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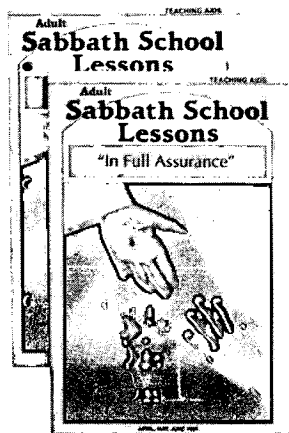
Sabbath School Lessons

Love Never Fails



April, May, June 1988

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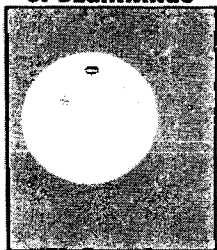
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COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS



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The Adult Sabbath School Lessons are prepared by the Department of Church Ministries of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the lessons is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Lesson Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors. The published lesson quarterly reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the authors.

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Adult Sabbath School Lessons (standard edition). (USPS 702-480). Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 North Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687, U.S.A. One year subscription in U.S.A., \$4.25; single copy, \$1.50. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$5.25; single copy, \$1.80. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage paid at Nampa, ID. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Adult Sabbath School Lessons (standard edition), P. O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707.

Editions in Braille available. See p. 97. Easy English Edition Available.

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Adult Sabbath School Lessons (USPS 702-480)/No. 372 / April-June 1988



Meet the Author of this Quarter's Lessons

Robert H. Pierson retired in 1978 after 12 years as General Conference President. During his ministry he served as conference and union president in India, Jamaica, Trinidad, and the United States, and as president of Southern Asia and Trans-Africa Divisions. Twenty-five years of his ministry were spent overseas.

Dr. Pierson has written numerous books, including two daily devotional books, *Give Us This Day* and *Faith Triumphant*. Throughout his career he has been active in evangelism and activities to strengthen Adventist homes. He and his wife, Dollis, have been married 57 years and have two sons.

Watch your local ABC for the companion book written by Robert Pierson. It will add a special dimension to this quarter's lesson.

Introduction to Hosea

“Love Never Fails”

The book of Hosea contains some heartening and some sobering lessons for our time, our lives, our families, and our church. Scholars generally agree that Hosea was the author of the Old Testament book that bears his name. Because Hosea was familiar with, and frequently mentioned, such places as Jezreel, Gilgal, Gibeah, and Ramah, he most likely lived in the northern kingdom of Israel. Samaria is mentioned frequently, but Hosea makes no mention of Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Hosea began his ministry sometime before 753 B.C. and continued beyond 729 B.C., serving the prophetic office for approximately sixty years. He lived and ministered during the darkest and most corrupt period of Israel's history. This, in itself, tells us something of the hardships he experienced, and the hatred and opposition that he must have encountered as God's messenger.

The marital life of the prophet, described in the first three chapters, served as a graphic illustration of how faithless Israel was breaking the heart of her heavenly Husband.

The rest of the book contains strong denunciations against the unfaithfulness of God's chosen people. Assurances of God's love are mixed with promises of mercy. If the Israelites will turn from their evil ways God will accept them gladly.

Although written many centuries ago, the book of Hosea contains much that is present truth today. It deserves careful and prayerful study.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Hosea 1 — 4	Hosea 4 — 13	Hosea 14
Hosea's unhappy marriage—a warning of Israel's spiritual apostasy	A warning of judgment mixed with God's appeals	Appeal for Israel to repent in order that God's plan for Israel can be put into effect

How to Get the Most Out of Studying These Lessons

Prayer: Because spiritual things are spiritually discerned, always pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as soon as you have opened your Bible to the Scripture portion being studied.

Reading: At least twice during the quarter read through the Bible book being studied at one sitting in order to gain the overall picture and to understand better the context of the passage you are reading. At the beginning of each week read the passage for the week through at one sitting. Repeat this two or three times during the week in order to become thoroughly acquainted with the entire passage. Each time you do so you should discover something new that you did not notice previously. The Sabbath afternoon section of the study is designed to give you an overview of the week's lesson.

Analysis: Do not merely read a text to find the answer called for. Take time to study each text carefully, analyzing each word until the meaning of the text is clear. If you have questions, consult a Bible commentary or Bible dictionary.

Supplemental Reading: Each quarter a supplemental book is prepared in English for additional help in studying the lesson. If you do not have access to this volume, find a book or commentary that deals with the Bible book being studied and read the section that is relevant to what you are studying. In North America, a Spirit of Prophecy supplement is available from the Adventist Book Center. If you do not have access to this, check the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* for additional Spirit of Prophecy insights.

Friday Lesson: The last section of each week's lesson is designed primarily as a review. Begin by rereading the Scripture portion designated for the week's study. Then read the "Further Study" suggestions if you have the recommended books available. An attempt is being made in this section to refer only to the most commonly available Spirit of Prophecy books. Before reading the printed "Summary," review the lesson then write your own two- or three-sentence understanding of what it is about. Do not pass over the "Application" section without giving it much thought. Applying the lesson is the most important aspect of your study. Yet you are not in a position to apply the lesson accurately until you are aware of what the Bible has to say on the entire topic being studied. Do not limit yourself to answering the few application questions for which there is room in the quarterly. Make your own applications and be prepared to share these in your Sabbath School class.

Leo R. Van Dolson, Ph.D., Editor

Daily Lesson Study Pledge

As one greatly desirous of improving my knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Lord to whom they point, I pledge to carefully and prayerfully study some portion of the Sabbath School lesson each day of the week.

God Gets Our Attention

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Read the first two chapters of Hosea in one sitting, absorbing the story of Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer. Concentrate on chapters 1 and 2:6-23.



MEMORY TEXT: "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth" (Deut. 28:1).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God spoke through His servants the prophets to point out sin in the ranks of His people, often in a dramatic way, and to call them to repent and return. Hosea's experience with Gomer demonstrates God's never-failing love. It also can serve to remind us how crucial the choice of a life companion can be.

OVERVIEW

Hosea 4:1, 2	Hosea 1:1	Hosea 1:1, 9-11 2:6-23	Hosea 1:2-9
God's controversy with Israel	The prophet introduced	The prophet's message	The prophet takes a wife

INTRODUCTION: Through the centuries the Lord called a variety of individuals to minister as prophets. He spoke through His chosen agents in what so often turned out to be a futile attempt to persuade His people to abandon their ever-increasing idolatry. The prophets spoke with great courage and conviction. Still, Israel continued stubbornly in her downward course of alienation from Jehovah. During the eighth century B.C., when Israel and Judah plunged into their darkest apostasy, the Lord called Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and others to speak for Him in an effort to salvage at least a remnant of His people from apostasy. In spite of all they had done to offend Him, God still wanted to find a way to lead them back to Him.

Hosea's story includes a thrilling personal drama that has many overtones that concern us. Its primary application is as an illustration of what He has done through Christ to redeem us. But it also illustrates the Lord's desire that those who are married may find happiness in their union.

Next to our decision to build a strong relationship with our Saviour, the choice of the one with whom we expect to share our earthly life is most important.

"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.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 359.

The book of Hosea speaks to all, whether we choose to marry or choose to remain single. True and lasting happiness can be found only in following the will of our all-knowing, all-loving God.



I. GOD'S CONTROVERSY WITH ISRAEL (Hosea 4:1, 2).

SUMMARIZE in your own words what Hosea had to say about the moral and spiritual condition of Israel in his day. Hosea 4:1, 2.

ILLUMINATION: “The closing years of the ill-fated kingdom of Israel were marked with violence and bloodshed such as had never been witnessed even in the worst periods of strife and unrest under the house of Ahab. For two centuries and more the rulers of the ten tribes had been sowing the wind; now they were reaping the whirlwind.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 279.

II. THE PROPHET INTRODUCED (Hosea 1:1, 2).

In Hosea's day the time was nearing when both Israel and Judah were in danger of losing national existence. If the community was to survive as the people of God, God must urgently communicate with His people.

1. The Prophets Were God's Chosen Means of Communication.

Why did God use prophets as His chosen means of expressing His love and rebuke? Amos 3:7; 2 Chron. 20:20.

ILLUMINATION: “Without this faithful witness duly recorded . . . there could be no survival, no identity, no return, no restoration. This is what made the prophets of the eighth century ‘writing prophets’: the imminence of the crisis and its aftermath. . . .

“It is safe to say that these prophets and their successors were the difference for an Israel and Judah that otherwise would have been swept away in the tides from east and west which rolled over all the nations of greater Syria-Palestine. Against the political and military leaders of their day, and the ecclesiastical authorities, they correctly warned of the coming collapse, and accurately predicted what did in fact happen. Theirs was an insight into political realities engendered not by special training in the esoteric fields of diplomacy and military strategy, but by an intimate acquaintance with the God who is the breaker of battles and the decider of human affairs.”—Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, “Hosea,” *The Anchor Bible*, (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Co., 1980), pp. 42, 43.

MON

Add what you can to the following list of ministries that were included in the work of a prophet:

Foretelling the future.

Participating in the affairs of government.

Publicly reprimanding the people for their sins.

Privately rebuking sin in individuals.

2. The Messenger and His Background.

What significance can be found in the fact that the name *Hosea* means “Jehovah has saved”?

“Unlike Amos, who descended upon the Northern Kingdom from his home in Judah, Hosea is a native of Israel and writes from within the situation which Amos so terribly foretold. He begins his prophecies a few years after the message of the older prophet. The disasters have already begun, and Hosea speaks as a daily observer of Israel’s unfaithfulness and corruption, of her vacillations and her obstinacy. He is plainly a man of feeling and passion. His own personal tragedy leads him to a far deeper understanding of the nature of forgiving and redeeming love.” —J. B. Phillips, *Four Prophets* (London: Geoffrey Bles Publishers, 1963), p. 27.

What Hosea tells us about himself is sketchy. His father’s name was Beeri. But as to where Hosea was born, what tribe he came from, his family background, and his death, inspiration has left no record. Although we have little information about Hosea’s life, the self-disclosures found in his book provide keen insights into the kind of man he was.

SEARCH AND LEARN: What do the first two chapters indicate about Hosea’s character? In what way does the Bible record reveal that Hosea acted as most husbands would in dealing with a wife’s unfaithfulness?

TUE

III. HOSEA’S MESSAGE (Hosea 1:1, 9-11; 2:6-23).

1. Source.

What was the source of Hosea’s message? Hosea 1:1, 2, 4, 6, 9.

At least four times in chapter one the words “the Lord said” or “God said” occur. In fact, much of the book is concerned with what God was saying to Israel. Hosea served merely as the penman and spokesman to record and deliver the messages of God.

2. Content.

The book of Hosea does not follow a clear sequence in presenting the author’s long life and ministry. Instead, it portrays God’s longing to keep His people from apostasy and its evil results.

Through Hosea, God denounced sin. He pronounced doom upon those

who failed to repent. But above and beyond this, He announced love and grace for all who would repent.

3. How God Is Presented.

What contrasting emphases are found in Hosea 1:9-11 and repeated in Hosea 2:6-23?

Hosea ushers us into the presence of a God who abhors sin. Yet He loves the sinner with an all-consuming passion. Although the book of Hosea is filled with harsh indictments of sin, these always are followed by heart-touching appeals to repentance and assurances of God's love.

THINK IT THROUGH: How do I respond when I hear strong, straightforward messages presented such as Hosea's?



IV. THE PROPHET TAKES A WIFE (Hosea 1:2-9).

The story of Hosea's marriage to Gomer is interspersed with related messages for Israel. These messages must have begun to be given to Hosea while he still was a young man, perhaps at the beginning of his prophetic ministry. This might be indicated by the first words of verse two, "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea."

NOTE these translations of the strange command given the prophet in Hosea 1:2: "Take a wanton [woman] for your wife" (NEB); "a wife of harlotry" (RSV); "an adulterous wife" (NIV).

Are the Lord's command to Hosea and the prophet's experience with Gomer historical facts?

Some scholars have found difficulty in accepting this story as historical fact. They think that Hosea's relationship with Gomer must have been something presented to him in vision, or that it was given to him as a parable that would make great impact upon apostate Israel. Other scholars disagree. They believe that Hosea's experience was historical.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary states: "The narrative has the form of a strictly historical account, and in the absence of any real evidence to the contrary it seems preferable to take it as such."—Vol. 4, p. 888.

Why would God tell His servant, a prophet, to marry such a woman? Is this not contrary to God's nature and instruction?

We should explore two possibilities:

1. That Gomer did not fall into sin until after her marriage with Hosea.
2. That God had a vital lesson to teach unfaithful Israel. To give His message maximum impact, He selected a man who, in his own personal life, experienced the trauma of unfaithfulness on the part of his wife. Hosea's experience with Gomer and her promiscuousness enables the prophet to

speak with deepest conviction. This poignant appeal would reach God's people and call them to repentance.

It should be noted also that, while Hosea's story is heartrending, it concludes on a most encouraging note—the restoration of a loving relationship. That typified what God wanted to do for Israel and wants to do for us today.

God's instruction to Hosea to "take unto thee a wife" touches on one of the most important steps a person can take—the selection of a life companion. Few decisions have a more far-reaching effect on the lives of the partners concerned, for better or for worse.



When and why was marriage introduced into the human race? See Gen. 2:18-24.

How should those considering marriage prepare for this all-important life commitment?

"Those who are contemplating marriage should consider what will be the character and influence of the home they are founding. As they become parents, a sacred trust is committed to them. Upon them depends in a great measure the well being of their children in this world, and their happiness in the world to come. To a great extent they determine both the physical and the moral stamp that the little ones receive. And upon the character of the home depends the condition of society; the weight of each family's influence will tell in the upward or the downward scale."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 44.

THINK IT THROUGH: Are there ever any circumstances under which an engagement should be broken? If so what are they?

ILLUMINATION: "Even if an engagement has been entered into without a full understanding of the character of the one with whom you intend to unite, do not think that the engagement makes it a positive necessity for you to take upon yourself the marriage vow and link yourself for life to one whom you cannot love and respect. Be very careful how you enter into conditional engagements; but better, far better, break the engagement before marriage than separate afterward, as many do."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 48.

In what way did Gomer's children illustrate what God wanted to tell Israel through the prophet Hosea? Hosea 1:2-9.

ILLUMINATION: "The first child born to Hosea and Gomer was a boy. God told Hosea to call the child Jezreel, which meant 'God will scatter.' Later a girl was born—probably not Hosea's child—and her name was Loruhamah, which meant 'no more pity.' Finally, another child was born who definitely was not Hosea's child—Loammi, a little boy. His name meant 'not my people.'

“When Gomer had left home Hosea was left with the three children—two of them probably not his. He had to keep house and be mother and father, besides all his other work. Can you picture Hosea as the evening shadows fell, going out to call the children in? Their very names were a warning—a pleading with the people of Israel. As he called them, the neighbors could hear him shouting, ‘God Will Scatter, No More Pity, Not My People.’ You can be sure that passersby felt uncomfortable. When they realized that it was the prophet calling his children, they recognized that the [children’s] names were a description of their own unfaithfulness to God.”—Leo R. and Bobbie Jane Van Dolson, *Boost Your Prophets* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1983), p. 12.

Hosea’s experience as a faithful single parent should encourage those who must raise children under less than ideal circumstances.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

Read the two chapters in *Prophets and Kings* entitled “The Assyrian Captivity,” and “Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge,” pp. 279-300. Chapter six of *The Adventist Home*, “The Great Decision,” pp. 43-49, is filled with practical counsel for those contemplating marriage and those who must counsel couples preparing for marriage.

SUMMARY: The book of Hosea gives us precious insights into the great controversy between good and evil. The living God is revealed as One who loathes sin and apostasy, but who loves the sinners in wayward Israel. The experience of Hosea and Gomer illustrates the heartaches that issue from unfaithfulness in marriage and the importance of prayerful consideration in the selection of a life companion.

APPLICATION

- If Hosea were to tell his story in my Sabbath School class, what would be my response 1) to Hosea as a person, 2) to his message?
- If I am contemplating marriage, have I weighed carefully all that is involved?
 1. Why have I selected my fiancée?
 2. What qualities are each of us bringing to our marriage that will be assets to it?
- If I am already in a home of my own, what can I do to make it a more loving home?
- How can I be helpful to others whose marriage is in trouble?

“For God so loved . . . that he gave”

John 3:16

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

John 2:6

Two Hazards to a Happy Home

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 2:1-6.



MEMORY TEXT: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: There are many hazards to happy homes. Two that are common and destructive in their effects upon marital peace and prosperity are selfishness and lack of commitment.

OVERVIEW: HOSEA 2:1-6

Selfishness	Lack of Commitment
In Israel (Hosea 10:1, first part) In Gomer's experience (Hosea 2:5)	Hazard to be reckoned with (Mal. 2:14) Hosea and Gomer's home (Hosea 2:2)

INTRODUCTION: Gomer, profligate by nature, brought untold suffering into her home. Hosea, her godly husband, suffered mental anguish as she went after illicit lovers. Her children suffered heartache, shame, and neglect as they witnessed the sinful course of their mother. They experienced the trauma that inevitably comes when unfaithfulness insinuates itself between father and mother.

God gave marriage as a tremendous blessing that would fill our need of companionship and having someone with whom we could share ourselves and our thinking. This close, confident relationship is broken when husband and wife permit someone else to break into that hallowed circle.

God is preparing a people to inhabit a pure, perfect eternity. Preparation for this breathtaking experience begins in this life. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Ps. 24:3, 4). "God's elect must stand untainted amid the corruption teeming around them in these last days."—*My Life Today*, p. 72.

God's word labels unfaithfulness to the marriage vow for what it is—sin. It is a transgression of the seventh commandment. We cannot expect to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25) and go unscathed. Apparently harmless indiscretions may lead to open violation of the seventh commandment. The unwise men and women tread on dangerous ground

when they indulge in intimacies that could lead to serious consequences. Paul reminds us that the only safe course for the child of God to pursue in this wicked world is to avoid “all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).

Many problems contribute to unhappy marriages and can lead to separation or divorce. These include such factors as money matters, jealousy, religious differences, unfaithfulness, unsatisfactory sexual relationships, educational differences, nagging, neglect of family worship, failures in communication, interfering in-laws, love grown cold, emotional stress, and lack of appreciation.

Two hazards, not mentioned above, are related fundamentally to many items in the list. *Selfishness* is the root cause of much marital unhappiness. *Lack of commitment* covers a multitude of sins. Because they both are disruptive of family peace and happiness and because they are illustrated so clearly in Hosea’s experience with Gomer, we have chosen these two for study this week. They also are two of Israel’s major failings in their relationship with God and are hazards that must be avoided in our relationship with our loving Father in heaven.



I. SELFISHNESS—ROOT OF PROBLEMS, UNHAPPINESS, AND SIN.

1. Selfishness and Self-centeredness in Israel (Hosea 10:1).

How was Israel’s selfishness and self-centeredness revealed by the prophet? Verse 1 first part.

The root of Israel’s sin was selfishness or self-centeredness. In Scripture Israel frequently was likened to a vine. In the above passage Israel is described as “a vine luxuriant in growth and abundant in fruit—but only *for itself*”—*Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 13, p. 298.

Selfishness eventually caused Israel to become empty toward God. It led them into sin and apostasy. “This power of fruitful endeavour in Israel was not directed to God’s glory as its end. The life of the nation was solely ‘from itself to itself.’ Its bent was toward self-gratification, . . . not towards the realization of a Divine ideal.”—*Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 13, p. 325.

2. Selfishness in Gomer’s Experience (Hosea 2:5).

It is clear from Hosea 2:5 that Gomer had chosen a life style of loose living. Evidently she spent much time with her paramours, to the distress of Hosea. It appears from reading the first eight verses of chapter one that illegitimate children were born of these illicit unions. Trouble and heart-sorrow followed.

How did Gomer reveal selfishness in her relationship with Hosea and her children? Hosea 2:5.

This verse can apply both to Israel in general and to Gomer in particular. Both were guilty of unfaithfulness—one to Jehovah, the other to her husband. Both sought “other lovers.”

MON

ILLUMINATION: Selfishness is defined as “too much concerned with one’s own welfare or interests and having little or no concern for others.”—*Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*, (Cleveland: William Collins and World Publishing Co., Inc., 1970).

