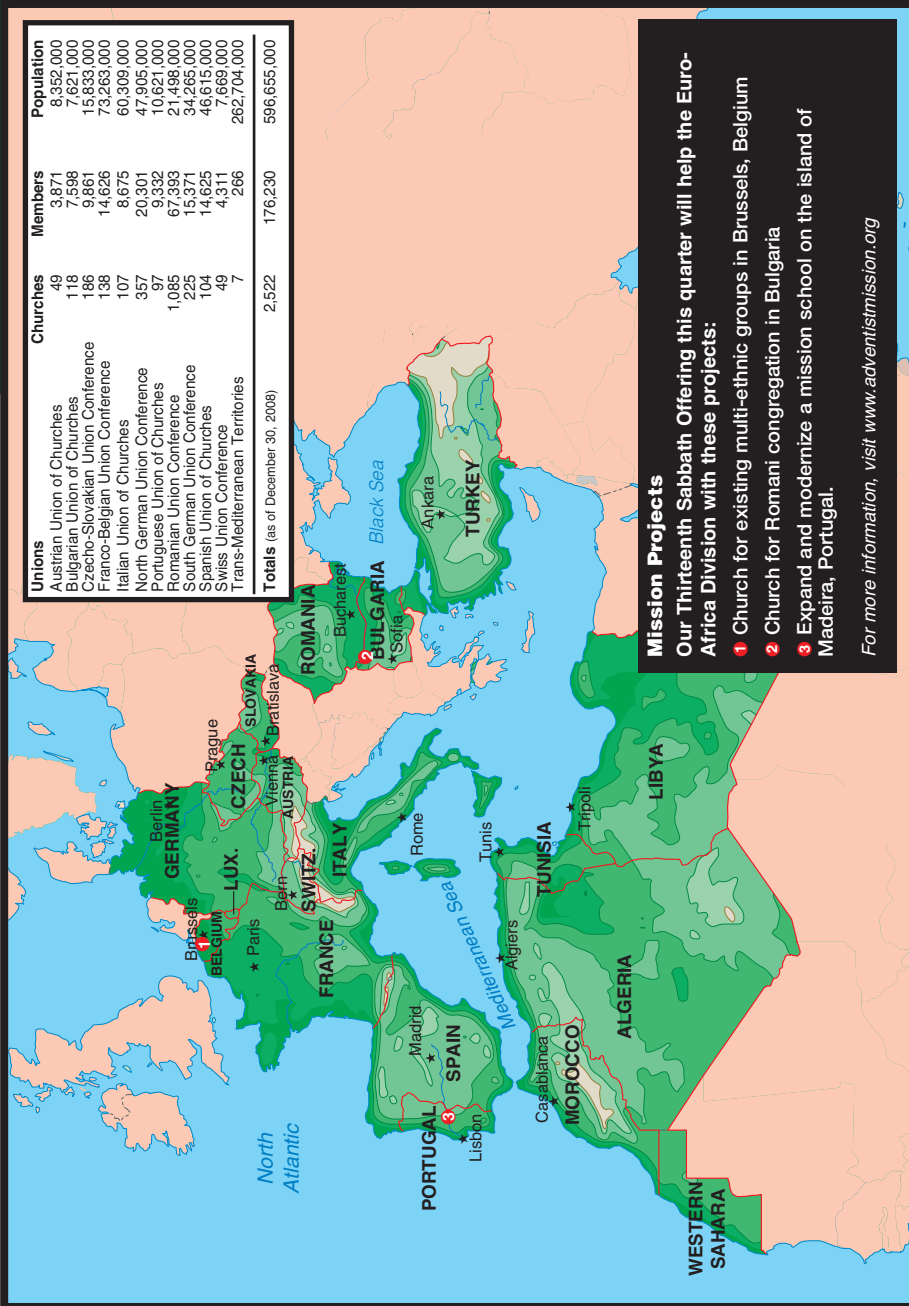


# Health and Healing



**Mission Projects**  
Our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help the Euro-Africa Division with these projects:

- 1 Church for existing multi-ethnic groups in Brussels, Belgium
- 2 Church for Romani congregation in Bulgaria
- 3 Expand and modernize a mission school on the island of Madeira, Portugal.

For more information, visit [www.adventistmission.org](http://www.adventistmission.org)



Where legally possible, offerings will go to these projects; otherwise special arrangement will be made with the General Conference for distribution of funds based on the laws of the countries where these offerings are collected.



\*EAQ100401\*

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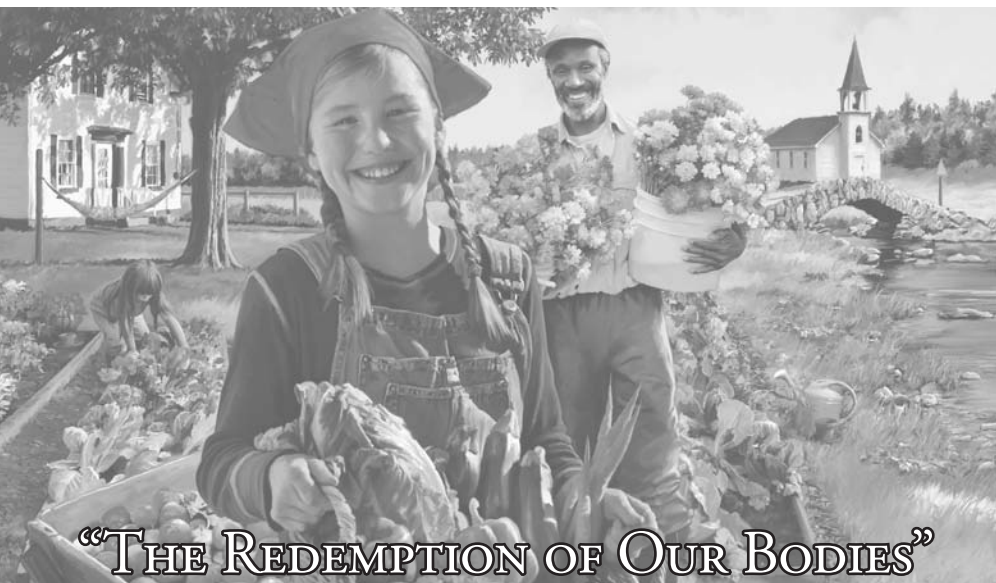
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## “THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES”

**I**f thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee” (*Exod. 15:26*).

The promise of immunity from Egypt’s diseases was given to the children of Israel soon after they left their captivity. Yet, this promise wasn’t based simply on supernatural intervention; it was based also, maybe even especially, on the natural laws of health. If they followed what the Lord commanded them to do in the area of health and sanitation, as opposed to what their captors did (for instance, while the Egyptians used human excrement for medicinal purposes, the Hebrews were to bury theirs outside the camp), they would be spared the ailments that afflicted the Egyptians.

Even here, then, we can see God’s concern for not just the spiritual well-being of His people but for their physical well-being, their health, as well. This idea also is found in the Hebrew word *shalom*, commonly translated as “peace.” Yet, the word conveys a deeper sense, that of a completeness, of a wholeness and a fullness that involves the total person, physical health included. The first use of the word *shalom* in the Old Testament appears when Jacob, inquiring about Laban, the grandson of Abraham’s brother, asks, “And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well” (*Gen. 29:6*). In both instances, the word translated “well” comes from *shalom*.

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Of course, it makes perfect sense that God would care about our physical health. After all, He created us as physical beings. Before sin, before the Fall, we were already in the flesh. We were made as fleshly beings. Our fall wasn't to the flesh; it was a fall in the flesh. Our bodies aren't evil, or bad, the prison houses for the soul or the like (as some religions have taught). Our bodies are wonderful gifts from a loving God who created us in His image and who wants us to enjoy our physical existence, at least as much as possible in this fallen world.

Thus, this quarter we are going to look at what's often been a neglected aspect of the wonderful truths God has given us as a movement, and that is the health message. The Lord revealed these principles to us for the same reason He died for us, because He loves us and wants what's in our best interest.

Of course, we all are mortal, we all face sickness, and, unless Christ comes in our lifetime, we all die. Nothing is going to change that now, and certainly not healthful living. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't do our best to take care of ourselves; that doesn't mean we aren't under a divine obligation to take care of our body

temples. As Paul expressed it, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20, NKJV).

This quarter's lesson on healthful living, written by the General Conference Health Department in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A., was produced with the desire to help us enjoy all the shalom we possibly can now, until that final day in which we receive, once and forever, "the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23, NIV).

*Our bodies are wonderful gifts from a loving God who created us in His image and who wants us to enjoy our physical existence, at least as much as possible in this fallen world.*

*Contributors from the Health and Temperance Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists were Allan Handysides, Kathleen Kuntaraf, Peter Landless, Stoy Proctor, and Thomas Zirkle.*

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# INTERSECTION

Your Faith, Your World

Where faith, ideas and life come together

[www.intersection.adventist.org](http://www.intersection.adventist.org)

Intersection is a half-hour, weekly television program broadcast internationally by the Hope Channel. Find local listings at [www.hopechannel.tv](http://www.hopechannel.tv)

A production of the Office of the President and the Communication Department of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church.



The Roma, or Gypsy people, are a tight-knit ethnic group living in communities throughout Europe and elsewhere. And they are opening up to the gospel. Fifteen years ago only a handful of Roma Adventists lived in one city in Bulgaria. Following evangelistic meetings, the church grew rapidly. Word spread through family groups, and today 1,000 Roma in this city are Seventh-day Adventists. So many visitors attend some Sabbath services that the members are asked to stay away to make room for guests.

In the town of Montana in northwestern Bulgaria, another Roma congregation has organized following evangelistic meetings. The 30 members and at least that many visitors meet in a rundown café. The lay pastor visits the people in their homes to build trust. He leads a study group for youth, none of whom are yet members.

This congregation needs a decent place to worship, a place to bring their friends to Jesus. I want to help them learn that Jesus died for them. I'm glad that part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will provide a church for this growing Roma congregation. For me it's personal.

ADVENTIST  
**MISSION**

[www.AdventistMission.org](http://www.AdventistMission.org)

# Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!



SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Matt. 22:37, 38; Rom. 12:1; Eph. 2:8, 9; 5:2; Col. 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 John 4:10.*

**Memory Text:** “Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!” (*Psalms 103:1, NKJV*).

As the Hubble telescope has probed ever deeper into the universe, the mysteries of creation have become ever grander. If such limitlessness is incomprehensible to our finite minds, how much more so must be its Creator, who—by necessity—must be more complex than what He has created. If we cannot understand the universe itself, how could we fully comprehend the One who made it?

Zophar the Naamathite asks Job, “‘Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?’” (*Job 11:7, NKJV*).

The answer, of course, is that he can't.

As if all this were not enough, this same God who created the universe is the One who in the person of Jesus bore not only our humanity but our sins, as well. The God who created the universe faced in Himself the punishment for our iniquities, in order that we could have eternal life.

With a truth like this ever before us, how could we not love this God and offer Him our very best praise and worship?

**The Week at a Glance:** An appreciation of the love, the power, and the majesty of our God should lead us to an attitude of praise, even in the worst of situations.

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 3.

## Our God of Love

By creating humanity with a free moral will, that is, by giving humans the capacity to choose to obey or disobey Him, God also had made provision for the potential consequences should humanity make the wrong choice with the freedom given it. That provision is what's known as the gospel, the good news of what Jesus has done for us in order to restore us to the eternal life that we originally were created to have.

**Read** 2 Timothy 1:9. Dwell on the implications of the idea that God had prepared the plan of salvation even before the world began. What does it tell us about God's unconditional love for us that He would do this even before we existed? How does this text help us understand what grace is all about?

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God's great love and grace were in operation for us even before our existence. The gospel was, in a sense, a warranty on our souls. God knew what was going to happen, and in His love and wisdom, He had the plan of salvation in place to meet the crisis when it arrived. And, of course, at the center of that plan was the sacrificial death of Jesus in our stead. The only way we could be redeemed from our fallen condition was through the Cross, the place where God Himself, in our humanity, bore the punishment for our sins. Nothing else would have sufficed; nothing else could have. No matter how steep the price, Jesus was willing to pay it in our behalf.

**How** then are we to respond in the face of such love for us? *Eph. 4:32, 5:2, Phil. 2:5–8, Col. 3:13*. What is the basic message that all these texts have in common?

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To love unconditionally is an alien concept to the human heart. There is almost always an ulterior motive, one usually tainted with self. Yet, at the same time, if we had to wait until our motives were absolutely pure, we might not get anything done, would we? How much time should you spend, then, dwelling on the character of Christ? How could that help you learn to act more and more out of the kind of unconditional love that has been shown to us in Jesus?



## God of Grace

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9, NKJV). Summarize in your own words the meaning of this text. Ask yourself this question too: Why must salvation be by faith and not by works? Why can works not save us? See Gal. 3:21.**

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An epileptic youth fell, convulsing, onto the New York City subway tracks as an oncoming train entered the station. Without hesitation, a stranger flung himself on top of the writhing youngster. Holding the boy flat, the man lay until the train screeched to a halt above him. Then he called out, “We are OK!” His risky act of self-denial was the only thing that saved the boy from certain death. What a powerful illustration of grace, of unmerited favor, of what Jesus has accomplished for us. Imagine how grateful that boy must have been to that man. How much more so should we, then, be grateful to Jesus for what He has done in our behalf?

The crucial question for all of us is, How do we manifest that gratitude in our lives? It’s one thing to talk about how grateful we are for Jesus or how much we love God because of what Jesus has done. But the real issue for us, the true test of the reality of our faith, is our works—works that arise not from trying to earn salvation (we can’t) but from a heart filled with gratitude and praise for what we have been given and promised in Jesus.

Sometimes, though, it’s not easy for us to appreciate fully what Christ has done for us. In a youth class where the plan of salvation was being explained, a boy raised his hand and said, “I have not done anything to deserve dying.” Well, the fact of the matter is we all deserve death. Or, perhaps, one could phrase this question another way. What have we done that we deserve living? What have we done that we deserve eternal life? What is it about us that God would go through so much to save us?

**Dwell on the paragraph above. What answer do you have to those questions? After all, what have any of us done to deserve eternal life? Who among us is so worthy that it’s understandable why Jesus would die for us? How does your answer help you better understand just how grateful we should be for salvation? More important, how well do your works reveal that gratitude?**

## A Love Relationship

**When** asked what was the most important of all commandments, Jesus responded, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (*Matt. 22:37, 38*). **What does that text mean? How are we to do what Jesus commands here?**

Think of the incredible implications of these words. According to Jesus, the most important of all commandments isn’t to keep the Sabbath, nor is it any of the prohibitions against killing, stealing, and adultery. On the contrary, the most important of all the commandments deals with what is in our hearts, in our souls; it deals with what is inside of us and not with our outward actions, however important they might be.

Indeed, if the most important commandment deals with our love to God, then the foundation of all the commandments deals with a relationship. After all, what is love if not a relationship—one in which we love God above and beyond everyone and everything else?

**Why** would love for God be the most important of all relationships? **Why would that be so fundamental? What spiritual dangers arise if we love something, anything, more than God?**

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God, in fact, had purposed from the start that humanity would be capable of enjoying a special relationship with Him. It was His purpose to provide a higher plane of experience for humans than for the rest of the creatures He had made on earth. This truth is reflected in Genesis 1:26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” None of the other creatures was made in His image; none of the other creatures was given the responsibility given to humanity. Hence, humans are not just highly developed apes; there’s a vast qualitative gap between humanity and the rest of God’s creation on earth. We are special, and part of that specialness is revealed in the love relationship that we are called to have with God, something that the animals and plants are not capable of experiencing.

**What is your own experience in loving God? How do you know that you love God? Write out a paragraph expressing what that means and how that love has changed your life. Bring it to class on Sabbath.**

## Praising the Lord

**“Be joyful in God. Christ is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Look toward the light. Accustom yourselves to speak the praise of God. Make others happy. This is your first work. It will strengthen the best traits of character. Throw the windows of the soul wide open heavenward, and let the sunshine of Christ’s righteousness in. Morning, noon, and night your hearts may be filled with the bright rays of heaven’s light.”—*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 7, 1904. How can you take these words and make them a reality in your own life?**

No question, as Christians we have much to praise God for; that is, whatever our struggles, whatever our fears, whatever our pains, whatever our losses and disappointments, we all have much to be thankful to God for, do we not? After all, in the end, no matter what our immediate situation is, we still have the hope and promise of eternal life in Jesus, the hope and promise that “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (*Rev. 21:4*). That alone, if nothing else, gives us reasons to praise.

