’s servants, who are striving to advance God’s cause, planning and working to master hindrance, ask God to forgive them for the injury they have done to His work by their wicked prejudices and unkind words. Let them think of the harm they have done by spreading false reports, by judging those they have no right to judge.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 84.

THINK IT THROUGH

While we should not criticize others, what is the value of self-criticism? Where should this be done? In open confession? In secret?

“We want to show to the world that we have a faith that is elevating, that it makes us kind, courteous, self-denying; and begets in us love and reverence for God, and makes us Christian ladies and gentlemen. We must pray more earnestly for the grace of Christ which is essential for us if we preserve our integrity and spiritual life. If any one comes to you and begins to tell you of the faults of another, if you cannot stop that voice in any other way, lift your voice and sing the Doxology. Vain talkers and mischiefmakers are Satan’s agents in doing his work.”—*Manuscript 4*, 1885.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 288, 289; *Education*, pp. 235, 236.

Part 6
MESSENGERS
OF TRUTH

“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” (2 Cor. 6:4-7).

The world is full of false messiahs, of elusive cures for the world's evils, of voices that deny truth, and of ignorance and misunderstanding of God and His government. Jesus came not only to redeem man but also to expose error and to reveal God's character. His teaching had the ring of authority and carried its own verification (John 7:46). He declared that the truth would set men free (John 8:32).

What descriptive word is often applied to the gospel in the New Testament? 1 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 10:26; 2 Peter 2:2.

We are making the highest use of the power of speech when we use it to proclaim God's truth, either in a public way or in private to a friend. “The power of speech is a talent that should be diligently cultivated. Of all the gifts we have received from God, none is capable of being a greater blessing than this. With the voice we convince and persuade, with it we offer prayer and praise to God, and with it we tell others of the Redeemer's love.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 335.

The apostle Peter was a ready speaker, but his speech could at times be impetuous and ill-advised. However, after Peter was converted, his talent of speech enabled him to preach that mighty Spirit-filled sermon on the Day of Pentecost when thousands were led to receive Christ. A ready tongue, converted, is an asset, not a handicap.

THINK IT THROUGH

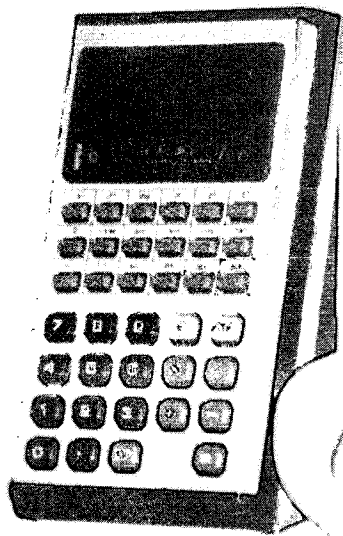
What can I do to make my voice heard in teaching the truth?

“Wherever we are, we should watch for opportunities of speaking to others of the Saviour. If we follow Christ's example in doing good, hearts will open to us as they did to Him. Not abruptly, but with tact born of divine love, we can tell them of Him who is the ‘Chiefest among ten thousand’ and the One ‘altogether lovely.’ Cant. 5:10, 16. This is the very highest work in which we can employ the talent of speech. It was given to us that we might present Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 339.

FURTHER STUDY

Messages to Young People, pp. 200-202.

5. HONESTY



**Honesty involves more than avoiding
criminal activities.**



HONESTY

LESSON 5 January 23-29

"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17).

Honesty includes those traits of character held by a person who does not lie, cheat, or steal. A week's lesson has been devoted to truthfulness. This week we will note honesty, primarily from the viewpoint of not cheating or stealing. However, lying is so close a partner to cheating and stealing that it is nearly unavoidable that we shall sometimes refer to it also.

When we emphasize love as a basic element in the Christian's life, we see that honesty is a vital aspect in the expression of one's love to God and to his neighbor. In the Christian context it is impossible to imagine the existence of a love that does not respect another's reputation or possessions.

The eighth commandment says: "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex. 20:15). The *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 606, points out that "Here the right to possess property is set forth, a right that is to be respected by others. For society to exist at all, this principle must be safeguarded, else there is no security and no protection. All would be anarchy."

Ellen White gives this specific instruction: "In every business transaction a Christian will be just what he wants his brethren to think he is. His course of action is guided by underlying principles. He does not scheme; therefore he has nothing to conceal, nothing to gloss over. He may be criticized, he may be tested, but his unbending integrity will shine forth like pure gold. He is a blessing to all connected with him, for his word is trustworthy. He is a man who will not take an advantage of his neighbor. He is a friend and benefactor to all, and his fellow men put confidence in his counsel. . . . A truly honest man will never take advantage of weakness or incompetency in order to fill his own purse. He accepts a fair equivalent for

that which he sells. If there are defects in the articles sold, he frankly tells his brother or his neighbor, although by so doing he may work against his own pecuniary interests.

"In all the details of life the strictest principles of honesty are to be maintained. These are not the principles which govern our world, for Satan, deceiver, liar, and oppressor is the master, and his subjects follow him and carry out his purposes. But Christians serve under a different Master, and their actions must be wrought in God, irrespective of all selfish gain."—*My Life Today*, p. 330.

"We are commanded to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves; but the daily experience of life shows that this law is disregarded. Uprightness in deal and moral integrity will secure the favor of God, and make a man a blessing to himself and to society; but amid the varied temptations that assail one whichever way he may turn, it is impossible to keep a clear conscience and the approval of heaven without divine aid and a principle to love honesty for the sake of the right."—Ellen G. White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1158.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Cultivating an Honest Mind (Phil. 4:8)**
2. **Deviousness (Prov. 3:28, 29)**
3. **Ethics in Business (Prov. 20:10, 14)**
4. **A Workman's Ethics (Ex. 38:23)**
5. **Honesty in Doctrine (2 Cor. 4:2)**
6. **Mercy to the Repentant (Prov. 28:13)**

Part 1
CULTIVATING AN
HONEST MIND

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

We are to take account of and let all of these Christian virtues play an active part in the life. Here is a course of mental activity that is truly fruitful and constructive. Ethical decisions require the cultivating of ethical thinking. Some may even say that dishonesty is usually premeditated. Then those who strive for good actions should prepare the mind, for to live right one must learn to think right. Here the will comes into play by rejecting dishonorable schemes and covetous ambitions from the thoughts. Paul put the necessity for doing this succinctly: “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). A good way to accomplish this is to preoccupy the mind with worthy projects and positive, constructive activities. The true end of life is not to acquire money or goods or fame, but to develop character.

“You are responsible to God for the indulgence of vain thoughts; for from vain imaginations arises the committal of sins, the actual doing of those things upon which the mind has dwelt. Govern your thoughts, and it will then be much easier to govern your actions.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 82, 83.

Where do sinful acts have their roots? Prov. 24:9; Matt. 15:19.

THINK IT THROUGH

If conscience tells me that I have done something that is not scrupulously honest, what is my duty?

“This [applying Philippians 4:8] will require earnest prayer and unceasing watchfulness. We must be aided by the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit, which will attract the mind upward, and habituate it to dwell on pure and holy things. And we must give diligent study to the word of God. . . . ‘Thy word,’ says the psalmist, ‘have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.’ ”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 265-268.

Part 2
DEVIUSNESS

“Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee” (Prov. 3:28, 29).

People become so infatuated by the charm of the things of this world that they go to uncommon lengths to achieve their material objectives. Sometimes the individual not only works hard to reach his goal, but also he may take unfair advantage of others to benefit himself. Deviousness almost always implies laying a plan that will take advantage of another's gullibility, ignorance, or trust.

What moral lessons are there in the story of Jacob and Esau? Gen. 25:29-33; 27:1, 15-19, 30-33, 41.

The *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 606 mentions situations where individuals deviate from the straight way: “They steal who conceal goods from a customs inspector or misrepresent them in any way, or who make out false or misleading tax returns, or who cheat tradesmen by incurring debts that they can never repay, or in view of impending bankruptcy, turn over their property to a friend, with the understanding that it is later to be restored, or who have recourse to any so-called tricks of trade.”

“Devious” literally means “off the road”—and as applied in society means departing from a right, accepted, or common course; therefore not being straightforward. In other words it means “tricky.”

As we come to the end of each day and we are alone with our thoughts, does a feeling of peace steal over us, or is there remorse for an act that cannot pass the searching eye of our God? There is a way in which peace can be sought and found.

THINK IT THROUGH

Proverbs 15:8 states that “the prayer of the upright is his [the Lord’s] delight.” In view of this, how can we delight God with our prayers?

“When a man is indeed connected with God, and is keeping His law in truth, his life will reveal the fact. . . . He will not sell his honor for gain. His principles are built upon the sure foundation, and his conduct in worldly matters is a transcript of his principles. Firm integrity shines forth as gold amid the dross and rubbish of the world. Deceit, falsehood, and unfaithfulness may be glossed over and hidden from the eyes of man, but not from the eyes of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 310.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 309-311.

Part 3
ETHICS IN
BUSINESS

“Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord.”

“It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth” (Prov. 20:10, 14).

The Word of God portrays men in all their greedy humanness, and the picture is not attractive. Commonly accepted standards of the commercial world may place achievement above strict integrity. The Bible penetrates behind the business deal and investigates the mechanism by which it was carried off: “Divers weights,” “divers measures,” “a false balance (verse 23),” all are hateful to God. Notice other dishonest practices condemned in the Bible: (1) lying about a lost article (Lev. 6:3); (2) holding back wages (Jer. 22:13; James 5:4); (3) non-payment of debts (Ps. 37:21).

“Especially in these days when the keen edge of morality is becoming increasingly dull, it is well to remember that adulteration, concealment of defects, the misrepresentation of quality, and the employment of false weights or measures are all the acts of a thief as much as pocket picking or shoplifting.

“Employees steal when they . . . appropriate that which has not been expressly agreed upon, or neglect to do whatever work they contracted to do, or perform it in a slovenly manner, or damage the owner’s property through carelessness or diminish it by waste.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 606.

God condemns the practice of being too close in dealing in business matters. “Those who profess to be waiting and watching for the appearance of their Lord should not disgrace their profession by bantering in deal and standing for the last penny.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 239.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what respects can I more faithfully apply the golden rule in business transactions?

“In all business transactions, we are to let the light shine decidedly. There is to be no sharp practice. Everything is to be done with the strictest integrity. Better consent to lose something financially than to gain a few shillings by sharp practice. We shall lose nothing in the end by fair dealing. We are to live the law of God in our world, and perfect a character after the divine similitude. All business, with those in the faith and those not in the faith, is to be transacted on square, righteous principles.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1158.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 350, 351; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 556.

Part 4
A WORKMAN'S
ETHICS

“And with him was Aholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen” (Ex. 38:23).

The work of a skilled craftsman is something to be admired. The higher the quality of the work and the more artistic and flawless its finish, the more does it testify to the workman's opinion of the importance of his calling. Shoddiness is ever disappointing, especially when the workman or workwoman is capable of doing better. Work well done always gives satisfaction both to the one who does it, as well as to the one for whom it is performed. Turn a garment over and examine the workmanship; check the fitting as you judge the work of a dressmaker or a tailor. Listen to the purr of an engine in perfect tune after repairs by a master mechanic. Observe the cabinet work in a kitchen, the laying of the floors and the finishing of doors and doorways, as you inspect a newly finished house. Then judge whether you think it is quality work.

In today's highly organized society a large share of the population depends upon tradesmen to keep the houses painted, the radios playing, the electricity and water flowing, the clothes manufactured, the dents removed from a crumpled automobile fender, and even the bread baked. Applying Christian ethics to the workman, every task undertaken would be done faithfully, with the best possible skill, and great satisfaction would result.

If the laborer is entitled to his just wages, paid promptly, to what is the employer entitled?

The conclusion that Christian principles apply to our daily work is unavoidable. This is certainly what we would speak of as applied ethics.

“Those who do nothing for their employers except that which is commanded them, when they know that the prosperity of the work depends on some extra exertion on their part, will fail to be accounted faithful servants.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 228.

THINK IT THROUGH

To what extent is an Adventist mechanic or contractor handicapped because he ceases his work between sundown Friday and sundown Sabbath? Why?

“If a workman in the daily vocations of life is unfaithful and slights his work, the world will not judge incorrectly if they estimate his standard in religion according to his standard in business.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 310, 311.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, “Talents” (“Strength”), pp. 348-351 (pp. 351-354 in 1923 ed.).

**Part 5
HONESTY IN
DOCTRINE**

“We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:2, RSV).

Paul had a passion to see the Scriptures used honestly, not wresting them from their true meaning. He admonished Timothy to be a good workman in the gospel calling, “rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, RSV).

If there is an innate honesty in our lives in regard to God and His truth, how will this witness for the cause of Christ? 2 Cor. 8:21.

Scripture must not be quoted to justify an improper practice in one’s life. Nor is it honest to choose just what portions are wanted and to disregard the rest. Every use we make of a passage of Scripture must fit in harmoniously with the whole pattern of its teaching. “Each passage of Scripture must be given its true meaning even as every brick in the wall of a building must be in its proper place, or the whole wall suffers. . . . Irrelevancies and secondary issues are to be subordinated to the principles that actually prepare men to conquer sin and enable them to live triumphantly in Christ.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 336, 337.

The principle of using the Scriptures honestly applies also to the use and interpretations of the writings of Ellen White. To quote out of context, or to otherwise wrest the meaning of passages is a dishonest practice condemned by Ellen G. White herself. (See *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 82, 83; bk. 1, pp. 42-44; *Testimonies to Ministers*. pp. 42, 43.)

THINK IT THROUGH

For what reason do people distort or misapply the Scriptures? Has this tendency ever entered into my own thinking?

“Brethren, cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost. . . .

“Simplicity and plain utterance are comprehended by the illiterate, by the peasant, and the child as well as by the full-grown man or the giant in intellect. . . .

“... In the very same way that they [those who wish to pervert the writings] treat the writings in my published articles and in my books, so do skeptics and infidels treat the Bible. They read it according to their desire to pervert, to misapply, to willfully wrest the utterances from their true meaning.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 18, 19.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 520, 521.

Part 6
MERCY TO
THE REPENTANT

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

One of the duties of the Holy Spirit is to help a sinner be honest with himself. Otherwise, he will never take the steps of repentance and confession. (See John 16:8.)

What is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and how does it operate? Matt. 12:31, 32.

“Light comes to the soul through God’s word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 322.

At the same time the wrongdoer must take the additional steps of ceasing his dishonest practice and seeking to resist all future temptation in the strength of God. (See Phil. 2:13; 1 Cor. 10:13). Sins to which the dishonest person has been clinging must be removed in God’s way—they cannot be carried over into the eternal world. Can it be imagined that there will be dishonesty of any type in heaven?

The purpose of confession and repentance is to remove from the life of the sinner the wrong practices and the accompanying guilt feelings that stand between him and God. When we receive Jesus as our Sin Bearer He can put our doubts to rest and heal our wounded souls.

THINK IT THROUGH

Recall how Jacob, guilty of tricking his father and supplanting his brother, wrestled with the angel. Does his experience have a lesson for me?

“Many a sin is left unconfessed to confront the sinner in the day of final account; better far to confront your sins now, to confess them and put them away, while the atoning Sacrifice pleads in your behalf. Do not fail to learn the will of God on this subject.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 327.

“Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

“Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 39.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, “Repentance,” pp. 23-36.

6. THE CHRISTIAN

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS LIVING
LESSON 6 January 30 to February 5
"And the Lord God took the man,
and put him into the garden of Eden to
dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

In the very beginning of human history it is seen that man is related to his environment in such a way that he is to be active in developing that environment and in supplying his needs to live.