Gomer was extremely selfish. She was determined to go her own way, to live her own life, regardless of the needs or feelings of Hosea and their children. *Her* desires, *her* pleasures, *her* will, were foremost.

“*I will go after my lovers.*” It is easy to detect a note of determined defiance in Gomer’s voice. “I don’t care what you think, Hosea. It’s my life, and I intend to live it as I please. How it effects you is of no concern to me. You take care of yourself and I’ll take care of myself.” We can picture Gomer slamming the door and going her own willful way.

The verse then lists some of the “things” in life that Gomer valued most. They pander to the senses—food, drink, clothing. Gomer was determined to satisfy her own desires, even if it meant heartache for her husband and deserting her children.

How does God safeguard the welfare of the family in the seventh commandment? Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:27-32.

“This commandment forbids not only acts of impurity, but sensual thoughts and desires, or any practice that tends to excite them. Purity is demanded not only in the outward life but in the secret intents and emotions of the heart. Christ, who taught the far-reaching obligation of the law of God, declared the evil thought or look to be as truly sin as is the unlawful deed.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS: What might have been some of the family heartaches and problems that resulted from Gomer’s selfishness? What does this teach me about avoiding selfishness?

TUE

3. Selfishness—a Hazard Even in Christian Families.

What counsel does Paul give that relates to the condition of the human heart? Phil. 2:4.

When Jesus comes into our heart, self goes. The converted Paul declares, “My present life is not that of the old ‘I,’ but the living Christ within me” (Gal 2:20, Phillips).

Selfishness in the home appears when people demand that things be done *their way*. *Their* desires, *their* program, *their* planning, *their* ideas must always be accorded highest priority. There is little or no willingness to yield to the preferences, the needs, or the methods of others. Such behavior is bound to foment friction and ill will.

What are some unselfish acts that may create happiness and contentment in Seventh-day Adventist homes?

THINK IT THROUGH: How do I respond to the following statement: "Pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 661.

ILLUMINATION: "Self is the enemy we most need to fear. . . . No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 485.



What is our only hope in overcoming self and selfishness? How can we bring more peace and happiness into our homes? John 15:5; Col. 1:27; Phil. 2:5.

ILLUMINATION: "No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, 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, unchristlike 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."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159.

Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, motivating every word, and thought, and action—this is our blessed, and certain, hope of overcoming self—the archenemy of happy relationships.

II. LACK OF COMMITMENT—PITFALL OF RELATIONSHIPS.

1. The Covenant of Commitment (Mal. 2:1, 14).

Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines *commitment* as "A pledge or promise to do something." It binds those making it by a promise.

When a man and woman marry, they enter into a covenant with each other, with society, and with God to be faithful to each other until death. This covenant has for its source of strength, as well as its model, God's everlasting covenant. God pledges to love us, be faithful, forgive, provide for our needs—even to sacrifice Himself for us. As we live out the gospel in marriage, our relationship is fashioned after the likeness of God's relationship with humanity. We are to love, serve, and forgive as He loves, serves, and forgives us. Our commitment is to have the quality of faithfulness and endurance that characterizes God's covenant. In the commitment a couple make to each other in marriage they draw strength from the provisions made in the divine covenant, God promising power to enable them to do what cannot be done on their own.

This commitment gives us a stimulus to work out differences, to walk with each other in agreement. (See Amos 3:3.) To acknowledge faults, to be able to say, "I made a mistake. I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me," will go far toward smoothing relationships. This approach is not a sign of weakness. Such frank admissions, spoken in love, can quiet frayed tempers and restore Christian harmony.

ILLUMINATION: "The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you

will appear in your own eyes, for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

2. Lack of Commitment in the Prophet's Home (Hosea 2:2-5).

How is Hosea's anguish over Gomer's action revealed in his appeal to his children to help bring her back home? (Hosea 2:2.)

“Plead with your mother, for she has become another man's wife—I am no longer her husband. Beg her to stop her harlotry, to quit giving herself to others” (Hosea 2:2, TLB).

In these poignant words, distraught Hosea cries out in agony of soul for his two sons and daughter to help him win back their wandering mother. Picture the scene. Hosea has his three children gathered about him. Tears are streaming down his cheeks. His pain of heart is reflected in his countenance. In tortured tones the prophet appeals to his children to plead with Gomer to give up her life of sin, and return home as a true wife and mother. Sin always produces heartaches.

Hosea seems torn between his longing for reconciliation with Gomer and a desire to get back at her for what she has done. What does he point to as the consequences if she will not listen to the children's and his pleadings? Hosea 2:3, 4, 6.

ILLUMINATION: “The safeguards of our purity must be watchfulness and prayer. We are living in an atmosphere of satanic witchery. The enemy will weave a spell of licentiousness around every soul that is not barricaded by the grace of Christ. Temptations will come; but if we watch against the enemy, and maintain the balance of self-control and purity, the seducing spirits will have no influence over us. Those who do nothing to encourage temptation will have strength to withstand it when it comes.”—*My Life Today*, p. 72.

SEARCH AND LEARN: What measures do the following scriptures suggest as a means of avoiding the hazards of selfishness and lack of commitment?

- Rom. 12:10 _____
- 1 Cor. 10:24 _____
- 2 Cor. 5:14 _____

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

“Sin originated in self-seeking.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 21.

“Selfishness is abomination in the sight of God and holy angels. Because of this sin many fail to attain the good which they are capable of enjoying. They look with selfish eyes on their own things, and do not love and seek the

interest of others as they do their own. They reverse God's order. Instead of doing for others what they wish others to do for them, they do for themselves what they desire others to do for them, and do to others what they are most unwilling to have returned to them.—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 551.

“Every impure thought defiles the soul, impairs the moral sense, and tends to obliterate the impressions of the Holy Spirit. It dims the spiritual vision, so that men cannot behold God. The Lord may and does forgive the repenting sinner; but though forgiven, the soul is marred. All impurity of speech or of thought must be shunned by him who would have clear discernment of spiritual truth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

“When the thought of evil is loved and cherished, however secretly, said Jesus, it shows that sin still reigns in the heart. The soul is still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. He who finds pleasure in dwelling upon scenes of impurity, who indulges the evil thought, the lustful look, may behold in the open sin, with its burden of shame and heartbreaking grief, the true nature of the evil which he has hidden in the chambers of the soul. The season of temptation, under which, it may be, one falls into grievous sin, does not create the evil that is revealed, but only develops or makes manifest that which was hidden and latent in the heart. As a man ‘thinketh in his heart, so is he;’ for out of the heart ‘are the issues of life.’ ”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (1956 edition), p. 60.

SUMMARY: Selfishness and lack of commitment still cause problems for God's people today. Unhappiness and broken families and friendships result. This is not God's plan. He has a better way—the way of Christlike selflessness, of love, compassion, and covenant. This will become a reality when Jesus' people allow Him to dwell in their hearts.

APPLICATION

- How can I keep the seeds of selfishness from germinating in my heart and home?
- Are there any little frictions that may threaten my marriage or other relationships?
- If there are conflicts in my relationships with God or human beings, what can I do to help resolve the problems?

“The truth is soon to triumph gloriously, and all who now choose to be laborers together with God, will triumph with it.”
Testimonies to the Church, vol. 9, p. 135.

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No Greater Love

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 3.



MEMORY TEXT: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (Hosea 14:4).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: "The dominant theme of the book of Hosea is the love of God for His erring children."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 886.

OVERVIEW: Hosea 3

Hosea 3:1-3	Hosea 3:4, 5
Command to go the second mile	Application to Israel

INTRODUCTION: "You are precious in my eyes . . . and I love you" (Isa. 43:4, RSV). "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). How could God say it more clearly? How could He reveal His love for the human race more affectionately?

God's love is unconditional. He doesn't say, "If you love Me, I will love you." The apostle Paul dispels forever any notion that God's love is characterized by this pattern of human love: "The proof of God's amazing love is this: that it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8, Phillips).

Not only is God's love unconditional but it is eternal. It appeared before the everlasting hills were created. It will continue long after they have disappeared in the last great conflagration.

The amazing nature of God's love is that it exists regardless of human response. Men and women may ignore it. They may spurn it. They may ridicule it. They may deny that it exists. Still God's eternal, unconditional affection flows ever earthward.

Seven-year-old Gillian was listening to her mother's story of God's great love. When she finished mother said, "Isn't that amazing—isn't it too wonderful to understand and believe that God loves us so much?"

Little Gillian's reply evidenced that she had experienced the amazing love of Jesus in her own heart.

"Why, no, Mama," she said. "I don't think it's too wonderful to believe. It's just like God to love us like that."

The love that is "just like God" is powerfully revealed in Hosea's writings. He wrote from experience. He knew firsthand the pain of unrequited love. Heartless, gadding Gomer treated the prophet as if he were dirt under her feet. There was no love in her heart for him, nor apparently for

her children. While Hosea did all within his power to demonstrate his abiding love for her, she spurned every overture he made to keep the family together, going her own wanton way. Hosea, abandoned and crushed, was left at home to fend for himself and for his fractured family.

What a graphic picture the inspired writer paints of God's love for apostate Israel! Despite the northern kingdom's debauchery, Jehovah's great heart still yearned over His dissolute people. In last week's lesson we concentrated on Gomer's unfaithfulness. This week we turn to God's boundless love for a people who had turned their backs upon Him.



I. COMMAND TO GO THE SECOND MILE (Hosea 3:1-3).

1. Hosea's unconditional love for Gomer. Hosea 1:1-8.

Just how long after the wedding Gomer began her extra-marital affairs, the Bible does not tell us. The first child born to the union was Hosea's (Hosea 1:3, 4). Probably the next two were not his.

How is Hosea's love for Gomer revealed in the first part of Hosea 3:2?

Picture the scene—an oriental slave market with Gomer surrounded by a crowd of coarse men. Perhaps other slaves are near the block where Gomer stands. The auctioneer rises to sell the human chattels. How do you imagine Gomer looked and felt in such a setting?

The auction is in progress. Visualize Hosea's arrival. With what mixed reactions must he have struggled as he saw his unfaithful wife in such surroundings?

THINK IT THROUGH: How do you think Gomer felt when she saw Hosea elbowing his way through the bidders to the auction block and beginning to bid for her? Imagine the gamut her feelings must have run—disbelief, anger, fear, hope. How do you picture her? Why?

An unidentified writer says, "Love yields the sweetest joy on earth, and also the most profound sorrow. The shattered cruse of romance may retain some of its fragrance, but its sharp edges cut to the quick." In what way is this true of Hosea's and Gomer's experience?

Among possible explanations for Hosea's dealings with his wayward wife are these:

- The prophet did not consider his wife's sin or mistake so grievous that the marriage was beyond salvaging.
- He had sufficient grounds for divorce yet he sought to reestablish his home.
- He was told by God to buy her back as a symbol of what God intended to do for Israel and as an illustration of what Christ was to do on the cross.

THINK IT THROUGH: What lessons are there in this for Seventh-day Adventist Christians in our day that could contribute to more stable marriages? What additional lessons do you find in the experience of Hosea and Gomer that need to be given careful attention at this time?

2. God's Unconditional Love for His People.

MON

SEARCH AND LEARN: In the texts that follow explore as much as possible the depths of God's love from the time Israel became His chosen people to the time when Jesus came:

Deut. 7:7-10 _____

Ps. 103:13 _____

John 3:16 _____

Eph. 2:4-5 _____

1 John 4:9, 10 _____

ILLUMINATION: "Tongue cannot utter it, pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 740.

How does John, the inspired apostle of love, define God and the impossibility of adequately explaining His love? 1 John 4:8; 3:1.

ILLUMINATION: "As the inspired apostle John beheld the height, the depth, the breadth of the Father's love toward the perishing race, he was filled with adoration and reverence; and, failing to find suitable language in which to express the greatness and tenderness of this love, he called upon the world to behold it. 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.'"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 15.

In Hosea we find God in one breath lamenting the truth about Israel's spiritually bankrupt condition (Hosea 4:17; 8:11) while in another breath God laments over His sinning people (Hosea 11:8).

TUE

How does God, in His love and compassion, make known to Israel what He is willing to do for them? Hosea 10:12; 13:9, 10; 14:1.

ILLUMINATION: "The prophet makes one last appeal to His people to forsake their iniquity and turn to the Lord. It was not yet too late. But the day of opportunity was fast slipping away. The war clouds were darkening on the eastern horizon. Assyria was at the zenith of its power and its imperialistic ambitions were soon to engulf the idol-mad, vice-intoxicated nation of Israel. Inasmuch as the prophetic ministry of Hosea extended to the reign of

Hezekiah (ch. 1:1) and the fall of Samaria came in the 6th year of that king's reign (2 Kings 18:9, 10), it is possible that this final message was delivered shortly before the final day of doom."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 932.

How does the prophet reveal that God made it difficult for Gomer, for Israel, and for people in all ages to be lost? Hosea 2:6, 7; 12:10.

"The sinner may resist His love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ, but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 27.

Despite their apostasy what earnest appeal and assurance does God extend to ancient Israel and to modern-day spiritual Israel? Hosea 14: 4, 5.

WED

3. God's Unconditional Love for the Remnant.

What precious assurance do God's remnant people have that He loves us as much, and will do as much for us as He loved and did for Israel in Hosea's day? Jer. 31:3; Matt. 28:20, last part; Heb. 13:5, last part.

In what penetrating words does the True Witness reveal the true condition of God's remnant people? Rev. 3:15-17.

"With what fidelity do these words [Rev. 3:17] portray the present condition of the church."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 101.

The Laodicean message is no "peace and safety" message. Its Author rebukes the last church succinctly and clearly. There can be no misunderstanding the meaning. It is no flattering picture. In our own unrighteousness we stand exposed, revealed as sinful before the universe.

How does the True Witness manifest His great love for an unlovely people in His tender and poignant appeal to them? Rev. 3:20, 21.

Thank God for the second part of the Laodicean message. It is not all scathing condemnation (although the part that *is* has to be given). It also contains one of the most loving and moving appeals to the sinner and halting saint in all of Scripture.

ILLUMINATION: "The counsel of the True Witness does not represent those who are lukewarm as a hopeless case. There is yet a chance to remedy

their state, and the Laodicean message is full of encouragement.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 966.



What encouraging assurance does Jesus leave for us today? Luke 19:10; John 3:17.

Your Saviour and mine is not in the *condemnation* business. He is in the *saving* business. He will save all who will permit Him to work His saving power in their lives. There is help and hope for even the most unpromising Laodicean through the gospel to Laodicea found in Revelation 3:20, 21.

In what tender words does God, through the pen of Hosea, appeal to His people to seek a new relationship with Him? Hosea 14:1-4.

II. APPLICATION TO ISRAEL (Hosea 3:4, 5).

Note the use of the expression “many days” in Hosea 3:3, 4.

“The prophet himself would not resume fully the family relationship with her [Gomer] for ‘many days.’ Likewise Israel, separated from both her lovers and her Husband, would for ‘many days’ be removed from her old idols and at the same time be cut off from her full covenant privileges.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 896.

ILLUMINATION: Forgiveness often takes time. “The worse you’ve been hurt, the longer it takes to forgive. Minor bruises can be handled quickly. But when you’ve been sliced and diced inside your being, you’d better count on a longer process.”—Lewis B. Smedes, “Forgiveness: Healing the Hurts We Don’t Deserve,” *Family Life Today*, January, 1985, p. 27. (Used by Permission.)

In this same article, Lewis Smedes lists these four stages of forgiveness:

- | | |
|---------|--------------------|
| 1. Hurt | 3. Healing |
| 2. Hate | 4. Coming together |

Verse 5 predicts that after the return from the captivity there would be only one king in Israel, the house of David would be represented in the leadership of the restored nation. The final fulfillment of this prophecy awaits Christ’s establishment of His kingdom following His second coming.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

“Oh, how precious was this promise, as it was shown to me in vision! ‘I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me!’ Oh, the love, the wondrous love of God! After all our lukewarmness and sins He says: ‘Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, and will heal all thy backslidings.’

This was repeated by the angel a number of times. ‘Return unto me, and I will return unto thee, and will heal all thy backslidings.’

“Some, I saw, would gladly return. Others will not let this message to the

Laodicean church have its weight upon them. They will glide along, much after the same manner as before, and will be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Those only who zealously repent will have favor with God.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.’ We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with Him.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 143, 144.

“As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. . . . [Jesus] knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. . . . Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 479, 480.

Read Ephesians 3:17-19. “With untold love our God has loved us, and our love awakens toward Him as we comprehend something of the length and breadth and depth and height of this love that passeth knowledge. By the revelation of the attractive loveliness of Christ, by the knowledge of His love expressed to us while we were yet sinners, the stubborn heart is melted and subdued, and the sinner is transformed and becomes the child of heaven. God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin from the heart. By it He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into love and faith.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76, 77.

SUMMARY: No matter how deep our sin or apostasy, there is help and hope for us. God’s love and compassion for the penitent transcends any mistake or misconduct toward either God or those about us.

APPLICATION

- How am I, as one who is living during the period of God’s last day Laodicean church, relating myself to the appeals of love from the True Witness?
- Has the love of God been “shed abroad” in my heart in such a way that all with whom I come in contact know that I love the Lord and am seeking to serve Him?

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING, June 25

The overflow offering will be used to build jungle chapels in Papua New Guinea.

Plan to give a liberal offering.

Recipe for a Happy Relationship

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 2:19, 20 and selected scriptures that deal with happy relationships and homes.



MEMORY TEXT: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:1, 2).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Happy homes, good marriages, and rewarding friendships are not the result of happenstance. It takes six "Ps" to make a home a little bit of heaven on earth and to keep our relationships happy ones—planning, praying, patience, pardon, perseverance, and practice.

OVERVIEW: Ingredients for Happy Relationships

Eph. 4:1-3 The Bond of Peace	Hosea 2:19, 20 Qualities that Make an Eternal Bond
God's instruction to Israel (Deut. 10:12) The Christian formula (Matt. 6:33)	Love: (1 John 4:7, 8) Loyalty: (1 Tim. 5:4, NEB) Forgiveness: (Matt. 6:12) Forbearance: (1 Cor. 13:4, RSV) Overlooking faults: (Prov. 19:11)

INTRODUCTION: Psalm 128 could properly be termed "The Psalm of the Happy Home." It tells us that anyone, whether that person lives alone or with others, will be blessed if he or she follows the Lord. It particularly specifies that spouses and children will be happy if the Lord is at the center of the home.

We digress somewhat from our study of the book of Hosea in this lesson in order to concentrate on some of the qualities and principles that we have touched on in previous lessons. If we practice these principles, we will have happier homes and happier relationships.



I. THE BOND OF PEACE (Eph. 4:2, 3).

Paul holds that the bond of peace that comes through the unity of the Spirit already exists among those who love the Lord. He urges that it be maintained by the exercise of such virtues as: unselfish humility, meekness, longsuffering patience, and forbearance.

1. God's Instruction to Israel.

What counsel did the Lord give Israel some seven hundred years before Hosea's day that still serves as a practical basis for happy communities, homes, and relationships? Deut. 10:12, 13.

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you except to listen carefully to all he says to you, and to obey for your own good the commandments I am giving you today, and to love him, and to worship him with all your hearts and souls?" (Deut. 10:12, 13, TLB).

If God's people through the ages had followed the Lord's counsel regarding their love relationship with Him it could have affected relationships in their homes and communities. When the love of God is in the heart everyone will be aware of it. Our family members will know it because our relationships with them will be warm and compassionate. People we contact in the community will notice something special about our behavior and attitude and will admire it.

2. The Christian Formula.

Centuries after Hosea's time, how did Jesus repeat Heaven's formula for personal family and community happiness and prosperity? Matt. 6:33.

ILLUMINATION: "Neither the husband nor the wife should merge his or her individuality in that of the other. Each has a personal relation to God. Of Him each is to ask, 'What is right?' 'What is wrong?' 'How may I best fulfill life's purpose?' Let the wealth of your affection flow forth to Him who gave His life for you. Make Christ first and last and best in everything. As your love for Him becomes deeper and stronger, your love for each other will be purified and strengthened."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

If we want happiness we must make Christ first in all things.