**Whatever** your struggles right now, what are things that you have to praise God for? Write down a list of these things and why you are thankful to God for them.

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Before we can praise in sincerity, we need to personally have experienced the goodness of the Lord. We need to know for ourselves the reality of God and the reality of God’s love for us as individuals. This is something the Lord will do for anyone and everyone who is open to His leading. It is only our stubborn hearts and carnal natures that keep us from knowing for ourselves the goodness and love of God. And once we come to know that goodness and that love, how could we help but praise the Lord?

**How can you learn to live more and more in an attitude of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, despite whatever trials and sufferings you face?**

## A “Reasonable Service”

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

So far, we have seen that God is a God of love and grace, and He desires to have a special relationship with us, one that none of the other creatures here on earth can enjoy. At the center of that relationship stand the Cross and the plan of salvation, because—of all the reasons we have to love God—the Cross remains by far the best one.

**How** does 1 John 4:10—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”—capture the essence of what it means to love God?

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When you love someone, words of praise and appreciation are natural. When we, as Christians, give our hearts to the Lord, we get the gift of the Holy Spirit, and He fills the Christian with a deep sense of gratitude or appreciation. From such appreciation there will arise a heart filled with praise and adoration of God.

Yet, there is an important point that many folk forget. True praise for God involves the whole being. That is, we praise God not only on spiritual, emotional, and mental levels but with our physical bodies too. Application of healthful habits in life gives us clarity of mind, the balance to the whole.

Scientists have uncovered fascinating physical changes in the brain that follow habitual practices. For instance, drugs induce changes in the brain that become firmly entrenched and make for powerful addictions. Degeneration in our blood vessels likewise results in impaired brain functioning. A disease like Alzheimer’s is a result of destruction of brain cells. Clearly, we are dependent on our physical state to enjoy clear mental, emotional, and spiritual relationships. Many foods and drinks, included as a very occasional item in the diet, will have no measurable effect. But they become problems when incorporated as habitual practices. We give our God praise from the whole of our being by offering our whole life as a living sacrifice.

**Dwell more on the idea of praising God with our bodies. What might that mean? How might lifestyle choices be a means of praising God? At the same time, how might wrong lifestyle choices be a way of denying God?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Anointing of David,” pp. 637–642, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“David, in the beauty and vigor of his young manhood, was preparing to take a high position with the noblest of the earth. His talents, as precious gifts from God, were employed to extol the glory of the divine Giver. His opportunities of contemplation and meditation served to enrich him with that wisdom and piety that made him beloved of God and angels. As he contemplated the perfections of his Creator, clearer conceptions of God opened before his soul. Obscure themes were illuminated, difficulties were made plain, perplexities were harmonized, and each ray of new light called forth fresh bursts of rapture, and sweeter anthems of devotion, to the glory of God and the Redeemer. The love that moved him, the sorrows that beset him, the triumphs that attended him, were all themes for his active thought; and as he beheld the love of God in all the providences of his life, his heart throbbed with more fervent adoration and gratitude, his voice rang out in a richer melody, his harp was swept with more exultant joy; and the shepherd boy proceeded from strength to strength, from knowledge to knowledge; for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 642.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ In class, discuss your answer to the question of what it means to love God. How do we as fallen beings love God? What does that mean? How does love for God differ from love for other people or other things, whatever they are?
- ❷ Why is praise to God so important to us? How do praise and worship draw us closer to God? How do praise and worship help us to better know and love God? Also, why is praise to God especially important during times of crises? After all, anyone can praise God in good times, right? What does it take to be able to praise Him during bad ones?
- ❸ As we have been stressing all week, salvation is by faith alone. None of us is good enough to deserve salvation; more so, none of us ever could be made good enough to deserve it either. Salvation has to be a gift, a gift from a loving and benevolent God to a fallen race of beings who, at their core, are corrupted by sin and who in and of themselves have nothing to offer the Lord. And yet, at the same time, we have been called, over and over again in the Bible, to obey God. In other words, though we are not saved by works, works are a part of what it means to be saved and to have salvation. How do we understand the relationship between faith and works? How can we learn to praise God and reveal our love to Him through our works, while at the same time not get caught in the trap of believing that these works save us?

# Emergency Room Evangelism

by FÁBIO DA SILVA

I fell, landing hard on my shoulder. Searing pain shot through me when I tried to move.

My friends helped me up and took me to the hospital emergency room. Gurneys lined the wall filled with patients far more seriously injured than I was. One man had been shot, another stabbed, and another was seriously ill.

I walked around while waiting to be seen, praying silently for those lying around me. Then I saw I Samuel, a man I had met once. He was awaiting treatment too. I talked to him about Jesus and offered him Bible studies. He agreed to the studies, but nurses moved him before I could get his address.

I was admitted to the hospital. As I lay in my bed, I prayed for those I had met in the emergency room. I realized that God was with me, even when I hadn't felt His presence.

When I was released from the hospital, I went to the government office to apply for disability until I could work again. There I met Samuel and reminded him about the Bible studies. We decided to meet every afternoon to study together.

When I arrived at Samuel's home the next day, his wife met us. She had invited another woman to the study, and this woman invited another friend who invited her mother. The mother became so excited about the Bible studies that she called some of her friends and asked me to start another study with them. When I arrived at this woman's house I found seven people ready to study the Bible.

Within a few days 12 people were studying the Bible from one invitation. When the studies ended, all 12 asked to be baptized as the result of a chance meeting in the emergency room!

We needed a place to meet and learned that the conference had purchased a house nearby to be used to plant a church. It already had been remodeled and even had a baptistry! The new believers with whom I had studied were the first ones to be baptized in this new church. And their passion for sharing Christ spread to family and friends. Today we have 30 baptized members and 10 visitors in an area of Belém, Brazil, that before this had been difficult to reach.

This church may have begun as an "accident," but your purposeful mission offerings helped make it happen. Thank you for your support.

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FÁBIO DA SILVA is a builder in Belém, Brazil.

# The Power of Choice



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1–13; Deut. 30:10–19; Ps. 119:11; Col. 3:2; Heb. 11:8–10.*

**Memory Text:** “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (*Daniel 1:8*).

Jackie and Carol (not their real names) were sisters, separated by two years, who grew up together in a loving home. By the time she reached adolescence, Jackie was applying herself diligently to her studies. She did well and, after graduating from high school, went to university to study business. Today, she has a position with an investment company, is married, and lives in her own home.

Carol chose to party and enjoy herself. She dropped out of high school and began to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Today she is a single mother, living on government assistance, in rehabilitation for her drug dependency, and remains slightly jealous—though grudgingly proud—of her sister’s success.

Both girls had the same opportunities, chances, and set of choices. Each is living with the consequences of those choices.

Choices—we all have them, we all have to make them, and we all have to live with the consequences of the ones we make.

Hence, the important question for us all is, What will those choices be, and how can we know how to make the right ones? This week we will look a little more at the power of choice.

**The Week at a Glance:** God gave humans the power of choice. With those choices, however, come consequences.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 10.*

## The Reality of Freedom

We often hear people talk about *freedom*. Political movements usually, in one way or another, make great proclamations about *freedom*. One state in the United States boasts the motto “Live free or die.”

Freedom is, in fact, a very complicated subject. The word means different things to different people in different contexts. It’s not always easy to pin down exactly what people mean when they talk about “freedom.”

One thing, though, is certain: when God created humans, He made them moral beings, and in order for humans to be truly moral, they had to have moral freedom. In other words, they had to have the capacity to choose wrongly, if they wanted to. If not—if they didn’t have that option—they really couldn’t be free.

**Read** Genesis 2:16, 17. What is implied in God’s words to Adam? How is Adam’s moral freedom revealed in these texts?

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In Genesis 3:1–6, we see the moral freedom given to both Adam and Eve. Why would God have warned them against eating of the tree unless they had been given the power of choice? Hence, we see perfect beings in a perfect environment allowed moral freedom. At the very foundation of human existence, the reality of our freedom has been made readily apparent.

**Read** Genesis 3:1–6. What are the places where Adam and Eve both exercised free will? How could they at each of these stages have made better choices? What can we learn from these texts about the kind of choices we make?

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Human moral freedom must be something very important in the eyes of God. After all, look at what our abuse of that freedom cost Him. So sacred, so fundamental, is this gift that, rather than deny it to us, God would go to the cross instead of leaving us to our demise because of how we misused this gift.

**What basic mistake did both Adam and Eve make? How can we, with the knowledge of their mistakes, avoid doing similar things in our own context? In what ways do we face similar temptations?**



## The Consequences: Guilt and Fear

**Read** Genesis 3:7–13 and answer the following questions:

1. If you could define, in one word, what the couple experienced, what would that word be, and why? How do we, in our own experience today, sometimes face the same thing?

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2. What other emotion did they experience that they had not known before? Again, in what ways do we experience the same thing, and why?

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When the Watergate scandal in the United States was exposed by the press in the early 1970s, it was revealed that much of the White House activity focused on cover-up operations. When President Richard Nixon finally resigned, it was not because he either had authorized the break-in to the Democratic Party's premises or had a part in planning the break-in; instead, he was guilty of trying to cover up what others had done.

In a sense, what we see in these verses is Adam and Eve attempting a cover-up job, trying to hide from God what they had done or at least trying to shift the blame from themselves.

Of course, most folk who know the Lord know that it's impossible to hide anything from Him. When the hairs of our heads are numbered (*Matt. 10:30*), we can't fool Him about our actions. But we can fool ourselves, can't we? How easily we find ways to try to shift the blame on others. *If only my boss hadn't done this, then I wouldn't have done that. If only my spouse hadn't done this, then I wouldn't have done that. If only God had taken away the temptation when I prayed, then I wouldn't have fallen. If only this, if only that . . .*

Sure, we sometimes face powerful temptations, temptations that pull at the very fabric of our being. The situation is worse, too, because we already come with corrupted and fallen natures, which makes it that much easier for us to succumb when tempted and tried. As bad as sin is, as bad as the consequences often are, we make it worse when we refuse to accept responsibility. After all, how can we overcome sin if, in our own minds, we don't blame ourselves for it?

**How open are you to accepting responsibility for your wrong choices? Or do you always find ways to blame others for them? If so, when are you going to stop?**

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## Choices: Good and Bad

However much human nature changed after the fall of Adam and Eve, as humans we still have the power of choice. We still have free will. What we do with that free will is, really, entirely up to us. We can surrender to God and obey Him, or we can choose to go our own sinful way.

**Read** Hebrews 11:8–10. What does this tell us about Abraham and his choices? What can we learn from those choices?

**What** were, however, some of the wrong choices that Abraham made? What were the consequences of those choices? See *Genesis 16, 21:9–14*.

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“Polygamy had become so widespread that it had ceased to be regarded as a sin, but it was no less a violation of the law of God, and was fatal to the sacredness and peace of the family relation. Abraham’s marriage with Hagar resulted in evil, not only to his own household, but to future generations.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 145.

Read Daniel 1:8–16. The words “Daniel purposed in his heart” indicate that Daniel’s choice was both conscious and firm. The consequences of this deliberate and reasoned decision influenced the whole life of Daniel and occasioned his special blessing and attention by the Lord. Daniel reaffirmed his commitment to the Lord daily in his seasons of prayer and devotion.

**It is one thing to say that we should make right choices; it is another to have the conviction of heart to do it. What are ways that we can program our minds so that we are more likely to make the right choices?** *Ps. 119:11, Phil. 4:8, Col. 3:2*.

In the end, we are free to choose for the Lord or free to choose against Him. There is no middle ground. We are on one side or the other. This doesn’t mean that we don’t make mistakes or fall (look at Abraham, for instance); it means, instead, that we must “purpose in our hearts” to seek to do God’s will, whatever the cost. We must “purpose in our hearts” to choose what is right, and what is right is what God commands us to do. What is important, one thing that we should never forget, is that if we fall, if we make the wrong choices, God does not cast us off. The danger, instead, is that we can feel so guilty, we can feel so bad, that we are in danger of giving up. In such cases, our only hope is to cast ourselves at the foot of the cross and claim the forgiveness offered in Jesus.

## Choice and the Next Generation

**Read** Deuteronomy 30:10–19. What is the essence of the Lord’s words to His people? What points jump out at you? More important, how do you understand the idea that their choices will impact the lives of their seed, their children? What does that mean? How can our choices impact our children?

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The consequences of life choices affect not just ourselves but often our children, as well. Our influence is so much greater than we imagine, especially on our children.

One example is that of drinking alcohol. A whole lot of hoopla has been made of the supposed *benefit* of one glass of alcohol per day. This promotion, empowered by liquor industry lucre, has fooled many. Few people, though, are aware that these studies are seriously flawed and when corrections for these flaws have been applied, it is found that these touted benefits are nonexistent.

Alcohol remains what it always has been, one of the great scourges of humanity; and with all the warnings we have been given about it, how foolish to let our guard down now.

It is known that about 7 percent of persons who take a first drink will become alcoholic or problem drinkers. The choice to introduce alcohol into our homes, even just a little here and there, may or may not have repercussions on us individually. We may not be damaged greatly by it. But what of our children? What about the example you leave? If you drink, it’s much more likely your children will, as well. Is it worth choosing something that may steal the life of your child? Studies clearly have shown that children raised in homes where alcohol is present are much more at risk of alcohol problems than are children raised in homes where alcohol is not consumed. That simple fact alone should make us even more cautious about the examples we set.

Read again Deuteronomy 30:10–19. Your choices impact not just yourself but your children, too. And if you don’t have children, why risk making a choice that, in the end, presents so many hazards? God gave us these health principles for our good. Do we have the faith to trust Him at His word?

**Who has not seen examples of the devastation brought by alcohol use? Why be foolish and risk that for yourself or, even worse, why do something that influences others in the wrong direction?**

## Choice and Chance

**“And of Zion it will be said, ‘This one and that one were born in her; and the Most High Himself shall establish her.’ The Lord will record, when He registers the peoples: ‘This one was born there.’ Selah.”** (*Ps. 87:5, 6, NKJV*).

Though all have the power of choice, not all have an equal array of opportunities. Some choices limit future possibilities and opportunities. Some individuals suffer disadvantages without the choice being theirs. Consider the disadvantages that cloud the lives of some: children born into homes where drugs are used, where domestic violence prevails, where poverty is extreme. Consider the ravages of violent corruption and desperation. We all, to one degree or another, have been placed in situations that are not of our own choosing.

**Read Psalm 87:5, 6. What is the message there for all of us regarding some of the circumstances that are not of our own choosing? How, too, should these verses help us better understand the meaning of Matthew 7:1, 2?**

God knows our circumstances; God knows that many of us have been brought into horrible situations not of our own doing. God alone fully knows the background of us all.

Who hasn't, at times, met people struggling with some terrible issues, issues brought about by choices that others made: a choice of a parent to abandon the family; a choice of a spouse to commit adultery; a choice of a friend to betray someone who had trusted him or her? The variables are as endless as they are scary.

Yet, the good news in all this is that we can make one choice that is the most important of all. We can choose to follow Jesus. As we choose Jesus as our personal Savior, as we repent from our sinful ways, and as we are baptized, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through this gift, God now enters and influences our hearts and minds to direct our actions and to lead us to bear fruit. We become branches of the True Vine.

According to Galatians 5:22, 23, the fruit of the Spirit does not come individually but as a cluster. It is the result of the Spirit taking control of our will, at least to the degree that we choose to let Him. In other words, through the power of God working in our lives, we can—by our choices—allow the Lord to negate some of the negative things brought upon us by choices we ourselves never made.

**What are some of the things you have struggled with that are the result of choices that others, not you, have made? What better choices can you yourself make that could help in the healing process?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Good Angels More Powerful Than Evil Angels,” p. 96, in *Selected Messages*, book 1.

“Every soul has a heaven to win, and a hell to shun. And the angelic agencies are all ready to come to the help of the tried and tempted soul. He, the Son of the infinite God, endured the test and trial in our behalf. The cross of Calvary stands vividly before every soul. When the cases of all are judged, and they [the lost] are delivered to suffer for their contempt for God and their disregard of His honor in their disobedience, not one will have an excuse, not one will need to have perished. It was left to their own choice who should be their prince, Christ or Satan.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 96.