Man was given dominion over the newly created world, was given the seeds and the fruit of the plants and trees for food, and was provided a home—the Garden of Eden—which he was to dress and keep. His life then was not very complicated, for the plan of God for him provided him with a dwelling and food.

After the Fall man was driven from the garden which had been his home. He would now have to till the less responsive soil in the sweat of his face, and with the added difficulty that the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles. The sinful pair first used leaves for garments, and later skins of animals.

Today we live in very different circumstances with very complicated relationships. One sector of society produces the food and fibers. Another processes the food and manufactures clothing. A special group builds dwellings, while another makes furniture. Other large sectors supply the services such as water, electricity, heat, sanitation, transportation, and communications. To facilitate all these arrangements we make use of a medium of exchange called money. With this we can purchase goods or

services supplied by others, and the whole economic fabric keeps in balance. This is a relationship that few, if any, escape; a large proportion of the people work for money or wages. Christians live in this world (though their spiritual citizenship is in heaven) and are involved in making a living. As they do this they must never cease to be less Christian. What are the Christian principles that relate to making a living? In this week's lesson we will note some of these principles.

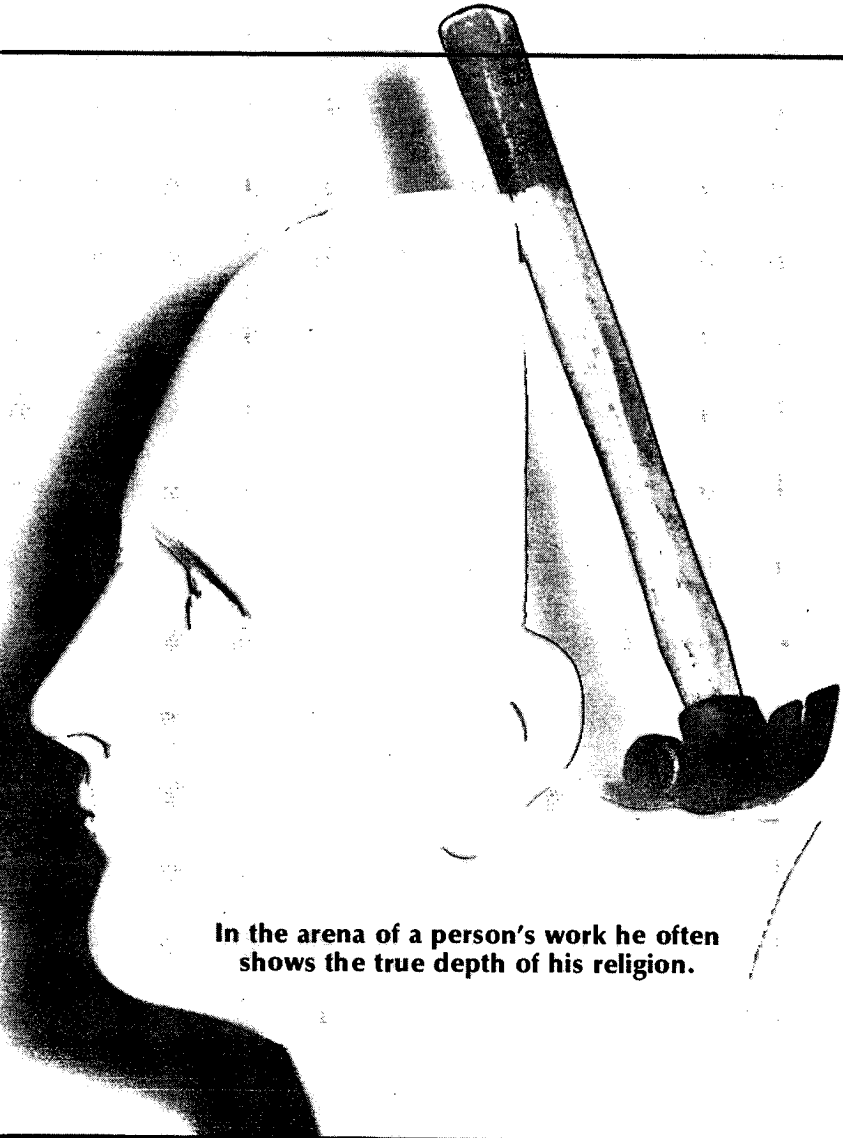
Ellen White wrote in *Education*, page 215, about the direction that should be given to training the youth. In one paragraph she summed up the place that work should have in life. Note that she viewed it as (1) practical and (2) developmental.

"The youth need to be taught that life means earnest work, responsibility, care-taking. They need a training that will make them practical—men and women who can cope with emergencies. They should be taught that the discipline of systematic, well-regulated labor is essential, not only as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of life, but as an aid to all-round development."

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Work—Its Value and Dignity (Prov. 28:19)**
2. **Acquiring Wealth (Deut. 8:18; Prov. 23:4)**
3. **Ambition, Industry (1 Thess. 4:11, 12)**
4. **Prudence (Prov. 27:23, 24)**
5. **Uses of Money (Prov. 13:7)**
6. **Laboring to Serve (Eph. 4:28)**

ND HIS LIVING



**In the arena of a person's work he often
shows the true depth of his religion.**

Part 1
WORK—ITS VALUE
AND DIGNITY

“He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough” (Prov. 28:19).

As we review Bible history, we see many examples of people at work earning their daily bread. Jesus was a worker. Carpentry was His trade; and His example of industry is for our learning. Paul was a tent maker. Dorcas is recorded as a seamstress; David a shepherd; several of the disciples were fishermen.

What incidents show that work activity was not looked upon as degrading by the sons of the prophets? 2 Kings 6:1-7.

Briefly, what activities are mentioned in the list of characteristics of a “virtuous woman” in Proverbs 31:10-31?

In the industrial societies today are found the “white-collar” and “blue-collar” workers. In a total organization it is necessary that some be supervisors and some workers. But all share in the dignity of work, and all draw their rewards from its successful accomplishment. No work, no task, is in itself degrading if it is necessary for the health and well-being of the whole group, and if it is performed in a workmanlike manner.

Some tasks are much more pleasant than others. Around the home such jobs as cleaning or washing the clothes or the dishes are often looked upon as the least glamorous in the round of duties. On the farm, the workers would much rather gather in the harvest than to clean out the stalls of animals or mend fences and roads. Always, in all processes, there are the tedious, unavoidable jobs that take patience and perseverance. But none of them can be neglected lest all suffer as a consequence.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can one best be happy in his work? Is it wrong to seek advancement in one’s work activity or calling?

“At the creation, labor was appointed as a blessing. It meant development, power, happiness. The changed condition of the earth through the curse of sin has brought a change in the conditions of labor; yet though now attended with anxiety, weariness, and pain, it is still a source of happiness and development. And it is a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence, and promotes industry, purity, and firmness. Thus it becomes a part of God’s great plan for our recovery from the Fall.”—*Education*, p. 214.

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pp. 214-222.

Part 2
ACQUIRING WEALTH

"Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18).

"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom" (Prov. 23:4).

Many of our outlooks on life are affected by our attitude toward money or wealth. The Bible has quite a little to say about wealth, both the acquiring and the use of it. Wealth in itself is not condemned; in fact some Bible characters who are mentioned as serving God were blessed with it, such as Abraham (Gen. 13:2), Solomon (1 Kings 10:23), and Job (1:3). Riches as such do not have a moral quality, but the one who uses them does. Character is to be valued above riches. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Ps. 37:16). One makes a mistake if he trusts to riches (Prov. 11:28). Especially are we warned about the method used in gathering riches (Prov. 21:6; 28:8). Because of the dangers that lurk in riches, the Bible writer chose the middle road. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. 30:8, 9).

Is the ability to acquire wealth readily, as seen in some individuals, a gift bestowed by God? If so, what is the responsibility of its possessor? (See Deut. 8:17, 18.)

The admonition of Proverbs 23:4, "Labour not to be rich," is a warning against making selfish gain the goal of life. It is an admonition against permitting money to be the chief motivating force in the life. The rapid accumulation of riches to the point where one is able to retire while young and give the rest of his life to idleness and pleasure seeking is not a blessing. Work has its benefits through all the life, from the earliest to the latest years.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the main purposes in my work? to make a living? to do a job well? to get rich? to leave money for my family? to have something for the church and those in need? What changes should I make?

"It is God who gives men power to get wealth, and He has bestowed this ability, not as a means of gratifying self, but as a means of returning to God His own. With this object it is not a sin to acquire means. . . . The Bible condemns no man for being rich if he has acquired his riches honestly. It is the selfish love of money wrongfully employed that is the root of all evil."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 452, 453.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 258-263.

Part 3
AMBITION
INDUSTRY

What three aspirations did Paul recommend to the Thessalonian believers, and why?

"To aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you; so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody" (1 Thess. 4:11, 12, RSV).

The apostle Paul had little sympathy for idlers and gave a good personal example to the believers, for he said, "We were not idle when we were with you, we did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you" (2 Thess. 3:7, 8, RSV). And a little farther in the text he said, "If any one will not work, let him not eat" (verse 10).

Regarding the situation among the Thessalonians it is said that some were teaching that in view of the second advent it was too late to work at ordinary pursuits. As a result, some had stopped working for a livelihood and were depending for support upon the generosity of their brethren.

In the book of Proverbs diligence is extolled (Prov. 10:5; 6:6-11; 24:30-34). In the Psalms is given a pleasant picture of the contented family life of a workingman who fears God: "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine at the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table" (Ps. 128:2, 3). Surely God wants us to be busy and contented. The reward of the righteous in the new earth is that they will labor and produce and enjoy the fruitage of their labors. (See Isa. 65:21-23.)

THINK IT THROUGH

In view of the nearness of the end, should I continue to work as usual, work harder, or take life more easily? Give reason for your answer.

"Life is too solemn to be absorbed in temporal and earthly matters, in a treadmill of care and anxiety for the things that are but an atom in comparison with the things of eternal interest. Yet God has called us to serve Him in the temporal affairs of life. Diligence in this work is as much a part of true religion as is devotion. The Bible gives no indorsement to idleness. It is the greatest curse that afflicts our world. Every man and woman who is truly converted will be a diligent worker."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 343.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Talents" ("Time"), pp. 344-346 (pp. 347-349 in 1923 ed.).

Part 4
PRUDENCE **"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?" (Prov. 27:23, 24).**

A Christian should develop a wholesome philosophy or outlook toward his daily work, money, and property. As a Christian philosopher it must take the principles of God's Word into account.

The Bible urges prudence in planning, the use of foresight with respect to the business of life. The one who raises cattle, sheep, or fowl is careful to keep disease away from his animals; the tiller of the soil treats the land carefully lest it be depleted or eroded and its value diminished.

The book of Proverbs counsels financial prudence. What are some of the guidelines advocated? (See Prov. 3:9, 10; 10:4; 11:15; 29:24.)

The modern man gets insurance on his home and other possessions, but he also applies this principle of prudence to his own life and family. He guards his health, retaining his vigor as long as possible through the best of health habits. He sends his children to school so that they will be prepared to cope with life in this modern world. Prudently he chooses a Christian school for them, for he is thinking of their eternal future. In all this he is not acting from selfish motives, but as a good steward of all that God has placed in his care.

THINK IT THROUGH **What moral principles are involved when we let ourselves and our affairs be ruled by inclination or thoughtlessness or the poor example of others?**

"God does not condemn prudence and foresight in the use of the things of this life, but the feverish care, the undue anxiety, with respect to worldly things is not in accordance with His will."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 159.

Ellen White, in 1869, wrote to a couple who looked to others for financial help. In part she said:

"I was shown that you, my brother and sister, have much to learn. You have not lived within your means. You have not learned to economize. If you earn high wages, you do not know how to make it go as far as possible. You consult taste or appetite instead of prudence. At times you expend money for a quality of food in which your brethren cannot afford to indulge. Dollars slip from your pocket very easily."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 431, 432.

FURTHER STUDY *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 431, 432.

Part 5 “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich
USES OF MONEY toward God” (Luke 12:21).

The moral consideration is not the amount of money we have, be it great or small, but the use we make of it. Review the parable of the selfish rich man who thought only of himself and his well-fortified future, and suddenly reached the end and found all he had accumulated to be useless (Luke 12:16-21). Also, think of Cornelius, that Gentile centurion who was not only devout but also charitable, and was marked by God as one to whom the Christian gospel must be opened (Acts 10:1-6). We might also keep in mind the case of Achan whose cupidity brought disaster to the whole nation of Israel (Joshua 7:1). Among these examples of people and their possessions we could remember the lad with five barley loaves and two small fishes whose offering Jesus took and blessed and had it distributed among five thousand (John 6:9-11). We all like the story of Zacchaeus, the short man who wanted to see Jesus, and when that moment came he opened his heart to the Master, telling how he exercised stewardship over his possessions (Luke 19:8).

The subject of investments is a broad one and should have our spiritually sensitized attention. Ellen White, speaking of investments in her time, commented on investments in business interests in cities, in patents, in secret organizations, in the publishing work, in earthly speculations, in God's cause, and a number of other types. She speaks of Satan's pleasure in having God's people make investments in worldly enterprises.

THINK IT THROUGH **What principles should guide the people of God in making investments today?**

If my life story were to be recorded between the covers of a modern Bible, what would be the record regarding the use of my money?

“Our money has not been given us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards we are to use it for the honor and glory of God. Some think that only a portion of their means is the Lord's. When they have set apart a portion for religious and charitable purposes, they regard the remainder as their own, to be used as they see fit. But in this they mistake. All we possess is the Lord's, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 351.

FURTHER STUDY *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 450-453.

Part 6
LABORING
TO SERVE

“The thief must give up stealing, and instead work hard and honestly with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with the needy” (Eph. 4:28, NEB).

What a remarkable transition is described by Paul in this verse, in which one who has been a thief stops his thieving, finds a useful, remunerative job, and gets the spirit of helping others who are worse off than he is.

“It is a Christian privilege to give to those in need, those who would perish without such aid. The making of money for its own sake is not a Christian activity. . . . The believer works in order that he may be able to help others after having discharged his obligation to society by supporting himself. Thus he lives in marked contrast with the thief.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1028.

Money represents labor, our own if we earned it, someone else's if it was acquired without our labor.

Notice how Paul recounts the training he had given the church members in his last charge to the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:35). He here quotes words of Jesus found nowhere else. The receiver of charity is relieved and made happy, but a greater blessing comes to the one who gives, who shares the fruit of his labor. And also, he has God's approval. (See Matt. 25:34-36.)

What feeling should brethren show for each other? 1 Peter 3:8.

THINK IT THROUGH

Make a list of several ways in which Christians may “labor to serve,” and think whether you have been using any of these ways.

“Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and clothing for the naked. It is a defense for the oppressed, and a means of help to the sick. But money is of no more value than sand, only as it is put to use in providing for the necessities of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 351.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, “Talents” (“The One Talent”), pp. 359, 360 (pp. 361-363 in 1923 ed.).

7. THE CHRISTIAN

THE CHRISTIAN AND HUMAN NEED

LESSON 7 February 6-12

"If any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17, 18, RSV).

There is danger in this modern world that people live lives that are so shut off from others around them that they fail to realize how much their personal and financial help is needed. The Christian is in danger of having the wellsprings of his compassion run dry.

Not only are people under obligation to help the poor, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped; but when they take the name of Christ, they are in very character motivated to do so. This is one of the clearest biblical teachings both in Old and New Testament times.

The practice of charging interest on the poor is condemned (Ex. 22:25, RSV).

The poor were to have gleaning privileges in the fields (Lev. 19:9, 10).

The poor were to have a home among the more prosperous (Lev. 25:35).

The poor were to be able to borrow (Deut. 15:7, 8).