II. QUALITIES THAT MAKE AN ETERNAL BOND (Hosea 2:19, 20).

Israel had played the harlot, thus ending her previous relationship with God—one that Hosea likens to a marriage. Although God had disowned her, He was more than willing to take her back into a union that He wanted to continue forever. The basis of that union would be righteousness, judgment, lovingkindness, and mercies. Some essential ingredients in the recipe for forging an eternal bond between marriage partners and for developing happy relationships with others will follow.

1. Love (1 John 4:7, 8).

It is difficult to love those who reject our love, but Hosea 3:1 implies that we should. Can we love upon command?

ILLUMINATION: “Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 384.

How did Hosea further demonstrate his love for his wayward wife? Hosea 2:14.

Other translations and paraphrases reveal the tenderness of Hosea’s love: “I will . . . speak tenderly to her” (verse 14, RSV); I will speak to her heart” (Goodspeed). How can love that has grown cold be awakened? God’s love can be a fountain from which we can draw when our cups are empty.

THINK IT THROUGH: What do I feel like when someone speaks tenderly to me? Have I spoken tenderly to those I love today? What does it mean to “speak to the heart”? Am I willing to share myself that openly with those I love?

What ultimate example of affection does the apostle Paul uphold as the ideal love of a husband for his wife? Eph. 5:28.

ILLUMINATION: “A home where love dwells and where it finds expression in looks, in words, in acts, is a place where angels delight to dwell.”—*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 115.

2. Loyalty (1 Tim. 5:4).

Hosea demonstrated his loyalty to unchaste Gomer many times in many ways. From chapters 1, 2, and 3 select instances that depict the prophet’s constancy toward his wayward wife.

In much of what we read in these three chapters God speaks to apostate Israel. Sometimes His words apply specifically to Hosea’s experience with wayward Gomer. The words in Hosea 2:19, 20 apply in both cases. They beautifully remind us that marriage—spiritual or temporal—is “forever.”

ILLUMINATION: As specified in the *Manual for Ministers*, a guide for Seventh-day Adventist ministers in carrying out their pastoral responsibilities, the minister asks the groom and then reverses the names in order to address the same question to the bride during the wedding ceremony: “And now, solemnly promising before God, and in the presence of these witnesses, will you [Groom—full name] have this woman [Bride—full name], to be your wedded wife, to live together after God’s ordinance in the sacred

estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor her, cherish her, in sickness and in health, in prosperity or adversity; and, forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her *so long as you both shall live*? Do you so declare?"—*Manual for Ministers*, p. 140 (italics supplied).

Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 5:4 is translated this way in the *New English Bible*: "They should learn as their first duty to show loyalty to the family."

Genesis 2:24 does not remotely suggest that the marriage relationship is to be a temporary relationship that may be ended easily—dependent merely upon the whims of husband or wife.

What is included in the meaning of loyalty in the home? To what other ties might it apply beside the marriage bond? How does it apply to criticizing?

Disloyalty may exclude guilty persons from becoming part of "the family in heaven." In a dream Ellen White was shown by a sentinel guarding the entrance some characteristics that would preclude entry into the kingdom of heaven: "None can enter who are grown-up children, carrying with them the disposition, the habits, and the characteristics which pertain to children. If you have nurtured suspicions, criticism, temper, self-dignity, you cannot be admitted; for you would spoil the feast. All who go in through this door have on the wedding garment, woven in the loom of heaven. Those who educate themselves to pick flaws in the characters of others, reveal a deformity that makes families unhappy, that turns souls from the truth to choose fables. Your leaven of distrust, your want of confidence, your power of accusing, closes against you the door of admittance. Within this door nothing can enter that could possibly mar the happiness of the dwellers by mar- rying their perfect trust in one another. You cannot join the happy family in the heavenly courts; for I have wiped all tears from their eyes. You can never see the King in His beauty if you are not yourself a representative of His character."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 110.



3. Forgiveness (Matt. 6:12).

To what lengths was Hosea willing to go in order to forgive Gomer? Hosea 2:2.

Over and over, Gomer had been unfaithful to the prophet. Yet he not only appealed to his wife himself but he also sent his children to plead his case. Hosea urged her to give up her profligate life and to come back and reestablish the home. Gomer's adulterous life had disqualified her from being his wife, yet his love was so great that he was willing to forgive and take her back.

In doing so, Hosea has left succeeding generations of husbands and wives an example of Christlike forgiveness. We are to be forgiving of the smaller mistakes among family members, as well as of major deviations.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the following Scriptures thoughtfully, then on the lines provided below write the thought each verse contains on forgiveness:

Matt. 6:12 _____

Matt. 18:21, 22 _____

Mark 11:25 _____

Eph. 4:32 _____

How do you define forgiveness?

THINK IT THROUGH: In what way do you think that these guidelines on forgiveness might be even more important within the family circle than outside the family?

4. Forbearance (1 Cor. 13:4).

Hosea's patience with Gomer is illustrated in Hosea 3:3.

The Living Bible paraphrases the last part of this verse, "I will wait for you." No doubt this continuous exercise of patience had much to do with winning her back to Hosea's home.

"Love is very patient, very kind" (1 Cor. 14:3, Moffatt). How many more happy homes we would have if the love of family members created patience and kindness (two cardinal marital virtues) in their midst. Webster defines patience as "the will or ability to wait or endure without complaint. . . . Endurance stresses the capacity to bear suffering or hardship. . . . Forbearance implies restraint under provocation or a refraining from retaliation for a wrong."—*New World Dictionary of the American Language* (Cleveland: William Collins & World Pub. Inc., 1970). Patience has been defined as "love on the anvil bearing blow after blow of suffering."

THINK IT THROUGH: How do these definitions of patience apply practically in a Christian home and to Christian relationships?

What threefold virtues of tranquil living does the palmist mention in Psalm 37:7, first part? Why does it seem so hard to wait patiently and not fret? How can we develop these virtues?

Ellen White describes patience as the extra help we need to "keep us from saying and doing those things which will injure our own souls and injure those with whom we associate."—*Our High Calling*, p.70.

5. Overlooking faults (Prov. 19:11).

How was Hosea godlike in his redemption of Gomer? Hosea 3:2.



One of the many beautiful attributes of God is His willingness to give His erring children another chance up until the time that probation closes. Over and over, Jehovah manifested this gracious disposition toward apostate Israel.

Hosea exhibited this same godlike trait in dealing with his wanton wife. Note the far-reaching implications of Hosea's forgiving, forgetting, and giving another chance to one who, because of her immoral behavior, certainly did not merit such treatment.



How does the wise man describe the second-chance characteristic in terms that are well understood in our day? Prov. 19:11.

It not only is good Christianity to overlook the faults of others but it also makes good sense to do so. We can see the truth of this when we face the hard but unwelcome fact that we have to expect others to overlook our faults and shortcomings.

If, through the grace of God, husbands and wives overlook faults and shortcomings in their spouses, are charitable and willing to give them another chance, there will be many more happy homes, and fewer broken homes and divorces.

THINK IT THROUGH: How far should the giving-a-second-chance approach be considered? Is it always a “glory to pass over a transgression?” Does overlooking faults have a limitation? What about cases of child abuse and violence that endangers life?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: “Never forget that you are to make the home bright and happy for yourselves and your children by cherishing the Saviour's attributes. If you bring Christ into the home, you will know good from evil. You will be able to help your children to be trees of righteousness, bearing the fruit of the Spirit.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 17.

“Every woman about to become a mother, whatever may be her surroundings, should encourage constantly a happy, cheerful, contented disposition, knowing that for all her efforts in this direction she will be repaid tenfold in the physical, as well as the moral, character of her offspring. Nor is this all. She can, by habit, accustom herself to cheerful thinking, and thus encourage a happy state of mind and cast a cheerful reflection of her own happiness of spirit upon her family and those with whom she associates. And in a very great degree will her physical health be improved.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 258, 259.

“Whatever may be his calling and its perplexities, let the father take into his home the same smiling countenance and pleasant tones with which he has all day greeted visitors and strangers. Let the wife feel that she can lean upon the large affections of her husband—that his arms will strengthen and uphold her through all her toils and cares, that his influence will sustain hers—and her burden will lose half its weight. Are the children not his as well as hers?”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 216.

“If we have a sense of the long-suffering of God toward us, we shall not be found judging or accusing others. When Christ was living on earth, how surprised His associates would have been, if, after becoming acquainted

with Him, they had heard Him speak one word of accusation, of faultfinding, or of impatience. Let us never forget that those who love Him are to represent Him in character.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 489.

SUMMARY: This week we have been able to compass a few Christlike characteristics that contribute to a happy Christian home and happy Christian relationships—fear of God, love, loyalty, a forgiving spirit, Christlike patience, overlooking faults, and dealing in a Christlike manner with an unbelieving spouse. Jesus can bring these graces into our relationships.

APPLICATION

In considering those qualities that create a happy Christian home where could we find more helpful counsel than the apostle Paul gave the Ephesians in his day? “As God’s dear children, try to be like Him” (Eph. 5:1, NEB).

● If I want a happy home and happy relationships I must desire to be like Jesus. What can I do to bring Jesus into my heart and into my home in a practical way?

Help Papua New Guinea Prepare for the Future



Building techniques in Papua New Guinea are changing as the church struggles to keep pace in this rapidly developing nation. Sonoma Adventist College has trained many skilled tradesmen to construct desperately needed church buildings. But the union needs our help to provide construction materials. Please remember the needs of these churches.

Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, June 25.
South Pacific Division thanks you for your help.

“What Shall I Do With You?”

THIS WEEK’S STUDY: Hosea 4:1—5:15; 6:4—7:16.



MEMORY VERSE: “And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings” (Hosea 4:9).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: As God’s representative, Hosea presents a strong and specific indictment of sins against Israel, calling them to repent and return to God.

OVERVIEW: Hosea 4:1-5:15; 6:4—7:16		
God Indicts Israel for Apostasy		
Hosea 4:1-19	Hosea 5:1-15	Hosea 6:4—7:16
<p>“Hear . . . ye children of Israel” (Hosea 4:1)</p>	<p>Hear . . . O priests. . . . give ear, O house of the king”</p>	<p>“What shall I do with you?” (Hosea 6:4, NASB)</p>
<p>The bill of particulars (4:1, 2) Results of corruption (4:3-19)</p>	<p>They do not know God (5:2-7) Judah’s treachery against their brothers (5:8-12) Folly of foreign alliances (5:13, 14) God withdraws until they repent (5:15)</p>	<p>What they are like (6:4—7:11) What will happen (7:12-16)</p>

INTRODUCTION: Chapter 4 introduces a new section in Hosea’s prophecy. He turns from figure and symbol to employ plain, clear statements of fact. In what amounts to a legal indictment, God presents a “Bill of Particulars” against wayward Israel. He lists specific sins of omission and of commission. In unequivocal language Hosea declares the sinfulness of the people and the results that are bound to follow unfaithfulness. Israel, the chosen people of God, are the object of both scathing rebuke and poignant appeal.

Hosea inveighs first against the people, then against their leaders. (See

4:1-5:14.) He calls sin by its right name. He points out the awful nature of transgression in leaders. He appeals tenderly to these leaders to mend their ways—to give the quality of spiritual leadership that will bless, rather than corrupt the people.

The prophet condemns the folly of the people and their course of action spiritually, morally, and politically. (See 5:2-14.) In an eloquent appeal for revival, the man of God repeatedly relays God's dire threats of punishment and destruction that will come if they persist in their heedless, sinful course. (See 7:12-16).



I. "HEAR . . . YE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL" (Hosea 4:1-19).

1. The Bill of Particulars (4:1, 2).

How does Hosea forcefully state God's charges against the Northern Kingdom? Of what sins of omission were the people guilty? Hosea 4:1.

Here we find three basic principles in the worship of the living God. The *New International Version* lists the first as "faithfulness." It has to do with loyalty and steadfastness. Next comes mercy or love. The third has to do with their knowledge of God and His work in their land.

Speaking of Israel, Hosea declares sadly that they lack these essential qualities. What an indictment of a people professing to be God's chosen ones!

ILLUMINATION: "God is charging Israel with having: 1) no faithfulness, 2) no devotion, and 3) no knowledge of Himself. 'No faithfulness' refers to lack of the very characteristic that God so abundantly shows toward us. It is the firmness and reliability of a person whose word is as good as his bond and who is consistent in his or her responsibility. Faithfulness must be seen in all areas of life but especially in marriage and in the relationship to God that marriage illustrates. Devotion (or 'love,' NIV) means religiosity or piety in the best sense. It is what man owes to God. Knowledge is that experiential awakening to God in love that affects our conduct.

"Each of these three lacks is brought against Israel as a just cause for God's judgments. But when we look at the book as a whole it is apparent that, of the three, the key concern and most important ground of accusation is Israel's failure to acknowledge God."—James M. Boice, *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), p. 36.

List several ways that we may demonstrate love and devotion in our service to God:

In what way can the lack of the knowledge of God be considered the root of all sin?

No “knowledge of God in the land” implies staggering indifference on the part of God’s people. It implies no knowledge of the love of God; no knowledge of the saving blood of the coming Messiah; no knowledge of the convicting, converting power of the Holy Spirit; no knowledge of the guidance and the promises of God’s Word; no union with God; no faith in Him. It implies that those affected are without pardon, without life, without grace, without comfort, without hope. “This is the ultimate in misery and loss.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1009.



Added to these sins of omission in God’s indictment of Israel are specific sins of commission (Hosea 4:2):

a. Swearing.

How did God’s ancient people profane the name of their God before the heathen? Eze. 36:20.

“The conduct and attendant miseries of the Israelites dishonored Jehovah in the sight of the heathen, who naturally inferred that if this was all that the God of Israel could do for His devotees, He was no better than their own gods. The heathen regarded Jehovah merely as the national God of the Israelites.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 696, 697.

b. Lying.

How does God view the violation of the ninth commandment? Ex. 20:16; Prov. 12:22.

ILLUMINATION: “He who utters untruths sells his soul in a cheap market. . . . “He whose heart is filled with the love that proceeds from God does not allow self-exaltation or dishonesty to find place in his life.”—*My Life Today*, p. 331.

c. Killing.

In many places Hosea refers to the killing, the violence, the war and crime that was rampant in Israel during his ministry: “The sword shall abide on his cities” (Hosea 11:6). “They shall fall by the sword” (13:16); “shall he leave his blood upon him” (12:14); even the priests were in on the killing (6:9). God condemned such wanton loss of life. Hosea uses the words “break out” to describe the prevalence of swearing, lying, and killing. “The allusion to the water overflowing its banks and spreading in all directions . . . is approved . . . to demonstrate the abundance of crimes. . . .”—*Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 13, p. 98.

How does Jesus enlarge the dimensions of the sixth commandment? Matt. 5:21, 22.

ILLUMINATION: "All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for 'whoso hateth his brother is a murderer'); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health—all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

THINK IT THROUGH: How may some of these kinds of violation of the sixth commandment be present within the home and family circle? What is the only safety for family members in avoiding such tragic results?

d. Stealing.

In what ways did the chosen people of God engage in robbery against God, against their own people, and against strangers? Mal. 3:5, 8.

e. Adultery.

What judgments were pronounced against Israel as the result of their lascivious living? Hosea 1:6, last part; 1:9 last part; 2:4, 11-13.



2. Results of Corruption (Hosea 4:3-19).

a. Effects on total environment (Verse 3).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Look up the following scriptures, then list the ways that the sins of Israel could affect the environment:

- 1. Hosea 4:3 _____
- 2. Hosea 13:15 _____
- 3. Isa. 33:9 _____
- 4. Joel 1:17, 18 _____

b. Effect on Israel of scorning her Divine Husband (Hosea 4:4-12).

How is Israel's apostasy compared to what happens when a wife deserts her husband? Jer. 3:20.

How were the priests of Israel involved in this sad apostasy? Hosea 4:9.

ILLUMINATION: “The people and their priests were bound together in sin. The apostate priests engaged in the very iniquities they should have reprov’d. In turn, the people, taking note of the worldliness and self-indulgence of the priests, hid behind their example. As someone has said, ‘Neither secular greatness should exempt the laity, nor the dignity of his order, the priest.’ Both alike will be held responsible before the judgment bar of God.” —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 898.

“Some of the leaders in Israel felt keenly their loss of prestige, and wished that this might be regained. But instead of turning away from those practices which had brought weakness to the kingdom, they continued in iniquity, flattering themselves that when occasion arose, they would attain to the political power they desired by allying themselves with the heathen.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 280.

With what words of unsparing condemnation did God rebuke Israel for her sinful course? Hosea 4:12, 13.

THINK IT THROUGH: What special responsibility falls upon those in leadership to guard their lives and stay close to Christ? What do we have a right to expect from leadership? In what way is it helpful to recognize that our leaders are struggling human beings like ourselves?



c. Final result—ruin (Hosea 4:15-19).

How bound by sin was Israel? What would be the final result? Hosea 4:16-19; Mal. 4:1.

II. “HEAR . . . O PRIESTS . . . GIVE YE EAR, O HOUSE OF THE KING” (Hosea 5:1-15).

Under God, the welfare of the church congregation, the conference, the institution, is, to a large degree determined by leadership. If leaders are weak or uncommitted, their deficiencies will be reflected in the congregation, in the conference, or in the institution. Instead of leading people to God’s will, such leaders may become a snare.

In what graphic language does Hosea indict the leaders of Israel? Hosea 5:1.

Those who should have been spiritual stalwarts, leading the people back to a true relationship with God, were, instead, a reproach to His name.

1. They Do Not Know God (Hosea 5:2-7).

What grave charge does Hosea make against persons who should know and serve the Lord faithfully? Hosea 5:4, last part.

What other charges does the prophet make? How well does God know His people? Hosea 5:2-7.

2. Judah's Treachery Against Their Brothers (Hosea 5:8-12).

Because the people of Judah also stooped to such forbidden and selfish activities as removing boundary landmarks, they also were to be punished with captivity.

3. The Folly of Foreign Alliances (Hosea 5:13, 14).

In what words does Hosea remind the leaders of the folly of making alliances with foreign powers? Hosea 5:13.

4. God Withdraws Until They Repent (Hosea 5:15).

What solemn warning did God give to Israel? What was their only hope? Hosea 5:15.

III. "WHAT SHALL I DO WITH YOU?" (Hosea 6:4-16).

God poses the same question to each member of His church today. Note well what Israel's condition was when God confronted them with this fateful question. If our condition parallels Israel's in any respect, we do well to heed what God had to say to our spiritual forebears.

1. What They Are Like (Hosea 6:4—7:16).

Complete the following descriptions of Israel's behavior to God's people in Hosea's day and relate the description to the remnant church today.

- a. The *morning* _____ that dissipated easily (Hosea 6:4).
- b. Like _____ in transgressing the covenant (6:7, NASB).
- c. Like *troops of* _____ (6:9—7:2).
- d. Like a *heated* _____ because of the heat of their unholy passions (7:4-7).
- e. Like a _____ *not turned* (half baked) in their spiritual inconsistency (7:8).
- f. Like a *silly* _____ (7:11).
- g. Like a *deceitful or faulty* _____ they miss the mark (7:16).

Pursue this simile further. How could a wayward Israel, then or now, be “useless” or “dangerous”?

THINK IT THROUGH: Which, if any, of the characteristics of Israel mentioned in this section of the lesson, prove a threat to Adventist homes and churches today?

2. What Will Happen? (Hosea 7:12-16).

Because Israel had departed from their only hope of salvation and turned their backs on the Lord they must face the inevitable consequences. The northern kingdom would lose all chance of reaching the high destiny God had in mind for them.

What was Israel’s only hope of escaping retribution? Hosea 12:6.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: “I saw that at present we are under divine forbearance, but no one can say how long this will continue. No one knows how great the mercy that has been exercised toward us. But few are heartily devoted to God. There are only a few who, like the stars in the tempestuous night, shine here and there among the clouds.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 76.

“The sin of ancient Israel was in disregarding the expressed will of God and following their own way according to the leadings of unsanctified hearts. Modern Israel is fast following in their footsteps, and the displeasure of the Lord is as surely resting upon them.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 94.

“It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 69.

SUMMARY: As Israel fell deeper and deeper into sin and apostasy, God continued to plead with the people to give up their wicked ways. He left no uncertainty about what they were doing, spelling it out in clear detail in order to lead them to repent and turn to Him.