“God does not compel men to give up their unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which they will accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 458.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class, discuss the whole question of *freedom*. What does freedom mean? Is someone who chooses to be a slave really free? How free are we, really? What are the limits of freedom? When can freedom be a bad thing?
- 2 Think about all the negative effects of alcohol. Think of the lives ruined through its use. When contrasted with the supposed *benefits*, why is it smart never to get involved with it at all?
- 3 Some folk have been born into loving, Christian homes with parents who loved them, cared for them, and taught them about Jesus and His grace. Others have been born into homes where the parents abused them and neglected them, and even if they did talk about Jesus, they certainly didn't reflect Christ in their lives. Their actions revealed them to be agents of Satan, not of Christ. What hope does the gospel hold out to these people? What promises can you point them to?
- 4 There's no question, some folk have been born in horrible circumstances with consequences that, to one degree or another, will haunt them for the rest of their lives. At the same time, why must we be careful not to spend the rest of our lives blaming our parents, or our poor upbringing, for our problems? How can we learn to, through God's grace, move beyond these things?

## Long-Distance Faith

Silas Motea is a lay Bible worker who lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. He studied the Bible with a young couple who were baptized.

Then Stella, the young wife, lost her job. For months she searched for work and sometimes wondered why God was allowing this trial. At last she found a new job in her field of expertise. She shared her faith with her new coworkers, and that's when she met Mpho, a woman who wanted to know more about the Bible. The two women began studying the Bible together. Mpho found the Bible studies so compelling that she stopped in the middle of one Bible study and called her mother long distance to share what she was learning.

Mpho's mother, Siongile, was excited too and wanted to know more. But she lived 250 miles (400 kilometers) away. Stella didn't know anyone who lived near Siongile, so Mpho arranged to call her mother every day so she could join the Bible studies over the telephone. Stella, Mpho, and Siongile studied together, long distance, almost every day.

Siongile was excited about what she was learning and wanted someone to visit her. Stella didn't know anyone who lived in Siongile's area, so she asked Motea and his wife, who lived much closer to Siongile, to visit. They were happy to go.

When the couple arrived at Siongile's home, they found that the woman had invited several neighbors to join her for the Bible study. During the Bible study Motea learned that Siongile had been searching for God even before her daughter had called her. And when Siongile learned that her daughter was studying with Adventists, she asked an Adventist nurse to take her to church.

Siongile was so excited about what she was learning that Motea and his wife spent the entire day studying the Bible with her. They stayed overnight and continued their Bible studies the following day. In two days the trio had completed an entire series of Bible studies, and Siongile sighed, "Why did I have to wait so long to find this message? If I had learned this while I was still young, I could have raised my children in this faith and shared the good news with my friends!"

Siongile traveled 250 miles [400 kilometers] to tell her other children what she was learning. Both Siongile and Mpho have been baptized; and Siongile wants to become a literature evangelist so she can share her new faith with others.

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*Our mission offerings help provide materials to reach those who are searching.*

# Celebrating Spiritual *and* Physical Fitness



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Ps. 139:13–15; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 9:24–27; Eph. 2:8; 2 Tim. 2:3–5; 4:7; Heb. 11:6.*

**Memory Text:** “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (*Isaiah 40:31, NIV*).

Much effort had gone into the preparation that ultimately led to Roger Bannister running the mile in under four minutes. There was endless training and practice that included, among other things, strenuous mountain climbing. Meanwhile, others around the world had their eyes on the prize that had meant so much to this young athlete.

May 6, 1954, dawned, the day that Bannister had been preparing for emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically for years now. Yet, the morning before, he had slipped on a polished floor and limped the rest of that day! Nevertheless, the race began the next day, and Bannister ran the mile in 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds—the first person to run the mile in less than four minutes!

Using imagery from athletics, the apostle Paul encourages us to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (*Heb. 12:1, NIV*). Yet, the race Paul is talking about is a race so much more important than the one Bannister won! This race demands our best possible spiritual and physical fitness, and an important component of that fitness is derived from exercise, our topic this week.

**The Week at a Glance:** Physical exercise is a very important part of keeping and maintaining our health.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 17.*

## The Spiritual Athlete

**“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). What was Paul, the great teacher of salvation by faith alone, talking about here? What point was he making?**

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Across the centuries, humans have been fascinated with athletics, and many have marveled at feats of the athlete. Who hasn't at times been envious of what these people have done with their bodies? And yet, whatever their natural abilities, most of these people achieved what they did through sheer hard work.

Someone once asked an award-winning, long-distance runner if the runner thought this person could become a great runner, as well. “Sure,” the athlete replied, “all you need to do is run 15 miles a day for six days a week and then, on the seventh, run 25. Do that for a year, and you'll have a good chance of making it.”

**The Bible, in numerous places, compares the life of faith with some sort of athletic endeavor. Read the following texts (1 Cor. 9:24–27, Phil. 3:12–14, 2 Tim. 2:3–5). What basic point are they making, and how have you experienced the meaning of these texts yourself?**

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From merely looking at their facial expressions, one easily can form an incorrect impression of how much (or little) joggers, cyclists, and runners are enjoying themselves. It sometimes may appear that the whole endeavor is a punishment. There are, however, many benefits to persisting with an exercise program. These will be discussed later in the week. The benefits come from the determined application and discipline required to perform the exercise itself. There are certain rules to be adhered to. Regularity of exercise is essential. There must be a goal and sometimes even a prize.

These principles apply to both spiritual and physical fitness. To be spiritually fit, we need to focus on Jesus. We need to read His Word, pray, and meditate. There are so many things that distract our attention. These may include good and noble causes—our work, studies, or even church activities. But we need to cast off the activities and distractions that keep us from growing in grace and prioritize our goals if we are going to finish strong.



## When Faith's Muscles Atrophy

**Read** Ephesians 2:8 and Hebrews 11:6. How are these verses related? Most important, how do we maintain and build up the faith that we have been given as a gift?

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Those who have suffered a broken bone or severe joint sprain have experienced the immobilization necessary for healing to take place. Supportive casts, bandages, and even surgical pins are used to help stabilize an injured joint or fractured limb. As a result of the immobilization, the muscles related to that particular area are not used. With this lack of use, a process of atrophy, or wasting, occurs. The muscles become thin and weak. When the healing of the bone or joint has taken place, movement begins to return, and with sustained use and exercise, muscle strength is regained.

“Action is a law of our being. Every organ of the body has its appointed work, upon the performance of which its development and strength depend. The normal action of all the organs gives strength and vigor, while the tendency of disuse is toward decay and death. Bind up an arm, even for a few weeks, then free it from its bands, and you will see that it is weaker than the one you have been using moderately during the same time. Inactivity produces the same effect upon the whole muscular system.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 237, 238.

So it is with faith. If faith is not exercised, it does not grow. The vital movements and actions of the limbs and body of faith cannot take place. Though faith is a gift, if it is not exercised, if we do not make choices based on it, if we do not reach out and by it claim God's promises, if we are not willing to take chances based on faith, if we will not exercise faith to the point of being brought to our knees in submission and humility, then we are in danger of losing it.

What a tragedy, because faith is one of the most precious of all God's gifts. Only those who know what it's like to live in this world without faith, without the knowledge of God, without the hope found in His promises, can tell you just how wonderful and precious a gift it really is.

**How often are you exercising the gift of faith? You might say that you believe and that you have faith, but how well do your actions show it? How can you learn to exercise your faith daily in small things so that when big things come, you will be able to reveal the faith that you profess?**

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## Believing Without Seeing

The dejected young officer kicked a small stone in the dry, desert sand. His mother was to undergo surgery for breast cancer. The demands of the military operational schedule would not allow him to return to be at her side. With a tinge of anger and rebellion, he asked, “Why? Why? Why?” He had been praying for faith, and, in these moments, when things were not going as he wanted, when his prayers weren’t answered as he had hoped, he found his faith waning. The darkness of doubt crept into his soul, and for a few moments, he wondered if God existed at all. Then as the sun rose and the beauty of the dawn filled the sky, his mind went to some verses in the Bible, to a story that he had known since childhood, and as he dwelt upon that story, his faith returned. However difficult it was for him to understand about things, however hard it was for him to see the reasons for what had happened, he pressed on ahead, trusting and loving His Lord Jesus.

**Read** John 20:24–29. What does this story say to you? How often do you need to believe without seeing? Why is that such an important aspect of what it means to exercise faith?

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After Jesus patiently and tenderly revealed His wounds to Thomas, Thomas acknowledged, “My Lord and my God” (vs. 28). The text that stuck in the young military officer’s mind was, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (vs. 29, *NKJV*). This was indeed the key—to believe without seeing; to take God at His word without insisting on *proof*. After all, for some folk, all the *proof* in the world will not convince them to believe. Living by faith is, then, going on what we already know of God’s love; it means trusting God based on what we already have experienced; it means taking Him at His word because He has shown us His goodness and love—no matter how difficult our circumstances are and no matter how much we do not see or understand.

**When was the last time you needed to act on faith without seeing? What happened? What did you learn from that experience that could help others who might be facing a similar situation? If you had it to do over, what would you have done differently, and why?**

## The Benefits of Physical Exercise: Part 1

So far this week we have been looking at what it means to exercise faith. We have looked at some of the Bible's images of athletes and racing that were used to talk about the Christian walk of faith.

At the same time, too, we have been told that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20*).

**Read 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.** What is Paul saying there? How might the question of physical exercise be linked to these verses?

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Our bodies are gifts from God. They are not to be abused. Science has shown us, over and over, that almost every aspect of our physical being is benefited by exercise. Sure, we were not all called to sprint four-minute miles. But in almost all cases, we can do enough exercise in order to benefit ourselves greatly, not just physically but mentally and spiritually, as well.

As Christians, we do not believe in the Greek idea of a separate immortal soul. We do not believe the pagan idea that the body is somehow evil. Our minds, our bodies, these are both gifts from God, and they are very closely related. How we feel physically will impact how we feel mentally, and that will impact how we feel spiritually, as well. Everything is related, and we cannot neglect any aspect of our being without impacting other aspects, as well.

“The requirements of God must be brought home to the conscience. Men and women must be awakened to the duty of self-mastery, the need of purity, freedom from every depraving appetite and defiling habit. They need to be impressed with the fact that all their powers of mind and body are the gift of God, and are to be preserved in the best possible condition for His service.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 130.

Those who exercise can attest to the wonderful benefits that come from it. And the good news is, you do not need excessive amounts of it.

**Though most of us are busy, we are commanded by God to take care of ourselves, and exercise is one important way we can do it. What about you? How much time do you spend exercising? What excuses do you use to get out of doing it?**

## The Benefits of Physical Exercise: Part 2

No question, just as faith needs to be exercised, our bodies do, as well. Before starting an exercise program, however, we need to be sure that our health will permit regular exercise. If there are any preexisting health conditions or disabilities, it is wise to be guided by a physician as to the appropriate intensity of exercise to be undertaken.

Three points need to be kept in mind with any exercise program: frequency, intensity, and duration.

1. Frequency. Currently, recommendations for optimal health and fitness suggest that we should exercise at least six times a week.

2. Intensity. The appropriate intensity of exercise will vary depending upon your age and medical condition. Over time, if you are consistent, you will be able to exercise harder and harder. It's good to get your heart beating faster and to work up a sweat. You have to pace yourself. What works for one person might not work for another.

3. Duration. It is estimated that 45–90 minutes of exercise per day is great. It would be beneficial if exercise were at least done for 30 minutes, six days per week. The exercise time may be divided into portions. For example, 10 minutes each morning, midday, and evening. It should be arranged to suit your program. Walking is an excellent and sustainable form of exercise.

There are many proven benefits of exercise. Regular exercise helps control weight. It is beneficial in helping to reduce high blood pressure and an important adjunct to any medical therapy for high blood pressure (under medical supervision and guidance). When exercise is regularly performed, there is a decreased incidence of Type 2 diabetes. Additional benefits to heart health include the fact that regular exercise improves the protective, healthy high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL).

Regular exercise gives one an improved feeling of well-being. This occurs partly through chemicals called endorphins, which the body produces during exercise. Exercise has been associated with delaying the onset of Alzheimer's disease, and it generally improves mental performance. People who exercise regularly have less depression. Exercise plays a role in the prevention of breast and colon cancer. The benefits are many and varied.

**Read Psalm 139:13–15. Dwell on just how incredibly designed we are and what a miracle of creation our mere existence is. Why is it so important for us, then, to take care of our bodies? What kind of exercise regimen are you on, and how, if needed, could you improve what you are doing?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Touch of Faith,” pp. 59–72, in *The Ministry of Healing*.

“The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has enjoined upon us—to engage, to the extent of our ability, in helping and blessing those who need the help we can give them. Strength comes by exercise; activity is the very condition of life. Those who endeavor to maintain Christian life by passively accepting the blessings that come through the means of grace, and doing nothing for Christ, are simply trying to live by eating without working. And in the spiritual as in the natural world, this always results in degeneration and decay. A man who would refuse to exercise his limbs would soon lose all power to use them. Thus the Christian who will not exercise his God-given powers not only fails to grow up into Christ, but he loses the strength that he already had.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 80, 81.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 What other parallels can you draw between exercising faith and exercising the body? Where do the parallels break down?
- 2 Someone driving in a car saw a woman jogging. He rolled down his window and yelled, “You’re going to die, anyway!” However rude, the man was right. As important as physical exercise is, and no matter how physically fit we become, we must always remember that, in the end, we are mortal and—unless we happen to be alive when Jesus returns—we are all going to die. The best exercise regimen in the world doesn’t save us from death. Healthful living and exercise do not lead to eternal life. Only faith in Jesus does. Why is it important always to keep this distinction in mind?
- 3 If possible, bring to class some of the latest validated scientific findings on the benefits of exercise. What do the studies teach, and how can we help our church as a whole better understand the benefits of exercise? How, too, can you get church members to start exercising more than they are now?
- 4 Without being judgmental of anyone, look around at your church. Do folk look like they are getting plenty of exercise, or do they look like they need to do more? What can you do to help?

## Prayer Warriors

Larisa knows the power of prayer. Prayer strengthened her during the difficult years when her homeland, Belarus, was under Communist control. Today she leads a prayer ministry that reaches out to all people.

Andrei walked into the prayer room one Sunday and asked the members to pray for him. His doctors said he was dying of cirrhosis of the liver. "I've prayed for months to be free of my addictions, but I'm weak," he said. "Please, pray for me."

The prayer group prayed for Andrei, and Larisa taught him more about God. As Andrei surrendered his will completely to God, he received victory from his addictions. His body was healed as well, and today Andrei leads one of several prayer groups in his city.

"Life was hopeless for me before God changed my life," he said. "Now I have hope and peace and a mission to reach other addicts for Jesus. I invite them to come to Jesus and find strength in prayer."

Many who come to Larisa's prayer group seeking help are not believers. Some are members of other churches, but everyone receives earnest prayer.

Lyuda, a new believer, asked Larisa to pray for her son, Maxim. He had broken his leg, and bone splinters had failed to heal properly. Doctors said he would not walk again without surgery, but they couldn't afford to pay the medical costs. The group prayed for Maxim, and a few months later X-rays revealed that the bone splinters were growing together. The boy did not need surgery.

Arturo was a Christian, but his wife was not. When she lost her voice, doctors found nodes growing on her larynx. Arturo asked Larisa and her prayer warriors to pray. Larisa said they would pray first for her spiritual well-being and then for her physical health.

Arturo's wife began attending church, and in time she gave her heart to God and was baptized. The prayer group continued praying, and when she returned to see her doctor, he could find no sign of the nodes on her larynx. Today she sings for God's glory.

"Everyone who asks for prayer receives prayers," Larisa says. "God always answers our prayers, and many have come to know Jesus because of intercessory prayer. Some have received different answers than they asked for, but God's answers are better than those they pray for."

Believers in Belarus continue to struggle for their religious freedom. Our prayers and mission offerings are helping believers in this country reach out to others.

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LARISA FILIPOVA *leads a prayer group in Minsk, Belarus.*

# The Water of Life



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 2:10, Isa. 40:31, Matt. 9:2–7, John 4:1–26, 9:1–11, Rom. 6:1–6.*

**Memory Text:** “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (*John 4:14*).

It is amazing how our senses can deceive us. The earth is spinning on its axis at about a thousand miles per hour, while careening around the sun at about 18 miles per second. And yet, despite all this motion, it feels to us perfectly immobile. Meanwhile, things like tables, chairs, rocks, and people (matter, basically)—however solid they appear to our senses—are mostly empty space. At any given moment, billions of subatomic particles from the sun are burrowing through our bodies, and yet we do not feel, see, or hear any of them. And, despite all outward appearances, our human bodies are made mostly of—water. Water? Yes, we are truly aquatic beings, in the sense that our bodies are made up of about 60 percent water. Our brains, believe it or not, are about 85 percent water. Even our hard bones are about 10 to 15 percent water.