There would always be poor in the land (Deut. 15:11).

Special blessings were promised to those who remembered the poor (Ps. 41:1-3).

The poor are entitled to righteous judgment (Prov. 31:9).

Christians are to give and lend to

those in need (Matt. 5:42).

Sharing of one's goods is taught (Luke 3:11).

The poor should share one's hospitality (Luke 14:12-14).

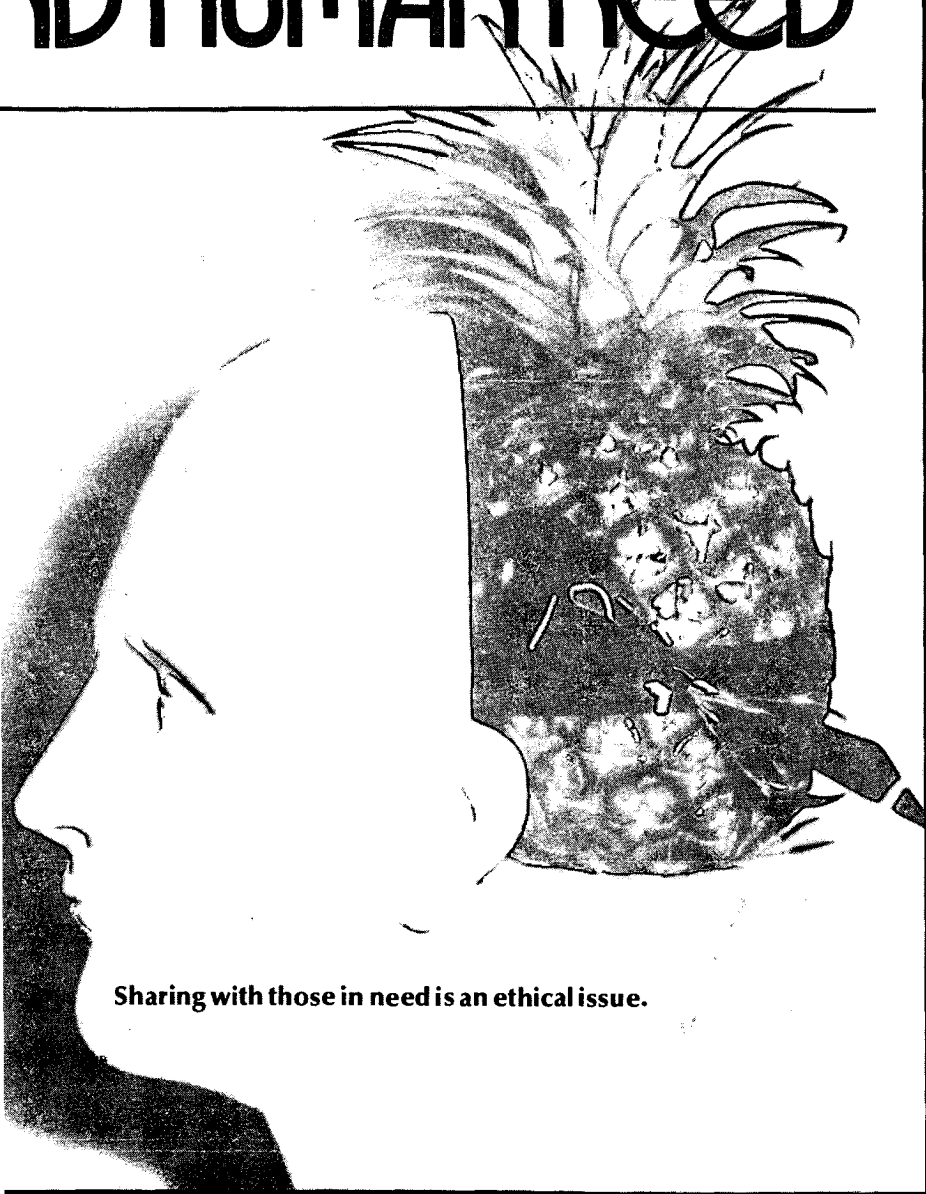
Christians are to be especially attentive to the needs of the brethren in the church (Gal. 6:10).

This lesson will examine some of the moral principles that apply to the Christian and his relation to those in need.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Material Resources** (1 Sam. 2:7)
2. **Identification of One's Neighbor** (Luke 10:36)
3. **Praise of Liberality** (Prov. 11:25, 26)
4. **Rebuke for Greed.** (Prov. 3:27; 15:27)
5. **Recognizing Need** (Prov. 21:13; 28:27)
6. **Macedonian Churches** (2 Cor. 8:2, 3)

ND HUMAN NEED



Sharing with those in need is an ethical issue.

Part 1
MATERIAL
RESOURCES

"The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up" (1 Sam. 2:7).

How much do we owe to God? First, He gave us our world and fashioned it so that the human race could live on it with all its needs supplied. God gives all men life and strength (Isa. 42:5; Ps. 29:11). Above every other ability God has given men intelligence (Dan. 2:21; James 1:5).

All that men and women can accomplish in scientific, technical, and industrial progress comes from the Creator. We may manufacture an automobile, but the raw materials come from the earth, and the intelligence to do it, from God.

When Europeans and Asians became aware of the existence of the Western Hemisphere, hitherto unrealized, a great reservoir of riches was opened for the wide use of the human race. It had rich soil, great stands of virgin timber, clean, fresh sources of water and water power, and minerals in abundance. These included gold, silver, copper, iron, nickel, and many other valuable metals; and the valuable fossil fuels—coal, oil, and gas. And the whole continent was teeming with animal life. All of these tremendous resources contributed to the wealth of the New World, and on no basis could those who came to use and possess them assert that they themselves made this wealth. It is the same story in any part of the world, Australia, Africa, or the islands of the sea.

In recounting Israel's experience enroute to Canaan, some of it a real testing experience, what was the psalmist's acknowledgment about their new home? Ps. 66:10-12.

The Christian recognizes the source of all he possesses and labors for. He knows in his heart that he is indebted for all to God and His blessing (1 Tim. 6:17). In other words, he is simply God's continuous agent or manager.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it a test of character for one to possess riches? For whom is the love of money a test?

"God may entrust men with money and possessions, but because of this they are not to lift themselves up. All they have they hold in trust; it is lent them by God that they may develop a character like His. They are on trial. God wants to see whether they will prove themselves worthy of the eternal riches. If they use their Lord's goods to set themselves above their fellowmen, they prove unworthy of a place in the kingdom of God."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 286.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 3, pp. 477-479.

Part 2
IDENTIFICATION OF
ONE'S NEIGHBOR

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves" (Luke 10:36)?

What a wonderful world we would enjoy if every one felt the spirit of true neighborliness toward every other person! The spirit of a neighbor is one of helpful interest in the happiness and well-being of others. This parable of the Good Samaritan shows that the spirit of true compassion has no social or ethnic or class boundaries. The spirit of charity leads one always to work "no ill to his neighbour" (Rom 13:10).

What are some manifestations of the neighborly spirit? Ex. 23:1; Lev. 6:2-4.

But again, who is that neighbor? It is not just the prosperous friend with whom we enjoy happy association. It is also the one who suffers, who lacks, who is neglected and overlooked. We need not wait to acknowledge him as neighbor until we know his religion, or nation, or family, or caste. When he comes to our attention and a need is apparent, he qualifies as our neighbor. A homeless flood victim or an earthquake victim halfway around the world is our neighbor. Though in distant lands a leprosy or "savage fire" patient, or an orphaned child all qualify as our neighbors. One who lives just down the street and attends church without a coat, or a widow, a shut-in, who cannot get to church is a neighbor. The neighbor may worship in a different church or not in any church, but the Bible puts him in the class of neighbor to his Christian brethren. Why should the Christian love his neighbor as himself? Because he serves that kind of God (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44, 45).

THINK IT THROUGH

Are there any new neighbors in your area with whom you have not become acquainted? Perhaps they are waiting for a call.

"Thus the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' is forever answered. Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 503.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Who Is My Neighbor?" pp. 383, 386, 387 (pp. 388, 389, 392, 393 in 1923 ed.).

Part 3
PRAISE OF
LIBERALITY

“The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it” (Prov. 11:25, 26).

What a blessing when the ownership of property and means, and the possession of a God-given spirit of compassion, come together in the same person! Here the Christian sense of stewardship is at its bounteous best as possessions are shared generously and intelligently to help sustain causes and persons that will suffer unless charity does its good work. The practice of liberality will be marked in God's record particularly when the gift is given privately and without ostentation and with no thought of reward or recognition. For example, a Christian young lady working as a secretary has quietly been contributing a good portion of her income to a fund for students in need, feeling that this is the area where God has shown her she can best serve His cause.

The opposite picture, revealed in the text, is that of one who takes advantage of his economically advantaged position and uses his power to create a condition that will further enrich himself. It is the old practice of getting a “corner on the market,” so as to raise the price artificially, so that the manipulator can make an excessive profit. In time of drought or other sources of crop failure, the one who happens to have a good crop might have many people at his mercy and demand especially high prices for his hoard of grain, for food or for seed. Notice what the prophet Amos (ch. 8:4-7) had to say about selfish merchandising.

What is the difference between stinginess and economy?

It is not the amount involved, but the spirit behind it that counts. (See 1 Cor. 13:3.) Rich, poor, and moderately poor are on the same spiritual basis in the sight of God.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do you think God might entrust us with more money if He felt we would make better use of it?

“Christ sanctions no lavish or careless use of means. His lesson in economy, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost,’ is for all His followers (John 6:12). He who realizes that his money is a talent from God will use it economically, and will feel it a duty to save that he may give.

“The more means we expend in display and self-indulgence, the less we can have to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 352.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 337-339.

Part 4
REBUKE FOR
GREED

“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it” (Prov. 3:27).

“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live” (Prov. 15:27).

Greed has a close relative in covetousness; and these two corroding characteristics can coexist quite comfortably in the same mind.

What is the Lord’s attitude toward the covetous? Ps. 10:3.

These traits of character grow like noxious weeds in the soil of the unredeemed human heart. They can be choked out with the love that flows from a heart made new. Greediness and glorying in one’s possessions is in a special sense a denial of God. (See Job 31:24, 25, 28.) Possessions have then become a god. The prophet Isaiah spoke of some people as “greedy dogs” (Isa. 56:11), a term that is certainly not complimentary.

Jesus warned against the spirit of greed and covetousness:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth” (Matt. 6:19).

“You cannot serve God and Money” (Matt. 6:24, NEB).

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt. 13:22).

God plans that Christians shall bear fruit to His glory and the benefit of His cause on earth.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what way does our attitude toward money and “things” reveal the depth of our Christian experience?

“The love of money was the ruling passion in the Jewish age. Worldliness usurped the place of God and religion in the soul. So it is now. Avaricious greed for wealth exerts such a fascinating, bewitching influence over the life that it results in perverting the nobility and corrupting the humanity of men until they are drowned in perdition.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 88, 89.

“Hoarded wealth is not merely useless, it is a curse. In this life it is a snare to the soul, drawing the affections away from the heavenly treasure. In the great day of God its witness to unused talents and neglected opportunities will condemn its possessor.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 352.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 295.

Part 5 “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also
RECOGNIZING shall cry himself, but shall not be heard” (Prov. 21:13).
NEED “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that
hideth his eyes shall have many a curse” (Prov. 28:27).

In many countries today there are government agencies that help the poor and unfortunate of society. Nevertheless there is still a need for church agencies and various private organizations to operate assistance programs. It is proper for Christians to favor and assist in all these worthy enterprises.

However, all of these avenues of practical service do not excuse a Christian from giving personal attention to the needs of individual cases that he encounters. To close his eyes against them or to harden his feelings and to turn the other way is unworthy of the name of Christian that he bears. The purpose of charity is not display or to earn the favor of Heaven; but “sincerity of purpose, real kindness of heart, is the motive that Heaven values.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 81.

What perversion of charity did the Pharisees practice in the time of Jesus? Matt. 6:1.

Although the self-centered reason for charity noted here is condemned, there is a benefit for the unselfish giver. “The work of beneficence is twice blessed. While he that gives to the needy blesses others, he himself is blessed in a still greater degree.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 82. A faithful Christian is one alert to the cry for help arising in the world around him.

THINK IT THROUGH **Does your church have a fund to help the poor, and do you contribute to it? Is that all you need to do for the poor and needy?**

“All His [the Lord’s] gifts are to be used in blessing humanity, in relieving the suffering and the needy. We are to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to care for the widow and the fatherless, to minister to the distressed and downtrodden. God never meant that the widespread misery in the world should exist. He never meant that one man should have an abundance of the luxuries of life, while the children of others should cry for bread. The means over and above the actual necessities of life are entrusted to man to do good, to bless humanity.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 370.

FURTHER STUDY *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 168-170.

Part 6
MACEDONIAN
CHURCHES

"In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, of their own free will" (2 Cor. 8:2, 3, RSV).

The example of the Macedonian believers stands out as a brilliant example of planned benevolence. They had suffered severely from persecution (Acts 17:5-9; 2 Thess. 1:4-6). They were so poor that they seemed to be utterly destitute.

"The abysmal poverty of Macedonia at this time was due to several factors. Three wars had desolated the area. . . . So desperate was the condition of the Macedonians that they had petitioned the emperor Tiberius for a reduction of taxes. Furthermore, most of the early Christians came from the poorer classes of society."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 888.

The example of the Macedonian churches teaches that poverty is never absolute, it is only relative. Even the poorest needs the spiritual exercise that comes from sharing. In the case of the poor there is danger that they indulge in bitterness and self-pity and do not sense that the privilege of stewardship is for them also. It is possible for the poor to be stingy as well as the rich, and Christian liberality applies as well to one as to the other.

What was the fruit John the Baptist told the multitude they must bear? Luke 3:9-11.

THINK IT THROUGH

What place has benevolence in character development? Would your answer be true for both rich and poor?

"Nearly all the Macedonian believers were poor in this world's goods, but their hearts were overflowing with love for God and His truth, and they gladly gave for the support of the gospel. . . .

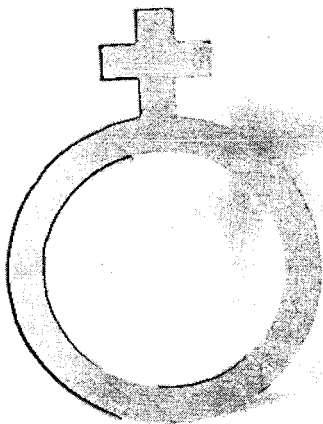
"The willingness to sacrifice on the part of the Macedonian believers came as a result of wholehearted consecration."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 343.

"In the balances of the sanctuary the gifts of the poor, made from love to Christ, are not estimated according to the amount given, but according to the love which prompts the sacrifice. The promises of Jesus will as surely be realized by the liberal poor man, who has but little to offer, but who gives that little freely, as by the wealthy man who gives of his abundance."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 398, 399.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 343-345.

8. HONOR BETWEEN



Relationships between the sexes must be based on mutual respect and equity.



EN THE SEXES

HONOR BETWEEN THE SEXES LESSON 8 February 13-19

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27).

The existence of two kinds of human beings, men and women, is the provision of a wise Creator. Sex has a meaningful place in God's plan, for it laid the basis for the family and the growth of the race. And, like all of God's gifts, when not abused it ministers to the deepest needs of humankind and provides a basis for social and spiritual growth of family members. When the divine intent for man and woman is not recognized and the boundaries set for the regulation of their relationship are disregarded, tragic consequences can come into the lives of individuals, into homes, and upon society in general.