APPLICATION

Satan’s attempt to corrupt God’s people in Hosea’s day continues in our day. (See Rev. 12:12.) The evil one will leave no stone unturned in his effort to lead God’s last day people into apostasy. Whether he succeeds depends upon each child of God, individually.

• If every Seventh-day Adventist were preparing for the return of Jesus with the same consecration and commitment that I manifest, would God’s appeal for His people to forsake sin be more successful in my day than it was in Hosea’s?

• How can I apply what I am learning from the book of Hosea to my opportunities for outreach?

Raining Righteousness

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 5:15—6:3; 10:12.



MEMORY TEXT: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hosea 10:12).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God appeals to His people—both ancient and modern spiritual Israel—to repent and to return to Him, experience true revival, and be the recipients of His richest blessings.

OVERVIEW: Hosea 5:15—6:3; 10:12

Hosea 5:15—6:1	Hosea 6:2	Hosea 6:3	Hosea 10:12
God invites His people to repent and return to Him	God appeals for revival within the ranks of His people	God assures His people of the gift of the early and latter rains if they return	God states that it is time for His people to seek Him and the rain of the Holy Spirit

INTRODUCTION: In chapters 4 and 5 God "warns the people and their leaders. Then He does something that is typical in this book. After the strong message of warning and judgment He appeals in tenderness to His erring people to repent and return. God's promise of healing and restoration revolves around three specific steps outlined in the sixth chapter of Hosea.

"Verses 1 to 3 are God's invitations. Verse 1 says, 'Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken and he will bind us up.' [RSV] Why does God tear us? The text says, 'That he may heal us.' Verse 2 expands this thought: 'After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.'

"Here is a prophecy often applied to Christ's resurrection on the third day, but it's also talking about *our* experience.

We may be raised up to a new life with Jesus and 'live before him.' So in verse 1 we find the call to return and in verse 2 the promise of revival. Then in verse 3 we read, 'Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord.' . . .

"Chapters 9 and 10 foretell punishment and destruction in the land of bondage. This punishment and destruction come as the result of turning away from God and turning to other nations and other gods.

“As we have come to expect by this time, God next turns from denunciation and warnings of impending doom to call His people to return and repent. Notice how He phrases this call in verse 12 of chapter 10: ‘Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain salvation upon you.’ In the midst of a strong message of denunciation and judgment to come, God has tenderly and beautifully appealed to His erring children to come, to sow righteousness, to reap the fruit of steadfast love, and to break up their fallow ground, for ‘it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain salvation upon you.’ What message could be more timely or appropriate for God’s Israel living today in the time when the latter rain is to fall with unprecedented power?”—Leo R. and Bobbie J. Van Dolson, *Boost Your Prophets* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1983), pp. 13, 14.

Hosea conveys a precious assurance of God’s blessing upon His people who repent and return to Him in true revival. “His going forth is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth” (Hosea 6:3, RSV).

This week we will be studying God’s four R’s to Israel—repentance, returning, revival, and rains.



I. REPENTANCE (Hosea 5:15; 6:1).

Verse 15 forms a bridge between God’s indictment of Israel for going after strange gods in the earlier verses of chapter 5, and the patient appeals and promises of chapter six. This bridge rests upon two pillars of truth that we should note and appropriate to our own spiritual needs.

The first pillar is the importance of repentance in getting right with God. Hosea is God’s spokesman when he declares, “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face” (Hosea 5:15). In other words the prophet is telling backslidden Israel in Hosea’s day, and back-sliders in Israel in our day, “I’m leaving you to your own devices until you are willing to respond to my plea to confess and forsake your sinful ways and seek Me with your whole heart.”

How did Jesus emphasize the importance of repentance during His earthly ministry? Luke 13:3.

Our repentance must be genuine if we hope to be right with God. There must be a forsaking of sin, as well as sorrow for sin. “No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 555.

How does the following statement imply that there is a need for the church to repent and make changes, as well as for individuals to experience heart sorrow for sin and to forsake their sinful ways?

“He shows us that when His people are found in sin they should at once take decided measures to put that sin from them, that His frown may not rest upon them all. But if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions, His frown will be upon them, and the people of God,

as a body, will be held responsible for those sins. . . . One sinner may diffuse darkness that will exclude the light of God from the entire congregation.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 265.

Repentance that works reformation is the first step “homeward.”

2. What significant truth is found in the last part of verse 15?

Suffering has varied effects upon different people.

For some, pain or adversity creates bitterness and resentment toward God. They count Him responsible for their plight. For others, trauma reveals a personal need for help outside oneself. Such response inspires a closer walk with God.



II. RETURNING (Hosea 6:1).

1. To what compassionate privilege should Israel respond? Hosea 6:1.

Repentance is the first pillar in the bridge between apostate human beings and God. The second pillar is a willingness to return to God. There can be no blessing, no revival, no latter rain experience until God’s people first *repent and then return*.

What happens when we do return to Him? Deut. 30:2-10.

ILLUMINATION: “We have done everything possible to avoid admitting our guilt. But when we finally come to God and allow Him to remove the robes of our self-righteousness, to which we have clung so desperately, we find that He is waiting with the blood of Christ to cleanse our sin, the oil of His Spirit to anoint our wounded bodies and the robes of His own righteousness to clothe us.”—James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, vol.1, p. 47.

Return is an interesting word. It means “to go or come back, as to a former place; condition, practice, opinion.” For a Christian who has drifted away from Jesus it means coming back to God—to a Person—to Christ the Saviour of the world.

What decision did Hosea long for profligate Gomer to make? Hosea 2:7, last part.



What decision does God long for His wayward children, then and now, to make? Hosea 3:5.

The word *return* implies a departure. We cannot return unless we have first departed from, or left, a person, a place, or a condition. Israel had departed from Jehovah. She was following other gods. Israel needed to return to God. In our day, many professed Adventist Christians have departed from Him and from His truth. They need to return.

NOTE the response of some—then and now—in Hosea 7:16:

“They return, but not to the most High.” Some prefer the translation found in the *Amplified Old Testament*—“They turn back, shift or change, but not upwards—to the Most High.” The thought here may be that events have caused some to think more seriously and perhaps effect an outward demonstration of religious interest, but without a definite change in life.

A people asleep spiritually, a sinning people, a people not representing their God or their church aright, can never be used to accomplish God’s purpose in the world. There are characters to be developed. There is a worldwide gospel to be proclaimed. There is a work to be finished. People who are like a malfunctioning “bow” (Hosea 7:16)—a backsliding people—in Hosea’s day or ours, cannot be depended upon to carry out God’s plan for a finished work and the return of Jesus.

THINK IT THROUGH: What is the remedy for a shallow type of religion? Is it not to be found in a wholehearted *return* to God?

SEARCH AND LEARN: Discover in the following texts how other prophets also appealed for God’s backsliding people to return to Him:

Isa. 21:12 _____

Jer. 3:12, 22 _____

Mal. 3:7 _____

What precious assurance do the prophets leave for us that many of God’s people will heed His appeals and return to Him? Hosea 3:5; Isa. 51:11.



III. REVIVAL (Hosea 6:2).

First comes repentance, then return, and then revival. We cannot expect a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit until there is a penitent return to the Lord and a revival.

From the subsequent history of Israel it is clear that her professed penitence and return was not followed by a true change of heart and life. Chapters 9 and 10 of Hosea foretell punishment and destruction in the land of bondage that would come as the result of turning away from God and turning to other nations and other gods. The revival did not come to Israel because they did not meet God’s conditions.

What inspired words describe the need for true revival within God's church prior to the Saviour's return? Rev. 3:15-17.

ILLUMINATION: In describing true revivals in the past, Ellen White says: "Revivals brought deep heart searching and humility. They were characterized by solemn, earnest appeals to the sinner, by yearning compassion for the purchase of the blood of Christ. Men and women prayed and wrestled with God for the salvation of souls. The fruits of such revivals were seen in souls who shrank not at self-denial and sacrifice, but rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer reproach and trial for the sake of Christ. Men beheld a transformation in the lives of those who had professed the name of Jesus. The community was benefited by their influence. They gathered with Christ, and sowed to the Spirit, to reap life everlasting."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 462.

What should the church do to prepare for the last great revival? Joel 1:14.

"The great deceiver has prepared his wiles for every soul that is not braced for trial and guarded by constant prayer and living faith. As ministers, as Christians, we must work to take the stumbling blocks out of the way. We must remove every obstacle. Let us confess and forsake every sin, that the way of the Lord may be prepared, that He may come into our assemblies and impart His rich grace. The world, the flesh, and the devil must be overcome."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 123.

ILLUMINATION: "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 464.



IV. RAINS (Hosea 6:3).

What glorious scenes were enacted when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost in former or early rain power? Acts 2:6, 41, 43, 47.

ILLUMINATION: "The Infinite One revealed Himself in power to His church. It was as if for ages this influence had been held in restraint, and now Heaven rejoiced in being able to pour out upon the church the riches of the Spirit's grace. And under the influence of the Spirit, words of penitence and confession mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven. Words of thanksgiving and of prophecy were heard. All heaven bent low to behold and to adore the wisdom of matchless, incomprehensible love. Lost in wonder, the apostles exclaimed, 'Herein is love.' They grasped the imparted gift. And what followed? The sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power

and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through unbelief. Thousands were converted in a day.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 38.

“To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the Day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 20.

What will be the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter rain power? Joel 2:23, 24, 28-32.

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

What was Israel admonished to do in order to enable God to pour out the rain of righteousness upon them? How does this apply to God’s people today? Hosea 10:12.

Here is God’s plan for a finished work in the world. Hosea proclaimed it in his day. Jesus emphasized it during His earthly ministry. The apostle Paul confirmed the plan in his epistles. God’s last day messenger speaks much about it in her voluminous writings.

God’s plan today, as in Hosea’s time, includes the four R’s—repentance, returning, revival, and rains. What progress are you and your church making in carrying out His plan?

In the midst of a strong message of denunciation and judgment to come, God has tenderly and beautifully appealed to His erring children to come, to sow righteousness, to reap the fruit of steadfast love, and to break up their fallow ground “for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain salvation upon you” (RSV). What message could be more timely or appropriate for God’s Israel living today in the time when the latter rain is to fall with unprecedented power?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: “None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 258.

“The sinner may resist this love [of God], may refuse to be drawn to Christ, but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 27.

“We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ. Christ is the source of every right impulse.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 121.

“Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active

Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 507.

SUMMARY: God's appeal to ancient Israel to repent, return to Him and experience revival were largely in vain. God appeals now to present day spiritual Israel to respond where literal Israel failed.

APPLICATION

God's message of love still comes to His people in our day as it did in Hosea's day. The appeals are just as plain, just as specific today as they were then. The invitations are filled with the same love and compassion.

- What should I do to find revival in my experience and to be prepared for the latter rain? What life changes can I implement that will open my heart to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

- Remembering that the Holy Spirit is given for service, what relationship does outreach have to my personal spiritual life and commitment to Christ?

Help Papua New Guinea Finish the Work



RUSSELL GIBBS

Mission in Papua New Guinea has come full circle since Seventh-day Adventist missionaries opened the work along the coast in 1908. Fully trained national pastors and doctors are leading out in spiritual life and health-care throughout the Pacific. "It all began with the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering," church members say. But they still cannot do it on their own. They need our help again this Thirteenth Sabbath to build jungle chapels throughout their union.

Thirteenth Sabbath offering, June 25.

South Pacific division thanks you.

"Sowing the Wind, Reaping the Whirlwind"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 8:1—9:9.



MEMORY TEXT: "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Impervious to the appeals of a merciful God, headstrong Israel plunged recklessly ahead in its downward course toward certain destruction. They failed to learn what we must learn—God's way not only is the right way but it also is the best way.

OVERVIEW: Hosea 8:1—9:9

Hosea 8:1-3	Introduction; warning of judgment False leadership False gods False allies False altars Consequences—from joy to mourning
Hosea 8:4, first part	
Hosea 8:4-7	
Hosea 8:8-10	
Hosea 8:11-14	
Hosea 9:1-9	

INTRODUCTION: A new series of oracles begins in chapter 8. The first declares that the judgments falling upon Israel come as a result of their turning from the Lord. The rest give specific examples of Israel's defections. The Lord states clearly what the inevitable results will be. These have application to conditions and challenges that confront spiritual Israel today.

Ancient Israel forsook both the good God and good morals. Their hypocritical professions were belied by their disobedience and apostasy. Every one of the twenty kings that represented several different dynasties was corrupt. Political expediency and lust for power, rather than God's selection, brought leaders to the throne who were unfit for such solemn responsibilities. The results were predictable—spiritual and moral ruin.

The setting up of false gods, the alliances with other nations, and the false altars of formalism brought chastening from God.

Spiritual bankruptcy and eternal loss will most certainly result if we follow Israel's course of disobedience and apostasy. If we sow the wind of spiritual defection we must inevitably reap the whirlwind of spiritual devastation.



I. WARNING OF JUDGMENT (Hosea 8:1-3).

What warning of impending doom did God instruct Hosea to sound against the prevailing evils in Israel? Hosea 8:1.

"Set the trumpet to thy mouth," God instructs His prophet. The trumpet's foreboding blast warned of an approaching enemy. The people must be forewarned of impending danger. God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, now speaks more directly, more pointedly than He has heretofore. He denounces Israel for a list of specific sins. As always, the Lord gives advance warning to transgressors. The symbol of blowing the trumpet reminds us of our summons to prepare the world for the second coming. (See Joel 2:1.)

What striking inconsistencies in Israel's behavior does the prophet note? Hosea 8:2, 3.

In their wanton ways, the people broke their covenant with Yahweh while still calling Him "our God." They rebelled against the law, yet hypocritically contended, "We know You." In the same way some Christians today must guard against declaring "My Jesus, I Love Thee" while living contrary to His teaching.



II. FALSE LEADERSHIP (verse 4).

What was the problem with leadership in Hosea's day? Hosea 8:4.

Beginning with their revolt against the house of David and rebellion against the son of Solomon, king after king came to the throne of the northern kingdom—mostly as the result of bloodshed. All were corrupt.

Right leadership in God's church today is of utmost importance. Headed into the narrows on their voyage to the Promised Land, God's people face times of trouble, perplexity, apostasy, opposition, and persecution such as they have never experienced before. (See 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Dan. 12:1; Rev. 13:11-18.) Red lights are flashing in many places both inside and outside the church. "The spirit manifested by the leader will be, to a great extent, reflected by the people."—*Christian Service*, p. 177.

THINK IT THROUGH: In light of the extraordinary demands resting upon leaders in God's church, am I supporting them daily in prayer and in meeting my responsibilities as a loyal follower? Complete the list below of the attributes of leadership that you believe should be sought in local church, conference, and institutional leaders today:

1. Fully committed to God, His last day message, and His remnant church.

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____



III. FALSE GODS (Hosea 8:5-7).

What idol did the Israelites make? What characteristic of idol worship does Hosea point to as foolish? Verses 5, 6; 1 Kings 12:26-29.

ILLUMINATION: “The apostate people had used their silver and gold to make idols, and to support idolatrous worship.

“The nation was shortly to reap the fruitage of the calf worship that had been instituted by Jeroboam I.

“Idolatry makes man go against the very principle of reason. . . . The folly of idolatry lies in the worship of what one’s own hands have made.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 910, 911.

God’s response to the image of the calf being used in His worship was the same as His reaction had been to the calf at Sinai.

How does the inspired Word remind us that fashioning idols of silver and gold is not the only way we may violate the first commandment? Ex.20:3; Eze. 14:3; 1 John 5:21.

ILLUSTRATION: Dwight Moody once said, “Whatever you make most of is your god. Whatever you love more than God is your idol. Many a man’s heart is like some . . . [heathens’] huts, so full of idols there is hardly room to turn around. Rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all classes of men and women are guilty of this sin.”

COMPARE Hosea 8:7 with Gal. 6:7.

Verse 7 contains the theme and the climax of chapter 8. Here Hosea asserts an eternal truth. Sin is a spoiler. Sin is a killer. Judgment is the inevitable consequence of sin. Whether it is a church or an individual knowingly straying from God’s revealed will, the price is always dear. We reap what we sow. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).



IV. FALSE ALLIES (Hosea 8:8-10).

To whom had Israel turned for help? Why was this a mistake? Hosea 8:9.

Israel had turned to the wrong source for help. Instead of turning to God in true repentance and seeking help from Him; sin-loving Israel, in her extremity turned to a godless power for help.

ILLUMINATION: “To escape one master, men sometimes put themselves in the power of a worse.”—*Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 13, p. 248.

To what does the Lord liken willful, ungovernable Israel? Hosea 8:9.

When trouble or affliction threatens us, or when Satan seeks to overwhelm us by temptation to sin, where are we to find help? Isaiah 8:19; Psalm 46:1.

We may learn valuable personal lessons from the experiences of faithless Israel. Instead of depending upon our own strength or turning to ungodly sources for help, we are to turn to God. Here is sure and certain help for the child of God. "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield" (Ps. 33:20).



V. FALSE ALTARS (Hosea 8:11-14).

Israel's once-vibrant worship had degenerated into a sad, formal adherence to rites and ceremonies—a practice of meaningless liturgical forms. These, too often, were corrupted by the lascivious practices of the heathen religion of their neighbors.

How does God contrast a dry formal religion with a true heart experience with the Lord? Hosea 6:6.

ILLUMINATION: Formalism "is of the head, and deals with externals. It stops with the theory of religion. It goes no deeper than the form and the pretense. Hence it is like salt without savor. It is a joyless, loveless religion, for it does not bring peace, assurance, and victory. Formalism springs from and thrives in the natural heart, where it has its root. It is one of those subtle, all-pervading evils which the Redeemer came to uproot and eliminate from the human heart."—A. G. Daniels, *Christ Our Righteousness* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1941), pp. 75, 76.

How did Jesus regard formalism? Matt. 9:13; 12:7.

ILLUMINATION: "The Jewish leaders looked with pride upon their magnificent temple, and the imposing rites of their religious service; but justice, mercy, and the love of God were lacking. The glory of the temple, the splendor of their service, could not recommend them to God; for that which alone is of value in His sight they did not offer. They did not bring Him the sacrifice of a humble and contrite spirit. It is when the vital principles of the kingdom of God are lost that ceremonies become multitudinous and extravagant. It is when the character building is neglected, when the adornment of the soul is lacking, when the simplicity of godliness is lost sight of, that pride and love of display demand magnificent church edifices, splendid adornings, and imposing ceremonials. In all this God is not hon-

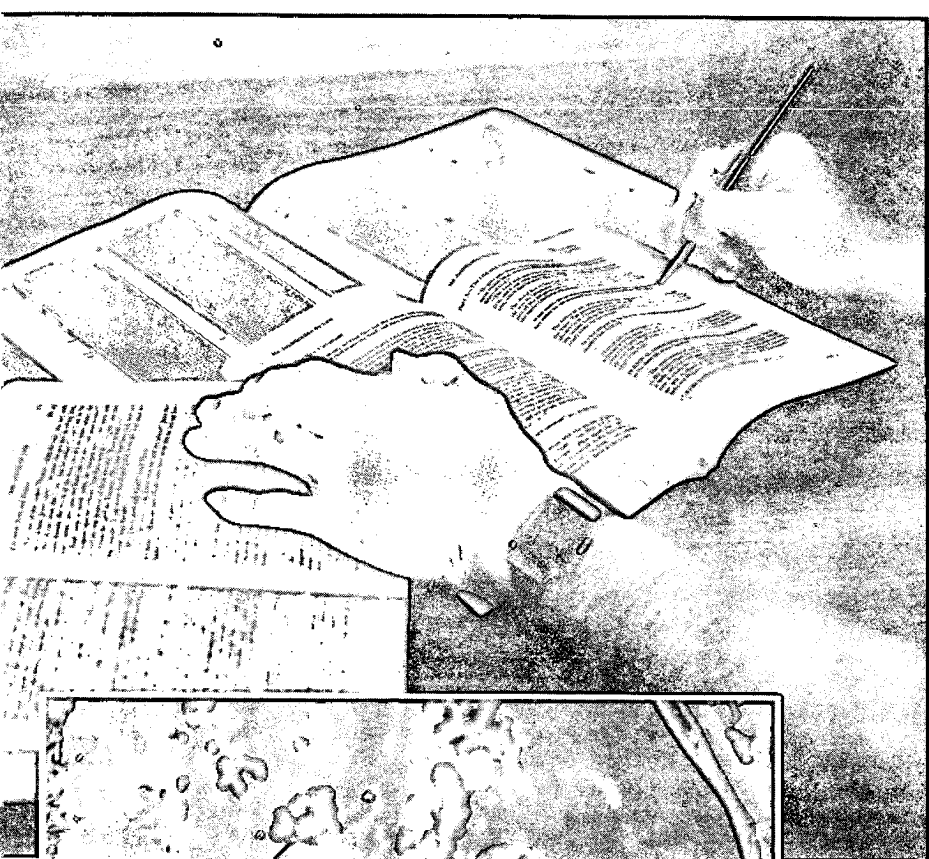
What Adventists Believe

During the third and fourth quarters of 1988, Sabbath Schools around the world will turn temporarily from the Bible book curriculum we have been studying. In order to revitalize our understanding of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we will study one of the 27 statements of belief each Sabbath over a two-quarter period.