Full of wonder and mystery, water is foundational to all physical life. Without it, we could not exist. This week we will take a look at both the spiritual and physical aspects of this truly essential liquid.

**The Week at a Glance:** God is the Source of physical and spiritual water, which is essential for life.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 24.*

## The Living Water

**Read** John 4:1–26. What are the different ways water is used in this story? What do the different kind of waters mean? What message is there from this story for us today?

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Jesus met a woman in Samaria who had come to draw water at Jacob's well. He asked for a drink. In the ensuing conversation, He told her that He could give her water that would take away her thirst forever and referred to Himself as the "Living Water." Such a concept implies His ability to satisfy the need for peace, joy, freedom from guilt, forgiveness, and a sense of oneness with God. Christians find such a solution in Jesus Christ. It is wonderful that He has offered to all of us an opportunity to come and unite with Him in service. His offer is still valid today, for He never changes. Many have found their restlessness, insecurities, and sense of futility transformed as they partake of His compassion, love, and acceptance.

God has promised us an abundance of spiritual water, as long as we seek Him. In Revelation 22:17, He invites us all to "take the water of life freely." We can experience an abundance of the Holy Spirit in our lives as long as we are close to Jesus Christ, the Fountain of Life. In His love, He invites everyone to drink freely of the Water of Life (*John 4:13, 14*). His invitation to receive this Living Water forever is extended to all of us. As God provided the children of Israel water from the rock, so Jesus is this Water of Life (*1 Cor. 10:1–4*) to us today.

No matter who we are, no matter what our past has been, no matter what our mistakes are, and even no matter what our present situation is, the offer of this Living Water is for us. We are told to drink freely of it. It's offered to us through the grace of Christ.

**No question, Jesus is Living Water for all of us. What has your own experience with this water been? How have you known for yourself the benefits and promises found in it? Are you taking of it freely, or are you holding yourself somewhat back? If the latter, ask yourself why. Whatever immediate gains you might think you are getting from holding back, how could they possibly compare to promises offered us in Jesus?**



## The Waters of Baptism

Read Acts 8:35–39. Here Philip preached the Scripture to the eunuch, telling him the good news of Jesus. The eunuch accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God. When they saw water, he asked Philip, “What hinders me to be baptized?” He then was baptized by Philip, and he went on rejoicing.

There is no miracle in the water itself; it is a symbol of cleansing. It is the gift of the Spirit that transforms the life. Baptism is an outward proclamation of the acceptance of Jesus. Read John 3:5–8. Jesus told Nicodemus that “ ‘unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’ ” (*NKJV*).

**What** takes place when someone has been baptized by immersion (*Rom. 6:1–6*)?

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A genuine conversion symbolized in baptism by immersion signifies the cleansing of one’s life. The New Testament mentions baptism by immersion many times, emphasizing the importance of this rite in our Christian experience.

“ ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Acts 2:38, NIV*).

When we are saved, we are spiritually baptized into Christ (*Gal. 3:26, 27*) and received into His body, the church (*1 Cor. 12:13*). In biblical symbolism, baptism by water represents inner cleansing (*Eph. 5:25, 26*) and spiritual rebirth (*John 3:5*), both of which are central themes of salvation.

Many people take baptism for granted, but for many in the world, the act requires immense courage. In a few countries, baptism can lead to isolation from spouse, family, and community and to imprisonment or even to death.

Among Jesus’ last recorded words on earth were these: “ ‘Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned’ ” (*Mark 16:16, NIV*). Think about that for a moment. Jesus’ very last call is to believe in Him, which includes a call to be baptized. If He puts it in that category, we cannot overlook its significance.

**Read again Romans 6:1–6. How have you experienced the reality of Paul’s words there? How has your “newness of life” in Christ changed you? What have you been spared from? In what areas do you still need more change? How can you better cooperate with the Lord, who offers to wash away your sins?**

## The Uses of Water

**Genesis 2:10** reveals that in the Edenic earth, even before sin, water was available for God's creatures. What's implied in that fact?

As creatures, we all need air, water, and food to preserve our existence (*Gen. 1:29*). In the description of Eden, aside from the presence of a beautiful garden, there was also a river that gave rise to four other rivers, Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. God provided water to preserve the lives of His creatures.

As God's creatures, we need water in order to survive. In fact, every body cell, tissue, and organ needs water to function. Water helps to regulate body temperature, transports nutrients and oxygen to the cells, removes waste, prevents constipation, moistens tissues, cushions joints, and keeps blood flowing throughout the body. We need to drink more water than our thirst demands. Many liquids, such as water, milk, and fruit and vegetable juices, contribute to hydration; however, alcohol and caffeinated beverages may paradoxically increase fluid loss, which may be harmful.

Pure water is superior to many other drinks. Start your day with one or two glasses of water and continue drinking water between meals to make sure you are well hydrated.

Water has other healthful functions, as well. Hand washing may reduce transmission of many infectious agents from person to person. A large percentage of infectious disease would be eliminated by hand washing, especially before eating. Daily bathing removes accumulated dirt, which can lead to disease, as well.

**Read Leviticus 11:40; 13:6, 34, 53, 54; 15:1–13.** What point comes through here?

A fair amount of scholarly debate exists regarding the purpose behind these cleansing rituals in the Old Testament. Many argue that these are purely ritual, with no health aspect involved at all. And though in some cases that point seems more obvious than in others (such as when the priests had to wash their hands and feet before going into the tabernacle [*see Exod. 30:20, 21*]), with what we know today about germs and cleanliness, the Lord could have instituted these things for health purposes as well, even if the Israelites themselves had no idea of germ theory and the like.

Whatever the facts are, today we know that using water to keep ourselves clean gives us wonderful health benefits.

## The Power of Water

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (*Isa. 40:31*).

**Meditate** upon this text. What promises can you take from it for yourself? How can you apply it to yourself?

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An historic experiment conducted by Dr. Pitts at Harvard University had athletes—walking on a treadmill at three and a half miles per hour in a hot environment—consume as much water as they lost in their sweat. At the end of the experiment, the athletes felt as if they could continue walking—seven hours later!—G. C. Pitts, R. E. Johnson, F. C. Conzolzio, “Work in the Heat as Affected by Intake of Water, Salt, and Glucose,” *American Journal of Physiology* 142:253, 1944. The same athletes, deprived of water during the experiment on another day, reached the point of exhaustion within three and half hours.

The message is obvious. Water can give us power and energy, especially when we are doing strenuous work. In contrast, inadequate water intake may result in dehydration, which leads to fatigue and exhaustion much more quickly than if we were drinking enough water. Also, insufficient water can impair our vital functions. Though compensatory mechanisms may come into play, a chronic water deficiency will lead to ill health.

It is possible that adequate fluid intake may limit some symptoms such as headaches, thus decreasing the need for headache medicine, which can cause bad side effects, especially if used often. As most athletes know, during prolonged and arduous exercise, water requirements increase significantly.

Nevertheless, it is possible to drink too much water, resulting in water intoxication. The appropriate amount of water intake depends upon multiple factors, such as temperature, body size, and kidney function, but it should be sufficient to result in pale or clear urine in normal circumstances. In most cases people should make an effort to drink a minimum of six to eight (at least 250 ml per glass) glasses of water per day, more when doing strenuous work in hot environments.

**How much water are you drinking each day? Make a conscious choice to keep track of how much water you are drinking, and if you're not getting enough, what's holding you back from doing something so simple and yet that holds so many benefits for you?**

## Water as Therapy

“He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight” (John 9:11).

**Read** John 9:1–11, the story of Jesus healing the man blind from birth. What is different about this healing miracle in comparison to some of the others? See for instance Matt. 8:8–13; 9:2–7; Luke 8:46, 47. What possible meaning could be found in this difference, if any?

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It is essential that water used both internally and externally be clean. Many people have difficulty accessing pure, clean water. Water taken from contaminated sources requires either chemical treatment or boiling to make it safe for consumption and domestic use.

Water is beneficial externally as well as when used internally. It may be used externally in treatments known as hydrotherapy. The intelligent, careful use of hot and cold wet towels in this process of hydrotherapy may bring relief to a number of conditions. Caution should be employed in cases of poor circulation, persons with diabetes, or neurological illnesses. It could very well be to your advantage to get proper training in the use of hydrotherapy.

“But many have never learned by experience the beneficial effects of the proper use of water, and they are afraid of it. Water treatments are not appreciated as they should be, and to apply them skillfully requires work that many are unwilling to perform. But none should feel excused for ignorance or indifference on this subject. There are many ways in which water can be applied to relieve pain and check disease. All should become intelligent in its use in simple home treatments. Mothers, especially, should know how to care for their families in both health and sickness.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 237.

**How conscientious are you with your health habits in general? That is, how could you be taking better care of yourself now? Why wait until your bad habits make you sick? How much better it would be to start following good health principles now and prevent disease instead of going through the hassle of seeking to be cured.**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Beverages,” pp. 419, 420, in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*; “Frequent Bathing,” p. 104, in *Counsels on Health*.

“Those who treat the sick should move forward in their important work with strong reliance upon God for His blessing to attend the means which He has graciously provided, and to which He has in mercy called our attention as a people, such as pure air, cleanliness, healthful diet, proper periods of labor and repose, and the use of water.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 303.

“The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ’s words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world. In smiting Christ, Satan thought to destroy the Prince of life; but from the smitten rock there flowed living water. As Jesus thus spoke to the people, their hearts thrilled with a strange awe, and many were ready to exclaim, with the woman of Samaria, ‘Give me this water, that I thirst not.’ John 4:15.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 In some parts of the world, people can walk into a grocery store and find about forty varieties of bottled water. In other parts of the world, folk have to struggle to find enough clean water to drink. What can we do to help those who don’t have enough water for life’s basic necessities? What is the water situation where you live? How can we improve the stewardship of water in our communities?
- 2 If you have access to a health professional or someone who knows about the topic of water, ask him or her to come to class and spend some time giving more details about the use and benefits of water. Ask, too, about the daily things we can do in order to derive as many health benefits as possible from the use of water.
- 3 Jesus tells us to come and drink freely of the water of life (*Rev. 22:17*). What does that mean? How do we do that? What requirements, if any, are placed on us in order to drink of this water?

## The Lost Cow

Subba Rao was worried. His cow had wandered off while grazing, and Subba couldn't find her. Like most people living in the villages near his in Andhra Pradesh, India, Subba Rao relied on his livestock for a livelihood. Now his cow was missing. Subba asked his neighbors if they had seen his cow, but no one had. Subba asked people in the neighboring villages if they had seen his cow, but again no one had seen her. Subba grew more concerned, for the cow was his most valuable possession, and she was about to have a calf.

Subba offered gifts to the idols in his home and prayed that his cow would find her way home. But days passed, and the cow did not return. When three weeks had passed with no word about the cow's whereabouts, his friends encouraged him to forget about her. Surely she was dead by now.

Then someone suggested that Subba Rao ask the Adventist pastor who lived in the village to pray for his cow. Subba saw no harm in trying, so he went to see the pastor and asked, somewhat reluctantly, whether he would pray for Subba's lost cow. The pastor agreed. He called together several church members to meet and pray together for Subba's missing cow. Subba watched and listened to the believers' prayers. The pastor and church members urged Subba to believe in Jesus, the true and living God, the only God who could hear and answer his prayers. Subba nodded thoughtfully.

Three days later Subba's cow returned home. The next day the cow delivered a healthy calf. Subba Rao and his family rejoiced over the lost cow. He told the pastor and the church members of their answered prayers.

The pastor invited Subba and his family to come to church and worship God, who had heard and answered Subba's prayers. Subba accepted, and today he and his family worship in the Adventist church regularly. The family is learning more about the God who cares for them and even cares for their cow. Soon Subba and other members of his family will be baptized into God's family. After all, if Jesus cares about their missing cow, how much more does He care about them?

Our mission offerings help plant churches in villages throughout India and around the world.

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SUBBA RAO *shares his faith in his home village of India.*

# The Environment



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Genesis 1–2:7, 18–24; 3:7, 17–19; Ps. 24:1; Matt. 25:34–46; Mark 2:27, 28; 3:4.*

**Memory Text:** “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (*Psalm 24:1, NIV*).

The Creator spent the first five days of Creation week preparing the environment for the human beings who were to follow. He placed Adam and Eve in a garden (*Gen. 2:8, 15*) and gave them the oversight of all earthly creatures. This offered them the opportunity for study and enjoyment and the chance to develop as God’s representatives on earth. The Sabbath would seal their relationship with Him.

Sin changed God’s preferred plan. The environment became hostile. Hard toil replaced pleasurable work. Selfishness ruled. Exploitation of the earth’s resources began and continues to this day. Forests have been cut down. Water courses have been changed, and pollution is rampant. The richness of the soil has been squandered thoughtlessly. Sunlight, though crucial for health, can become a foe of health if we are exposed to it in excess. Through all this, the world still supports our existence here, despite our endless abuse of the planet.

**The Week at a Glance:** Our environment is just as much a gift from God as life itself; thus, we have a responsibility toward it.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 1.*

## Creating the Environment

Some theories today depict the creation of the earth, and life on it, as nothing more than an accident, nothing but the chance creation of amoral forces that over time and without thought brought the earth and all life on it into existence. In contrast, the Bible presents a radically different picture of our origin. The contrast between the godless and purposeless model of our origin, as expressed by the theory of evolution, and the Genesis Creation account could not be more distinct. These two views are, at their core, incompatible.

**Read** Genesis 1 and Genesis 2:1–7. How did God’s acts of Creation week prepare the way for the crowning act of Creation—man and woman? How did creation of humans differ from the rest of creation?

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Let us pause for a moment at the scene of the Creator God working on the creation of man and woman. First, He forms Adam from the ground; here is God, the Sculptor. Then, when all else is ready, He bends down and breathes His own breath into Adam’s waiting form. God the Giver of life brings Adam to life. What a marvelous picture of our God at work!

But that is not all. He becomes God the Surgeon as He takes a rib from Adam and forms Eve to be the partner of Adam and the mother of the race. She is also to stand by his side in this perfect setting (*see Gen. 2:18–24*). He then puts these brand-new beings into the place of beauty and wonder He had spent previous time preparing.

God provided the most healthful surroundings for Adam and Eve. The restful green of foliage, the color of flowers and fruit—all combined to make the ideal home for them. The Lord did not plan a life of idleness for our first parents. They were to work in the Garden and care for it. In this way they would find satisfaction and enjoyment. They would learn more of God in what we have come to call God’s second book—*nature*.

**Read through the Genesis Creation account again in Genesis 1 and 2. What do we find there that points us toward the idea that, as humans beings, we should be good stewards of the earth?**



## The Sabbath Environment

How interesting that amid all the work of creation, God was not quite done until He created the Sabbath day. What a contrast: all the work of creating the world, the animals, the seas, the grass, and finally humankind—and then, one final act, the act of resting.

**Read** Genesis 2:2, 3. What can we read into the fact that God Himself rested on the Sabbath day?

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God Himself, in the role of Creator, keeping the seventh-day Sabbath? Talk about showing us the deep roots of the Sabbath! Whatever the implications of that idea, one thing is sure: the seventh-day Sabbath came from God long before there ever was a Jewish nation and people.

The Sabbath, meanwhile, has provided us an opportunity to focus attention on the Creator, His love, and His care for His creatures in a way that would otherwise not be easily available to us. It helped set a limit to labor, even in a time when labor was relatively easy and productive. After sin entered and work became much harder and tiring (*Gen. 3:17–19*), this limit on work and the call to remember the Creator became even more important. As a reminder of the Creation itself, it should help us focus on our responsibility to our created world, as well.

As the centuries passed, the true meaning of the Sabbath rest became lost in numerous rules and regulations that turned the thoughts of the people away from the true meaning and value of the Sabbath.

**Read** Mark 2:27, 28 and Mark 3:4. What was Jesus' understanding of the Sabbath?

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Christ restored the meaning of the Sabbath to what God originally intended it to mean. He showed how God viewed the day as a time for doing good, for seeking the advancement of His kingdom, and for being of service to all in need.