The standards of life established by God to assure our happiness and well-being may be perverted or rejected by those around us. The world has turned its back on those ideals which throughout the centuries have characterized Christian conduct; but God's standards have not changed. He expects those who bear the name of Christ not to yield to the prevailing iniquitous practices that are condoned even in sophisticated circles. The believer is to respect the bodies of other people, honor his own body, and honor God's name in thought, word, and deed. This subject of relations between the sexes is of special importance in these last days. Ellen White wrote:

"Near the close of this earth's

history Satan will work with all his powers in the same manner and with the same temptations wherewith he tempted ancient Israel just before their entering the Land of Promise. He will lay snares for those who claim to keep the commandments of God, and who are almost on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. He will use his powers to their utmost in order to entrap souls and to take God's professed people upon their weakest points. Those who have not brought the lower passions into subjection to the higher powers of their being, those who have allowed their minds to flow in a channel of carnal indulgence of the baser passions, Satan is determined to destroy with his temptations—to pollute their souls with licentiousness."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 327.

"Don't be under any illusion: you cannot make a fool of God! A man's harvest in life will depend entirely on what he sows. If he sows for his own lower nature his harvest will be the decay and death of his own nature. But if he sows for the Spirit he will reap the harvest of everlasting life from that Spirit" (Gal. 6:7, 8, Phillips, Revised).

"The attributes which God prizes most are charity and purity. These attributes should be cherished by every Christian."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 85.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Creator's Plan (Gen. 2:24)**
2. **Marriage (Mark 10:9)**
3. **Promiscuity (1 Thess. 4:3-5)**
4. **Marriage With Unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14)**
5. **Divorce, Remarriage (Matt. 19:9)**
6. **Love in Honor (Gen. 24:67)**

Part 1
THE CREATOR'S
PLAN

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

God created Adam and Eve, the original pair that began the biological process by which the earth was to be peopled. God established the institution of marriage and it carries the divine endorsement. It did not arrive after ages and ages in a long and tedious process of development; nor did it happen by accident. It is a part of God's design, basic to the needs and happiness of man.

In His earthly mission, what was Jesus' intention with regard to the marriage institution? Matt. 19:5, 6.

“He [Jesus] came not to destroy the sacred relationship of marriage, but to exalt it and restore it to its original sanctity.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 121.

Marriage is one of the most sensitive areas of Christian decision making. There is a rightness and wrongness, based on God's Word, relating to one's treatment of the opposite sex and to marriage. The times and customs may change and become evil like the days of Noah and of Sodom, but God's plan for the relationships between men and women stands vindicated in the lives of His followers.

The question of the relation of men and women is not basically a social question or a legal one, but is at heart a theological one having to do with an individual's relation to God, and involving his spiritual nature. Jesus, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, was invited to a wedding in Cana and gave the event His approval, not only by attending, but also by performing His first miracle there. (See John 2:1-11.)

The relation of husband and wife in marriage is used in the Bible to illustrate the relation between Christ and the church, one of honor and sacrifice of self in behalf of the other in love. (See Eph. 5:23-27; Hosea 2:19, 20.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there any significance in the fact that marriage is practiced all over the world?

“God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided ‘an help meet for him’—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. . . . A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 46.

Part 2 "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put
MARRIAGE asunder" (Mark 10:9).

"In the youthful mind marriage is clothed with romance, and it is difficult to divest it of this feature, with which imagination covers it, and to impress the mind with a sense of the weighty responsibilities involved in the marriage vow. This vow links the destinies of the two individuals with bonds which naught but the hand of death should sever.

"Every marriage engagement should be carefully considered, for marriage is a step taken for life. Both the man and the woman should carefully consider whether they can cleave to each other through the vicissitudes of life as long as they both shall live."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 340.

Polygamy occurred in the Old Testament times in Israel, but by New Testament times monogamy had become the established form of marriage among the Jews. Marriage was always intended by God to be for life between two committed partners. (See Matt. 19:8, 9.)

"Like every other one of God's good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin; but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty. . . .

"The grace of Christ, and this alone, can make this institution what God designed it should be—an agent for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. And thus the families of earth, in their unity and peace and love, may represent the family of heaven.

"The condition of society presents a sad comment upon Heaven's ideal of this sacred relation. Yet even for those who have found bitterness and disappointment where they had hoped for companionship and joy, the gospel of Christ offers a solace."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 100.

"Let those who are contemplating marriage weigh every sentiment and watch every development of character in the one with whom they think to unite their life destiny. Let every step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest purpose to please and honor God. Marriage affects the afterlife both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will make no plans that God cannot approve."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 359.

Part 3
PROMISCUITY

“This is the will of God, that you should be holy; you must abstain from fornication; each one of you must learn to gain mastery over his body, to hallow and honour it, not giving way to lust like the pagans who are ignorant of God” (1 Thess. 4:3-5, NEB).

The word “abstain” in this passage has a negative sound, and in the thinking of many moderns the negatives are not to rule. However we must recall that all of God’s Ten Commandments except one and part of another one, are stated negatively, the better to act as a deterrent against sin.

“Abstain from fornication” (1 Thess. 4:3).

“Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14).

These are laws of Christian living and are for our guidance and protection.

Man is more than an animal, although in many respects his body functions similarly to that of certain animals. Man has more than a brain; he has a mind. He has more than a nervous system that responds to instinct, or to learned stimuli; he can be guided by reason, will, and conscience. He was given dominion over the earth. He was created a being to be held responsible for the consequences of his acts. He was meant to love God and to put God’s will above his own self-pleasing desires.

Can you think of some important reasons why social, family, and religious inhibitions on sexual conduct should be safeguarded and not abandoned?

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the meaning of the question heard in some wedding services: Wilt thou keep thyself wholly unto him (her) so long as you both shall live?

“Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness” (Gal. 5:19, RSV).

“Make no mistake: no fornicator or idolator, none who are guilty either of adultery or of homosexual perversion . . . will possess the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9, 10, NEB).

“In this degenerate age many will be found who are so blinded to the sinfulness of sin that they choose a licentious life because it suits the natural and perverse inclination of the heart. Instead of facing the mirror, the law of God, and bringing their hearts and characters up to God’s standard, they allow Satan’s agents to erect his standard in their hearts.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 141.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, “The Spirituality of the Law” (Matt. 5:28), pp. 59, 60.

Part 4
MARRIAGE WITH
UNBELIEVERS

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14).

This admonition not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers applies to various aspects of life, including business and recreation. Marriage is one of the possible ways of unequal yoking together.

In Paul's day marriage with an unbeliever usually meant marriage to a pagan. The ways and views of a pagan were so utterly different from the Christian faith that to marry one was like trying to join light with darkness.

Among the Old Testament people of God marriage with a Canaanite was forbidden. (See Ezra 9:2, 12; Mal. 2:11.) In one of the sad experiences that came to Israel, consorting of the men with heathen women led to the worship of false gods and the death of 24,000 Israelites. (See Num. 25:1-5, 9).

Writing to a sister who was considering marriage with one not united with her in religious faith, Ellen White said: “My sister, unless you would have a home where the shadows are never lifted, do not unite yourself with one who is an enemy of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 363.

In that same letter Ellen White asked: “Will it [this new relationship] be a help to you in the Christian life? Will it be pleasing to God? . . .

“What has been his past record? Is his life pure? Is the love which he expresses of a noble, elevated character, or is it a mere emotional fondness? . . . Can she [the wife] honor the Saviour's claims as supreme?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 362.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church puts its influence squarely against the marriage of its members with unbelievers and the *Manual for Ministers* states:

“Ministers should not perform the marriage ceremony of believers with unbelievers, because this is expressly contrary to the teaching of the church.”—Page 97.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the problems associated with the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever?

“The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 356, 357.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 361-368.

Part 5
DIVORCE,
REMARRIAGE

What is the only legitimate exception for divorce and remarriage?

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matt. 19:9).

Many are the reasons marriage partners give for wanting to be divorced, such as cruelty, desertion, lack of support, or incompatibility. Jesus commented pointedly on divorce and the believer must not ignore His judgment.

Divorce of a spouse by a church member because the spouse was not a believer was opposed by the apostles. (See 1 Peter 3:1, 2; 1 Cor. 7:12-14.) The effect of New Testament teaching is not to make divorce and remarriage easy, but rather the opposite.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has studied the question of divorce and remarriage diligently and has formulated an eleven-point statement based on the Bible and the spirit of prophecy writings. It is found in the *Church Manual*, in chapter 15, and is the controlling policy to be followed in every Adventist church in dealing with cases that arise among its members. We quote here a meaningful paragraph which precedes the statement of the eleven-point position:

“Those who speak for the Advent Movement are not commissioned of God to frame resolutions that fit the desires of the human heart, but only those that fit the heavenly standards. The question of divorce and remarriage is one that has troubled the church through all the centuries, and no easy solutions are possible for the fearful problems that men and women often create for themselves and the church by their departure from God’s ideal. But spiritual problems that grow out of violated standards are never solved by lowering those standards.”—*Church Manual*, p. 252. (1971 ed.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it better to seek divorce from a guilty marriage partner or to try to forgive and heal the injured union?

“Among the Jews a man was permitted to put away his wife for the most trivial offenses, and the woman was then at liberty to marry again. This practice led to great wretchedness and sin. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 63.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 2, pp. 339-342; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Spirituality of the Law” (Matt. 19:3), pp. 63-65.

Part 6
LOVE IN HONOR

“Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” (Gen. 24:67).

The Bible contains a number of love stories such as Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:29, 30), Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:11-13). In all of these there is a picture of love with honor.

In the area of sex relationship there is a path of dishonor. It is sinful for a person to beguile one of the other sex into a relationship condemned by God and the church’s standards. It is no excuse to claim that the relationship is based on love. For love to be valid it must harmonize with principle, and a principle of right can never be thrust aside in an effort to justify some tawdry emotion even in the high name of love.

How did Jesus demonstrate a redemptive and corrective attitude to those who had sinned and been guilty of dishonorable conduct? John 8:3-11.

There is also the path of honor between the sexes. Sex is among the things God created in the beginning, and He pronounced all of His creation good. (See Gen. 1:31.) If, as God said, it is good, then it is also sacred and not to be abused in any sense.


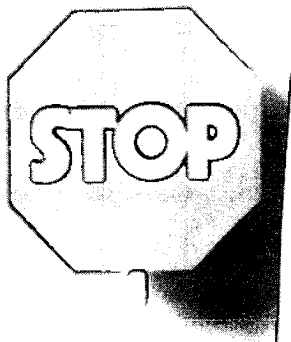
The love that joins men and women in marriage under God is honorable and responsible. It is made up not only of an emotional response between man and woman, but also has an intellectual quality based on the approval of will and conscience. Marriage is honorable in all (Heb. 13:4). The Bible condemns those who forbid to marry (1 Tim. 4:1-3), though the way is open to those who wish to do so to refrain from marriage to serve God more fully (1 Cor. 7:32).

“In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people. To the mind of Jesus the gladness of the wedding festivities pointed forward to the rejoicing of that day when He shall bring home His bride to the Father’s house, and the redeemed with the Redeemer shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

FURTHER STUDY

The Adventist Home, pp. 105-113.

9. THE CHRISTIAN



**Responsibilities in the area of citizenship
carry moral implications.**

ND THE STATE

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE STATE LESSON 9 February 20-26

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. 13:7).

The Christian waits in this world for Jesus to return. At that time He will set up His perfect government based on love and loyalty. Until then the Christian has to live in his community of the world as a citizen of a state under the secular laws of his government.

Not only is he expected to live under this rule of secular law as does any other citizen, but he is also to remain obedient to God's requirements. He has given his life and will to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Sometimes in this situation he has to make ethical decisions that clash with the laws that regulate his citizenship in his community. The question is, To what extent is he justified in making and holding to such decisions?

The Christian must not think of his earthly citizenship as mostly negative. Rather, there is a positive, obedient attitude which he must cultivate with respect to the officials in his city, state, or country.

We must remember that even the best of secular codes under which men live together are administered by people who are human and faulty. Thus at times emotionalism, or favoritism, or self-interest, or narrowness of understanding may make the administration of the laws less than just.

"Let God have the matter of

condemning authorities and governments wholly in His own keeping. In meekness and love let us as faithful sentinels defend the principles of truth as it is in Jesus."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 397. It is the Christian's part to relate to unjust situations helpfully and to endeavor to use the processes of reason and education to correct an imbalance or misunderstanding on the part of a civil officer.

By His life and teaching Jesus set us a perfect example in relation to earthly governments. The effect of this teaching in the individual life was revolutionary, but He led no movement against the governments of His time.

"The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses,—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments."
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Citizenship of Christians (Phil. 3:20)**
2. **Love in the Christian Commonwealth (2 Cor. 5:14)**
3. **The State Ordained of God (Rom. 13:1, 2)**
4. **The State Requires Obedience (Rom. 13:3-5)**
5. **Duality of Christian Obligations (Matt. 22:21)**
6. **Loyalty to God Paramount (Acts 4:19; 5:29)**

**Part 1
CITIZENSHIP OF
CHRISTIANS**

"But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20, RSV).

In the writings of the apostle Paul the words in KJV translated "conversation" in Philippians 3:20; and "commonwealth" in Ephesians 2:12, and "fellowcitizens" in Ephesians 2:19 are all related linguistically to one Greek root that has to do with citizenship. Paul is saying simply that the Christian is a citizen of a heavenly kingdom, the one that Jesus announced at the beginning of His ministry when He said "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17).

In the symbolic description of Jesus in Revelation 19:11-16, what position of Jesus is emphasized?

When we speak of a kingdom, we imply the existence of a ruler, of laws, and of subjects. All these are present in the kingdom of heaven established by Jesus. Christ is the King (John 18:36), His followers are the citizens (Eph. 2:19). At present it is a spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:21), but it is no less real. Those who accept Jesus as Redeemer and Lord are delivered from the power of darkness and are translated "into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Those who are Christ's are heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5) which is an everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11). This kingdom of heaven is nothing less than God's government which ruled from eternity, was repudiated by our first parents at the Fall, and to which we return when we become His subjects.

THINK IT THROUGH

Christians are sometimes accused of paying too little attention to the problems of this present world. Do you think it is a fair accusation? Why? Or why not?

"God placed man under law, as an indispensable condition of his very existence. He was a subject of the divine government, and there can be no government without law."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.

"The kingdom of grace was instituted immediately after the fall of man, when a plan was devised for the redemption of the guilty race. It then existed in the purpose and by the promise of God; and through faith, men could become its subjects. Yet it was not actually established until the death of Christ."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 347, 348.

"The Saviour's mission on earth was fast drawing to a close. Only a few months remained for Him to complete what He had come to do, in establishing the kingdom of His grace."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 253, 254.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Like a Grain of Mustard Seed," pp. 76-79 (pp. 75-79 in 1923 ed.).

"For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

Part 2
LOVE IN THE
CHRISTIAN
COMMONWEALTH

It is love, not force, that motivates subjects of Christ's kingdom. "Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ's kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12.

No one is forced or required to become a subject of the kingdom of Christ. And inside the kingdom there is freedom to follow Christ. "In Christ's kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 550, 551.

"In His [Christ's] plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 77.

In earthly society a person's birth makes him a subject of the realm. In Christ's kingdom entrance is also by birth, a rebirth (John 3:5). One is not forced to accept this heavenly citizenship; it comes through faith in Christ, by the action of the will, by repentance and confession, all motivated by love—Christ's love for the sinner, and the sinner's loving response to that tender, winning appeal.

Once in the kingdom of Christ, the subject adopts the ways of the kingdom, its principles and its requirements. He is always alert to these and wants to fulfill his obligation to live as a subject of that kingdom. He must be faithful to it and never deny its claims upon him. To do so is to deny Christ, his Lord (Matt. 10:33).

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the best identification of our membership in the heavenly commonwealth?

"Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.