But there is more to this unique approach than reviewing our beliefs. Not only will you become more familiar with the teachings of your church but you also will be learning how to share your beliefs with those who wish to know more about them.

Watch for additional information that will give you guidance on how to combine your study of these lessons with supplemental outreach tools such as doctrinal tracts, books, Bible lessons, and missionary literature.





ored. A fashionable religion that consists of ceremonies, pretense, and display, is not acceptable to Him. Its services call forth no response from the heavenly messengers.

“The church is very precious in God’s sight. He values it, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of the members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 297, 298.

THINK IT THROUGH: Why do human beings so often find religious formalism an on-going struggle? What makes it so much easier to deal with the theory of religion rather than to enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? In what ways can our understanding of doctrines be important in establishing a close relationship with Jesus?

What warning for God’s people today can be found in Hosea 8:14?

ILLUMINATION: “What God is talking about in these phrases is the passion of the nation at that time to build big things. Having forsaken God, who alone was big enough for her need, Israel tried to compensate by the construction of big things without Him.

“This is so contemporary! And so true of humanity in general! If we have God, we can be content with however little (or much) He gives us. But if we have lost Him, we find ourselves striving to build big things to take God’s place.”—Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, vol. 1, pp. 58, 59.



VI. CONSEQUENCES: FROM JOY TO MOURNING (Hosea 9:1-9).

How did God warn Israel against a feeling of false security that might come to them as a result of temporary prosperity? Hosea 9:1-3.

It was God’s plan that Palestine should be a permanent homeland for God’s people. Hosea here refers to it as “the Lord’s land” (Hosea 9:3). But because they failed to keep their part of the covenant, they would find themselves deprived of their land.

The future for Israel was dark indeed. They would eat “the bread of mourners” (verse 4). The word *destruction* mentioned in verse 6 foretells the desolation of their land. God’s “anger is kindled against them” (verse 5). Hardship and bondage will be their lot in the land of exile. They will become “a vessel wherein there is no pleasure” (verse 8). What a sad and awful price to pay for sin!

How does Scripture confirm the inevitability of judgment and punishment for sin? Prov. 11:21; Jer. 11:11; Hosea 8:7; Amos 5:18, 19; 9:2.

Reaping is the sure result of sowing. When we sow the wind, the whirlwind is sure to follow.

ILLUMINATION: "Jesus is coming; and will He find a people conformed to the world? and will He acknowledge these as His people that He has purified unto Himself? Oh, no. None but the pure and holy will He acknowledge as His. Those who have been purified and made white through suffering, and have kept themselves separate, unspotted from the world, He will own as His.

"As I saw the dreadful fact that God's people were conformed to the world, with no distinction, except in name, between many of the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus and unbelievers, my soul felt deep anguish. I saw that Jesus was wounded and put to an open shame. Said the angel, as with sorrow he saw the professed people of God loving the world, partaking of its spirit, and following its fashions: 'Cut loose! Cut loose! lest He appoint you your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers outside the city. Your profession will only cause you greater anguish, and your punishment will be greater because ye knew His will, but did it not.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 133.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: "The apostle Paul plainly states that the experience of the Israelites in their travels has been recorded for the benefit of those living in this age of the world, those upon whom the ends of the world are come. We do not consider that our dangers are any less than those of the Hebrews, but greater. There will be temptations to jealousies and murmurings, and there will be outspoken rebellion, as are recorded of ancient Israel. There will ever be a spirit to rise up against the reproof of sins and wrongs. But shall the voice of reproof be hushed because of this? If so, we shall be in no better situation than are the various denominations in our land who are afraid to touch the errors and prevailing sins of the people."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 358.

"Often when Satan has failed of exciting distrust, he succeeds in leading us to presumption. If he can cause us to place ourselves unnecessarily in the way of temptation, he knows that the victory is his. God will preserve all who walk in the path of obedience; but to depart from it is to venture on Satan's ground. There we are sure to fall. The Saviour has bidden us, 'Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' Mark 14:38. Meditation and prayer would keep us from rushing unbidden into the way of danger, and thus we should be saved from many a defeat."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 126.

"While we are encased in self-righteousness, and trust in ceremonies, and depend on rigid rules, we cannot do the work for this time."—*Review and Herald*, May 6, 1890.

"A cold, legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion."—*Review and Herald*, March 20, 1894.

SUMMARY: In our lesson this week Hosea sums up the five sins of Israel that will inevitably bring God's judgment upon them:

1. Disregard for God's covenant and law (Hosea 8:1).
2. Unworthy leaders set up by human beings, but not approved by God (verse 4).
3. Idols became part of their worship service (verses 4, 5).
4. They sought help from heathen nations rather than going to God in the time of need (verse 9).

5. A worthless formal religion replaced the worship of the living God (verse 11).

These sins proved the downfall of Israel, bringing God's wrath and judgment upon them.

APPLICATION

Israel's only hope is the sinner's only source of assurance today—in penitence we must return to God and His way of salvation. Sin will be forgiven and power will be given us to overcome sin and give it up. Obedience to God's law will spring from love for Him. A meaningless, formal religion will be replaced by a warm, heartfelt experience with Jesus.

- Do I want God to be my all in all? Am I willing to let Him make my service one of joyful obedience if it is not such already?
- What is the relationship between my commitment to Christ and my willingness to witness to others?

NOTES:

“I Didn't
Know
Where
the
Money
Was
Going

So I didn't start a Sabbath School Investment project. Then God reminded me that He would take care of the money and send the blessings where they belonged. So I invested my talent for teaching Hawaiian guitar. That year I earned \$205 for Investment. I wonder how many I deprived from hearing the gospel during those years I neglected to get involved!"

Church Member, Citra SDA Church, Florida

In Pursuit of Degradation

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 9:9—10:15.



MEMORY VERSE: “As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death (Prov. 11:19).”

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Our lesson this week traces the encounters of Israel from her first love experience through a sad history of forgetting God. The prophet shows how the nation became spiritually degraded. He closes chapter 10 with a dirge of disappointment, warning the Israelites that they will pay dearly for their apostasy.

OVERVIEW: Hosea 9:9—10:15

Hosea 9:9, 10	Israel's history recalled
Hosea 9:10-14	Apostasy at Baal-Peor
Hosea 9:15-17	Apostasy at Gilgal
Hosea 10:1-8	Israel's sin and Captivity
Hosea 10:9, 10	Apostasy at Gibeah
Hosea 10:11	Metaphor of the heifer
Hosea 10:12	Kind of sowing God desires
Hosea 10:13-15	Judgment is certain

INTRODUCTION: In reflecting upon Israel's history, Hosea outlines how the nation had become so spiritually degraded. In earlier days the chosen people walked with God. In beautiful figurative language the prophet describes this early experience: “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time” (Hosea 9:10).

Finding luscious grapes and ripe figs in an unexpected place in the desert would bring joy to a weary traveler on a long, hot journey. God exclaims with delight over Israel, whom He has singled out to become His chosen people.

“He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye” (Deut. 32:10).

But something happened. After comparing Israel with delicious-tasting grapes and figs (Hosea 9:10), Hosea says, "*But.*" When we see the word *but* we expect to find some modification of the thought just expressed. Israel was like tasty grapes and ripe figs, *but* then comes the unhappy qualification in respect to their goodness—and it is a sad one indeed. "But they went to Baal-peor" (verse 10). "Good," "sweet" Israel was all right. She was like luscious grapes and figs BUT—the people fell into sin. They "separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved" (verse 10). In sad lament the prophet spells out in lurid detail the measure of their apostasy: "Baal-peor," "Gibeah," "Gilgal," and "Bethaven," "calves," "wicked doings," "revolting princes," "dry root," "no fruit," "cast off by God," "wanderers among the nations."

The distressing part of the story for us is that it is so contemporary. There is so much in Hosea's plaintive denunciation that applies to our last-day church. As we study this week our prayer should be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" (Acts 9:6).



I. ISRAEL'S HISTORY RECALLED (Hosea 9:9, 10).

Of what does Hosea remind Israel? Verse 10.

Israel's history is filled with evidences of God's presence, His love, His guidance, and His watch care. Deliverance from the plagues of Egypt, miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea, miles of miracles in the desert wilderness, God's presence in the fire and cloud, God's voice at Sinai, the manna, the water—all tell their story.

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut. 4:9).

Unfortunately, Israel failed to remember these evidences of God's love. Israel went astray.

Why is it important for us today to carefully consider Israel's history? 1 Cor. 10:11.

ILLUMINATION: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."—*Life Sketches*, p. 196.

LIST as many tangible evidences of the Lord's leadership in the Advent movement as you can:

The rest of our lesson this week deals with the sad failures and apostasy in ancient Israel. Some of these experiences cast their shadows over the state of spiritual Israel today.



II. APOSTASY AT BAAL-PEOR (Hosea 9:10-14).

1. Baal-Peor in Times of Ancient Israel:

Instead of honoring the God who preserved them in the wilderness, the Israelites, noticing the prosperity of the Canaanites, turned to the heathen fertility god for blessing as they entered the Promised Land. Terrible calamity resulted.

To what sad apostasy of their forefathers at Baal-Peor was Hosea referring? Num. 25:1-18.

“Baal . . . [Heb. *Ba'al*, ‘lord,’ ‘possessor,’ ‘husband.’ . . .]. . . . A designation for a local god in the sense of ‘lord,’ as in Baal-gad, Baal-peor. . . . The Canaanites believed that Baals dwelt in holy trees, springs, mountain summits, rocks, etc., and spoke of each of these gods as the Baal, i.e. ‘lord’ of that particular locality. . . . Where the name appears in the singular it generally refers to the chief national god of the Canaanites. . . .

“Baal worship, universal throughout Syria and Palestine, seems to have held a great attraction for the Israelites. They repeatedly turned to it from the time they entered the land of Canaan until they were carried into exile.—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, pp. 104, 105.

Peor is the name given to the mountains in Moab to the top of which King Balak led Baalim that he might see and curse Israel (Num. 23:28).

Israel was on the border of the Promised Land when this degrading chapter in their history was written (Num. 33:49). In the sequence of events that took place there, note particularly Israel’s gradual, but certain descent into sin and apostasy. They were invited to mix with the Moabites socially. They accepted. Soon they were bowing down to the Moabitish gods. Next they were participating in the licentious rites of their worship. Step by subtle step they were led into sin and apostasy.

ILLUMINATION: “When the people of Israel, in their worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, paid supreme homage to the forces of nature, they severed their connection with all that is uplifting and ennobling, and fell an easy prey to temptation. With the defenses of the soul broken down, the misguided worshipers had no barrier against sin and yielded themselves to the evil passions of the human heart.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 282.

2. Baal-Peor Today.

How does John, the beloved disciple, warn Christians in succeeding generations of similar soul-destroying temptations? 1 John 2:15-16.

TUE

III. APOSTASY AT GILGAL (Hosea 9:15-17).

How does Hosea denounce Israel for their wicked actions at Gilgal? Hosea 9:15-17.

At least three Gilgals are mentioned in the Old Testament. From the course of events in Israel it seems most likely that the Gilgal where the Israelites established their first encampment on the banks of the Jordan river entering the Promised Land is the locality to which Hosea refers.

SEARCH AND LEARN: In Hosea 9:15 the inspired author declares, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal." Below are some clues that may provide at least partial explanations for this statement. Look up the scriptures and probe their content for meaning to Israel in Hosea's day, and any possible messages for us today.

1. Gilgal was a place of _____ (1 Sam. 11:14, 15).
2. Gilgal was a place of _____ (1 Sam. 13:7-14).
3. Gilgal was a place of _____ (1 Sam. 15:12, 13).
4. Gilgal was a place of _____ (Amos 4:4; 5:5).
5. Gilgal was a place of _____ denounced by the prophets (Hosea 12:11).

THINK IT THROUGH: Can you think of times when we, as individuals, or as a church, have been guilty of rebellion? Presumption? Disobedience? Rejection? Condoning immorality? Installing other gods or idols in our lives?

WED

IV. ISRAEL'S SIN AND CAPTIVITY FORETOLD (Hosea 10:1-8).

How does Hosea now describe the once luxuriant grapevine? Hosea 10:1, first part.

Israel now existed for their own profit, interested only in selfish comfort and carnal pleasure. Their claim to the title of God's chosen people was an empty one—a name only. Their sinful actions belied their profession. Israel scarcely could be distinguished from their heathen neighbors.

In what words does the prophet further describe Israel's spiritual decline? Hosea 10:1, last part.

How did the prophet make clear to his people that the hour of punitive judgment was just ahead? Hosea 10:2-4.

The word translated “break down” is “a single word in Hebrew meaning literally, ‘to break the neck of,’ a word commonly used in a ritualistic sense. . . . In these words Hosea declares that the means of sinning shall be taken from the transgressors and destroyed, their altars broken down and their images spoiled. The ‘he’ in this third clause of the verse is emphatic: ‘He [the Lord Himself] shall break down their altars.’”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 917.

How does the wording in verse 8 describe the total devastation that Israel would experience as the result of choosing to go the way of the world about them?

In verse 8 what interesting parallel exists between Hosea’s Israel and last-day events. (See Rev. 6:16-17.)

V. APOSTASY AT GIBEAH. Hosea 9:9, 10.

Of what gruesome event at Gibeah does Hosea remind the people and their leaders? Hosea 9:9; 10:9; Judges 19:1-30.

There were several Gibeahs in the northern kingdom. Probably it was the Benjaminite city by this name mentioned in chapters 19 through 21 of Judges to which Hosea makes reference. Gibeah was the site of one of the most horrendous events in Israel’s history. It involved hatred, lust out of control, sex perversion, mob violence, murder, genocide, revenge, remorse and the death of multiplied thousands of people. Hosea reminds the Israelites that they are just as wicked and just as guilty of heinous crimes as were their forebears.

THINK IT THROUGH: What lessons can Seventh-day Adventists learn from this sordid experience in Israel’s history? Would we not do well to “remember their iniquity?” (Hosea 9:9).



VI. METAPHOR OF THE HEIFER (Hosea 10:11).

ILLUMINATION: “Ephraim is here likened to a heifer trained to tread out grain. Oxen were not yoked together, but worked singly when treading out corn [grain], treading it either with their feet or by drawing a threshing sledge or cart over it. Also they were not muzzled (see Deut. 25:4), so were left free to snatch at times a mouthful of corn. Such was Israel’s history. She had been placed in the Promised Land in easy, comfortable circumstances, like a heifer threshing, that was allowed to eat at pleasure. Tragically, these material comforts that should have drawn her close to her Creator, made her sinfully self-sufficient and rebellious.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 919.

NOTE some of the lessons that we can learn from Israel's experience related in this portion of Hosea's prophecies:

1. God is patient and long-suffering. He bears long with offenders before they are allowed to reap the consequences of their rebellion.
 2. God forewarns a person, a church, or a nation in order that each one of them may be forearmed.
 3. Continued sin is certain to exact its payment. As in Israel's experience, the price can be high.
 4. We cannot hope to enjoy the blessings of a religious experience without a willingness to do our part in the support of its goals and objectives.
 5. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).
 6. Add your own: _____
-

VII. KIND OF SOWING GOD DESIRES (Hosea 10:12).

To those who spoke of love while being unfaithful, who pretended to be truthful while practicing falsehood, and posed as righteous while indulging in sin, God appealed for a revival and reformation.

What stirring appeal does Hosea make to persuade the Israelites to forsake their sinful ways before it is forever too late? Hosea 10:12.

Before there can be a harvest there must first be a sowing. In this verse the prophet continues to use terms from farm life, with which the people are familiar. He talks about seed sowing. The seed is spiritual seed—the seed of righteousness.

Righteousness is something we *do*, as well as being something we are (Ps. 106:3). It is something that can and should be checked against God's standard of righteousness.

ILLUMINATION: "The rule of righteousness is the Law of God, and the directions of that rule include our duty both to God and man. To sow in righteousness, therefore, is to discharge the duties of righteousness, comprehending piety towards God, justice and charity towards man, together with propriety of personal conduct."—*Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 13, p. 312.

What eternal truth does Paul lay down in Galatians 6:8?

(FR)

VIII. JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN (Hosea 10:13-15).

What solemn announcement does Hosea make as he closes his plea for Israel to forsake sin and espouse righteousness? Hosea 10:13-15.

Now is Israel's moment of truth. Repentance or rejection? They must decide—wholehearted repentance, forgiving favor and restoration, or continued rebellion, God's sorrowful repudiation, and destruction at the hands of a cruel, godless enemy. Israel's national probation as God's chosen people, in a sense, hangs in the balance. The harsh demands of a bloodthirsty Assyrian army are almost audible at the door of Israel's destiny.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: "There should be a humbling before the Lord; the Israel of God should rend the heart, and not the garment. Childlike simplicity is rarely seen; the approbation of man is more thought of than the displeasure of God. Said the angel: 'Set your heart in order, lest He visit you in judgment, and the brittle thread of life be cut, and ye lie down in the grave unsheltered, unprepared for the judgment. Or if ye do make your bed in the grave, unless ye soon make your peace with God, and tear yourselves from the world, your hearts will grow harder, and ye will lean upon a false prop, a supposed preparation, and find out your mistake too late to secure a well-grounded hope.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 133, 134.

"Another source of encouragement is here presented [Hosea 10:12]. If we seek him he shall be found of us, according to the promise, 'Seek, and ye shall find.' Thus encouraged, let us seek him presently, patiently, and perseveringly until he comes, as he will be sure to do, and rain righteousness upon us. . . . He will come to the individual soul, Gentile or Jew, that seeks him, and when he comes he will rain righteousness upon us."—*Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 13, p. 313.

SUMMARY: "Do not deceive yourselves; no one makes a fool of God. A person will reap exactly what he plants. If he plants in the field of his natural desires, from it he will gather the harvest of death; if he plants in the field of the Spirit, from the Spirit he will gather the harvest of eternal life. So let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest" (Gal. 6:7-9, TEV).

APPLICATION

"As I saw the dreadful fact that God's people were conformed to the world, with no distinction, except in name, between many of the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus and unbelievers, my soul felt deep anguish. I saw that Jesus was wounded and put to an open shame. Said the angel, as with sorrow he saw the professed people of God loving the world, partaking of its spirit, and following its fashions: 'Cut loose! Cut loose! lest He appoint you your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers outside the city. Your profession will only cause you greater anguish, and your punishment will be greater because ye knew His will, but did it not.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 133.

- In the light of this warning and of God's tender appeal, am I willing to consecrate all I have and am to the Lord and His service?
- Am I missing the main purpose of my existence if I fail to allow God to reach out to others through me?

The Gospel in Hosea

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Review of chapters 1-10; Hosea 11:1—13:16.



MEMORY TEXT: “Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me; for there is no saviour but me” (Hosea 13:4).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The book of Hosea, with its graphic love story, embodies many basic truths of the gospel. These precious truths still are applicable to our spiritual and family life.

OVERVIEW: The Gospel in Hosea		
Chapters 1-10	Hosea 11:1-11	Hosea 11:12—13:16
The contrast between God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness	God's love and compassion portrayed	The contrast between Israel's attitude and God's attitude

INTRODUCTION: The word *gospel* means “good news” or “good tidings” of our salvation through Jesus. It is translated from the Greek word for good news or announcement. While Hosea does not mention Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospel stands out in bold relief in the prophet's writings. The sins of Israel in general, and of Hosea's profligate wife in particular, represent those of the sinner in any age—including our own.