**How could and should Sabbath keeping help us better understand the wonderful gift we've been given of this created world and, more so, how could and should it help us understand better our obligation to take care of it?**

## Changes in the Environment After Sin

**Read** Genesis 3:7, 17–19. What was the first indication to Adam and Eve that their action in eating the forbidden fruit had consequences?

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With the entry of sin into their lives, Adam and Eve faced some hard consequences. First, as Ellen White wrote, the clothing of light that had covered them disappeared. The environment that had clothed them changed. The environment of the plant world changed, as well. Thorns and thistles grew. The soil became hard and unyielding. And, worst of all, there was now the entrance of death, something that they never were to have known.

Suddenly, the wonderful environment that had been theirs to enjoy now had a new face, and it presented to them new challenges, challenges that over time and in subsequent generations only became worse. Humans, meanwhile, began to exploit the earth, often for their own gain and glory.

**See** 1 Kings 10:14–22. What does this tell us about how humans had come to view the Creation?

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Exploitation, decay, loss of substance, and death have been present with all peoples—so much so that we may take them for granted as part of the cycle of life. But it was not so in the beginning and is not in God’s final plan. Humankind’s stewardship of the earth has turned into an exploitation of it, as greedy people seek to take all from the earth that they can, regardless of the consequences.

The pollution of air and water, the contamination of soil, and the presence of new and fearful disease agents all point to the aging of the earth and the escalating need for renewal. As more and more countries seek to develop, and as developed countries seek to continue to maintain their standard of living, the health challenges humanity faces are becoming enormous because of damage to the environment.

**Years ago, a political leader made a statement to this effect: “We don’t have to worry about the environment because Jesus is coming back soon.” What is the logic of that argument? How would you respond to it?**

## Our Responsibility for the Environment

**Read Psalm 24:1.** What implications do these words have for us and how we relate to the world? As we look around at the conditions in our world, we need to ask the question, “What, if anything, can we do to improve the environment?”

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We need to begin by reminding ourselves of the Lordship of God over the earth. We are not free of responsibility to Him and His created works. Not only the earth is His but the people also—we and everyone else. We are responsible to Him for other people, as well as the rest of the earthly creation. We can conserve resources.

One example is water. We can be thoughtful in using water. We can support efforts to provide clean water to those who do not have it. In certain parts of the world, lack of clean water is a very serious problem, leading to a tremendous loss of life.

We can follow the diet that the Lord has outlined for us. If more people were on a vegetarian diet, there would be more food to go around because it takes a lot more natural resources to sustain a meat-eating diet than to sustain a vegetarian one.

We can care for the plants and trees that we have responsibility for. This will assist in maintaining clean air.

To whatever degree we can, we should seek to reduce the level of carbon emissions, which is increasingly becoming a worldwide concern due to the potentially dangerous impact to the environment caused by carbon emissions.

By being good stewards of the earth, by seeking to take care of the environment, by not hoarding natural resources for ourselves, by being willing to share with others out of our own abundance (if we have it), we can improve the daily lives of those who need our help. As Christians, as those who profess to follow the Lord Jesus, we are obligated to help those in need.

**Read Matthew 25:34–46.** How might our stewardship of the earth in some way play a role here in doing what Jesus asks us to do? What other verses could you think of that also could apply to this issue?

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## Sun Worshipers

Only in the light of eternity will we be able to grasp fully the negative impact of sin on the environment. It's hard for us to imagine what this world must have looked like and how perfectly suited for life the environment must have been for our first parents.

Of course, sin didn't just impact the earth. It impacted humans, as well. Among the negative impacts of sin on humans was their degeneration into idolatry, which was manifested in (among other ways) their worshiping and serving "created things" (*Romans 1:25, NIV*) as opposed to the Creator.

**Read** 2 Kings 23:1–5; Jeremiah 8:1, 2; and Ezekiel 8:16. What was going on here? Why, in one sense, would it make sense to worship the sun?

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One thing we can know for sure about the environment of the earth today is that sunlight, though very important for our health, can have exceedingly deleterious effects if we're exposed to too much. Thus, in a sense, modern sun worshipers are living in almost as much ignorance as their ancient predecessors.

We now know that too much exposure to sunlight increases the risk of various skin cancers.

On the other hand, sunlight exposure helps to produce vitamin D, which is essential for body metabolism and the building of strong and healthy bones. Adequate exposure to sunlight also helps to prevent certain types of cancer.

What, then, is the optimal exposure to sunlight? Light-skinned people in equatorial environments who rely on sunlight for their vitamin D require at least five minutes per day of direct exposure. Dark-skinned people in the same environment require about thirty minutes to make the same amount of vitamin D. In areas where the hours of sunlight are more limited, vitamin D should be supplemented under medical supervision.

It also is healthful to open curtains and windows to allow sunlight to enter our rooms, which helps destroy certain bacteria.

Studies show that folk without adequate sunlight exposure can be more prone to suffer from seasonal depression (known as seasonal affective disorder); this problem occurs especially in areas where the days are short in winter. The cure is very straightforward: more exposure to light, even if artificial, in the winter months.

The bottom line? As with so much else regarding healthful living, temperance and balance in regard to sunlight exposure are crucial.

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Creation,” pp. 44–51, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “The Controversy Ended,” pp. 675–678, in *The Great Controversy*.

“ ‘Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.’ Romans 1:20 [NKJV]. The things of nature that we now see give us but a faint conception of Eden’s glory. Sin has marred earth’s beauty. On all things may be seen traces of the work of evil. Yet much that is beautiful remains. Nature testifies that One infinite in power, great in goodness, mercy, and love, created the earth and filled it with life and gladness. Even in their blighted state, all things reveal the handiwork of the great Master Artist. Wherever we turn, we may hear the voice of God and see evidences of His goodness.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Health and Healing*, p. 234.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 The issue of the environment, especially the question of global warming, has in recent years come to the forefront of the news. What is the response of your nation, community, and church to these issues?
- 2 How should a Christian, someone who believes that God did create the world, relate to questions of the environment differently than someone who believes we are here as products of pure chance alone?
- 3 How can and should the Sabbath play a role in our concern for the environment? How does Sabbath keeping help us be better environmentalists?
- 4 If Jesus is coming back soon, as we believe, should we really be all that concerned with the environment? Justify your answer.
- 5 Do some research, if possible, on the negative health effects that damage to the environment is causing in various parts of the world. What about in your own community? What role could and should your church take in this area? How might you be able to use any activism here in outreach?
- 6 What are ways, even small ways, you could make some lifestyle changes that could impact the environment for good? How much self-sacrifice would it take on your part?

# The Prodigal Soul Winner

by ALBERTO VILLANUEVA

As a youth I found no reason to live. I was deeply into alcoholism and was having problems with my family. I left home and moved to another part of Mexico.

I met an Adventist man who gave me a well-marked Bible. I read it, especially the marked verses, and was amazed that God's Word was so alive. I began attending church and eventually asked the pastor to prepare me for baptism.

God rescued me from a hopeless life and gave me a ministry to people who are living as I once lived. I've seen God open many doors.

My wife had some distant relatives with whom we became friends. I wanted to study the Bible with them, but when I asked the husband, he said it was impossible; they were strong members of another faith. Right there I silently prayed for God to open this man's heart. As we stood to leave, the man said, "Come back soon and share the Bible with us!"

The family began Bible studies, but one of the sons, Servino, refused to study with us. We continued studying together for three months, and eventually Servino joined us again. Seven family members committed their lives to Christ, including Servino. Only later did I learn that Servino had been so angry about the Bible studies that he had plotted to kill me.

I held a short evangelistic series in a mountain village. As I walked to one family's home, I noticed that I was being followed. When I arrived at the family's home, the man of the house recognized one of the men following me. "Be careful," he whispered. "These men are thieves. Carry a weapon to protect yourself." I told him that I carried no weapon.

The host, who owned a small store in the area, told the thief, "Leave this man alone. He's a missionary who has come to share God's love with us." The thief disappeared and didn't bother me. Eventually, two members of this man's family were baptized, along with five other people.

I share the gospel with others because God shared it with me. I praise God that some 50 people have been rescued from Satan's lies and have committed their hearts to Christ.

Pray for those who are searching for something better in life. And remember that your mission offerings help make a difference in the lives of those who need to know about God's love.

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ALBERTO VILLANUEVA *shares his faith in Morelos, Mexico.*

# Faith *and* Healing



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 3:8–10, Ps. 118:6, Prov. 17:22, Matt. 6:27–34, Heb. 13:6, 1 John 4:18.*

**Memory Text:** “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (*Isaiah 26:3*).

Convinced that he was the victim of an evil spell, a patient came to a physician with symptoms unrelated to any known disease or syndrome. The doctor placed before the patient two glass tubes, one filled with hydrogen peroxide, the other with plain water, though both looked identical. He then drew blood from the patient and mixed it with the hydrogen peroxide. The mixture immediately started to bubble and fizz, which the patient believed was the work of the evil spell.

The doctor then gave the patient a simple saline injection, telling him that this would break the spell. After a while, he then drew blood from the patient and mixed it with the plain water in the other glass. There was no bubbling or fizzing, proof that the spell was broken. The patient left feeling cured, so much so that he brought all his friends to the doctor to be cured, as well.

This story shows, indeed, how powerful an influence our mind has on our bodies, the subject for this week's lesson.

**The Week at a Glance:** Faith and trust in the Lord's goodness can have very positive health effects.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 8.*

## The Fear Factor

For a few seasons, TV watchers were subjected to a show called *Fear Factor*, in which contestants would be placed in various fearful situations: from sitting in a pit filled with scorpions or rats to walking through a building that was on fire—all in order to see how well they would deal with fear.

Of course, one doesn't need to manufacture fear. Life itself, in this fallen world, is full of things that cause us to be afraid. A seventeenth-century British political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, wrote that fear was the prime and motivating factor in all human life and that humans created governments for the main purpose of protecting us against those who would do us harm. No matter who we are, where we live, how good and safe we might feel, we all face things that cause us to fear.

Fear, though, in and of itself, isn't always bad.

**What** are ways in which fear can help protect us? What are things, in fact, that we should be afraid of?

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Fear is a natural and necessary emotion that helps humans cope with danger and helps them survive. This emotion and instinct is necessary in a world subject to accidents, crime, disease, terrorism, and war.

**What** can we learn about fear from the Bible's first mention of it? *Gen. 3:8–10.*

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Sure, there are many things to make us afraid in this world. So often, though, we find ourselves fearing things that never come to pass. Fear is a very stressful emotion, one that can take a powerful physical toll on our bodies. In other words, fear is not merely limited to what it does to our minds; it can have a very deleterious effect on our physical health, as well. No matter who we are, where we live, or what challenges we face, fear is an ever-present part of our lives. The question for us, then, should be, How are we to deal with it?

**What are your fears? How have they affected your life? How can you better take advantage of the promises of God in dealing with things that make you afraid?**

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## A Man Said to the Universe

A man said to the universe:  
 “Sir I exist!”  
 “However,” replied the universe,  
 “The fact has not created in me  
 A sense of obligation.”—Stephen Crane

**Read** the poem above. What is the message there? How should we, as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, differ in our view of our place in the universe from the idea presented here? What is the main reason for that difference?

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Think for a moment: suppose there were no God, no Creator, no Divine Power who created us. Suppose, instead, we were what many folk claim we are: highly advanced apes, nothing more; just beings who arose amid a godless universe that cares nothing about us at all. Suppose we were at the mercy of mindless forces that have no interest or concern about us or our well-being. What kind of world would that be?

In contrast, that is not what we as Christians believe. We believe, instead, that God created us, sustains us, and cares for us. Because of this, we of all people should have reasons to be able to deal with the fears and trials that beset all humanity.

**Look** up the following texts. What hope and comfort, even amid fearful times, can you draw from these texts? *Ps. 118:6; Prov. 3:5, 6; Luke 12:6, 7; Rom. 8:38, 39; Heb. 13:6; 2 Tim. 1:7; 1 John 4:18.*

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There is no question, even as Christians who believe in the existence of God, that we face a scary world out there, a world where anything can happen. With our knowledge of God, however, we have a context, a background, to help us better understand the world as a whole and our place in it. And thus, ideally, we can have hope and comfort even amid the most trying times. This does not mean we do not face bad things or things that can cause us to fear. It means, instead, that we have a firm foundation upon which to meet and deal with those fears.

## The Power of Faith

**“A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Prov. 17:22, NKJV). What does this text tell us about the link between the mind and the body?**

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A young child lay dying in a hospital bed when his teacher visited him and gave him some schoolwork to do. “Here, Michael,” he said, “are lessons on verbs and adverbs. Do the best you can.” The teacher, though, could not help but sense the futility of it all, because the child seemed so lethargic, so empty, so resigned to death. Yet, right after that, the child had a remarkable turnaround. Before the prognosis was not good, and he now seemed well on his way to recovery. When asked about what happened, about why the schoolwork seemed to have changed him so much, he replied, “They wouldn’t give a dying boy work on adverbs and verbs, would they?”

No question, the link between our mind, our attitude, and our bodies is very powerful. Though science cannot fully explain how that link works, it recognizes that the link is there, and this can make a world of difference in our overall health.

And here is where faith in God and trust in His love and His goodness can make such a difference. How much easier to be calmer and less stressed when you know the reality of God’s love and His care for you! Studies from around the world have shown that religious faith brings with it clear health benefits, that those who believe in God tend to live longer, to suffer less depression, and to deal better emotionally with traumatic events. And while we certainly can’t rule out the supernatural and miraculous power of God to bring healing in our lives, that is not necessarily what is only involved here. Instead, the peace, the assurance, the hope that faith gives believers no doubt can bring about mental attitudes that will impact our overall health. A merry heart can, indeed, be like medicine—even better, because so often medicine can come with deleterious side effects.

**Read Matthew 6:27–34. What is Jesus saying to us here? How can you apply these words to whatever is causing you fear and worry now? Are any of those fears too great for the Lord to handle? Is anyone beyond the loving reach of God? How can you learn to surrender these fears to the Lord and have the peace that He promises?**

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## Stressing Out

**“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13, NKJV). How can you learn to better claim these promises? What attitudes or actions are holding you back?**

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One of the greatest health challenges we all face has to do with stress; it does not have to be with major traumas in life but with life in general, with the daily pressures that we so often face.

Doctors report that up to 90 percent of patients they see come with stress-related complaints. Science has shown that when we are stressed, we release certain hormones that can affect various organs in our bodies. Over long periods of time, the organs can be weakened by these hormones, making them more susceptible to disease. Stress, for instance, can release adrenaline, which causes the heart to beat faster and more powerfully, leading to palpitations. Some stress hormones cause the blood vessels to constrict, causing hypertension. Stress can induce shallow and rapid breathing, even hyperventilation. Stress can result in the diversion of blood from the stomach, causing digestive problems. (Who has not felt what fear, anxiety, and worry can do to the stomach?) Stress can cause an increase in blood glucose, which in some people can lead to diabetes. Stress also is known to have a negative impact on our sleep, which in turn can have a negative impact on our overall health. Stress has been shown, too, to affect negatively our immune system, our body’s frontline defense against disease.

The list can go on and on. And so the point should be clear. We need to learn to handle stress. Here is where faith in God can have such an important role, because knowing and experiencing for yourself the reality of God’s love can have such a calming effect, greatly reducing stress and the negative health consequences that often follow it.

**Just being religious, in and of itself, is not the answer. What is most important is having a personal relationship with Jesus, knowing for yourself His love and care. This can be done through daily reading of the Word, through prayer, through talking to the Lord as if with a friend, and through contemplating His character as revealed in nature and Scripture. How much time do you spend getting to know the Lord for yourself? Might you need, perhaps, to spend a little more time with your Lord and Maker?**

## Faith and Miraculous Healing

Even a superficial reading of the Gospels shows that much of Jesus' ministry involved miraculous healing: the sick, the blind, the dying, even the dead—all were healed through the supernatural power of the Lord. In many cases, too, faith is treated as a prerequisite to the healing itself (*Matt. 9:2, 22, 28, 29; 15:28*).

In contrast, in some cases, disbelief was a deterrent to healing, as in Nazareth (*Matt. 13:58; Mark 6:5, 6*). In one case when the disciples were unable to perform a healing, Jesus said it was because of their unbelief (*Matt. 17:14–20*).

The fact, however, that faith is such an important component in these miraculous healings has led some to believe that if an attempt at healing through prayer fails, it is because of a lack of faith on the part of the one who is sick. Yet, this is a very superficial and false understanding of faith and healing.