"His court is one where holy love presides, and whose offices and appointments are graced by the exercise of charity. He charges His servants to bring pity and lovingkindness, His own attributes, into all their office work, and to find their happiness and satisfaction in reflecting the love and tender compassion of the divine nature on all with whom they associate."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1111.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 547-551.

Part 3
THE STATE
ORDAINED OF GOD

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God” (Rom. 13:1, 2).

“The powers that be are ordained of God.” Considering the evil nature of some secular powers that have existed through the course of history, this seems to be a most difficult statement to accept. The lesson in it for Christians is that they recognize the authority of rulers as God-given, and that their own concern is to be good citizens. “The Christian . . . will not presume to take it into his own hands to resist or to depose ‘the powers that be.’ ”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 626.

Paul was writing to the Roman Christians at a most turbulent time in the Jewish history. Incidents of rebellion against the Roman power were frequent among the Jews. Christians were not to be involved in such rebellions, evil and despotic though the controlling government might be.

Christians were to live in cooperation with their appointed rulers, showing an example of loyalty and order in things relating to this life. Notice the ways in which Christians could support their rulers:

1. They would be obedient to magistrates (Titus 3:1).
2. They would pray for authorities (1 Tim. 2:1, 2).
3. They would submit to laws (1 Peter 2:13, 14).
4. They would honor the king (1 Peter 2:17).
5. They would pay their taxes (Rom. 13:7).

All in all, the Christian following these admonitions would be an ideal citizen. We can hardly think of one joining in undermining the authority of government officers.

Who is the ultimate Ruler over all? Dan. 4:25

THINK IT THROUGH

Can you think of one or more instances in sacred history where a secular ruler or government carried out God’s purpose?

“We should not work in a manner that will mark us out as seeming to advocate treason. We should weed out from our writings and utterances every expression that, taken by itself, could be so misrepresented as to make it appear antagonistic to law and order. Everything should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as encouraging disloyalty to our country and its laws. We are not required to defy authorities. There will come a time when, because of our advocacy of Bible truth, we shall be treated as traitors; but let not this time be hastened by unadvised movements that stir up animosity and strife.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 394.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 394-397.

Part 4
THE STATE
REQUIRES
OBEDIENCE

"For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience" (Rom. 13:3-5, RSV).

One's view of government is necessarily affected by his view of history and the development of governmental patterns.

The Christian expresses the proposition that God is, and throughout history has been, in ultimate control of affairs in this world. There are those who, on the other hand, view world history as having come through its various stages as the product of man's struggles, his growth in wisdom, and his response to his environment. In their thinking there is no God who has a guiding role in the affairs of men. They do not feel any need to give any thought to an obligation to God as they strive by their own efforts to make changes or to improve their condition.

The Christian never embarks on any course of action without sensing his duty to act within the knowledge and plans of God. This leads him to examine all the issues that concern him and the state to see how they relate to his relationship to God. He must look also at how his own position may affect or influence his fellowmen.

What is Peter's counsel on the Christian's relation to governing authorities? 1 Peter 2:13, 14.

Christians therefore accept the existence of rules as in God's plan and offer their cooperative obedience as good citizens.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can we express opposition to an ordinance of the state that is contrary to our duty to God without undermining respect for all law? When a law is unjust, is it right for Christians to go about trying to change it?

"Some, I saw, have a prejudice against our rulers and laws; but if it were not for law, this world would be in an awful condition. God restrains our rulers; for the hearts of all are in His hands. Bounds are set, beyond which they cannot go. Many of the rulers are those whom Satan controls; but I saw that God has His agents, even among the rulers. And some of them will yet be converted to the truth. They are now acting the part that God would have them."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 203.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 402, 403.

Part 5
DUALITY OF
CHRISTIAN
OBLIGATIONS

“Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21).

Everyone in this world lives within some sort of political order, whether it be under a constitution, tribal law, a monarchy, or military rule. Nations and communities have government, and no individual can long insulate himself from that actuality. While some governments have a Christian philosophy, even to the point where the Christian faith is established in the government, some are based on other religious traditions, or are frankly atheistic.

The Christian lives within his own political order; and, though this is a world of sin and often of injustice, he looks upon the political order as within the mind of God, even as a present part of His plan for this world. In his relationship with the state there is no absolute personal liberty; for the state, in order to continue as the state, claims a degree of power over its subjects.

This situation in one’s country does not cancel the fact that the Christian is also a citizen of Christ’s kingdom. The Christian citizen therefore carries dual citizenship. It is certainly not ethical for him to deny the claims of either one; rather, he must recognize the existence of both and endeavor to discharge the obligations of both under God.

In some issues both the state and the heavenly kingdom claim legitimate authority over the Christian, for example, the laws that regulate our relationships to our fellow citizens as stealing, lying, and doing bodily harm to another. The laws of God go farther in regulating not only an outward act but even the thoughts and motives. (See Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28; 2 Cor. 10:5.)

Thus the Christian strives to maintain a correctness of life that makes for good citizenship on earth and loyalty to the heavenly Father.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are some situations where obedience to government raises problems for a Christian? How can these be resolved?

“In His Gift to the world the Lord has revealed how solicitous He is that we bear in our lives the marks of our heavenly citizenship by letting every ray of light we have received shine forth in good works to our fellow-men.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 42.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 602.

Part 6
LOYALTY TO GOD
PARAMOUNT

"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

We have noted that in some governments there is an official recognition of Christianity and even its establishment as the religion of the state. In other governments a religion other than Christianity may be the established religion. In still other governments there is constitutional separation of church and state.

In some situations the church as an organization seeks to use political authority or to wield social power so as to achieve its own ends.

Whatever the circumstances, the individual Christian sustains a basic relation to God and Christ in which no earthly power can intervene to tell him what he must do. In the Biblical view the state does not possess absolute sovereignty, but the claims of the state are always limited by the claims of God. It has never been the purpose of God, who made man a free moral being, that he should live under an order based on coercion alone; and God has reserved in the mind and will of man the right to make God first in all things.

Obedience to God first may result in paying a high price under an oppressive earthly rule, and many are the millions of Christians who have paid that price. True Christians have always feared God above men.

What was the challenging question hurled by Pharaoh at Moses and Aaron at their first encounter? Ex. 5:2.

Review briefly the prophecy of Revelation 13 and its lessons and warnings regarding loyalty to God.

THINK IT THROUGH

Politics has been described as the art of compromise. What kind of compromise is acceptable, and which is not acceptable?

"We are to receive this word [the Bible] as supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God's word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A 'Thus saith the Lord' is not to be set aside for a 'Thus saith the church' or a 'Thus saith the state.' The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 69.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 68, 69; *The Great Controversy*, p. 204.

10. THE PEOPLE

THE PEOPLE AROUND US

LESSON 10 February 27 to March 5

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (James 2:8).

The world has shrunk so that people who used to live in isolated communities now—through the radio, television, and print media—find themselves looking at and evaluating diverse peoples all over the world.

They are inclined to judge people by the houses they live in, their clothes, their diet, the color of their skin, their height, their hair, or the shape of the nose. Some are judged to be advanced, others categorized as primitive; some are thought of as being Christian, others as heathen.

The migration of peoples has moved masses from one continent to another, and some countries have developed populations that are mixtures of diverse strains and cultures.

Travel is of great importance in making people aware of the characteristics, the values, and the problems of those who live on distant continents. The world is getting to be an open book as man becomes better and better informed about his fellowmen. And he often needs to know better the peoples that inhabit his own city or village.

These, then, are "The People Around Us." And what does the Christian think and do about them?

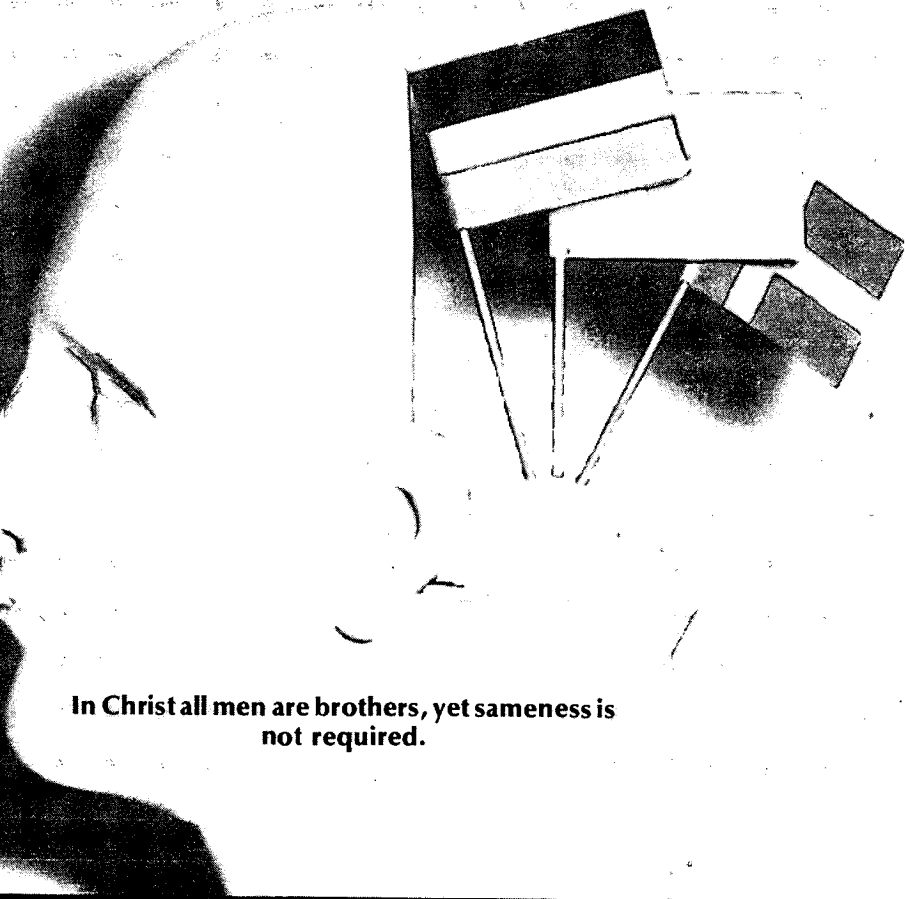
"The command, 'Go ye into all the world,' is not to be lost sight of. We are called upon to lift our eyes to the

'regions beyond.' Christ tears away the wall of partition, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle which their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field."—*The Desire Ages*, p. 823.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Christian and His Neighbor (Rom. 13:10)**
2. **Human Brotherhood (Acts 17:26)**
3. **Christians and Race (Acts 10:34, 35)**
4. **Roots of Prejudice (John 4:9)**
5. **When God Re-creates (Col. 3:10-11)**
6. **Heaven Is Inclusive (Rev. 7:9)**

OUND US



**In Christ all men are brothers, yet sameness is
not required.**

Part 1
THE CHRISTIAN AND
HIS NEIGHBOR

From what truth does Paul conclude that love fulfills the law?

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10).

The term “neighbor” is a concept used frequently in the Bible. In the KJV it occurs in some form at least 136 times in the Old Testament and 21 times in the New Testament. The Old Testament admonitions about relationship to one’s neighbor reached out to almost every situation in life. Offenses against a neighbor called for stiff penalties (Exodus 22). Taking up a reproach against a neighbor is condemned (Ps. 15:3) as is privily slandering a neighbor (Ps. 101:5). Despising a neighbor shows lack of wisdom (Prov. 11:12); and is a sin (Prov. 14:21).

Sometimes mere chance makes us neighbors in the narrow sense of living nearby, in a community where our paths cross from time to time, our children play together, and even housewives come over occasionally to borrow a cup of flour or sugar. God has cast our lot with people so as to make them our neighbors, to give them a helping hand in a crisis, to lift their morale, to share with them the truth of which we are custodians. Could we bestow a better favor upon a neighbor than to share our faith with him? Certainly God will expect us to give an account of our stewardship with respect to our influence upon and our treatment of our neighbors. In the uneven journey of life we need them and they need us. A Roman sage said that when your neighbor’s house is afire your own house is endangered; and the reverse is true too.

Jesus, our Example and our Lord, revealed the true meaning of “neighbor” in the parable of the Jewish priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan traveler. The neighbor principle fails in the presence of personal pride or churchly indifference; it reaches across lines of racial prejudice and stuffy tradition when love and compassion fill the heart.

THINK IT THROUGH

Give some thought to the ninth and tenth commandments (Ex. 20:16, 17) and show how they would apply in your twentieth century life.

“By no selfish practices can the cause of Christ be served. His cause is the cause of the oppressed and the poor. In the hearts of His professed followers there is need of the tender sympathy of Christ—a deeper love for those whom He has so valued as to give His own life for their salvation. These souls are precious, infinitely more precious than any other offering we can bring to God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 383, 384.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 504, 505.

Part 2
HUMAN
BROTHERHOOD

“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

People are frequently driven by greed, lust, and feelings of superiority. As a result some sorry chapters have been written into history in man's dealings with his fellowmen. In some areas exploitation has been carried out in the form of colonialism, particularly by the white races over darker peoples. A particularly grievous relationship through the centuries has been that of master and slave. Although the days of slavery are past, there remains a sort of economic slavery where one class abuses another for profits.

In the Old Testament times God recognized the evil of these unfair or unfortunate social arrangements and sought to alleviate and to set bounds on them. Such was the purpose of the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:10, 13).

In New Testament times the leaven of Christian teaching spread through the pagan nations and struck hard at slavery, polygamy, the gladiatorial contests, and similar practices. Today principles of Christian love must be applied anew to intercommunity, international, and interracial relations.

Where have all of the races on earth come from? Gen. 3:20; 10:32.

The “one blood” principle strikes a death blow at the claims of any group that seeks to elevate itself above another for its own selfish pride or gain.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does Christ's death on the cross supply us with a measure of God's regard for every portion of the human race? Are any left outside the boundary of God's concern?

“During His earthly ministry Christ began to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to all mankind. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 19.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 49.

Part 3
CHRISTIANS
AND RACE

What lesson did Peter learn from the vision of the sheet?

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35).

The teachings of the Bible lead to these conclusions about race:

1. All men are a part of God's creation.
2. The burden of sin rests equally upon all, so that there is no elite race free from sin.
3. God sent Jesus to die for everyone. He died for the poor degraded cannibal of the jungle as well as for the enlightened and sophisticated people of every continent.
4. The saving, restorative, and healing work of the gospel can be received equally by any people.
5. The gospel commission places every Christian under obligation to teach the gospel in all parts of the world.
6. The entrance of gospel truth brings humility into relations among all the races, and as fellow Christians they are ready to bend down and wash one another's feet as fellowsaints of the same heavenly household.
7. There are no second-class saints in God's family judged on minority status, economic disadvantage, or lack of education.
8. Christ showed the way in dealing with race problems by extending the blessings of His redemptive grace to Samaritans, Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks, and Jews.
9. Racial intolerance is a judgment based on external criteria and is unsound and unchristian.

THINK IT THROUGH

Recall the people of various races and nationalities that live in your community and point out some of their qualities that contribute to the total culture.

"In the gift of His Son for our redemption, God has shown how high a value He places upon every human soul, and He gives to no man liberty to speak contemptuously of another. We shall see faults and weaknesses in those about us, but God claims every soul as His property—His by creation, and doubly His as purchased by the precious blood of Christ. All were created in His image, and even the most degraded are to be treated with respect and tenderness. God will hold us accountable for even a word spoken in contempt of one soul for whom Christ laid down His life."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 56, 57.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 402, 403.

Part 4
ROOTS OF
PREJUDICE

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9).

Embedded in the customs of many peoples are indications that they look down upon those of another race. It also comes out in the language as in prejudicial terms that cast a slur upon the members of another race or citizens of another country.