Faithful, long-suffering, forgiving Hosea reveals the unfailing love of God for the sinner. Hosea's untiring search for the straying Gomer and his unflagging efforts to win her back remind us of the work of the Holy Spirit wooing the transgressor. Hosea dealt patiently and compassionately with Gomer, as God deals with sinners of all generations. Despite the heartbreak and anguish that she inflicted upon him, Hosea forgave Gomer, just as our slighted Saviour forgives and receives us back when we have wandered away and seek to return to Him.

Israel could be restored to her place with God only through repentance and confession (Hosea 14:1, 2). When Israel repented and confessed her sins, God would freely forgive and receive her back (Hosea 2:23). Israel had to accept God's proffered pardon by faith (Hosea 6:1). In the same way, the sinner today finds Jesus' forgiveness and cleansing through sincere repentance and confession of sin and faith in Jesus' saving power.

The gospel that saves sinners also preserves saints. The good news must do its work in our hearts and homes today. Through the indwelling Christ, family members can be overcoming Christians who reflect the image of

Jesus. When this experience becomes a glad reality our homes will become the havens of happiness and righteousness that God intends.

Keep this precious promise in mind as you study this week: "None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 258.



I. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS (Hosea, chapters 1-10).

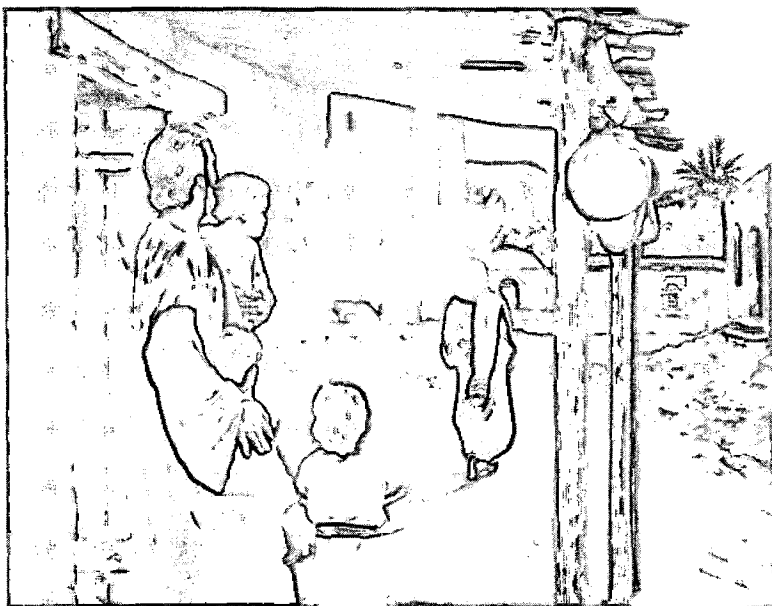
1. The Sinfulness of Sin.

According to the apostle Paul, how widespread is the blight of sin? Rom. 3:9-18, 23.

ILLUMINATION: "Few realize the sinfulness of sin; they flatter themselves that God is too good to punish the offender."—*Testimonies* vol. 4, p. 370.

Before we can be saved we must realize that we are lost. Before we become saints we must first realize that we are sinners. The sin problem is the world's greatest problem. It is the ultimate cause for all others. We must understand the sinfulness of sin—and its only remedy.

When exposed, sin reveals itself for what it is—subtle, deceptive, often attractive to the human senses, but nevertheless a death-dealing agent that robs the sinner of eternal life.



REVIEW the unhappiness and sorrow that Gomer's sinful life brought to Hosea and his family. Hosea 2:1-4.

CONTRAST God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness by completing the chart that follows:

Israel's Unfaithfulness		God's Faithfulness	
Hosea	Not my people	Hosea	Ye are sons of the living God
1:4-9		1:10,11	
2:1-13	Israel's adultery	2:14— 3:5	
4:1— 5:15		6:1-11	God's willingness to forgive
7:1-12	Reasons why punishment is deserved	7:13	What God desires Israel to be



II. GOD'S LOVE AND COMPASSION PORTRAYED (Hosea 11: 1-11).

The great truth of the gospel is that God hates sin but loves the sinner.

How does the psalmist describe the compassionate nature of God? Ps. 78:38, 39; 86:15.

ILLUMINATION: "In concluding chapter 10, verses 13 to 15 continue to point out that in spite of God's often-expressed concern, Israel's conduct is the opposite of what He earnestly desires from them.

"One of the most beautiful chapters in the entire Bible follows. Chapter 11 presents the gospel in all its power and majesty. Again and again, in the midst of messages denouncing unfaithfulness and warning of its inevitable consequences are found tender, loving pleas from God. And chapter 11 is one of the most heartwarming and appealing of them all."—Leo and Bobbie Jane Van Dolson, *Boost Your Prophets*, pp. 14, 15.

What contrast does God draw between His great love for Israel and their response to His love? Hosea 11:1-4.

The *New International Version* translates verse 4 this way: "I led them with the cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them."

God says that He bends down to minister to their needs. But which way are His backslidden people bent? Hosea 11:7.

In what appealing words does God describe His dealings with erring Ephraim? Verses 8, 9.

God's magnificent love will not let us go. He will not give up on us. Nevertheless, He will not force us to love and serve Him. In spite of His punishments and judgments, He will become a roaring lion to our enemies and protect us when we return to Him. (See verses 10, 11.)



III. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SINNER'S ATTITUDE AND GOD'S ATTITUDE (Hosea 11:12—13:16).

This section of the book of Hosea returns to the theme of Israel's ingratitude and the resultant impending judgment. In chapter 12 we find God comparing Israel to Judah. The Judeans have remained more faithful, but also must be punished. Chapter 13 adds that because Israel turned from God they must suffer the consequences. Nevertheless, God still loves them and longs for them to return to Him.

NOTE once again the contrasting attitudes:

Israel's Attitude	God's attitude
12:1-5	12:6
12:7, 8	12:9-14
13:1-3	13:4-10
13:11-13	13:14-16

1. The Gospel Principles in Hosea's Time.

SEARCH AND LEARN: In order to become better acquainted with how the gospel is presented in the book of Hosea, match the following experiences of Hosea, Gomer, and Israel with the most appropriate scripture:

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| ___ Gomer's sinfulness | 1. Hosea 2:2 |
| ___ God's love for Ephraim (Israel) | 2. Hosea 3:3-5 |
| ___ How Israel must confess her wrongdoings | 3. Hosea 11:8 |
| ___ What will happen if Israel returns to God | 4. Hosea 3:1, 2 |
| ___ Hosea redeems (buys back) Gomer | 5. Hosea 14:2 |
| ___ Hosea reorders Gomer's life-style as God expects sinners today to reorder theirs | 6. Hosea 2:23 |
| ___ God will be able to say once again "Thou art my People." | 7. Hosea 6:1-3 |



How does Hosea reveal that it is possible to presume too long upon God's love and mercy? Hosea 4:17; 5:6; 12:14. Compare with Genesis 6:3.

2. The Gospel Principles Today.

How does Paul explain the practical implementation of gospel principles in the home? 1 Tim. 5:4.

The messenger of the Lord says, "If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 16. Is it not also true—If you would be a saint in your community, you must first be a saint in your own home? Our homes are the proving ground of our gospel experience.

Where is there a better place to demonstrate remorse when we have wounded a family member, or to learn to say "I'm sorry," or to forgive quickly an injury done consciously or unconsciously on the part of husband, wife, son, daughter, or sibling?

Here of all places we must "make things right" with someone we have hurt. All these practices are based on gospel principles.

ILLUMINATION: "Family religion consists in bringing up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Every one in the family is to be nourished by the lessons of Christ, and the interest of each soul is to be strictly guarded, in order that Satan shall not deceive and allure away from Christ. This is the standard every family should aim to reach, and they should determine not to fail or to be discouraged. When parents are diligent and vigilant in their instruction, and train their children with an eye single to the glory of God, they cooperate with God, and God cooperates with them in the saving of the souls of the children for whom Christ has died."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 317.



What gospel principles can help us reach God's ideals for families? 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Phil. 2:3-5.

If the gospel is to be an effective guiding light in our hearts and our homes we must do our part. Christ surely will do His. Paul declared that he had to make his body his "slave" (1 Cor. 9:27, NIV); otherwise, even though he preached to others, he would be lost. Only Christ can enable us to keep our carnal natures under control. Christ in us is our only hope of living *for* Christ in this life, and *with* Christ in the life to come. (See Col. 1:27.)

ILLUMINATION: "Sometimes folks seem to be ashamed of their Christianity. Some young people, for example, after accepting Christ while away at boarding school, look forward with dread to going home and meeting old friends and relatives who are not Christians. They fear the finger of scorn or ridicule. Paul considered it a privilege to be a Christian. You and I, too,

should consider it so. If we have been disgraced, it is hard to face people; but if we have been promoted, it is easy. Think of Christianity as the power of God unto salvation, and we can face all unashamed.

“Should a fine automobile be ashamed of its power and its lines? Should a diamond be ashamed of its brilliance? Should a rose be ashamed of its fragrance, or an orchid its beauty? Should the sun be ashamed of its light, or the sunset its color? No more should you and I be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. For he who is ashamed of Jesus, is ashamed of His life”—P. C. Heubach, *This is Life* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1957), p. 225.



FOR FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: “The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power. These whose course has been most offensive to Him He freely accepts; when they repent, He imparts to them His divine Spirit, places them in the highest positions of trust, and sends them forth into the camp of the disloyal to proclaim His boundless mercy. He would have His servants bear testimony to the fact that through His grace men may possess Christlikeness of character, and may rejoice in the assurance of His great love. He would have us bear testimony to the fact that He cannot be satisfied until the human race are reclaimed and reinstated in their holy privileges as His sons and daughters.

“In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Saviour. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable Gift. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

“Words alone cannot tell it. Let it be reflected in the character and manifested in the life. Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. Every one God has predestinated to be ‘conformed to the image of His Son.’ Rom. 8:29. In every one Christ’s long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested to the world.

“The first disciples went forth preaching the word. They revealed Christ in their lives. And the Lord worked with them, ‘confirming the word with signs following.’ Mark 16:20. These disciples prepared themselves for their work. Before the day of Pentecost they met together, and put away all differences. They were of one accord. They believed Christ’s promise that the blessing would be given, and they prayed in faith. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely; they were weighted with the burden for the salvation of souls. The gospel was to be carried to the uttermost parts of the earth, and they claimed the endowment of power that Christ had promised. Then it was that the Holy Spirit was poured out, and thousands were converted in a day.

“So it may be now. Instead of man’s speculations, let the word of God be preached. Let Christians put away their dissensions, and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them in faith ask for the blessing, and it will come.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.

SUMMARY: The gospel saves sinners from their most implacable enemies—sin and guilt. This good news is found in the book of Hosea. It reveals a God of love with a message for our day that redeems us from our lost condition and provides principles that help us live better lives and have happier homes.

APPLICATION

- Is the softening, subduing influence of the grace of God working upon my heart?
- Has the gospel of Christ saved me from sin?
- Have I allowed the good news to do its work in my life in such a way that the members of my family are able to see the attributes of Jesus' character in me?
- Am I "weighted with the burden for the salvation of souls"?

NOTES:

Help Papua New Guinea Prepare for the Future



Building techniques in Papua New Guinea are changing as the church struggles to keep pace in this rapidly developing nation. Sonoma Adventist College has trained many skilled tradesmen to construct desperately needed church buildings. But the union needs our help to provide construction materials. Please remember the needs of these churches.

Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, June 25.
South Pacific Division thanks you for your help.

Victory at Last (for Those Who Want It)

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 12:1-3; Hosea 4:1-17; 14:1-9.



MEMORY TEXT: “Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein” (Hosea 14:9).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God planned great things for His people. Instead of following His plan they went deeply into apostasy. But the day is coming when God's plan will be carried out. In the grand finale God will say to them which were not His people, “Thou art my people” (Hosea 2:23).

OVERVIEW: Victory at Last

Gen. 12:1-3	Hosea 4:1-17	Hosea 14:1-9
God's Promises to Abraham and Israel	Israel's Failure to Keep the Covenant	God's Plan Fulfilled
Promise of Land, nation, and blessing	God's conditions for blessing	Assurance that the covenant ultimately will be implemented

INTRODUCTION: “The history of the wilderness life of Israel was chronicled for the benefit of the Israel of God to the close of time. The record of God's dealings with the wanderers of the desert in all their marchings to and fro, in their exposure to hunger, thirst, and weariness, and in the striking manifestations of His power for their relief, is fraught with warning and instruction for His people in all ages. The varied experiences of the Hebrews was a school of preparation for their promised home in Canaan.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 293.

As we contemplate what will happen to God's people between now and the time that they shall inherit that heavenly Canaan it is well to keep ever in mind that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

We have that hope. Hosea concludes his book with an appeal to repentance. God will not allow His people to go into captivity without “pulling out all the stops” in a majestic final appeal. Although not heeded fully by ancient Israel, it will inspire spiritual Israel to finish God's work on earth. Then our sure hope can become reality.

“The holy city, new Jerusalem [will come] . . . down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2). “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). Home at last! God’s plan fulfilled! What a blessed hope is ours!

SUN

I. GOD’S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM AND ISRAEL.

What promise did God make to Abraham when He called the patriarch to leave heathen Haran? Gen. 12:1-3.

ILLUMINATION: “It was a high honor to which Abraham was called, that of being the father of the people who for centuries were the guardians and preservers of the truth of God for the world—of that people through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed in the advent of the promised Messiah. . . .

“He had separated Abraham from his idolatrous kindred, that the patriarch might train and educate his family apart from the seductive influences which would have surrounded them in Mesopotamia, and that the true faith might be preserved in its purity by his descendants from generation to generation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 140-142.

What did God’s plan for Israel include? Deut. 28:1-13; Rom. 9:3-5.

ILLUMINATION: “Had the Israelites obeyed the instruction they received, and profited by their advantages, they would have been the world’s object-lesson of health and prosperity. If as a people they had lived according to God’s plan, they would have been preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations. Above any other people they would have possessed physical strength and vigor of intellect. They would have been the mightiest nation on earth. God said, ‘Thou shalt be blessed above all people.’ (Deut. 7:14)”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 283.

MON

II. ISRAEL’S FAILURE TO KEEP THE COVENANT.

1. God’s Condition of Blessing (Deut. 28:2).

What condition did God lay down if Israel was to be so richly blessed? Deut. 28:2.

Feeling secure in their election and in their own strength, the Israelites readily agreed to keep the covenant. “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient,” they declared (Ex. 24:7).

SEARCH AND LEARN: How was Israel’s failure to keep the covenant made manifest through succeeding generations?

Judges 2:12 _____

Psalm 78:56-58 _____

ILLUMINATION: "Yet He [God] did not utterly forsake His people. There was ever a remnant who were true to Jehovah; and from time to time the Lord raised up faithful and valiant men to put down idolatry and to deliver the Israelites from their enemies. But when the deliverer was dead, and the people were released from his authority, they would gradually return to their idols. And thus the story of backsliding and chastisement, of confession and deliverance, was repeated again and again."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 545.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Review Hosea 4. In what specific ways did Israel fail to measure up to its commitments to God?

Hosea 4:1-2 _____

Hosea 4:6 _____

Hosea 4:7 _____

Hosea 4:12, 13 _____

Hosea 4:16 _____

Hosea 4:17 _____

TUE **ILLUMINATION:** "Through disloyalty, God's chosen people developed a character exactly the opposite of the character He desired them to develop. They placed their own mold and superscription upon the truth. They forgot God, and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. The blessings they had received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. Like the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, they followed out every imagination of their evil hearts. Thus they made sacred things appear a farce, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these,' while at the same time they were misrepresenting God's character, dishonoring His name, and polluting His sanctuary."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1181.

What final act sealed the doom of the chosen nation? Matt.21:37-43.

Inasmuch as Israel's apostasy caused them to forfeit the great blessing God had in store for them, what will God do to ensure that His plan will be carried out? Isa. 11:11, 12; Eze. 21:27; Rom. 11:17-24.

ILLUMINATION: “Though the people of Israel ‘according to the flesh,’ had failed of the high destiny to which God had called them, . . . yet God had not cast off the seed of Abraham; the glorious purposes which He had undertaken to accomplish through Israel were to be fulfilled. All who through Christ should become the children of faith were to be counted as Abraham’s seed; they were inheritors of the covenant promises; like Abraham, they were called to guard and to make known to the world the law of God and the gospel of His Son.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 476.



III. GOD’S PLAN FULFILLED.

How does God’s love shine through even the darkest hours of Israel’s apostasy? Hosea 1:10.

Read Hosea 2:14-23. Note the depths of God’s love, forgiveness, and mercy revealed in the many “I wills” that shine forth in this passage. Note also the beautiful assurances of His tender support for the faithful and the precious promises of ultimate victory contained in these verses.

What plaintive appeal does God make to Israel through the prophet? Hosea 14:1, 2.

“God will not allow His people to go into captivity without ‘pulling out all the stops’ in a majestic final appeal. The gospel of Hosea involves every bit of the beauty and passion of the gospel story. . . . Next God’s voice is heard in verses 4 through 7 in response to the projected prayer of penitence, exclaiming, “I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. . . . They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden [RSV].’ ”—Leo and Bobbie Jane Van Dolson, *Boost Your Prophets*, p. 16.

SEARCH AND LEARN: When and how will God’s plan finally be fulfilled?

1 Thess. 3:13 _____

1 Thess. 4:16, 17 _____

Eph. 2:7; 3:11 _____

What precious assurance of final restoration comes through Hosea’s pen? Hosea 2:14-23.

ILLUMINATION: “Through Hosea was given a prophecy that set before them [the ten tribes] the privilege of having part in the final restoration that

is to be made to the people of God at the close of earth's history, when Christ shall appear as King of kings and Lord of lords."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 298.

What is God's desire for His people then and now? Hosea 14:4-8.

How does Hosea describe those who respond to God's appeal? Hosea 14:9.

God will not force anyone to accept Him. All have a choice to make. Those who are wise will respond to the compelling power of love; will be drawn to the fullness of pardon and salvation God longs to bestow.

God's people in the last days will come from every nation in response to the loving appeal of the three angels' messages. "From 'every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,' there will be some who will gladly respond to the message, 'Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.' They will turn from every idol that binds them to earth, and will 'worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.' They will free themselves from every entanglement and will stand before the world as monuments of God's mercy. Obedient to the divine requirements, they will be recognized by angels and by men as those that have kept 'the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.' Rev. 14:6, 7, 12."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 299, 300.

ILLUMINATION: "The earth originally given to man as his kingdom, betrayed by him into the hands of Satan, and so long held by the mighty foe, has been brought back by the great plan of redemption. All that was lost by sin has been restored. . . . God's original purpose in the creation of the earth is fulfilled as it is made the eternal abode of the redeemed. 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 674.

What will be the reaction of the Man of Calvary as He views the end product of His redeeming love? Isa. 53:10-12.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: "He [God] chose Abraham, of the line of Shem, and made him the keeper of His law for future generations. Abraham had grown up in the midst of superstition and heathenism. Even his father's household . . . were yielding to the seductive influences surrounding them, and they 'served other gods' than Jehovah. But the true faith was not to become extinct. God has ever preserved a remnant to serve Him. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, in unbroken line, had preserved from age to age the precious revealings of His will. The son of Terah became the inheritor of this holy trust."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 125.

"God in His infinite wisdom, chose Israel as the depositary of priceless treasures of truth for all nations. He gave them His law as the standard of the

character they were to develop before the world, before angels, and before the unfallen worlds. They were to reveal to the world the laws of the government of heaven. By precept and example they were to bear a decided testimony for the truth.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1180, 1181.

“It was when the Israelites were in a condition of outward ease and security that they were led into sin. They failed to keep God ever before them, they neglected prayer and cherished a spirit of self-confidence. . . . A long preparatory process, unknown to the world, goes on in the heart before the Christian commits open sin. The mind does not come down at once from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 459.