**Read** the following texts in which Jesus miraculously healed people.

**What do the texts say about the faith of those who were healed?**

**What lessons can we take from these examples?** *Matt. 12:9–13, Luke 13:11–13, 14:2–4, 22:47–52.*

In none of these texts is there any mention of faith on the part of those who were healed. This is not to diminish the role of faith in the question of miraculous healing; it is just to show that expressed faith is not always a crucial component.

The fact is that we do not understand why in some cases we can see what is obviously a supernatural intervention of the Lord for healing. In other cases, healing comes from natural processes, in which we justifiably can believe that the hand of the Lord is working in behalf of the sick through these means. And there always are those cases where, for reasons we do not understand, healing does not come as we have prayed for and would wish for. The good news for us as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, however, is that even in these latter cases, we still can trust in the love, mercy, and goodness of God, even amid the inexplicable tragedies that always are part of a fallen world.

**How can we learn to trust in the Lord and in His love for us, even when prayers for health and healing have not come as we would have liked?**

**Further Study:** “In true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word of God, for both have the same Author. A correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 258. See also *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 462 and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12, pp. 751–783. In light of this understanding, there should be no hesitation in seeking God’s help through true science—which is a revelation of His natural laws.

“The sympathy which exists between the mind and the body is very great. When one is affected, the other responds. The condition of the mind has much to do with the health of the physical system. If the mind is free and happy, under a consciousness of right doing and a sense of satisfaction in causing happiness to others, it will create a cheerfulness that will react upon the whole system, causing a freer circulation of the blood and a toning up of the entire body. The blessing of God is a healer, and those who are abundant in benefiting others will realize that wondrous blessing in their hearts and lives.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 60, 61; *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 345, 346.

“We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes. And because we can trust His wisdom and love, we should not ask Him to concede to our will, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His purpose. Our desires and interests should be lost in His will. These experiences that test faith are for our benefit. By them it is made manifest whether our faith is true and sincere, resting on the word of God alone, or whether depending on circumstances, it is uncertain and changeable. Faith is strengthened by exercise. We must let patience have its perfect work, remembering that there are precious promises in the Scriptures for those who wait upon the Lord.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 230, 231.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 What is the role of medical science in the healing of the Christian? Does seeking health and healing from medical science mean we don’t have faith in God?
- 2 What has been your experience regarding the link between attitudes and emotions and physical health? What have you learned that could help others use the power of the mind to benefit the body?
- 3 Do you know someone in your church who is sick and in need of healing? How can you, either as an individual or as part of a class, help that person in the healing process?

# A Thousand Ways

by ERIC KOFI BOADI-AGYEKUM

I'm from Ghana, West Africa. I wanted to study in a university, but I didn't know which one. Someone told me about Valley View University (VVU), a Seventh-day Adventist school. I had never heard of the school or of Seventh-day Adventists before, but after I asked a lot of questions, I decided to go see the school.

When I walked onto the campus I was amazed. Everyone was so friendly, so helpful, that I wanted to be a part of this institution. I called my brothers, who lived abroad, and they encouraged me to apply. They even promised to help sponsor me. So I applied.

But on the day that I received my acceptance letter from VVU, my brothers told me that they couldn't help me. I was so disappointed. I prayed and fasted about this decision, and I was sure that God wanted me at VVU. Then suddenly I had no way to pay my school fees.

I talked to my church, and the members agreed to help me the first year. So I enrolled.

I come from a charismatic home, and the worship style I knew was far different from the worship services at Valley View. But I felt God's presence in the school's worship, and I realized what a deeply spiritual school this was.

When help from my home church ran out, I had to earn my own school fees, a difficult thing in Africa. I was not a baptized Seventh-day Adventist, but I applied to be a student literature evangelist to earn a scholarship. I was accepted and sent to Nigeria to work. I loved working for God and being a part of the action. I didn't earn enough to pay all my school fees that summer, but God led me to a government worker who helped me.

The next summer I returned to Nigeria to canvass. I earned half my school fees, and I feared that I would have to drop out of school. But again God provided in small ways, and I could stay.

That semester I gave my life totally to God and was baptized. When I took my stand for Christ, the people who helped me withdrew their support. When I thought I had exhausted every means of paying my school fees, I learned that God has a thousand ways to provide. I've learned the importance of trusting Him for everything, for with Christ standing beside me, Satan cannot prevail.

Your mission offerings make Christian education possible. Because of you, I found Christ.

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ERIC KOFI BOADI-AGYEKUM *has graduated from Valley View University and is working in Ghana.*



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# Rest *and* Restoration



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 2:15, Exod. 20:8–11, 23:12, Matt. 11:28–30, Mark 2:27, 6:30–32.*

**Memory Text:** “Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’ ” (*Mark 6:31, NIV*).

**A** bright, young medical student at Loma Linda found himself burning out. Getting up at four in the morning, working until midnight, he struggled to keep up with his strenuous curriculum, but to no avail. He fell farther and farther behind.

“In desperation he went to his professor for help. Being an astute man, the professor recommended that Tom get at least seven hours of sleep each night, no matter what, and thirty minutes of vigorous exercise every day. Tom was incredulous, . . . but at last he reluctantly agreed to give this program a try. After all he was so far down he had nothing to lose. To his utter amazement his grades began to improve within just two weeks. By the end of the year he was in the upper third of his class and in due time successfully completed his medical training.”—“I’m So Tired,” *Hardinge Lifestyle Series* (Loma Linda, Calif.: Loma Linda University School of Health, 1988), pp. 3–5.

Many of us are just like Tom. We all need to have daily rest, as well as weekly rest in order to achieve optimum health physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially.

**The Week at a Glance:** We need sufficient regular physical, mental, and emotional rest in order to function at our best.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 15.*

## No Time

Many of us live in a very tense and fast-paced environment filled with so many things to do and so little time to do them. Mother Teresa said, “I think today the world is upside down, and is suffering so much because there is very little love in the home, and in family life. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other. There is no time to enjoy each other.”

In some cultures, the drive to *get ahead*, to make money, to be a *success*, dominates everything to the point where marriage, families, and even health are sacrificed.

Of course, working hard, doing one’s best, and striving to provide for oneself and one’s family are good; the Bible has little time for slackers (*Prov. 6:9, 13:4, 2 Thess. 3:10*). We can, however, take a good thing too far, and as a result we and the ones we love and care about suffer. So often we hear about a father who works all the time, arguing that he is doing it “for his family,” when, in the end, it is the family who is being hurt by the father’s continued and excessive absence.

**Read** Genesis 2:15. What does it say about God’s intention for humanity regarding work, even before sin?

From the beginning, even in the pre-Fall world, God’s intention was for humans to work. And to rest from work, as well. Especially now, as fallen beings thousands of years removed from the tree of life, we must remember that our bodies have limitations, and, therefore, rest is vitally important.

**Read** Mark 6:30–32, 45, 46. What do these texts say to us about the need for rest, regardless of what we are doing and how important our work might be?

Jesus and His disciples took time to rest. He knew that His body needed time to be refreshed. We, too, need time for daily rest. Persistent cheating on our sleep produces, in time, physical and emotional loss. No matter how young, how healthy, or how strong we are, our bodies need rest, and sooner or later an intemperate lifestyle will catch up to us.

**What things drive you? What things motivate you? What things cause you to work the hardest? Whatever they are, however noble and good they might be, you need to ask yourself if they are worth ruining your health over.**

## The Need for Rest

All of us are aware of the need to rest. We need food, we need water, and we need rest. So often our bodies themselves give us the signal that it is time to rest, and so often the signals are loud and clear. Much of the time, if we would listen to what our bodies tell us, we would get enough rest. Unfortunately, we so often are caught up in the hustle and bustle of life, of earning money, of running here and there, that we don't listen to our own flesh. How many folk—struck down by sickness—finally have been forced to rest, and for a long time, too, who otherwise would have been fine had they listened to what their own bodies were telling them?

Sooner or later, we will rest—one way or another. The question is, Why not do it the best way possible?

**What** signals does your body send to you, telling you it's time to slow down and rest? How well do you listen?

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Every living creature needs time for rest to restore that which has been used. Consider the word *restoration*, which means “the act of returning to an original state or condition.” In adjective form, it means a “reinvigorating medicine” or “anything that reinvigorates.”

“Sleep, nature's sweet restorer, invigorates the tired body and prepares it for the next day's duties.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 342.

We need to realize our limitations. We cannot do our work in our own strength. God promises grace to cope with our work. In regular rest, we permit the Lord to restore our bodies so we will awaken refreshed, ready to do His will.

**Read** Exodus 23:12. What reason is given there for rest?

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The verb translated “refreshed” occurs as a verb only a few times in the Old Testament, yet it is based on a very common noun, often translated “soul” (*Gen. 2:7*), which has the meaning of “life” or “that which breathes.” In other words, it's as if the word *soul* were made into a verb, and so the idea is that, through resting, we are getting more life, more breath, more “soul,” as it were. Rest is therefore basic, even fundamental, to us as living humans, and by denying ourselves that needed rest, we are denying our basic humanity.

## The Rest in God's Presence

**What** is Jesus' invitation to all of us? *Matt. 11:28–30*. What is your understanding of what Jesus is saying here? More important, how have you experienced this promise in your own life?

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The rest that Jesus offers here is more than physical rest. It is rest for the soul. We need to experience the complete rest that Christ offers us. A deep sleep will suffice for physical rest. A vacation may give us emotional rest. But where can we find spiritual rest, relief from the deepest issues of the heart?

Jesus is ready to give spiritual rest to all who come to Him. What does that rest include?

It includes freedom from the pain and guilt that accompany the human struggle for acceptance through good works. We can rest in the promise that we are accepted by God because of Jesus' perfect works and certainly not our own imperfect ones. By His grace and the transforming power of the Spirit, Christians can yield themselves to Jesus, and He will give them rest. The just shall live by faith (*Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11*). Human effort falls far short from the high standard that God requires of us. It is so comforting to know that Jesus paid the penalty for sin and that His righteousness covering us—a righteousness that exists outside of us but is credited to us by faith—contains our assurance of eternal life. His perfect life and sacrifice are our only hope. In Him our soul can find rest.

Jesus speaks not only to those who are encumbered by sin but also to those who stagger under the burdens of life, whatever they are. God knows what our struggles are, He knows what our burdens are, and He offers us to lay them at His feet, trusting in His loving-kindness and care for us, regardless of our situation. What a rest for our weary souls when we learn to trust in Him!

All of us need a time and place where we can direct our minds to God. Prayer, Bible reading, and Christ-centered meditation bring with them a sense of peace and restoration.

It is in this place of personal worship that one will hear the still, small Voice of encouragement and hope. This coming apart from the strains and stresses of life allows time for the Holy Spirit to restore our soul.

**How can you better avail yourself of this wonderful promise offered us in Jesus?**

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## The Daily Rest

Read Genesis 1. During the days of creation, the evening and the morning defined each day. God was creating a natural rhythm that would permit the cycle of work and rest to rejuvenate and restore the body in a regular fashion.

The human body requires daily rest. Studies on sleep deprivation show a variety of negative effects. These may include increased risks of diabetes, obesity, poor school performance, traffic accidents, injuries, and fatalities—even psychotic behavior. The workday of airline pilots, air traffic controllers, and resident physicians is strictly regulated, laying out precisely the length of time for work and the time set aside for rest. Traditionally, before the convenience of electrical lighting, people naturally would sleep during the hours of darkness and work in the light.

In today's modern world, we have to guard against the temptation to work more than is healthful.

Science's discovery of the circadian rhythm, in which the body works on a daily 24-hour cycle, with specific release of hormones at certain times of the day, supports the statement made by Mrs. White, "Sleep is worth far more before than after midnight. Two hours' good sleep before twelve o'clock is worth more than four hours after twelve o'clock."—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 224.

Studies performed in sleep laboratories show a need for different kinds of sleep. Adult sleep requirements range from six to nine hours. Sleep requirements are met when sleepiness and drowsiness are absent during the day and there is a sense of well-being and alertness.

People awake for 17 to 19 hours will perform at a level comparable to those who are intoxicated.

**List** some of the factors you think affect your ability to get a good night's sleep.

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Some suggestions to help you have better sleep:

- Exercise daily.
- Keep your room at a comfortable temperature.
- Avoid eating for two to three hours before sleeping.
- Avoid tension and excitement before sleep.
- Avoid alcohol, sleeping pills, or caffeine.

**How well do you sleep? What practices are you engaged in that could be hindering your sleep? What changes need you make in order to better take advantage of this important aspect of human health?**

## The Weekly Rest

**Read** Genesis 2:1–3 and Exodus 20:8–11. What do these verses tell us about just how fundamental the whole idea of rest is?

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God rested on the seventh day, after completing the work of Creation. The Hebrew verb for “rested” there comes from the same word designated “Sabbath” (*Shabbat*). This fact shows just how ingrained into the fabric of Creation itself the seventh-day Shabbat and the rest it offers really are. However hard for us to fully grasp, the text makes it clear that God Himself rested on the Sabbath day.

**Jesus** said, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” (*Mark 2:27, NKJV*). What was the context of the statement, and what did He mean?

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Though it is so easy to get caught up in rules and regulations, we never must forget that the Sabbath is a day for our benefit. It is for reflection and enjoyment of the wonderful gifts our God has given us. It is a time to contemplate God’s goodness. The Sabbath is a perpetual sign of our recognition of His love. The good news of the Sabbath is that, through keeping it, we do not just talk about “resting in Christ,” but we—in a very real and tangible way—express that rest, showing that we trust in Christ’s works for us, and not our own, as the way of salvation.

Besides all the spiritual benefits, the Sabbath provides us a time to step aside from the toil and struggles and stress and fatigue of the week. Sabbath is God’s way of allowing us, without guilt, to truly relax, to rest, to take it easy and unwind. Sabbath provides a way for our bodies and souls to get the rest they so often need.

**What is your Sabbath experience? Is it truly a delight, a blessing, a rest? Or, as in the time of Christ, has it become just another burden? How can you learn to derive all the benefits possible from this divinely given day of rest?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Temperance in Labor,” p. 99, in *Counsels on Health*.

“Those who make great exertions to accomplish just so much work in a given time, and continue to labor when their judgment tells them they should rest, are never gainers. They are living on borrowed capital. They are expending the vital force which they will need at a future time. And when the energy they have so recklessly used is demanded, they fail for want of it. The physical strength is gone, the mental powers fail. They realize that they have met with a loss, but do not know what it is. Their time of need has come, but their physical resources are exhausted. Everyone who violates the laws of health must sometime be a sufferer to a greater or less degree. God has provided us with constitutional force, which will be needed at different periods of our lives. If we recklessly exhaust this force by continual over-taxation, we shall sometime be the losers.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, pp. 397, 398.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 What about your local society and culture? Is it one that pushes and drives people to work, work, and work? Or is it one that is more relaxed? How can you learn to find the right balance in regard to rest in whatever culture you live?
- 2 Some folk might have a hard time sleeping because of one thing: a guilty conscience. If that is you, what has Jesus done at the Cross that could help you there? At the same time, what might you need to do to make things right and ease your conscience?
- 3 Bring to class some reputable scientific research on the need and the benefits of rest and discuss how you can benefit from this knowledge.
- 4 How has the Sabbath rest been a blessing to you? Share some of these blessings with others in class. Focus not just on the spiritual benefits but on the physical ones, as well.
- 5 Dwell more on the amazing fact of God Himself resting on the seventh day of Creation. What message is there for us? How are we to understand this? How does it help us better understand how important Sabbath rest really is?

## New Life in Christ

by DOLGORSUREN ULZII-ORSHIH

Doogii wept and prayed in the temple in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. Her husband had died, and for 18 days she prayed to the idols so that his next life would be better and that her grief would subside.

But she returned home to learn that her eldest son had died. She returned to the temple and grieved and prayed for a month. This time she bought a small idol so she could pray for protection for her remaining children.

Her grief and depression were almost unbearable. One day a friend visited and saw how depressed Doogii was. "Why are you still grieving?" the friend asked. "There is a God who loves you."

Doogii's friend invited her to attend church with her the following Sunday, where the people prayed for Doogii. Doogii was impressed that these people really cared for her, and she continued to attend the church. In time she accepted Jesus as her Savior and joined the church. Once again she was happy and at peace.

She met a cattle farmer who lived in the countryside, and the two married and eventually moved to the nearby small town.