The use of such expressions marks the user as uncouth, inconsiderate, or prejudiced. The Christian rejects these words and roots them out of his working vocabulary.

There may be prejudice that is based on fear, such as fear of competition, and this should give way to a recognition that every man is entitled to an opportunity to achieve his best.

An eye-opening experience is to be a visitor or a resident in a foreign land. What did God say to the children of Israel about the treatment of foreigners who might live among them? Deut. 10:19.

We need to know all people better, to win their confidence, and draw them to Jesus.

THINK IT THROUGH

Examine your own life or culture to single out habits or ways that might be objectionable to people of another race or country.

"When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the souls of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many very differently from the way in which it is now regarded. To love as Christ loves, lifts the mind into a pure, heavenly, unselfish atmosphere."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 209.

"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. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 386.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 369, 370.

Part 5
WHEN GOD
RE-CREATES

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:10, 11).

There is the utmost hopefulness in the gospel of Christ toward man in whatever plight or circumstance he may be found.

When Paul was writing to Titus about conditions among the people in the island of Crete, he had some very unpleasant things to say about the inhabitants. He pointed out: “One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true” (Titus 1:12, 13, RSV). Yet Paul expressed great hope for those people.

Ellen White wrote of Jesus:

“He sees on every hand souls in darkness, bowed down with sin and sorrow and pain. But He sees also their possibilities. He sees the height to which they may attain. Although human beings have abused their mercies, wasted their talents, and lost the dignity of godlike manhood, the Creator is to be glorified in their redemption.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 38.

What outlook or attitude toward the race question would be absolutely necessary in the life of a successful missionary? 1 Cor. 9:22.

“Never does the gospel put on an aspect of greater loveliness than when it is brought to the most needy and destitute regions. . . . Those who have been loathed and abandoned are through faith and pardon raised to the dignity of sons and daughters of God. Lifted above the world, they sit in heavenly places in Christ. They may have no earthly treasure, but they have found the pearl of great price.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 226.

THINK IT THROUGH

Have you ever invited persons of another race or culture to share the hospitality of your home?

“We have no right to keep our minds stayed on ourselves, our preferences, and our fancies. . . . We have a character to maintain, but it is the character of Christ. Having the character of Christ, we can carry on the work of God together. The Christ in us will meet the Christ in our brethren, and the Holy Spirit will give that union of heart and action which testifies to the world that we are children of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 187, 188.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 25, 26.

Part 6
HEAVEN IS
INCLUSIVE

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands” (Rev. 7:9).

Long forgotten will be the suspicions of this sinful life on earth. Language barriers will not stand between; distances that now separate will be bridged; misconceptions that now feed human prejudices will be cleared away.

No one will be jealous that those of a different race or color are there; these envies or resentments have long since, even while on earth, been cleansed away in the breadth of vision that comes with Christ's salvation and the redeemed heart.

No one is degraded or humiliated; all have but one ambition, to serve one another in the spirit of their Lord. Heaven is the ultimate equalizer, both in concept and in condition.

We are traveling together toward that heavenly home. We have been called from the ways and thought patterns of the world, to look on God's great humanity as He does. He is making up the jewels of His kingdom, and they display a rich variety of people. In every one Christ sees the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

What did Jesus teach about where the saved will come from? Matt. 8:11; John 10:16.

THINK IT THROUGH

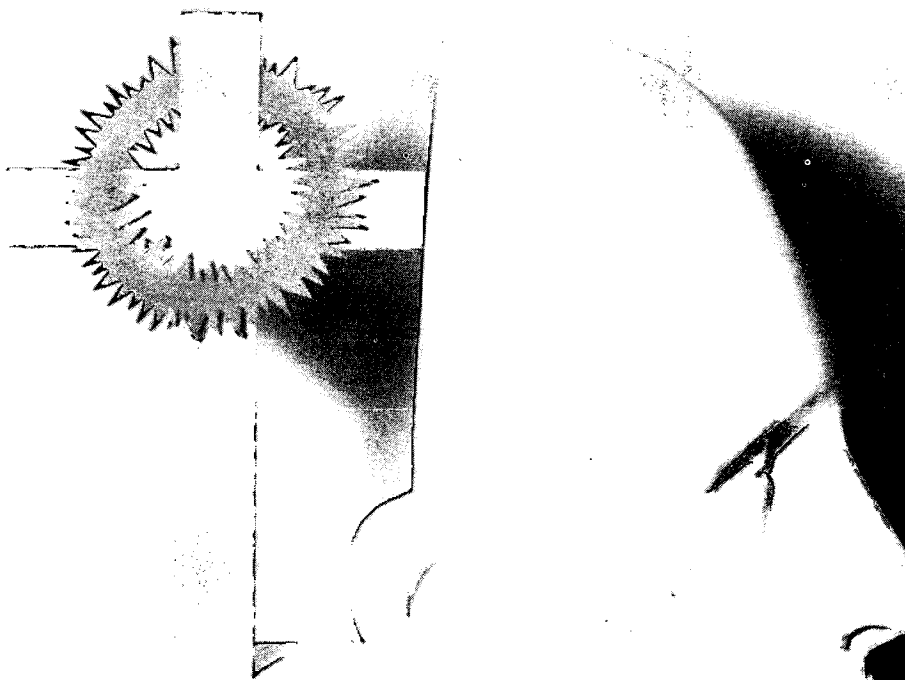
How best could a member of a minority group witness as a Christian in his community?

“Christ will perform wonderful miracles if men will but do their God-given part. In human hearts today as great a transformation may be wrought as has ever been wrought in generations past. John Bunyan was redeemed from profanity and reveling, John Newton from slave dealing, to proclaim an uplifted Saviour. A Bunyan and a Newton may be redeemed from among men today. Through human agents who co-operate with the divine, many a poor outcast will be reclaimed, and in his turn will seek to restore the image of God in man. There are those who have had very meager opportunities, who have walked in ways of error because they knew no better way, to whom beams of light will come.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 236.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 257-261.

11. THE MORAL USE



**For the Christian, ethical use of power always
implies the loving, sacrificial attitude
of Jesus.**

OF POWER

THE MORAL USE OF POWER

LESSON 11 March 6-12

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

Situations are present in life where one individual has power or a position of advantage over another. Such situations occur in the relationship of the employer or supervisor and worker, parent and child, the stronger and the weaker, and the rich and the poor, the official and the citizen, the lender and the borrower, the owner and the renter, or the seller and the buyer. The list is almost endless. One could add to the list the advantage of the motorist over the pedestrian, of the driver of one vehicle over another, such as a car driver over a cyclist. It could also include the relation of the physician and the patient, as well as the teacher and the pupil, the well-trained individual and the untrained or novice.

Christians are accountable to God for the use of the power and authority which come into their possession. The Golden Rule set forth by Christ is to be the ideal that motivates and controls their actions.

The exploitation of the weak by those who are strong is soundly condemned in both the Old and New Testaments. Rather, the strong are exhorted to help bear the burdens of the weak (Acts 20:35).

The Christian must reject the temptation to use power to personal advantage whether it be for gain, prestige, or show of authority. The standards of Christian conduct call for

clear moral and ethical perception and a sympathetic realization of the consequence of one's actions upon those with whom one deals.

"Satan is busily at work in our crowded cities. His work is to be seen in the confusion, the strife and discord between labor and capital, and the hypocrisy that has come into the churches. That men may not take time to meditate, Satan leads them into a round of gayety and pleasure-seeking, of eating and drinking. He fills them with ambition to make an exhibition that will exalt self. Step by step, the world is reaching the conditions that existed in the days of Noah. Every conceivable crime is committed. The lust of the flesh, the pride of the eyes, the display of selfishness, the misuse of power, the cruelty, and the force used to cause men to unite with confederacies and unions—binding themselves up in bundles for the burning of the great fires of the last days—all these are the working of Satanic agencies."—*Evangelism*, p. 26.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **God's Character (Ex. 34:6, 7)**
2. **The Spirit of Domination in the World (Matt. 20:25, 26)**
3. **Paying Back for Evil (Matt. 5:44)**
4. **Christ's Use of Power (Matt. 26:53)**
5. **Restraints (Prov. 24:17)**
6. **Christian Influence at Work (Col. 3:13)**

Part 1 **What traits of His character did God reveal to Moses on**
GOD'S CHARACTER **Mount Sinai?**

“And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:6, 7).

God has supreme power in the universe, in our world, and in the affairs that have to do with our salvation. He alone is worthy to exercise this great power, for it rests in a Being whose very nature is wisdom and love. It was in order to demonstrate that love and mercy that the Son of God came to save the inhabitants of our guilty, rebellious world. How different it would have been with us had God chosen to deal with us according to what we justly deserve.

The condition of our world, filled as it is with deceit, immorality, hatred, bloodshed, and injustice, cries out for retribution. Why does God delay in setting things right? The answer is clearly seen in the character of God as revealed in the Bible in dealing with individuals and nations in instances such as: (1) the sin of Israel (Ex. 32:9-11, 14; Num. 14:17-20); (2) the sin of David (2 Sam. 12:13, 14); (3) the sparing of Nineveh (Jonah 3:10).

We have another example of divine forbearance and patience in the way Jesus dealt with Peter, who denied Him during His trial (Luke 22:60-62).

The character of God should be seen increasingly in the lives of Christians.

THINK IT THROUGH **What lessons to guide us in our relationship with those over whom we have some measure of control can we find in God's dealings with our world and His people? What evidences exist that God's sovereign power is under the control of His mercy and justice?**

“When we study the divine character in the light of the cross we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice. We see in the midst of the throne One bearing in hands and feet and side the marks of the suffering endured to reconcile man to God. We see a Father, infinite, dwelling in light unapproachable, yet receiving us to Himself through the merits of His Son. The cloud of vengeance that threatened only misery and despair, in the light reflected from the cross reveals the writing of God: Live, sinner, live! ye penitent, believing souls, live! I have paid a ransom.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 333.

FURTHER STUDY *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 737-746.

Part 2
THE SPIRIT OF
DOMINATION IN
THE WORLD

“Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority; but it shall not be so with you’ (Matt. 20:25, 26, NEB).

We must all agree that there should be a proper exercise of authority by those who control in society, in the home, and even in the church. This is a part of God’s order and should have our consent and cooperation.

However, in the world we often witness the exercise of naked power, resulting in oppression, discrimination, extortion, persecution, and similar injustice. This is in tune with the spirit of the world but not with the kingdom of Christ. It is in harmony with the character of the prince of this world who has always lusted for power.

What are some of the characteristics ascribed to Lucifer by the prophet Isaiah? Isa. 14:12-14.

“When Adam sinned, man broke away from the heaven-ordained center. A demon became the central power in the world. Where God’s throne should have been, Satan placed his throne. The world laid its homage, as a willing sacrifice, at the feet of the enemy.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 33.

The philosophy of worldly power is to have no place among the subjects of Christ’s kingdom.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16).

Notice how the spirit of domination is exercised in the last days to control the lives of people through oppression and discrimination. (See Rev. 13:16, 17.)

THINK IT THROUGH

In what organizations is a spirit of dominance evident?

“Lucifer desired God’s power, but not His character. He sought for himself the highest place, and every being who is actuated by his spirit will do the same. Thus alienation, discord, and strife will be inevitable. Domination becomes the prize of the strongest. The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of force; every individual regards every other as an obstacle in the way of his own advancement, or a steppingstone on which he himself may climb to a higher place.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 435, 436.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, “The Spirituality of the Law (Matt. 5:22), pp. 55-58.

Part 3 "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that
PAYING BACK curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them
FOR EVIL which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

The words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount sound so unreal and other-worldly. Some would even say they are not very workable in this thoughtless, competitive, unjust world.

We are not to "resist evil" (Matt. 5:39), or to fight back when smitten (verse 39); but to yield to unjust lawsuits (verse 40), and to love our enemies (verse 44). Thus we will be children of our Father which is in heaven (verse 45).

What penetrating, difficult instruction this is for us in our human frame of thinking! It is difficult for us humanly to imagine how it is possible for the meek to inherit the earth (verse 5). How can they ever hold out?

What principle is especially enjoined upon the brethren in their relations one with another? 1 Peter 3:8, 9.

It is only as we have the mind of God, as we begin to become sharers of His nature, that we come to understand how such a renewal of human attitudes can take place, and how valid are the principles Jesus proclaimed.

Our minds need to be cleansed from the prides and worldly standards of this life, and spiritually sensitized repeatedly by the flooding of the Spirit into our hearts.

The Christian can only agree with Paul's statement about God's evaluation that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness" (1 Cor. 3:19).

How can we refrain from paying back evil with evil? By recognizing that our case is in God's hands, as Joseph did with his brothers who had wronged him so terribly in his youth.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does making others suffer really heal our own wounds? How far should we go in claiming our dues in the face of open dishonesty on the part of others?

"Strength of character consists of two things—power of will and power of self-control. Many youth mistake strong, uncontrolled passion for strength of character; but the truth is that he who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. The real greatness and nobility of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he subdues, not by the power of the feelings that subdue him. The strongest man is he, who, while sensitive to abuse, will yet restrain passion and forgive his enemies. Such men are true heroes."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 656.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Shall Not God Avenge His Own?" pp. 171-173 (pp. 175, 176 in 1923 ed.).

Part 4
CHRIST'S USE
OF POWER

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53).

The attitude of Christ toward the use of power is in striking contrast to the attitudes of the world and even of those of His followers nearest to Him. To Pilate He declared: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" (John 18:36). When Peter drew the sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus rebuked him and accepted the indignity that lay ahead (verses 10, 11). James and John wanted Jesus to call fire down from heaven upon a village of the Samaritans who would not show hospitality to Him and His party. He rebuked them and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55). He declined to say who should sit at His right and left in His kingdom, leaving that with His Father to decide (Matt. 20:23).

On the other hand, Jesus drove out the merchants and money changers from the temple, saying they had made it a den of thieves (Matt. 21:12, 13). He was zealous to enhance God's honor, not to exercise His own authority. Christ had power to forgive sins and did not hesitate to exercise it (Matt. 9:6; John 8:11). He bestowed upon His twelve disciples power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal diseases (Matt. 10:1). Jesus Himself spoke with an authority that generated confidence in the minds of His listeners (Luke 4:32, 36).

Christ used His power to instruct, heal, combat the forces of evil, and overcome their results. He never used His power for display, selfish reasons, or to prove Himself to His critics. Herein we discern the holiness of His character: knowing He possessed the power, He used it with such discrimination. He saw that genuine changes in men's thought and action come about only by reason and persuasion.

What does Peter point out as one way in which Jesus uses His great power? 2 Peter 1:3.

"Christ has given us His life as a pattern, and we dishonor Him when we become jealous of every slight, and are ready to resent every injury, supposed or real. It is not an evidence of a noble mind to be prepared to defend self, to preserve our own dignity. We would better suffer wrongfully a hundred times than wound the soul by a spirit of retaliation, or by giving vent to wrath. There is strength to be obtained of God. He can help. He can give grace and heavenly wisdom."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 426, 427.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:5), pp. 13-18.

Part 5 "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine
RESTRAINTS heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Prov. 24:17).

Saul, out of jealousy and moved by a perverse, evil spirit, endeavored to take David's life. On two occasions during this time Saul fell under David's power. At one time David cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, but later repented that he had acted so boldly and disrespectfully toward the king (1 Sam. 24:4-6). On another occasion David and Abishai penetrated Saul's camp at night and took away his spear and cruse of water. David refused to take the life of the king when it was within his power to do so (1 Sam. 26:8-12).

Abraham refused to exercise his seniority and authority over his nephew, Lot. He gave Lot his choice of territory to avoid clashes between their herdsmen (Gen. 13:7-9).