SUMMARY: Israel came far short of meeting God’s condition for fulfilling His promises to Abraham. Yet those covenant promises will be fulfilled—this time through spiritual Israel. Soon the promised blessing will be bestowed upon the redeemed of all ages when God sets up His kingdom of glory. “What a day that will be—the day when God will sow His people in the fertile soil of their own land again.” (Hosea 1:11, TLB). This time theirs will be a heavenly home—for eternity.

APPLICATION

The fulfillment of God’s promises to His chosen people will soon become a glorious reality. A perfect people, spiritual Israel—His chosen ones from all cultures, from all climes, from all ages, will be gathered out for His eternal kingdom.

- Should this grand culmination of the plan of redemption occur today—would I be ready?
- Would others be ready as a result of my witness to them?
- What is my relationship with Christ? How do I measure up to God’s standard of holiness?

“God
could
have

reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy,—of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice — we must participate in His labors for their redemption.”

The Desire of Ages, p. 142.

INTRODUCTION TO PHILEMON

From Bondage to Brotherhood

Paul's letter to his personal friend Philemon is unique. In this letter the apostle corrects no heresy. He rebukes no sin in any church. He propounds no new doctrine. He amplifies no current teaching. Instead, he deals with a domestic problem in the household of Philemon, one of his converts in Colossae. The problem arose after the dramatic escape and conversion of Onesimus, a runaway slave. He had probably stolen from Philemon and fled to Rome hoping to be lost in the metropolitan masses of that great city.

Through the guidance and intervention of the Holy Spirit, Onesimus met Paul, who was under house arrest in Rome, and accepted the gospel of Christ. As a new Christian, Onesimus learned that he must return to his master, Philemon, make things right, and submit himself and his future to the will of Philemon.

In Paul's day a slave in the Roman empire was but a chattel—a "thing" whose life-and-death fortunes were dependent upon the caprice of his master. In such an atmosphere Onesimus might expose himself to grave danger—death itself—if he returned to Philemon's household. But he was determined to do what is right.

The elderly apostle, tender shepherd that he was, wrote an appealing letter to Philemon, entreating him to receive the new convert, Onesimus, as a brother in Christ.

Paul's epistle is a beautiful testimony to his Christian experience and an example of tactful Christian letter writing. From it we may draw lessons that will help us have more caring homes, churches, and communities.

THE EPISTLE OF PHILEMON OUTLINED

Philemon 1:1-7	Greetings and commendations
Philemon 1:8-18	Paul's earnest appeal on behalf of Onesimus
Philemon 1:17-21	Philemon's cooperation sought
Philemon 1:22-25	Faith, optimism and a benediction of love

The Runaway

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Read Paul's epistle to Philemon through at least twice, making sure you understand fully the story of the runaway slave and what Paul did for him. Then concentrate on verses one through seven.



MEMORY TEXT: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal 6:1).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Paul wrote a loving and tactful letter to Philemon in an effort to assure Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, of being received wholeheartedly as he returned to Philemon's household.

OVERVIEW: Philemon 1:1-7	
Philemon 1:1-3 Background and Greetings	Philemon 1:4-7 Paul's Example in Christian Relationships
Author—vs. 1 Greetings—vss. 1-3 Commendations and appreciation—vs. 1-7	Christian tact and encouragement vss. 4-6 Appreciation—vs. 7

INTRODUCTION: Although we have much more information about Paul as a person than we have about Hosea, both set us clear examples of loving personal relationships. The book of Hosea and the epistle written to Philemon illustrate the gospel in a dramatic way. Through the medium of personal relationships, Paul and Hosea demonstrate how God can use individuals to portray His great love. Both become types of what Jesus does for us.

Paul knew the secret of good personal relationships. He was capable of stimulating an atmosphere of warm Christian love among his church members. He exercised great tact in dealing with church problems. He was considerate of the feelings of others. He was courteous. He knew well the bonding strength of commending associates for work well done. His was a ministry of encouragement.

All of these qualities of human relationship, if practiced in the home, are calculated to contribute to family well being and happiness. For the rest of this quarter we will study the 25 verses of this epistle, singling out for special attention some commendable qualities Paul manifested in dealing with those involved in the Philemon-Onesimus episode.

This week we will concentrate on the value of creating warm affection within Christian and family circles. Paul's tactful approach to the solution of

a domestic problem will be noted. We will deal with the need for expression of commendation and appreciation among family members. Like Paul, all true Christians will develop traits of character that will help make their hearts and homes places where angels of God delight to dwell.



I. BACKGROUND AND GREETINGS (verses 1-3).

1. Paul the author (verse 1).

"This epistle specifically claims Paul as its author (v. 1). The fact that it deals only with a personal circumstance and that it reflects no attempt to promote any new teaching is a strong indication that it is genuine. Today scholars are virtually unanimous in accepting this brief epistle as authentically Pauline."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 375.

This letter must have been written sometime during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, approximately A.D. 62. Paul does not commence this letter in his usual style of writing to the churches. Instead he speaks of himself only as Paul, "a prisoner of Jesus Christ" (verses 1, 9).

ILLUMINATION: "Among those who gave their hearts to God through the labors of Paul in Rome was Onesimus, a pagan slave who had wronged his master, Philemon, a Christian believer in Colosse, and had escaped to Rome. In the kindness of his heart, Paul sought to relieve the poverty and distress of the wretched fugitive and then endeavored to shed the light of truth into his darkened mind. Onesimus listened to the words of life, confessed his sins, and was converted to the faith of Christ.

"Onesimus endeared himself to Paul by his piety and sincerity, no less than by his tender care for the apostle's comfort, and his zeal in promoting the work of the gospel. Paul saw in him traits of character that would render him a useful helper in missionary labor, and he counseled him to return without delay to Philemon, beg his forgiveness, and plan for the future. The apostle promised to hold himself responsible for the sum of which Philemon had been robbed. Being about to dispatch Tychicus with letters to various churches in Asia Minor, he sent Onesimus with him. It was a severe test for this servant thus to deliver himself up to the master he had wronged; but he had been truly converted, and he did not turn aside from this duty.

"Paul made Onesimus the bearer of a letter to Philemon, in which, with his usual tact and kindness, the apostle pleaded the cause of the repentant slave and expressed a desire to retain his services in the future. The letter began with an affectionate greeting to Philemon as a friend and fellow laborer."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 456.

"Paul's present status as a 'prisoner' was in decided contrast with Philemon's memory of Paul as the zealous evangelist, the indefatigable traveler, the untiring administrator. Philemon knew that Paul's present disgrace and hardship were the result of faithful witnessing for the Christ they both served."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 378.

2. Greetings (verses 1-3).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study carefully verses one through three. Make a list of the characteristics that describe Paul's relationships with his fellow workers and church members.

THINK IT THROUGH: If practiced among church members and family members, how would the characteristics you have selected help to develop warmer relationships among Adventists today?



II. PAUL'S EXAMPLE IN CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS (verses 4-7).

1. Commendations.

Paul begins his letter by addressing words of sincere commendation to Philemon. He commends him for his love and faith toward God and his fellow members in Colossae. He speaks appreciatively of their effective witnessing and good works. He prays that the blessing of God will rest upon Philemon for His service to the saints.

Sincere commendation, when expressed warmly at the appropriate time, is a great bonding agency among members of any group—in the home, in the church, in the community. Hearts are warmed when people know that their best efforts are appreciated.

Husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, likewise are blessed and encouraged when words of honest commendation are spoken to them. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

THINK IT THROUGH: What danger should we avoid in commending others? How can we encourage without contributing to pride? In discovering an answer for yourself, consider Ellen White's counsel given in the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1131: "We see danger in the bestowal . . . of words of commendation upon human agencies. Those who are favored by the Lord need to be on guard constantly, lest pride or self-esteem obtain the supremacy."

- What is the difference between cheap flattery and praise and sincere commendation and encouragement?

What specific traits does Paul commend in Philemon? Verses 4, 5.

What does Paul pray that Philemon's commendable traits may accomplish? Verse 6.

In addition to commending Philemon's saintly qualities and his service, how does the apostle further encourage him? Verse 7.

This assurance, Paul knows, will encourage the man to whom he brought the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus' Ministry Was Filled With Words and Acts of Encouragement.

Note Jesus' example: "Jesus declared that it was His work to give encouragement and comfort and help wherever it was most needed."—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 171.

How did Matthew apply a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah to the nature of Christ's ministry? What is its relevance to the quotation given above? Matt. 12:17-21.

SEARCH AND LEARN: What illustrations of Jesus' method of encouragement are found in the passages that follow?

Matt. 19:28-30 _____

Mark 12:32-34 _____

Luke 8:48 _____

John 16:27 _____

3. Encouragement Within Our Families.

THINK IT THROUGH: What can I do to bring the same blessing of encouragement demonstrated by Jesus into my family and community today?

ILLUMINATION: "Those who are fighting the battle of life at great odds may be refreshed and strengthened and encouraged by little attentions which cost nothing. Kindly words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation which gather over the horizon of the soul."—*My Life Today*, p. 152.

"The Lord Himself will be with you, to teach and to lead and to guide Watch unto prayer. Believe that God will help you to speak words that will cheer and encourage and increase the faith of those with whom you associate."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 201.

By precept and example, Jesus and Paul provide good counsel that, if followed in their spirit, will be a great blessing today.

4. Paul's Tact.

The entire epistle is an illustration of Paul's Christian love and concern for others. How tactfully he selects his words as he appeals on behalf of Onesimus!

ILLUSTRATION: The word *tact* comes from an old Latin word *tangere* meaning "to touch." Tact is the God-given ability to "touch" others with-

out offense. The dictionary defines *tact* as the “delicate perception of the right thing to say or do without offending; skill in dealing with people.”—*Webster’s New World Dictionary*, p. 1448.

SEARCH AND LEARN: With this definition of tact in mind, read again the first nine verses. List examples of Christian tact that you find.



In another letter to Christians, what does Paul say about the use of tact in dealing with others? 2 Cor. 6:3.

THINK IT THROUGH: How important is the exercise of tact in the home?

Those whom we should love the most challenge our skill in “saying the right thing without offending.”

ILLUMINATION: “A consecrated Christian life is ever shedding light and comfort and peace. It is characterized by purity, tact, simplicity, and usefulness. It is controlled by that unselfish love that sanctifies the influence. It is full of Christ, and leaves a track of light wherever its possessor may go.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 667.

“Those who surrender wholly to God will put thought and prayer, and earnest, consecrated tact into their labors.”—*Christian Service*, p. 230.

Thought and prayer, and earnest consecrated tact govern relationships among family members, as well as between church workers. Ellen White describes some members who “have not the tact that is born of love. If they had this they would know how to speak the right word and do the right thing at the right time and in the right place.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 349, 350. Here is consummate tact:



What is the only source of true tact?

“God is the giver of tact.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 481.

The book of Philemon demonstrates the virtue of tact in a most interesting way through Paul’s appealing letter to Philemon. If we are to possess this rare gift we must know well the One who alone can give us love and concern for the welfare of others.

SEARCH AND LEARN: What do you learn about tact from the following texts?

Judges 8:1-3 _____

1 Sam. 25:18-37 _____

Prov. 15:1 _____

Prov. 25:15 _____

Acts 19:35-41 _____

THINK IT THROUGH: Think of a time when someone has treated you with great tact. How did you feel? What can you do to pass that blessing on to others?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: “By giving their children love, sympathy, and encouragement at home, parents may provide for them a safe and welcome retreat from many of the world’s temptations.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 185.

“Kind, cheerful, and encouraging words will prove more effective than the most healing medicines. These will bring courage to the heart of the desponding and discouraged, and the happiness and sunshine brought into the family by kind acts and encouraging words will repay the effort tenfold.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 306, 307.

“The members of every church are to cultivate the tact and ingenuity that God will give them.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 269.

“Paul might have urged upon Philemon his duty as a Christian; but he chose rather the language of entreaty: ‘As Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.’

“The apostle asked Philemon, in view of the conversion of Onesimus, to receive the repentant slave as his own child, showing him such affection that he would choose to dwell with his former master, ‘not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved.’ He expressed his desire to retain Onesimus as one who could minister to him in his bonds as Philemon himself would have done, though he did not desire his services unless Philemon should of his own accord set the slave free..

“The apostle well knew the severity which masters exercised toward their slaves, and he knew also that Philemon was greatly incensed because of the conduct of his servant. He tried to write to him in a way that would arouse his deepest and tenderest feelings as a Christian. The conversion of Onesimus had made him a brother in the faith, and any punishment inflicted on this new convert would be regarded by Paul as inflicted on himself.

“Paul voluntarily proposed to assume the debt of Onesimus in order that the guilty one might be spared the disgrace of punishment, and might again enjoy the privileges he had forfeited. ‘If thou count me therefore a partner,’ he wrote to Philemon, ‘receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or

oweth thee aught, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.' . . .

"Paul's letter to Philemon shows the influence of the gospel upon the relation between master and servant. Slave-holding was an established institution throughout the Roman Empire, and both masters and slaves were found in most of the churches for which Paul labored. In the cities, where slaves often greatly outnumbered the free population, laws of terrible severity were regarded as necessary to keep them in subjection. A wealthy Roman often owned hundreds of slaves of every rank, of every nation, and of every accomplishment. With full control over the souls and bodies of these helpless beings, he could inflict upon them any suffering he chose. If one of them in retaliation or self-defense ventured to raise a hand against his owner, the whole family of the offender might be inhumanly sacrificed. The slightest mistake, accident, or carelessness was often punished without mercy. . . .

"It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 457-460.

SUMMARY: In dealing with a sensitive domestic problem, the apostle Paul offered sincere commendation and encouragement, and exercised rare tact. Christians, today, will contribute to the happiness of their homes, and solve problems more effectively by following Paul's example.

APPLICATION

- Do I speak words of commendation and encouragement to members of my family? Am I tactful in my home? Do I assure family members of my prayers?
- Am I careful to exercise tact and good judgment in my efforts to lead others to Christ?

What Giving Means to Me

- If I give nothing,
I cast a vote in favor of closing my church.
- If I give grudgingly,
I shall neither find joy nor receive God's blessing.
- If I give systematically,
I make it possible for my church to plan to advance, and I make it easier for myself.
- If I give sacrificially,
I testify to the high value I place upon Christ and the ministry of His church to the physical and spiritual needs of suffering humanity.

—Thorvald Kristensen.

The Gospel in Philemon

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Philemon 8-19.



MEMORY TEXT: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The gospel, as demonstrated in the letter to Philemon, changed lives and worked miracles in Paul's day. It must and will manifest the same power in our day.

OVERVIEW: Philemon 8-19

8, 9	Paul's two options
10, 11	The power of the gospel at work in the lives of Onesimus and Paul
12, 14	Paul pleads for special consideration for Onesimus
15-19	Paul offers himself as Onesimus's substitute
Rom 1:16	The power of the gospel

INTRODUCTION: The gospel is designed to save sinners. Sinners say "No" to God and "Yes" to self. They are controlled by "the lust of the flesh" "and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) rather than by the appeals and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In their experience truth and righteousness are ever on the scaffold, sin and Satan are ever on the throne. They choose death rather than life. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

The gospel story centers in a Saviour. The sinner need not die. Jesus Christ can be the sinner's Redeemer. Upon Calvary's cross Jesus paid the penalty for sin by becoming the penitent sinner's substitute. He bore the blame. He experienced the shame. He died the awful death. Sinners who repent, confess, make restitution, and believe can escape the death they deserve and inherit eternal life.

The gospel also proclaims a Mediator—a heavenly High Priest who pleads the penitent sinner's case before the judgment bar of God. The good news is that Jesus not only died for us and arose from the tomb but also that He is alive forevermore (Rev. 1:18). He is appearing "in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24). "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1) is our Advocate, our High Priest in the Most Holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. "He ever liveth to make intercession" for the righteous (Heb. 7:25).

Paul's letter to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus illustrates these basic

truths of the gospel. Onesimus—the sinner, the deserter, the absconding slave—deserved to die, according to Roman law. “Paul voluntarily proposed to assume the debt of Onesimus in order that the guilty one might be spared the disgrace of punishment. . . . How fitting an illustration of the love of Christ for the repentant sinner!”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 458.

In a sense Paul represents both saviour and mediator on behalf of Onesimus. Not only does Paul help the penitent slave to get right with God, but also, as his spiritual father, he helps him to make things right with his offended master.



I. PAUL'S TWO OPTIONS (verses 8, 9).

1. Authority or love?

In seeking Philemon's help for Onesimus, what two principles of persuasion could Paul choose? Verses 8, 9.

Facing problems in the home we might seek to solve them with the threat of our authority, endeavoring to compel family members to comply with our wishes; or we might, through love and affection, persuade them to choose what is best for them.

The healthy atmosphere of normal day-to-day family living requires God's kind of love, as well as Christian authority. Authority and discipline are closely related. Discipline can be administered in the spirit of impatience, and made apparently effective by the use of authority. Such an approach may bring about the desired end—it may solve the problem for the moment—but if resentment smolders and unhappiness exists, then the ultimate solution to the problem has been thwarted. The better solution is achieved when Christlike authority is exercised lovingly and sparingly; when family members seek to understand and meet one another's needs, looking for creative and loving ways to meet their problems.

ILLUMINATION: “Paul's position as an apostle and as Philemon's father in the faith (v. 19) presupposes the authority to which Paul could have appealed in directing Philemon to accept Onesimus as a Christian brother. There is no doubt in Paul's mind that Philemon would have responded to any direction given him by an apostle of high authority.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 380.

2. Paul chooses love (verse 9).

“Paul might have urged upon Philemon his duty as a Christian; but he chose rather the language of entreaty.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 457.

Throughout the epistle Paul reveals his love, using terms of Christian endearment. He speaks of his “dearly beloved” Philemon; of “our beloved Apphia and Archippus.” Three times the word *love* flows from his pen. He exudes brotherly affection in such love-filled words as *joy, peace, grace, faith, trust, and confidence*.

What three words in verse 9 reveal the Christian basis for harmonizing domestic issues?

Love will enable the Christian to meet any situation, to soothe the temper, to discover the best solution to problems. Christian love conquers all.



II. THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL AT WORK IN THE LIVES OF ONESIMUS AND PHILEMON (verses 10, 11).

How does Paul describe Onesimus before his conversion? Verses 10, 11.

The Greek word here translated “unprofitable” may also be translated “useless.” The name *Onesimus* means “useful.” Paul may have intended a play on words. Mr. Useful had become useless, but now, through the power of the gospel, had become useful again.

REVIEW: From your study of the letter to Philemon, list the violations of God’s law and Roman law of which Onesimus was guilty:

What changes took place in the life of Onesimus after his conversion? Verse 11.

ILLUMINATION: “Onesimus endeared himself to Paul by his piety and sincerity, no less than by his tender care for the apostle’s comfort, and his zeal in promoting the work of the gospel. Paul saw in him traits of character that would render him a useful helper in missionary labor.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 456.

What part did Paul play in the new birth experience of Onesimus and Philemon? Verses 10, 19, last part.

III. PAUL PLEADS FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR ONESIMUS (verses 12-14).

It was at some cost to himself that Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon. “I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you” (verse 12, NIV).

TRUE AND FALSE: Study verses 13, 14, 19 then indicate whether the following statements are true or false:

1. _____ Although Paul would lose the comfort of Onesimus’ presence, he would be rewarded by the reconciliation of two of his brothers in the faith.
2. _____ Paul insisted that Philemon owed him personal service.

3. _____ Paul pointed out that, whereas he was in prison for Christ, Philemon enjoyed the benefits of freedom along with the blessings of Paul's sacrificial ministry.

What does verse 14 teach about rights and respect?

“Although Paul may have been completely certain of Philemon's approval, he will take nothing for granted, always respecting each man's sacred right of free choice. The apostle knows that genuine friendship is built only on free and voluntary expressions of kindness. Therefore, with great courtesy and consideration, Paul insists that Philemon should make all further decisions regarding Onesimus.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 381, 382.

IV. PAUL OFFERS HIMSELF AS ONESIMUS' SUBSTITUTE (verses 15-19).

In the gospel, Jesus is revealed as our Intercessor and Mediator, as well as our Substitute and Saviour. (See Heb. 9:24 and 1 John 2:1.)