One day Doogii met a young woman who invited her to attend a small group meeting. Doogii went and enjoyed the deep Bible study with these people. Her husband went to the small group meetings with her. The couple then attended evangelistic meetings, and Doogii realized she had known so little about God before. Following the meetings she joined the Adventist church by profession of faith. Her husband is studying the Bible with the Global Mission pioneer who leads their small congregation.

"I'm happier now than I've ever been in my life," Doogii says. "I know that Jesus loves me and accepts me as His daughter." Doogii shares her faith with others and invites them to visit the small congregation of 30 or 40 members that meets in an apartment. "We're growing, and soon we'll have to find a larger place to meet," she adds, smiling.

Doogii's joy will be full when her husband and children commit their lives to God, but she knows that God is leading, and she can rest in Him.

Your mission offerings support the growing work in Mongolia. Thank you for your support.

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DOLGORSUREN ULZII-ORSHIH *shares her faith in Hotol, Mongolia.*



# The Atmosphere of Praise



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 1:1, 2, 9–12, 20–26; Ps. 104:29; Dan. 5:23; Luke 15:7; Rev. 21:4.*

**Memory Text:** “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (*Genesis 2:7, NIV*).

A few years ago, a family of five went to a cabin in the mountains for a short Christmas vacation. One evening they shut all the windows tight in order to keep cold air from coming in, and they turned the furnace on full blast in order to keep the cabin warm through the bitter night.

The only problem? The whole family died because the furnace had used up all the oxygen in the air!

As most of us know, we can live a few weeks without food, a few days without water, but only a few minutes without air.

Air, clear pure air, is vital to our existence. Impure, polluted air is the cause of many acute and chronic disease conditions often attributed to other causes. Every year millions of people, especially children, suffer terribly from breathing polluted air.

With oxygen going to every organ of our body, it is no wonder we need air as fresh and as clean as possible.

The good news about fresh air is that not only is it free, in most cases people can have access to it.

**The Week at a Glance:** Clean, fresh air is a vital component in maintaining good health, and we should do all in our power to breathe as much clean air as possible.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 22.*

## The Creation

**Read** Genesis 1:1, 2. From these texts, how would you describe this primeval earth?

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The earth at that point was obscure; there was darkness, a void, formlessness. However difficult for us to understand exactly what was present or what was happening, it is clear that there was no created life at this time on the earth. Yet, even amid this primeval chaos, God's presence is made manifest. This is revealed in the words, "and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." We can, for now, only speculate on what that means.

According to the texts, over the next few days, God began the process of preparing the earth for life. Genesis 1:3–10 shows us part of this process. Notice the recurrence of separation and division. God separates light from darkness, God separates the waters of the firmament, God separates the land from water. All the way through, there are these major divisions of these prime elements. After these initial divisions have been completed, God then brings forth the first life on earth.

**Read** Genesis 1:9–12 and Genesis 1:20–26. What does God create next? What conditions were needed in order for this to happen; that is, what was needed in order for this part of creation to be able to survive?

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God had a great master plan for His creation. It called for many types of living things—things that would require constant support to survive. As the Creation story unfolds, it is clear that God planned for many of His created beings to live on dry land. It also is clear that He knew that these creatures would need oxygen in some form for sustaining life. We see this plan realized on day two of Creation, with the separation of the waters and the creation of the atmosphere. The space between the waters above and below was thus prepared to receive the rest of the creation that was to follow.

**The Creation account teaches that the Creation was a very orderly, planned, and meticulously executed event. It leaves no room for chance of any kind. What does that tell us about the character and power of God? How could this realization about God help you in whatever struggles you might be going through now?**

## The Necessity of Air

In the creation of the animals that populated the earth, one thing they shared in common was the need for oxygen to sustain life. Air is a combination of gases in which oxygen forms about 21 percent of the total product. (Our entire atmosphere weighs about five thousand trillion tons!) Other component gases include nitrogen, argon, helium, hydrogen, and small amounts of trace gases. The amount of oxygen in the air is the ideal percentage for the breathing requirements of the creatures God made. It is another testimony to the carefulness and precision that God used in creating us.

**What** was the unique way God used air in the creation of Adam?

*Gen. 2:7.* **How does this account differ from the account of how God created the other creatures? What does this tell us about ourselves, about our uniqueness in the eyes of God?**

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Air obviously was important in the creation of all animals, in that all these animals need air to exist. Yet, the creation of humanity was different. God “breathed” into Adam the “breath” of life. Air, life-giving air, was certainly a component of this miraculous act of Creation, for right after God breathed this breath into him, Adam became a living soul. When Adam was first formed, with all his organs, with all his flesh, with all the physical components needed for life, he still was lifeless, kind of a *corpse*. One more thing was needed, and that was life itself, which only God, the Life-Giver, could provide.

God did just that, and we ourselves partake every day of this gift of life. Indeed, the gift of life, carried with that breath, has been shared by everyone in the human race since then. Through our first father, Adam, the breath of God has been passed on to all of us. And through the act of breathing, we keep that original breath of life alive in us. Each breath we take should remind us of that original breath breathed into Adam!

**Take a deep breath. Unless you have respiratory problems, it seems so simple, so natural, so easy, and yet it is really a miracle from God—a legacy passed on to us from Eden. How thankful are you for the gift of life? Why wait until your life is threatened before you stop taking it for granted?**

## The Air Over Our Heads

“Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (*Acts 17:25, NKJV*).

**Look** up the following texts: Daniel 5:23, Psalms 104:29, 146:4. What do they tell us about the link between life and breath?

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The air has many protective qualities. On a global level, the air and its suspended water vapor protect the earth and its people from solar radiation and from the cold vacuum of outer space. The air recycles water and many chemicals to moderate the climate. Within this atmospheric envelope, life is found over a very wide range of altitudes and temperatures. Some life-forms require a high level of light and warmth. Other things require only a little light and very little heat to survive. Some animals require large amounts of oxygen, others only a scant amount.

On a more personal level, high-quality fresh air is the best suited to transfer oxygen to the blood through the lungs and to carry off the carbon dioxide that the body produces. This high-quality air is most available in natural environments, where trees, plants, and flowing waters are found. The plants absorb the carbon dioxide in exchange for renewing the oxygen content of the air.

We recall that God placed Adam and Eve in a garden setting surrounded by plants of all types and watered by a river that flowed through the Garden and became the headwater for the great rivers of the antediluvian earth.

The message for us, then, is that in order to obtain optimal health, fresh air is crucial. We should seek to do all that we can in order to breathe the cleanest and freshest air possible.

A person carries about two quarts of oxygen in the blood, lungs, and body tissues at any given time. Every cell in our bodies requires air in order to work, and when that supply is cut off, life cannot exist. Indeed, brain cells deprived of oxygen for more than four minutes begin to die, and the person will, as well.

**How often do you take advantage of fresh air? What changes can you make that would give you more access to it? Sometimes it would take nothing more than opening a window.**

## Bad Air, Good Air

One of the great challenges that many people face, especially those living in cities, is that the air often is dirty and polluted. Other factors working against fresh air include tobacco smoke, especially when it is recirculated in office buildings. Breathing dirty air can lead to numerous health problems, including migraine headaches, nausea, vomiting, and eye and respiratory ailments. In some parts of the world, millions of people, especially children, suffer life-threatening illnesses from breathing bad air, often from poorly ventilated cooking facilities.

In contrast, good clean air usually may be found in abundance in natural outdoor environments, especially around evergreen trees, green plants in mountains and forests, near moving waters such as oceans, lakes, and waterfalls, and after rain. It is estimated that the algae in the ocean provides almost 90 percent of the oxygen in our atmosphere, with the rest coming from plants. Live plants in your own home can help to clean the air there and remove carbon dioxide.

How important, then, that we do our best to breathe clean air. Exercise outside, as opposed to indoors, especially in the morning, if possible. In addition, especially for those who work inside, it is important to be able to take breaks at regular intervals in order to get outside and breathe fresh air, if possible. After just a few moments outside, a person often will feel refreshed and reinvigorated. It's so much better to sleep at night with a window open, even just a little, so that we can enjoy the benefits of fresh air while sleeping.

"In order to have good blood, we must breathe well. Full, deep inspirations of pure air, which fill the lungs with oxygen, purify the blood. They impart to it a bright color and send it, a life-giving current, to every part of the body. Good respiration soothes the nerves, stimulates the appetite, and aids digestion. And it induces sound, refreshing sleep.

"The lungs should be allowed the greatest freedom possible. Their capacity is developed by free action; it diminishes if they are cramped and compressed. Ill effects follow the practice so common, especially in sedentary pursuits, of stooping at one's work. In this position it is impossible to breathe deeply. Superficial breathing soon becomes a habit, and the lungs lose their power to expand."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Health and Healing*, pp. 151, 152.

Our personal situations vary; some folk have a lifestyle and situation in which about all they ever breathe is fresh, clean air; others, due to where they live and work, might find fresh air a precious commodity that they covet as much as a thirsty person does water.

Whatever your situation, how important it is for the best health to take advantage of fresh air when you can get it.

**Read Genesis 1:26. What does this imply about our responsibility to the created world we have been given?**

## The Atmosphere of Heaven

The study so far this week has emphasized the *physical* properties of the atmosphere that God created for His family on earth.

We use the word *atmosphere* to describe not only the physical environment of air that surrounds us but also the attitudes, feelings, emotions, support, and affirmation of those around us, which create an atmosphere that may be positive or negative.

“Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own—an atmosphere, it may be, charged with the life-giving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of cherished sin. By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 339.

One may thrive or die, depending upon the nature of such atmospheres. Let us now consider the atmosphere of heaven—a spiritual atmosphere of praise and joy—and study the effect it can have on the lives of believers here and now on earth.

**What** can you learn about the atmosphere of heaven from these texts? *Job 38:6, 7; Pss. 103:20–22; 148:2; Luke 15:7; Rev. 21:4.*

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The atmosphere in heaven is clearly one of joy and praise to God. Several of the texts above call for the angelic host to praise God. It is a rich experience to see in the mind’s eye these mighty beings of light gathered about the throne of God in praise for His love, mercy, and grace. Heaven must be a place where joy, praise, and happiness reign.

The good news is that we may, by accepting the abiding presence of Christ and the Father in our lives (*John 14:23*), begin to experience these things now. We are called to action, to breathe the pure air of heaven now and be surrounded by the atmosphere of the heavenly home as we complete our sojourn on this earth.

**What kind of atmosphere surrounds you? That is, your words, your demeanor, your attitudes; are they more reflective of the lowlands of earth or of the promises of heaven? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your need to change?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Not Judging, but Doing,” pp. 123–152, in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*; “Growing Up Into Christ,” pp. 67–75, in *Steps to Christ*; “General Hygiene,” pp. 151–154, in *The Ministry of Health and Healing*.

“God calls upon His people to arise and come out of the chilling, frosty atmosphere in which they have been living, to shake off the impressions and ideas that have frozen up the impulses of love and held them in selfish inactivity. He bids them come up from their low, earthly level and breathe in the clear, sunny atmosphere of heaven.”  
—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 607.

“Those with whom Christ dwells will be surrounded with a divine atmosphere. Their white robes of purity will be fragrant with perfume from the garden of the Lord.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 135.

“Although there may be a tainted, corrupted atmosphere around us, we need not breathe its miasma, but may live in the pure air of heaven. We may close every door to impure imaginings and unholy thoughts by lifting the soul into the presence of God through sincere prayer. Those whose hearts are open to receive the support and blessing of God will walk in a holier atmosphere than that of earth and will have constant communion with heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 99.

## Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What is the general quality of the air where you live? If you live in the country, it is probably very good, and you can breathe plenty of it. If in the city, what challenges do you face?
- ❷ The question of air pollution is a serious one. What can you do as an individual, even on a very small scale, that could help with this problem? What are our obligations as a church to try to help alleviate this problem?
- ❸ “In fellowship with God, with Christ, and with holy angels, they are surrounded with a heavenly atmosphere, an atmosphere that brings health to the body, vigor to the intellect, and joy to the soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 513. How can the class assist each other in realizing this goal?
- ❹ Do you know people who have been suffering some sort of health problems due to poor air quality? If so, how could you help? Why not help them spend some time in a place where the air is pure and fresh?
- ❺ Bring a health professional to class who could explain in more detail the benefits of fresh air.

## My Brother's Wish

Ashika lives in Fiji. She grew up in an eastern Indian home where many gods were worshiped. Her parents had divorced, and Ashika and her brother lived with their grandparents. Then her father married a Seventh-day Adventist woman, and Ashika and her brother were introduced to Christ. Soon the brother and sister gave their hearts to God and were baptized into the Adventist Church. Their choice to follow Christ caused a deep rift within their extended family, but the teenagers were deeply devoted to God.

Then Ashika's brother became sick and was diagnosed with bone cancer. Ashika stayed with her brother in the hospital whenever she could. One day he told her, "I won't live to become a pastor, Ashika. You must take my place."

Ashika was devastated by her brother's death. Her brother's last wish troubled her, for she had planned to become a teacher. She wasn't interested in studying theology. *What can I—an Indian woman—do with a theology degree?* she wondered.

Her parents encouraged her to apply to study theology at Fulton College, so she did. She hoped that the school of theology wouldn't accept her. But her parents were praying that God's will would be done in her life. When she learned that she had been accepted into the theology department, she realized that this was God's will. She surrendered to God.

"Now I know that this wasn't just my brother's wish; this is God's calling," she says. "I rest in God's will and wait for Him to show me His plan."

Ashika's decision to study theology in Fiji means stepping out against a culture in which women are not encouraged to be leaders in the church. But she is willing to follow the path God is laying for her. She is certain that He will guide her all the way.



Roughly half the population of Fiji is Indian; only a handful are Christians. Pray for this largely unreached population. And remember that your mission offerings support evangelism in Fiji and around the world.

ASHIKA CHAND (left) has graduated from Fulton College and is working in Fiji.



# Temperance



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 9:20–27, Prov. 20:1, 23:31–35, 1 Cor. 6:19, 10:31, 2 Pet. 1:5–9.*

**Memory Text:** “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (*Philippians 4:5*).

He had been a respected judge, but he now lived in poverty, the victim of alcohol abuse. Because of this horrible addiction, which robbed him not only of his dignity but of his family and his livelihood, he had exchanged his robes of judicial office for the rags of a tramp. What a tragic ending to such a prosperous and useful life!

In 2007, newscasts were filled with the tragic news of the unnecessary death of a young woman who died from drinking too much water!

Water? Yes. As part of a radio contest, she drank an excessive amount of water and died later that day from water intoxication. Water, although essential for life and usually harmless, can kill when taken in excess.

This week we study about temperance in a world that regards excess as success. The illustrations above show that unhealthful things ought to be completely avoided, and healthful substances and practices should be used in moderation. In so many cases, moderation is the key element so often missing.

Let's take a look at what true temperance is about and why the Lord wants us to be temperate.

**The Week at a Glance:** As human beings, we have been bought with the blood of Jesus. Hence, we have a moral responsibility to take care of our bodies, and temperance is the key to fulfilling that responsibility.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 29.*

## The Bible's First Drunk

What would you like your legacy to be? More specifically, for what would you like to be remembered after your death? That you were rich, popular, or politically powerful? What are the things that really matter?

All through the Bible we find characters who have left legacies. Some very good, some very bad, and some a mixed bag.

Look at Noah. Noah probably is remembered best as the first and not-so-successful evangelist. He preached for 120 years and only a handful of human converts chose to take refuge in the ark, and those were of his own immediate family.

God's view of Noah, however, was very positive. Amid the evil and wickedness of the antediluvian world, "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (*Gen. 6:8, NIV*).

**How** did Noah find favor with God? Why? *Gen. 6:9, 22; 7:1.*

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**Despite** Noah's faithfulness and obedience and doing all that God has asked, there's another story that was recorded for us, as well. Read Genesis 9:20–27. What lessons can we take away from this sordid tale?

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Noah achieved the notoriety of being the first named drunkard in the Bible. How sad that a man who did so much good for the Lord, who had been given so much responsibility, and who had been so highly regarded would fall as he did.

The mind is the channel for most communication, and it must be kept free from toxins and substances that may cloud reason and judgment. Noah's experience is a warning and example for our instruction that even the "best" among us, even the strongest and most faithful, are not immune to temptation and even to outright sin. Drinking would have been bad enough, but it appears that Noah went on a binge. If Noah could fall like that, what about the rest of us?