"The cultivation of a uniform courtesy, a willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, would annihilate half the ills of life. The spirit of selfaggrandizement is the spirit of Satan; but the heart in which the love of Christ is cherished, will possess that charity which seeketh not her own."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 133.

When asked about the tares growing among the wheat, the householder instructed the servants to let the tares remain until the harvest time (Matt. 13:27-30).

Unhappily, now as well as in Bible times, many show lack of restraint in the use of power. For an extreme example, see the story of how Herod had John the Baptist beheaded (Mark 6: 25-28).

THINK IT THROUGH

How does the exercise of restraint apply at home? at school? at work? in traveling on the highway?

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

"Every true Christian will develop in his life the characteristics of this divine love; he will reveal a spirit of forbearance, of beneficence, and a freedom from envy and jealousy. This character developed in word and act will not repulse, and will not be unapproachable, cold, and indifferent to the interests of others. The person who cultivates the precious plant of love will be self-denying in spirit, and will not yield self-control even under provocation. He will not impute wrong motives and evil intentions to others, but will feel deeply over sin when discovered in any of the disciples of Christ."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 123.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 485-487; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

**Part 6
CHRISTIAN INFLU-
ENCE AT WORK**

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13).

The Old Testament sets forth principles of ethical conduct. Lending money at an exorbitant rate of interest was especially pointed out as unjust (Ex. 22:25). Even a poor person's raiment, taken as a pledge, was to be returned before the coldness of the night set in (verses 26, 27). Amos called for justice and righteousness to be exercised in the nation (Amos 5:24).

What is the instruction in the New Testament about the behavior of believers toward others?

Guard against the source of wars and fightings among you (James 4:1); put off anger, wrath, malice (Col. 3:8); lay aside malice, guile, envies (1 Peter 2:1); show the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24).

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways should I improve in exercising care and restraint toward others and in seeing that my attitudes and actions are just?

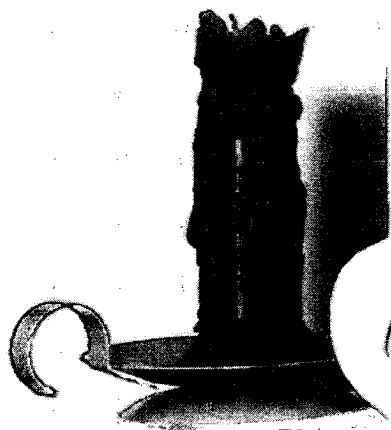
“God has given to men talents of influence which belong to Him alone, and no greater dishonor can be done to God than for one finite agent to bring other men's talents under his absolute control, even though the benefits of the same be used to the advantage of the cause. In such arrangements one man's mind is ruled by another man's mind, and the human agency is separated from God and exposed to temptation. Satan's methods tend to one end—to make men the slaves of men. And when this is done, confusion and distrust, jealousies and evil surmisings, are the result. Such a course destroys faith in God and in the principles which are to control, to purge from guile and every species of selfishness and hypocrisy.

“The high-handed power that has been developed, as though position has made men gods, makes me afraid, and ought to cause fear. It is a curse wherever and by whomsoever it is exercised. This lording it over God's heritage will create such a disgust of man's jurisdiction that a state of insubordination will result. The people are learning that men in high positions of responsibility cannot be trusted to mold and fashion other men's minds and characters. The result will be a loss of confidence even in the management of faithful men.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 360, 361.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, “The Beatitudes” (Matt. 5:7), pp. 21-24.

12. THE MORAL M



**In this dark world the Christian should be a
source of light and strength.**



THE MORAL MAN

LESSON 12 March 13-19

"That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15, RSV).

The truly moral man or woman stands out as a member of God's nobility. His heart is moved by love to God, he longs to know God better, and to perform His will more fully. He may be surrounded by crookedness and deceit, pride and hypocrisy, but he rejects the low standard of the ethics of his time and aims to meet the standard of God's law and His kingdom. That means that not only will his conduct be outwardly correct but his inward life will truly give consent to God's way. This true inward morality is the result of the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. The truly moral man has had a change of heart; his heart is no longer made of stone but of flesh (Eze. 36:26) and God's law is inscribed here by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3).

The moral man or woman is genuine, sincere, faithful, believable. He is God's answer to this apostate generation; he is God's word in the face of doubt and cynicism, giving credence to the whole plan of salvation.

"We must let our light shine amid the moral darkness. Many who are now in darkness, as they see a reflection of the Light of the world, will realize that they have a hope of salvation. Your light may be small, but remember that it is what God has given you, and that He holds you

responsible to let it shine forth. Someone may light his taper from yours, and his light may be the means of leading others out from the darkness."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 171.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Hypocrisy (Luke 18:9)**
- 2. Source of True Righteousness (Rom. 3:21, 22)**
- 3. No Salvation by Works (Rom. 3:20)**
- 4. Love of Righteousness (Heb. 1:9)**
- 5. Salt of the Earth (Matt. 5:13)**
- 6. Making Righteousness Believable (Matt. 5:16)**

Part 1 "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9)
HYPOCRISY

The parable that follows the above text is about the two men who went up to the temple to pray.

What was the status and attitude of the first worshiper? Verses 11, 12. Compare him with the other worshiper and his attitude. Verse 13.

The Pharisee was in reality paying homage to himself, to his lack of evil deeds in contrast to the lives of the sinners around him. How greatly he gloried in his status, his correctness in living by the letter of the law! There appeared to be much to approve in the way he lived. His fault lay in making himself the center of his life and worship.

The humble publican was aware of his inner unfitness to reach God's standard of holiness. His genuine humility drew the approval of Jesus. There is also a false humility that could almost be called a "proud humility." It is a kind of good works by which a person may seek to please God. The perfect pattern in humility is that shown by Jesus as described by Paul in Philippians 2:5-8.

What is hypocrisy? And in what connection did Christ speak of it? (See Matt. 6:2; 23:13-15, 25.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Why should we not allow the fear of being called hypocrites to deter us from trying to lead an upright, moral life?

"There is cheap religion in abundance, but there is no such thing as cheap Christianity. Self may figure largely in a false religion, but it cannot appear in Christian experience."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 339.

"Among the followers of our Lord today, as of old, how widespread is this subtle, deceptive sin [of hypocrisy]! How often our service to Christ, our communion with one another, is marred by the secret desire to exalt self! How ready the thought of self-gratulation, and the longing for human approval! It is the love of self, the desire for an easier way than God has appointed that leads to the substitution of human theories and traditions for the divine precepts. To His own disciples the warning words of Christ are spoken, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 409.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 386, 387; *Christ's Object Lessons* ("Lost and Is Found") next to last page, p. 210.

Part 2
SOURCE OF TRUE
RIGHTEOUSNESS

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:21, 22).

Since "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), it follows that righteousness cannot be found within man. The principles of rightdoing are implanted in the regenerated life by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1, 4; 1 Cor. 3:16).

The life pattern of the believer does not come up fully to the standard of God's righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him so that before God he is seen as altogether righteous (Rom. 3:22).

"Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the sanctification of the truth, the believer becomes fitted for the courts of heaven; for Christ works within us, and His righteousness is upon us."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 395.

The Christian knows the source of his righteousness and takes no credit for what he has achieved in keeping God's law. He lives with assurance that God has pardoned his sins and moment by moment gives him strength to prevail.

Would this not be a good moment to pause and repeat with faith and full assurance the promise of Jesus in the fourth Beatitude? Matt. 5:6.

THINK IT THROUGH

Apply the following statements from the pen of Ellen White thoughtfully to your own experience:

"We should take the greatest care to live a blameless life and abstain from all appearance of evil, and then it is our duty to move boldly forward, and pay no regard to the reproachful falsehoods of the wicked."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 353.

"The righteousness manifested in the character of Christ was forever to be the anchor, the saving hope, of the world. Every soul who chooses Christ can say with faith, 'The Lord my righteousness.' "—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 348.

"Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness. The apostle Peter became a faithful minister of Christ, and he was greatly honored with divine light and power; he had an active part in the upbuilding of Christ's church; but Peter never forgot the fearful experience of his humiliation; his sin was forgiven; yet well he knew that for the weakness of character which had caused his fall only the grace of Christ could avail. He found in himself nothing in which to glory."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 160.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 397, 398.

Part 3
NO SALVATION
BY WORKS

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20).

When we say that there is no salvation by our works, we do not take the position that there is salvation without good works. Good works in the life of one who has chosen to accept God's way will follow his faith as surely as sun and rain bring the harvest.

The danger lies in placing one's confidence for salvation in the merits of one's own record of good deeds. Many religious people, because they wanted to perform some worthy deed, have built churches or shrines, and that is good; but the charitable act does not ensure their acceptance with God.

What was the basis of Paul's hope of acceptance in God's sight? Phil. 3:9; Titus 3:5. (Compare with Gal. 2:16.)

Paul had much over which he might feel personal satisfaction: his race and tribe, his religious sect, his zeal, his observance of the law, and his high moral character, all of which might be looked upon as gain (Phil. 3:5, 6).

Luther, ascending the sacred stairs in Rome on his knees, came suddenly to the realization that this ceremony was really powerless to save him. He could not win God's approval by performing meritorious works. The same is true of pilgrimages, fastings, even prayers when done by rote to gain merit. The only life that counts is the one based on faith, which is followed by obedience.

What is the meaning of Ezekiel 14:14?

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I been trusting to my good works, and if I have, how should I change my relationship to God?

“None but God can subdue the pride of man's heart. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot regenerate ourselves. In the heavenly courts there will be no song sung, To me that loved myself, and washed myself, redeemed myself, unto me be glory and honor, blessing and praise. But this is the keynote of the song that is sung by many here in this world. They do not know what it means to be meek and lowly in heart; and they do not mean to know this, if they can avoid it. The whole gospel is comprised in learning of Christ, His meekness and lowliness.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 456.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 389-391.

Part 4
LOVE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1:9).

When Jesus comes into the life and the Holy Spirit is active, a love is generated for the things that are good, true, and holy. This is God's way to break the hold of sin in the human life. The end of this experience is that one comes to love righteousness as Jesus did. And this cultivating of the love of the right is one of our most pressing needs.

The strong grip of the world upon our lives may be broken. An acceptance of the lovely character of Christ alone can do this. Then we will not love the sordid, prideful standards by which this Satan-controlled world lives. Our ideals will reach up to the lofty standards set before us in God's Word.

Our lives are molded by that upon which our faith is fixed. Do we love Jesus and the traits of His character—honesty, truthfulness, generosity, morality, and courage? If so, then these will be exalted and emulated in the acts of our daily lives.

"God has had moral heroes, and He has them now,—those who are not ashamed of being His peculiar people. Their wills and plans are all subordinate to the law of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5. p. 527.

What admonition of Amos to Israel is applicable in our modern times also? Amos 5:15.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are there instances in which I do not love rightdoing? If there are, what shall I do about it?

"Each one must hunger and thirst after righteousness for himself. Leaning upon men, and trusting in their wisdom, is dangerous to the spiritual life of any Christian. Those in whom confidence is placed may be honest and true, serving the Lord with all diligence. But if, individually, we are endeavoring to walk in the footsteps of Christ, we can follow Him as well as those whom we admire for their consistent, humble lives."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 385.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:6), pp. 18-21.

Part 5
SALT OF THE
EARTH

What is the meaning of salt in relation to the Christian life?

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men” (Matt. 5:13, RSV).

True Christianity in Christ's followers gives a certain flavor to life that is an influence in the world. Christians living in this world remain in contact with society, and their genuine goodness and morality have a saving, restraining effect upon their neighbors as they witness to God's holiness.

“It would be as unthinkable for a Christian to lose his essential characteristics and still be a Christian as it would be for salt to lose its saltiness and still be considered and used as salt. If Christians are such in name only, their nominal citizenship in the kingdom of heaven becomes a farce. They are not Christians unless they reflect the character of Christ, regardless of what their profession may be.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 330.

The Jewish moralists, branded by Christ as hypocrites, had lost their saltiness. Yet God had intended them to be the bearers of His salvation to the world. He intended that they should be moral and redemptive seasoning in the world.

THINK IT THROUGH

A person from whose life the saltiness, the grace and the power of God, is lost is “good for nothing.” What am I good for in this world?

‘Ye are the salt of the earth,’ Jesus said. Do not withdraw yourselves from the world in order to escape persecution. You are to abide among men, that the savor of the divine love may be as salt to preserve the world from corruption.

“Hearts that respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit are the channels through which God's blessing flows. Were those who serve God removed from the earth, and His Spirit withdrawn from among men, this world would be left to desolation and destruction, the fruit of Satan's dominion. Though the wicked know it not, they owe even the blessings of this life to the presence, in the world, of God's people whom they despise and oppress. But if Christians are such in name only, they are like the salt that has lost its savor. They have not influence for good in the world. Through their misrepresentation of God they are worse than unbelievers.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 306.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, “The Beatitudes,” (Matt. 5:13), pp. 35-38.

Part 6
MAKING RIGHTEOUS-
NESS BELIEVABLE

What is the purpose of letting one's light shine?

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

It would be ideal if all Christians were attractive people so that their character and life would draw unbelievers to Christ and give them confidence in the Christian way. Unfortunately some so-called Christians may show traits that have just the opposite effect so that others tend to be repelled or disappointed rather than drawn to the Christian faith.

Our mission in life is to represent the way of uprightness so that those around us will have confidence in our morality and then in Christ from whom it comes. Some of the qualities that will help to build this confidence are these:

1. **Humility.** Do not make a parade of goodness. No one is likely to admire our way if we seem to show pride in our morality. (See 1 Cor. 13:4; Matt. 6:1.)

2. **Consistency.** Our actions must conform reasonably to our profession; otherwise we fall into the trap of hypocrisy. To frankly admit our errors and confess our sins will add credibility to our example. Keep in mind David's example. (See 2 Sam. 24:10.)

3. **Tact.** We should avoid thrusting our ideas upon those we wish to win. They may not be ready to take the advanced stand that we have chosen. People must be allowed opportunity to weigh issues and reach their own decisions. The Holy Spirit must be given time to do its quiet work upon the heart.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways do I fail to be a believable Christian in my home and community?

"When those who profess the faith show their lives to be consistent with their faith, then we shall see a power attending the presentation of the truth, a power that will convict the sinner and draw souls nigh to Christ.

"A consistent faith is rare among rich men. Genuine faith, sustained by works, is seldom found. But all who possess this faith will be men who will not lack influence. They will copy after Christ; they will possess that disinterested benevolence, that interest in the work of saving souls, that He had."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 663, 664.

FURTHER STUDY

The Sanctified Life, pp. 12, 13.

13. STRENGTH FO

STRENGTH FOR MORAL ACTION LESSON 13 March 20-26

"In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul" (Ps. 138:3).

We need strength in the soul as we strive to reach the moral standards of our heavenly citizenship while still living in this sinful world.

As we read of the apostle Paul's struggle to do righteousness, we feel a kinship with him. We know all too well the reality of this inner personal struggle.

"I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:22-25, RSV).

The Bible has left us a record of the lives of the great heroes of God who prevailed with His help—men and women like Abraham, Noah, Joseph, David, Ruth, Jacob, Esther, Daniel, Peter, Mark, and Nathanael. They all drew strength from God and became conquerors over weaknesses and grievous faults of character.