ILLUMINATION: “Under the mighty impulse of His love, He took our place in the universe, and invited the Ruler of all things to treat Him as a representative of the human family. He identified Himself with our interests, bared His breast for the stroke of death, took man's guilt and its penalty, and offered in man's behalf a complete sacrifice to God. By virtue of this atonement, He has power to offer to man perfect righteousness and full salvation. Whosoever shall believe on Him as a personal Saviour shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 924, 925.

In Paul's letter to Philemon, how does the aging apostle intercede on behalf of Onesimus? Verses 9, 10, 12, 15, 17-19.

Two times Paul uses the word “beseech” in his appeal for Philemon to accept the penitent slave back into his good graces. To “beseech” is to beg urgently, anxiously. In this earnest supplication Paul lays his good offices on the line to accomplish his desired objective.

THINK IT THROUGH: Three times Paul pleads for Philemon to “receive” Onesimus when he arrives with the letter. Study these three usages of “receive” thoughtfully. What spiritual insights can be gathered from these phrases:

“receive him” (verse 12) _____

“receive him for ever” (verse 15) _____

“receive him as myself” (verse 17) _____

Paul's stated willingness to assume Onesimus's liabilities (verses 18, 19) pleads most eloquently on behalf of the returning penitent. Although not parallel in every detail, Paul's intercession on behalf of Onesimus is an illustration of Christ's work as the sinner's Mediator, as well as his or her Substitute.

WED **Reconciliation and restitution.** The gospel message includes "being right" with those about us, as well as with God. Reconciliation includes confessing our sins to God. It also includes doing our best to remove any stones of stumbling that may mar our relationships with others.

How did Jesus stress this practical phase of reconciliation in His Sermon on the Mount? Matt. 5:23, 24.

What exercises are included in this reconciliation process? James 5:16; Eze. 33:15; Eph. 4:32; Matt. 6:15.

As a newborn babe in Christ, Onesimus had to be reconciled with Philemon and with anyone else whom he may have offended. The runaway slave must return to Colossae and confess his wrongdoing. He and Philemon must be willing to engage in a true reconciliation.

V. THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL (Rom. 1:16).

This "new start" gospel clears the record and cleans up the sinner and the backslidden saint. Through Christ it cares for past sins. Through Him it provides grace and strength for present challenges. It assures a glorious future with the redeemed of all ages who have experienced similar transformations of character. All this is the result of the transforming, energizing power of Christ through the gospel message.

1. The Past and the Present.

Paul's epistle to Philemon presents some penetrating insights into the apostle's character. The gospel took Saul, an arrogant, overbearing, and cruel religionist, and turned him into Paul, a kind, loving, and considerate Christian.

What the gospel did for Paul and other characters in the Onesimus-Philemon drama, it can and must do for us today—especially in our homes. The gospel, lived out in everyday life, can set our homes back on the path of becoming happy, healthy, and holy places.

THU **2. The Gospel Makes Us Kind in the Home (Rom. 12:10).**

What loving admonition did Paul direct to the Christians in Rome? Rom. 12:10.

How does Paul further emphasize the beauty of kindness in dealing with others? Col. 3:12, 13.

THINK IT THROUGH: Do I always treat members of my family circle with as much deference and kindness as I do those outside the home?

What counsel does the apostle Peter record that will help create happier homes today? 1 Peter 3:8.

3. The Gospel and Self-control (Prov. 16:32).

How does the wise man describe a person without self control? Prov. 25:28.

ILLUMINATION: "He who under abuse or cruelty fails to maintain a calm and trustful spirit robs God of His right to reveal in him His own perfection of character."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 301.

With whom does God compare a person who maintains self control? Prov. 16:32.

ILLUMINATION: "The highest evidence of nobility in a Christian is self-control. He who can stand unmoved amid a storm of abuse is one of God's heroes. . . .

"God's abounding love and presence in the heart will give the power of self-control and will mold and fashion the mind and character. The grace of Christ in the life will direct the aims and purposes and capabilities into channels that will give moral and spiritual power."—*My Life Today*, p. 70.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: "The gospel of Christ is to be lived, practiced in the daily life. The servants of God are to be cleansed from all coldness, all selfishness. Simplicity, meekness, lowliness, are of great value in the work of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 218, 219.

"The world will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives. The minister in the desk announces the theory of the gospel; the practical piety of the church demonstrates its power."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 16.

"Why do we not learn of the Saviour every day? Why do we not live in constant communion with Him, so that in our connection with one another we may speak and act kindly and courteously? Why do we not honor the Lord by manifesting tenderness and love for one another? If we speak and act in harmony with the principles of heaven, unbelievers will be drawn to Christ by their association with us."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 190.

SUMMARY: The power of the gospel that changed the lives of Paul, Phile-

mon, and Onesimus is available to us today. Our homes will be enriched and brightened as this power brings with it forgiveness, victory over sin, love, kindness, tenderness, courtesy, and self-control.

APPLICATION

- Have I permitted the gospel to justify and sanctify me?
- Does the love of Christ possess me?
- Am I kind, tenderhearted, and courteous in my family relationships?
- How can I better allow the Christ of the gospel to provide power to keep my emotions, my words, my actions under control? How can the assurance of His acceptance help me to grow in these areas?
- What principles learned in this lesson will make me a more effective witness to the power of the gospel?

NOTES:

“There is means enough in the hands of believers to amply sustain the work in all its departments without embarrassing any, if all would bear their proportional part.”
Testimonies to the Church, vol. 3, p. 410.

Equality in Christ

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Philemon 5, 6, 8-10, 13-16, 20-25.



MEMORY TEXT: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When we become born again Christians we join an international family that knows no favored nation, no superior nationality, sex, race, or culture.

OVERVIEW: United in Christ		
Verses 8-10, 16	Verses 5, 6, 13-19	Verses 20-25
Equality of all Christians	How Christians should treat others	Benediction of love

INTRODUCTION: The "everlasting gospel" calls believers from among all "that dwell on the earth," from "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

The apocalyptic angel with "a little book open . . . set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth" (Rev. 10:2). Here, too, is revealed a worldwide movement gathering men and women, boys and girls, from every nation under heaven. After being gathered into the worldwide family of God, the converted are to become one people in Christ Jesus. Male and female, married and single, black, white, brown, whatever nationality or culture—all are one in Christ Jesus.

God values us for what we are—creatures of His hand, redeemed by Christ's blood, being fitted by Him for a place among those who never have fallen. The classless unity that He wants us to portray is to be a marvel to the world. It is the answer to Christ's prayer "that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22). When this ideal is realized, "the world may believe that thou has sent me" (vs. 21).

The early church, through such experiences as that recorded in the epistle Paul sent to Philemon, testified in a remarkable way to the unifying power of the gospel and to the power of Christ to remove people's prejudices.



I. EQUALITY OF ALL CHRISTIANS (Philemon 8-10, 16).

1. The Principle of Equality.

How does the apostle put himself, Philemon, and Onesimus on an equal footing? Verses 8-10, 16.

It is obvious that people are different in many respects. But God accepts all of us on the same basis—creation and redemption. Such things as nationality, wealth, and education that many consider so important do not have any significance as far as our value in God's sight is concerned.

ILLUMINATION: "The evidence of Paul's love for both Onesimus and Philemon is repeatedly seen throughout this epistle. Not as someone superior, but as an equal, Paul appeals to Philemon for help in reconciling the problem of Onesimus' status as a repentant Christian slave. Paul was confident that Philemon would appreciate this gracious approach in resolving the mutual problem."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 380.

What words of the apostle reminded Philemon that, at the cross, there are no masters and servants? Verse 16.

What kind of affection should exist among members of the family of God?

"I am sending him back to you, and that is the same as to send you a bit of my own heart" (vs. 12, Barclay). Sometimes members of God's family on earth are closer than blood relatives.

2. Jesus and Equality.

In His contact with the Syrophenician woman, what lesson did Jesus convey to His disciples about the equality of all Christians before God? Matt. 15:21-28.

"The Saviour's visit to Phoenicia and the miracle there performed had a yet wider purpose. . . . The same agencies that barred men away from Christ eighteen hundred years ago are at work today. The spirit which built up the partition wall between Jew and Gentile is still active. Pride and prejudice have built strong walls of separation between different classes of men. . . .

"In faith the woman of Phoenicia flung herself against the barriers that had been piled up between Jew and Gentile. Against discouragement, regardless of appearances that might have led her to doubt, she trusted the Saviour's love. It is thus that Christ desires us to trust in Him. The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel.

"Caste is hateful to God. He ignores everything of this character. In His sight the souls of all men are of equal value. . . . Without distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege, all are invited to come unto Him and live."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.



For whom did Jesus pray and what was the burden of His prayer? John 17:20, 21.

ILLUMINATION: “Those who, in the spirit and love of Jesus, will become one with Him, will be in close fellowship one with another, bound up by the silken cords of love. Then the ties of human brotherhood would not be always on the strain, ready at any provocation to snap asunder. ‘All ye are brethren’ will be the sentiment of every child of faith. When the followers of Christ are one with Him, there will be no first and last, no less respected or less important ones. A blessed brotherly fellowship one with another will bind all who truly receive the Lord Jesus Christ in a firm loyalty that cannot be broken. All will be equally one with Christ.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1097, 1098.

3. What Peter and Paul Indicate About Equality.

What did Peter testify regarding the equality of all before God? Acts 10:34, 35.

ILLUMINATION: “Peter dimly realized that Christianity was not to be national. In his dealings with Cornelius he began to see how this might be, though he did not yet understand it thoroughly. Paul would shortly declare that neither race, nor sex, nor social status have any bearing in God’s sight” (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:10,11).—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 254.

In his message on Mars Hill, how does Paul make clear the basis of his position on Christian equality? Acts 17:26.



II. HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD TREAT OTHERS (Philemon 5, 6, 13-16).

Because we are equal before God, we should treat one another—and certainly our own family members—in a manner befitting such a relationship. We should exercise every care to assure that the golden rule is the norm for our behavior. Thus we create an atmosphere of Christian affection and good will. In his letter to Philemon, Paul illustrates some Christian principles in personal relations that will help to maintain a truly Christian atmosphere in our homes.

1. Always Look for the Best.

What good points in Philemon’s character does Paul recognize. Philemon 5, 6.

Because the apostle looked for the best in others, he was aware of many positive traits in Philemon’s experience.

ILLUMINATION: "Let all seek to discover the excellencies rather than the defects. Often it is our own attitude, the atmosphere that surrounds ourselves, which determines what will be revealed to us in another."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 105.

"Cultivate the habit of speaking well of others. Dwell upon the good qualities of those with whom you associate, and see as little as possible of their errors and failings. When tempted to complain of what someone has said or done, praise something in that person's life or character."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 492.



2. Place the Interests of Others Before Your Own Desires.

From a human viewpoint, what course of action regarding Onesimus would Paul have preferred to follow? Philemon 13.

Onesimus had been a great blessing to Paul in his confinement. No doubt the penitent slave helped the aging apostle in his work and in his home. If Onesimus were to leave, Paul would miss him greatly. It would be to his personal advantage for Onesimus to remain with him. But, placing Philemon's interests above his own, Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the following in order to gain a clear picture of how interested Jesus was in others?

Matt. 8:14, 15 _____

Mark 6:34-42 _____

Luke 19:1-10 _____

John 11:32-44 _____

ILLUMINATION: "The afflicted ones who came to Him felt that He linked His interest with theirs as a faithful and tender friend."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 254, 255.

THINK IT THROUGH: How would following the example of Paul and Jesus affect our Seventh-day Adventist homes today?

What additional consideration did Paul keep in mind in deciding the future of Onesimus? Philemon 14.

3. Overlook Mistakes Others Make.

Describe Paul's largehearted approach in dealing with Onesimus. Philemon 15, 16.

From his experience with Barnabas, Paul may have learned something

about dealing with people who make mistakes. During their first missionary journey John Mark decided to return home. Paul, branding him a quitter, refused to take him on their next overseas venture. Barnabas, however, was willing to overlook the weakness of young John Mark. He was willing to give him a second chance, and took him on a missionary trip to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-41).

Onesimus had made many serious mistakes. Now Paul was willing to overlook those mistakes and give him an opportunity to redeem himself. Perhaps the apostle remembered some of his own mistakes with Barnabas and John Mark. If so, this helped him to be less critical of Onesimus. "Receive him back," Paul wrote to Philemon, "forget the past and give Onesimus another chance. Receive him, not as a servant but as a brother beloved."



III. A BENEDICTION OF LOVE (Philemon 20-25.)

On what confident, joyous note does Paul close his letter? Verse 20.

Christian love for fellow believers, faith, optimism, humility, all shine through the closing words of the apostle's unique epistle.

How did Paul reveal his confidence that Philemon would give due consideration to his request? Verse 21.

"It is with complete confidence in your willingness to listen that I write to you, for I know well that you will do more than I ask" (Philemon 21, Barclay).

Human nature responds to expressions of confidence. Persons seeking to overcome harmful habits and sinful practices are encouraged in their struggle when they are aware that family members and friends believe in them, and believe that they will succeed in doing better.

ILLUMINATION: "Verse 21 is typical of Paul's dealings with people. It was Paul's rule always to expect the best from others. He never really doubted that Philemon would grant all his request. It is a good rule; to expect the best from others is often to be more than half way to getting the best. If we make it clear that we expect little, we will get little. But if we put a man upon his honour by showing him that we expect much from him, the sleeping chivalry of the human heart will be awakened, and we will get much from him from whom we expect much."—William Barclay, *The Letter to Philemon* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, March 1960), p. 324.

How does Paul further demonstrate his confidence in Philemon in verse 22?

Paul's relationship to Philemon is so close that he feels free to ask for accommodations without first being invited.

ILLUMINATION: "Paul here, unobtrusively, expresses his implicit confidence in Philemon's good judgment regarding Onesimus. Only genuine

friends, bound in mutual respect, would write as frankly regarding accommodations as Paul does here. Philemon would give Paul no occasion to lose faith in his integrity. Apparently, Paul had reason to expect an early release from prison. Tradition states that soon after this letter was written, Paul fulfilled his promise to visit Colossae.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 384.

Paul exhibits a noble humility as he confesses that only the intercession of the churches would secure his release and make his visit to Colossae possible.

Paul is not too burdened, nor too busy to add his usual warm family greetings and his benediction of love on behalf of his fellow workers and friends. These Pauline “postscrips” in this and other letters to the churches are a gesture of Christian love and good will.

Note Colossians 4:7-9. Tychicus was dispatched by Paul to carry the Epistles of Philemon and Colossians from Rome to Colossae. Onesimus accompanied him. They also had been commissioned to bring oral reports.



THINK IT THROUGH: What have I gained from my study of the short epistle to Philemon? In what way does what I have learned challenge me to a deeper experience with Christ?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapter, “In Contact With Others” in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 483-496.

“Both husband and wife should be willing to yield his or her way or opinion. There is no possibility of happiness while they both persist in doing as they please.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 118.

“Study to advance the happiness of each other.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 106.

Onesimus had been a slave to sin. Now he was a willing slave to righteousness. The very experience that Paul had described in his epistle to the Romans had become a reality for Onesimus. (See Romans 6:16-22). The same level of consecration to God that was enjoyed by Onesimus is to characterize the Christian experience of every believer:

“You are professedly the servants of Christ. Do you then yield to Him ready and willing obedience? Do you earnestly inquire how you shall best please Him who has called you to be soldiers of the cross of Christ? Do you . . . lift the cross and glory in it? Answer these questions to God. All your acts, however secret you may think they have been, are open to your heavenly Father. Nothing is hidden, nothing covered. All your acts and the motives which prompt them are open to His sight. He has full knowledge of all your words and thoughts. It is your duty to control your thoughts. You will have to war against a vain imagination. You may think that there can be no sin in permitting your thoughts to run as they naturally would without restraint. But this is not so. 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. Your thoughts need to be sanctified. Paul writes to the Corinthians: ‘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.' When you come into this position, the work of consecration will be better understood. . . ."

"Your thoughts will be pure, chaste, and elevated; your actions pure and sinless. Your bodies will be preserved in sanctification and honor, that you may present them 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' You are required to deny self in little as well as in greater things. You should make an entire surrender to God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 82, 83.

SUMMARY: Among Christians there should be no superior race or sex, no favored nation or culture. We are all "one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5) "and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each needs all the others" (Rom. 12:5, TLB).

As part of this divinely planned unity we each must treat others, including family members with Christian deference—"in honour preferring one another" (vs. 10).

Thus, in this life, we are preparing to live with our heavenly Father, His Son, the Holy Spirit, the angelic host, creatures from the unfallen worlds, and the redeemed saints of all ages, in love and serene unity throughout eternity.

APPLICATION

- Am I Christlike, loving, and thoughtful in my dealing with the members of my family?
- Am I patient, kind and understanding in my relationships with those who are not part of my national, social, cultural, or family group? If not, am I willing to yield myself to the Lord and ask Him to make me more like my Saviour and to treat those my life touches with Christian love and compassion?
- Do I recognize the importance of being a consistent Christian in order that others may be attracted to Christ through me?

Temporary Interruption in Curriculum

There will be a two-quarter interruption in the Adult Sabbath School lesson Bible book curriculum in order to give you an opportunity to revitalize your understanding of the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. The lessons the first quarter of 1989 will return to our ten-year study of Bible books.

Lessons for Third Quarter, 1988

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1988 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "God Reveals His Love."

First Lesson:

"GOD TELLS US ABOUT HIS LOVE"

MEMORY TEXT: 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

CENTRAL TEACHING: "The Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history." Fundamental Beliefs No. 1.

OUTLINE:

- I. God's Two Words.
- II. Evidences of Inspiration.
- III. How to Understand the Bible.
- IV. The Importance of Bible Study.
- V. The Word Reveals the Word.

Second Lesson:

"GOD TELLS US ABOUT THE GODHEAD"

MEMORY TEXT: Deuteronomy 6:4, 5.

CENTRAL TEACHING: "The Trinity. There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation." Fundamental Belief No. 2.

OUTLINE:

- I. There Is Only One God.
- II. Jesus Christ Is Deity
- III. The Holy Spirit Is a Person and Deity.
- IV. There Is Only One Creator—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- V. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Have the Same Characteristics.

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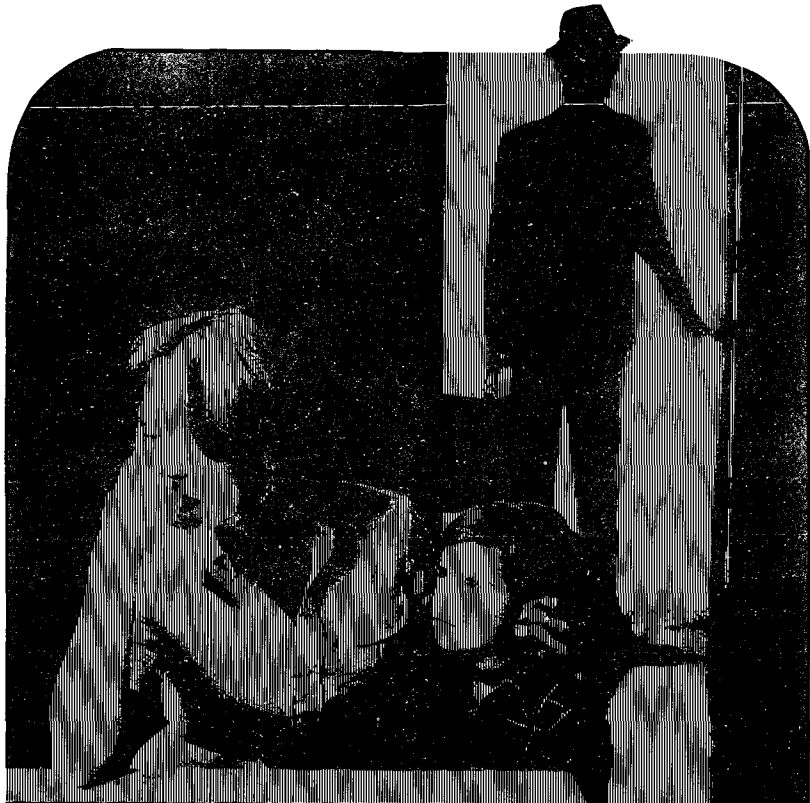
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