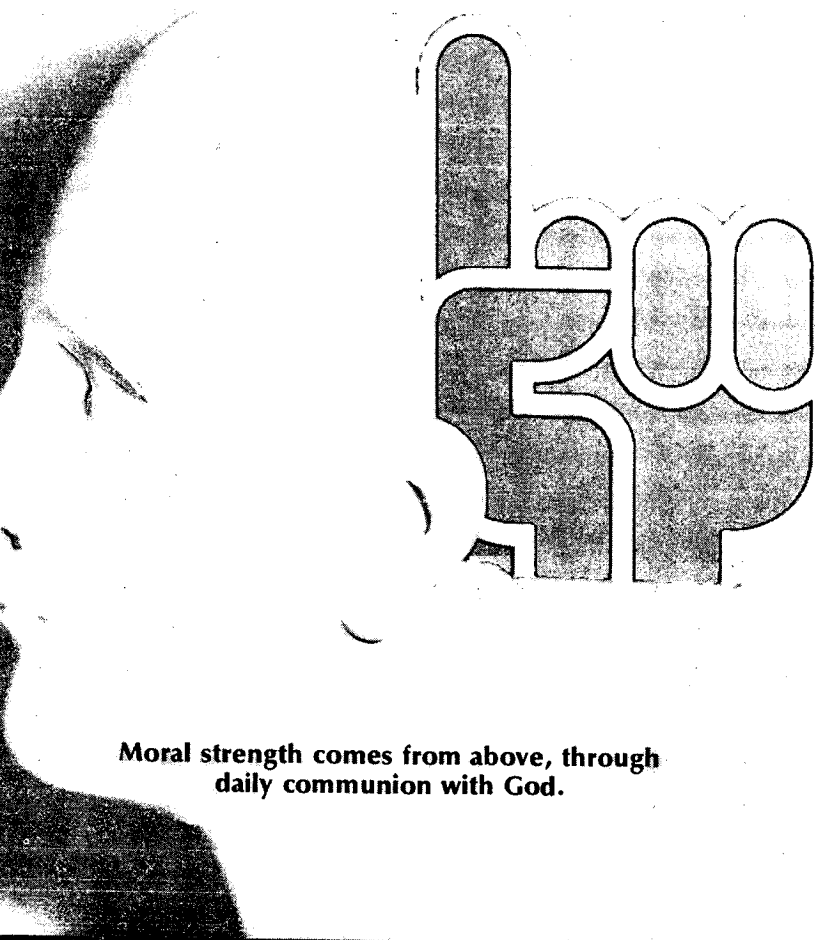
"Men whom God favored, and to whom He entrusted great responsibilities, were sometimes overcome by temptation and committed sin, even as we at the present day strive, waver, and frequently fall into error. Their lives, with all their faults and follies, are open before us, both for our encouragement and warning. If they

had been represented as without fault we, with our sinful nature, might despair at our own mistakes and failures. But seeing where others struggled through discouragements like our own, where they fell under temptation as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness. As they, though sometimes beaten back, recovered their ground, and were blessed of God, so we too may be overcomers in the strength of Jesus."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 238.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Dedicated Will (Phil. 3:13, 14)**
2. **The Conscience (1 Tim. 1:19)**
3. **The Holy Spirit's Part (Eph. 3:16)**
4. **Power of God's Word (Heb. 4:12)**
5. **Dependence Upon Divine Help (Ps. 16:8)**
6. **Victorious in Christ (John 16:33)**

MORAL ACTION



**Moral strength comes from above, through
daily communion with God.**

Part 1
THE DEDICATED WILL

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13, 14).

God has given to us the capacity to choose between right and wrong. He has revealed to us a knowledge of the issues that pertain to right and wrong. There is thus placed upon us the responsibility for the path we shall choose.

The matter of free choice is a clear teaching of God’s Word. (See Deut. 30:19; Rev. 22:17).

What commendation did Jesus give Mary for the role she had assumed at the time of His visit in her home? Luke 10:42.

Our choice decides our destiny. No individual will be saved against his will. God respects our choices, and when we choose salvation He comes to help and support us. We must place our will on His side in response to His invitation. As we dedicate our will to making the right moral choices—obeying His law, following His will—we also seek His sustaining and supporting grace. God wants us to rise above the fickleness and instability of a life of moral indecision.

Notice the comments of the apostle James:

“He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6).

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (verse 8).

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:7, 8).

THINK IT THROUGH

I bow to God and give my will to Him. I see my need and seek His help. He has promised to come to me with His help, and in faith I claim that promise.

“What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart. you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 47.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 513-516.

Part 2
THE CONSCIENCE

What did Paul counsel Timothy to hold along with faith?

"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (1 Tim. 1:19).

Let us notice a definition of the conscience: "The sense or consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good."—*Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*.

"Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 120.

George Washington said, "Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called Conscience."

From a study of the Bible on the subject of conscience several principles stand out:

1. There is a conscience that is enlightened and responsive (Acts 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; Heb. 13:18).

2. A conscience can be abused so as to become seared and unresponsive (1 Tim. 1:19; 4:2).

3. An abused conscience can be renewed in faith to exercise its rightful place in the life (Heb. 9:14).

THINK IT THROUGH

A conscience is personal, designed to guide myself, not another.

"God does not send messengers to flatter the sinner. He delivers no message of peace to lull the unsanctified into fatal security. He lays heavy burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer, and pierces the soul with arrows of conviction."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 104.

"This daily review of our acts, to see whether conscience approves or condemns, is necessary for all who wish to arrive at the perfection of Christian character."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 512.

"Let it be written upon the conscience as with a pen of iron upon the rock, that real success, whether for this life or for the life to come, can be secured only by faithful adherence to the eternal principles of right."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 164.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 195-197; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 69, 70.

Part 3 "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his
THE HOLY glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner
SPIRIT'S PART man" (Eph. 3:16).

The Holy Spirit, sent from heaven as the Comforter, is also a reprover of sin (John 16:7, 8). He works in behalf of righteousness and judgment to help fit the soul to stand before God. He guides the responsive person into truth (verse 13) and makes the presence of Christ real in the inner life (verse 14).

Every true Christian has felt the influence of the Holy Spirit in his life, drawing him, warning him, and reassuring him of the things of Christ. As we invite Christ to take control of our lives, the Holy Spirit makes the personal experience real. "The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 805.

Furthermore the Holy Spirit causes the Christian graces, called the "fruit" of the Spirit, to develop in the life. This fruit is seen in the positive Christian virtues.

The Holy Spirit stands ready to help us. "Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

The Holy Spirit was likened by Jesus to the wind whose presence is not seen but whose activity is real, being evidenced by the results it produces. Though invisible to human eyes the Holy Spirit's activities in the life are truly seen and felt, witnessing to the divine presence.

"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.

THINK IT THROUGH

The Holy Spirit comes in as an invited guest; have I made ready for Him, and am I really prepared to welcome Him?

"All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied. The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 669-672.

Part 4
POWER OF
GOD'S WORD

"The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of the soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, RSV).

Paul was fully convinced of the power and authority of God's Holy Word, and he believed in its effectiveness to do its work in the Christian life.

God's Word defines truth, supports our faith, exposes untruth, and measures our conduct. Without it we are in hopeless confusion as to the rightness and wrongness of our plans. The philosophy of our time helps but little and is more likely to lead us astray. The Bible is the Christian's source book for ethical judgments. Jesus used the Old Testament Scriptures to give the authority for His rejection of Satan's subtle temptations (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10), and as the foundation for His doctrine.

Ellen White teaches the importance of Scripture. "One sentence of Scripture is of more value than ten thousand of man's ideas or arguments."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 71.

The Bible, studied sincerely, will educate and correct the conscience. "If we would live a true Christian life, the conscience must be quickened by constant contact with the word of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 195.

The Bible lifts us from earth into a heavenly atmosphere. "As you take the Bible in your hands, remember that you are on holy ground."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 195.

The Bible is God's message to us. "It [the Scriptures] is the medium of communication between God and man."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 69.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I increase my growth daily, weekly, in knowledge of the Bible?

"When the Bible is made the study book, with earnest supplication for the Spirit's guidance, and with a full surrender of the heart to be sanctified through the truth, all that Christ has promised will be accomplished. The result of such Bible study will be well-balanced minds. The understanding will be quickened, the sensibilities aroused. The conscience will become sensitive; the sympathies and sentiments will be purified; a better moral atmosphere will be created; and new power to resist temptation will be imparted."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 357.

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pp. 123-127.

Part 5
DEPENDENCE UPON
DIVINE HELP

"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:8).

When divine forces are invited to join us in the spiritual battles of life, we have a majority on our side. This gives us confidence and places the weight of the battle upon One who is able to bear it. We wrestle against powerful forces, dark and evil (Eph. 6:12), and so are admonished to put on the whole armor of God.

In the world's great religions we find many noble sentiments and lofty ethical principles. These are effectual only as they become operative in the lives of people.

In Christianity, centered in the life of God's Son, we have the promise of divine help to live by the ethical principles taught. This is the distinction between the way to God through Christ, the door, as compared to the false ways that promise enlightenment but lack the power to make needed changes.

Here again the Bible points the way: (1) "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20); (2) "It is God which worketh in you" (Phil. 2:13); (3) "He is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18); (4) "Grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

THINK IT THROUGH

It would be well for all of us to memorize the consecration prayer from "Christ's Object Lessons," page 159"

"Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, un-Christlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul."

The results of this consecration are summarized in the following paragraph:

"All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.

FURTHER STUDY

Messages to Young People, pp. 105-110.

Part 6
VICTORIOUS
IN CHRIST

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

We must never for a moment lose sight of the fact that adequate heavenly agencies are with us to make our lives spiritually successful and victorious. The victory in life is found in Christ and when we take Him we have the victory. It cannot elude our grasp as long as we hold firm to Him. (1) He is the Vine, we are the branches (John 15: 1, 5); (2) He is the Shepherd: we are His sheep (John 10:4, 11); (3) He is the Bread of life (John 6:35); (4) He is the "Prince of life" (Acts 3:15).

The ethical and moral standards for the Christian have been set forth in God's law and His Word. We can reach them only through faith in Christ. He is our final and only hope. Thank God that He has overcome the world!

To be clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness is not simply an intellectual assent to orthodox doctrine. It is an experience that brings repentance, a new heart, and personal trust and abiding in the all-sufficient Christ in whom is all the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9).

We look forward to the final moments of our existence on this world, scarred in life's battles but victorious in Christ. Heaven will be open to those who have not compromised their faith, have not lowered their banners in the dust, but have pressed on to reach the goal. "Here is the patience [endurance, RSV] of the saints" (Rev. 14:12).

Ellen White gives this heartening assurance:

"All who ever enter heaven's gates will enter as conquerors. When the redeemed throng surround the throne of God, with palm branches in their hands and crowns on their heads, it will be known what victories have been won. It will be seen how Satan's power has been exercised over minds, how he has linked with himself souls who flattered themselves that they were doing God's will. It will then be seen that his power and subtlety could not have been successfully resisted had not divine power been combined with human effort. Man must also be victor over himself; his temper, inclinations, and spirit must be brought into subjection to the will of God. But the righteousness and strength of Christ avail for all who will claim His merits."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 384.

Lessons for 2nd Quarter/1977

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the second quarter of 1977 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is "Jesus, the Model Man."

First Lesson

GOD WITH US. Memory text, Matt. 1:23.

1. *Jesus, God in Every Respect (John 1:1, 14)*
2. *Jesus, the Word of God (John 1:14, 18)*
3. *Jesus, the Creator (John 1:3)*
4. *Jesus, Life and Light (John 1:4)*
5. *Jesus, the Sustainer of Life (Col. 1:16, 17)*
6. *Jesus, the Glory of God (John 1:14, last part)*

Second Lesson

GOD WITH US. Memory text, Matt. 1:23.

1. *The Word Became Flesh (John 1:14)*
2. *Partook of the Same Nature (Heb. 2:14, 16, 17)*
3. *Tempted as We Are (Heb. 4:15)*
4. *Example of Obedience (Heb. 5:7-9)*
5. *Complete Dependency on Heavenly Father (John 5:19, 30)*
6. *The Controversy Settled (Heb. 6:19, 20)*

Lessons in Braille

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 162/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal inkprint. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accidents, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal inkprint publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation, Box 6097, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506.

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partnership with God in an investment project, don’t blame it on the fact that you “don’t own a farm.” God can bless a project even if you live in an apartment.

Be creative. Think of a special project this quarter to raise funds for investment. Children will especially enjoy a family project, be it gathering tin cans, washing cars or whatever better idea you conceive. Investing with God is an investment for eternity.

Invest with God

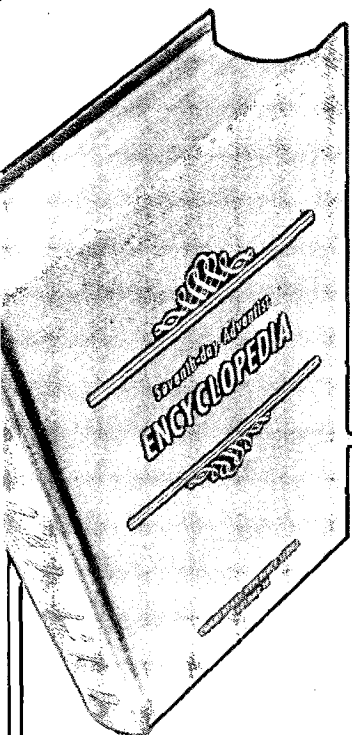
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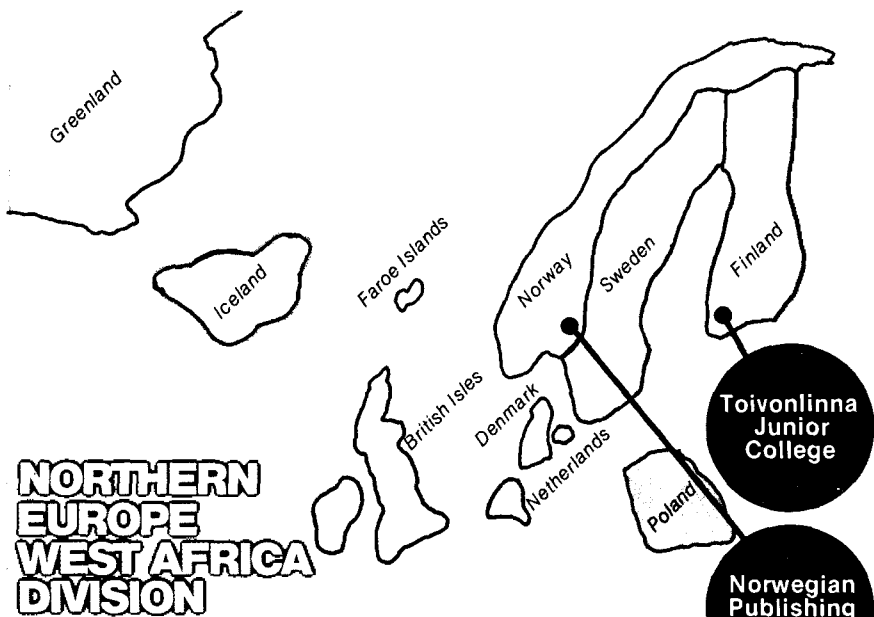
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- Nigerian U.M.
- Polish U.C.
- Swedish U.C.
- West African U.M.
- West Nordic U.C.
- Iceland C.

Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members	S.S. Members
British U.C.	61,343,361	149	12,631	13,925
Finland U.C.	4,700,000	51	5,678	5,955
Netherlands U.C.	13,500,000	46	3,647	2,823
Nigerian U.M.	58,344,582	214	34,676	83,218
Polish U.C.	33,000,000	120	4,095	4,572
Swedish U.C.	8,433,000	57	3,748	4,842
West African U.M.	28,350,000	156	30,607	61,983
West Nordic U.C.	8,726,336	128	9,398	8,406
Iceland C.	213,070	7	500	476
Division Totals	216,610,349	928	104,980	186,200

(Figures as of 3rd quarter 1975)