**Do you know a well-respected church leader who has fallen in one way or another? It always hurts when someone we look up to stumbles and falls and disappoints us. How can we learn to extend the promises of grace even to those who, like us, really do not deserve it?**

## Alcohol Today

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, alcohol has been implicated in almost 1.8 million deaths per year; this translates into 3.2 percent of total deaths worldwide. The amount of alcohol consumed is rising steadily. Binge drinking (the consumption of four to five successive drinks in males and three to four successive drinks in females) is growing alarmingly among adolescents and young adults. This trend shows no sign of abating. Alcohol has consequences through intoxication, drunkenness, dependence (addiction), and other chemical effects on the body.

**What instruction, experience, and warnings are found in the Bible that warn us against alcohol?** *Judg. 13:2–8, Prov. 20:1, 23:31–35, Isa. 5:11, Eph. 5:18.*

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Interestingly, long before any scientific description of the negative effects of alcohol on the fetus (fetal alcohol syndrome), Samson’s mother was warned not to take alcohol during her pregnancy. Solomon also warns against the effects of alcohol, specifically wine and beer. From his observation and possibly even experience, he describes how alcohol changes and modifies behavior, usually leading to regrets. Isaiah graphically describes how inappropriately priests behave when intoxicated, confirming the warnings given by the other writers. Paul, too, has words of caution regarding alcohol.

The biblical descriptions of alcohol consumption mostly reveal inappropriate and undesirable behaviors and warn against these.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (*1 Pet. 5:8*). We can be sure that the use of alcohol is one of the devil’s greatest traps. How many millions of lives have been ruined over the centuries through use of this dangerous drug, which is poison to both the body and the mind. How much better for ourselves and our loved ones were we to avoid this dangerous trap completely, with no compromise at all.

**Who does not know people whose lives have been hurt by alcohol, either through their own use or through the use of others. Why take a chance for yourself? What steps can you take to help ensure that you, or your loved ones, never start down this dangerous path, which promises nothing good but only sorrow and heartache?**

## “But Isn’t Alcohol Good for the Heart?”

Since the early 1970s, debate has raged about the benefits of wine and alcohol on heart health. Much has been written in the lay and scientific press about studies done in France on this issue. In recent years, reanalysis of the data on the French population and further follow-up have cast significant doubt on the whole theory. Vested interests in the alcoholic beverage industry have kept the subject in public view. Many church members are wondering whether their health is suffering through their not drinking alcohol on a regular basis.

There is no literature at all to show any apparent or real benefit of alcohol to the health of young people. The claim of apparent cardiovascular health benefits of alcohol in the middle-aged population has been successfully challenged in recent scientific literature.

In the studies that showed apparent benefit, individuals who had been previous alcohol drinkers were included in the control (non-drinking) groups; some of these had stopped drinking because of alcohol-related health problems. These same control groups, in general, were in poorer health than the drinkers. Reanalysis of the data, correcting for these defects in study design, showed no demonstrable health benefits to moderate drinking, compared to the nondrinkers. Further, more analysis of the groups studied showed that those in the moderate drinking group who originally had been thought to have better health outcomes differed in other ways from the control group. They had better diets, exercised regularly, were of a higher socioeconomic status, and had better access to healthcare. This set of circumstances is well-known to be associated with improved health and longevity. The benefits in these studies were not due to moderate drinking but to other lifestyle practices.

How blessed we have been to have a health message that has warned us in detail of the ravages of these poisons, even before the epidemiologists did. How dangerous it is to seek what turns out to be a nonexistent health benefit in exchange for a wide spectrum of dangerous effects of alcohol. These range from impairment of motor skills and judgment to the potential destruction caused by trauma, violence, accidents, domestic violence, cirrhosis, cancer, addiction, and even dementia.

Even just one measure of alcohol impairs neurological function and may even trigger alcohol dependence. Most important, alcohol impairs our ability to make sound judgments and respond to the Holy Spirit. Who hasn’t seen people make utter fools of themselves, or even worse, through alcohol use?

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. How could this apply to the topic at hand? On a more personal note, how can you take that principle and apply it to your own life? What changes might you need to make in order to better manifest what the Bible says here?**

## Temperance in All Things

*Temperance* sometimes appears to be an outdated word. We often equate it with movements and organizations that focus particularly on alcohol and tobacco. We think of the old songs promoted by these movements and sung by our early church, warning young women about the disgusting habits of those who chew and spit tobacco. We almost caricature the whole issue, and we avoid mention of the word in our sophisticated age.

It sometimes is thought easier not even to talk about temperance. While we fail to talk about and instruct in temperance, some in our church are being overcome by things that were once thought to be problems only of *the world*.

**Read 2 Peter 1:5–9.** How should these words be applied to all areas of our life, particularly when it comes to our health habits? How can we take this biblical admonishment and turn it into reality for ourselves?

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Temperance is so much more than not smoking cigarettes, taking illegal drugs, drinking alcohol, or even tea, coffee, and soft drinks. And that is because even good things, when taken to excess, can cause problems.

What are your work habits? Do you keep reasonable hours? Is there time for God, family, recreation, physical fitness, and service to others?

How much time do you spend sleeping, or are you working all the time? Or, on the other hand, do you sleep too much? Too much sleep, as well as too little, can have negative health effects.

What about diet? Maybe you do not eat pork or even chicken, but are you piling your plate so high with food that you barely can get up from the table when done?

We know sunlight is good for us. But too much can be a cancer-causing agent. Exercise, too, is important. Many do not get enough, while too much can hurt your body. Even sexuality, while a gift from God, can be taken to excess, with negative side effects.

Ellen G. White caught the essence of true temperance with this simple statement: “True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is healthful.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 562.

**Look at all areas of your life. How temperate are you? In what areas do you need to change? Might you even now be suffering some negative effects from wrong practices? Why not seek some help in making needed changes?**

## Bought With a Price

The philosophy of many today is that our bodies belong to us, and we can do with them as we please. Some may justify this approach even further by adding the argument that in so living they harm no one but themselves. We know, though, that this kind of reasoning is so wrong.

**What** are ways in which the intemperance of others has hurt you or someone you know? Or, even more to the point, how might your intemperate actions hurt others?

The Bible talks of the importance of the body as a dwelling place. This abode is not only for our own benefit, thoughts, plans, and actions; our bodies are, in fact, temples of God. What a privilege and responsibility. Sometimes we are more caring of the houses in which we live than our own bodies.

**Why** should we take care of our bodies? What theme comes from the following texts that answers this important question for us? Why do these texts make sense only if God created us, as opposed to our being the chance results of purposeless cosmic forces? *John 2:19–21; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.*

Jesus referred to His own body as a temple. Paul emphasizes this theme often and expands on it further by pointing out that we do not belong to ourselves. “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20, NIV*).

What a price was paid for our redemption. Only when we contemplate the Cross, and what happened there, can we even begin to understand our value and our worth before God. This thought alone should help us understand the sacred responsibility we have to take care of ourselves, not just spiritually but physically, as well.

God emptied heaven and allowed the blood of Jesus to be spilled for our redemption. We do not belong to ourselves; we have been redeemed and belong to God and owe Him our all, including faithful stewardship in the use of our bodies.

**Dwell more on the Cross and what Jesus did for us. Why should that motivate us in all that we do? If you truly believe that Christ, the Lord, died for your sins so that you can have the promise of eternal life, shouldn't that take front and center in your life? How should this wonderful truth motivate you to take better care of your body temple?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Helping the Tempted,” pp. 161–169, and “Working for the Intemperate,” pp. 171–182 in *The Ministry of Healing*.

Despite the growing problem of obesity in many parts of the world, gluttony is encouraged and accepted. Type 2 diabetes is becoming more of a problem because of diet, obesity, and lack of exercise, affecting even teenagers. Addiction to Internet activities and pornography has fostered unthinkable cases of violence and sexual abuse. Tobacco continues to be the largest single cause of preventable death throughout the world—over five million deaths per year. There are warnings on the cigarette boxes; these go unheeded by many. Information is not preventive if we do not act on it.

God has given, through various sources, consistent guidance on how to be healthy, happy, and holy. Blessed we will be if we follow the counsel.

“‘Have faith in the Lord your God, and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.’” (2 Chron. 20:20, NIV).

“There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers. The body should be servant to the mind, and not the mind to the body.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 398.

## Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Look at this quote taken from Friday’s study: “There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny.” What does this mean in practical terms?
- ❷ How does the society in which you live impact attitudes toward temperance? Does it encourage temperance, or does it promote attitudes that make temperance seem outdated? Why is it important to be aware of these influences, and, if needed, how can you learn to help others, especially the young, be persuaded by them?
- ❸ If possible, have a health expert speak in class about the right balance of things like diet, exercise, sleep, and sunlight.
- ❹ Some people have the mentality that if a little is good for you, then a lot must be even better. For example, if a little salt is good for the body, then a lot must be even better for it. What’s wrong with that kind of thinking?

## Another Power

by JOESIE DURANGO

Tay Juan walked through the village with his spear in one hand and his charms in the other. These were the signs of his power. He claimed to heal the sick or appease the spirits with slain chickens or a slaughtered pig. When tribal conflicts arose, Tay Juan restored peace.

As Sulads, student missionaries from Mountain View College, we had been warned about the powers of darkness we would face in the village. We knew that victory came only through a constant and close connection with Jesus. My partner and I prayed for God's strength and the Holy Spirit to boldly face Tay Juan and the powers of darkness.

When I finally met Tay Juan, his dignified bearing reminded me of Elisha, but the smell of alcohol and the smoke from his cigarette told me otherwise. "I am so happy that you have come to teach my people," he said. "You have risked your lives to come here. You sacrifice your own needs for the sake of others. I, too, will learn from you."

I felt so humble realizing that God had gone before us and had tamed the devil.

Tay Juan calls my partner and me his children. When we warned him of the dangers of tobacco and palm wine, he listened. "Thank you for telling me this," he said. "I didn't know that these things could destroy my body."

One evening he came to hear the children sing during our worship service. He loved the beautiful songs and asked for more. Tay Juan began attending worship every day. He listened to the songs and messages from God's Word.

And when two pastors came to baptize some believers in our village, we were surprised to see Tay Juan join the line!

Tay Juan gave his heart to Christ. One day he came to our cottage carrying a knife and a sword. "These weapons were my power, my protection from accidents and enemies," he began. "But I have a stronger power now and don't need these any longer." We prayed that God's protection would go with Tay Juan.

Tay Juan continues to heal the sick, not with incantations or sacrificial chickens, but with prayers to the Great Physician, Jesus.

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JOESIE DURANGO served as a teacher in the Tubakon Literacy Center in the mountains of Mindanao, southern Philippines.



# Integrity: Wholeness *and* Holiness



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 39:6–12; 1 Sam. 24:1–10; Dan. 6:1–10; Matt. 4:1–11; Rom. 1:26, 27; Eph. 3:14–21.*

**Memory Text:** “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (*Titus 2:7, 8, NIV*).

The preacher was being distracted by noisy children. To make matters worse, they were his own. Finally, he had to stop preaching and tell the children they would be punished when the service was over. Silence descended on not only the children but everyone. The sermon was completed, the service ended, and Sabbath lunch was a delight. Visitors laughed and relaxed, and it was a happy Sabbath.

That evening a pleasant euphoria came over the household. The little daughter, feeling perhaps the freedom of relaxation, came to her preacher dad. “Daddy?” she said. “Yes, dear?” he responded. “Today, you promised to punish me, and you didn’t. You told a lie.”

No question, integrity is a lot easier to talk about than to display. Even the *best* of us find ourselves easily compromised unless we are careful. Truly in the *littlest things* it is so easy to slip.

This week we will take a look at this topic and how it impacts our lives on so many levels.

**The Week at a Glance:** Moral integrity impacts our health—spiritually, mentally, and physically.

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 5.

## Jesus in the Wilderness

Compromise is so easy, isn't it? Especially as one gets older, things do not often appear so black and white as they once did. We give in a little here, a little there, and hold firm from our new position. Then, over time, we give in a little here, a little there, and hold firm from our newest position. Then, over time, from this latest position, we give a little here, a little there, and then hold firm. Before long, we find ourselves in a place that we once never would have dreamed we would be in. That is what compromise is all about.

And though sometimes we need to loosen up a bit and be willing to give here and there, oftentimes we do so on the very things that we should not budge on at all!

**Read** Matthew 4:1–11. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, what were the three avenues of temptation through which Satan approached Him? How did Jesus refute those temptations, and what can we take away from this account for ourselves?

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Satan found Jesus an impregnable wall. No matter what he tried to do, he failed to get Jesus to compromise on anything. Jesus was as impregnable as the Great Wall of China had been for centuries. Only better. And that was because the Great Wall was once breached. What happened? Someone bribed the gatekeeper! All that work, all that masonry, all that stone became almost useless when one single guard stopped doing what he was supposed to.

Yes, compromise is easy. Too easy. Satan will work through our appetite, through our presumption and pride, and through our desire for worldly things, through any avenue he can in order to lead us into sin, to get us to violate our integrity, and to push us away from Jesus. We not only need to be aware of his devices, we need to know how to claim God's promises and not be seduced into doing what we know is wrong. Only through a constant and firm reliance on the power of God, and a willingness to die to self, can we overcome.

**In what areas of your life have you compromised what you know is right? How did you feel the first time you did it? Does it bother you less now than at first? Or does it not even bother you at all anymore?**

## Maintaining Integrity

There are so many temptations out there, temptations that can so often lead to moral compromise. How easy it is for a traveling staff person to pad the expense account. How easy for a man to sneak a few looks at Internet pornography. How easy for children to lie to their parents. How easy for folk to cheat on their taxes. How easy to overindulge in food and drink. How easy to cheat in school. How easy to . . . and the list goes on, and on, and on.

**Read** the following accounts. In what ways could these men have so easily violated their integrity? What can we learn from these stories? As you read each account, think of the background to these temptations, think of all the pressure on these men to compromise, think about how easily they could have rationalized another choice.

*Gen. 39:6–12*

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*1 Sam. 24:1–10*

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*Dan. 6:1–10*

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If we are honest with ourselves, many of us will admit we are devious or at least less than transparent in many of our dealings. Sometimes we will not tell a lie, but we do not exactly convey the truth. We may believe a situation is not helped by openness. Such behavior can be found in many areas of life. What are ways in which you may have chosen expediency over forthrightness? Why is it so easy to do?

**Think about a nonbiblical character, either from history, from the news, or from a personal acquaintance, whom you deem as a person of integrity. What are the traits this person has that you wish you had? How can you seek to emulate those traits better in your own life?**

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## Integrity in Our Spiritual Lives

A young man purchased a pleasure boat with a nice little motor and trailer. The unit appeared clean and satisfactory, and—being purchased secondhand—it was not too expensive. Eager to try out his new acquisition, he took some friends and rode out to the public slip and launched the boat. It ran well, and the group made their way to a small island off the mainland in Lake Ontario.

Beaching the little boat, they explored the island and returned to the boat to head home. A short distance out, a splashing sound alerted them to the fact that they were taking on water. Quickly, the boat capsized, dumping the three friends into the chilly waters. A most fortunate rescue forestalled serious repercussions. What had happened? A single rotted timber was found in the base of the hull that, with the wave action on the beach, had led to a split in the wood. Just one bad piece, out of all the others, was enough to overturn the boat.

How similar it can be in our lives, as well. We might be so solid, so faithful, so firm and unwavering in so many ways, and yet with one area in which we have not surrendered to the Lord, one sinful area we seek to hold on to, we can find ourselves in deep moral, spiritual, and even physical trouble.

**Read** Ephesians 3:14–21. What is Paul saying to us here? How does this bear on our personal integrity? How can we experience these promises in our own lives?

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So much is promised us in these texts. The Holy Spirit can strengthen us from within; that is, He can change us, not like some cosmetic surgery but more like heart surgery, something working deep within us. And this change comes to us by faith, by knowing the reality of God’s love for us. The Lord seeks a complete transformation in our lives; He desires that we be “filled with all the fulness of God.” Notice, too, that unlike many self-help and New Age philosophies, Paul is not talking about our tapping into some innate power found within us. No, the power that “works in us” is the power of God, who can do more than we ask or think. The question is are we allowing Him to, or are we letting our carnal natures rule instead?

**What might it mean to be “filled with all the fulness of God”? Be prepared to talk about your answer in class.**

## Sexual Integrity

**Read** Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:15–18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Jude 7. What is the basic message of these texts to us today?

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Young Megan went off to college. It was her first time away from home for a long period of time. Though she had been taught about sexual immorality, and though she knew what the Bible and her church taught about it, she suddenly found herself in situations where the pressure was very great to give in. She knew it was wrong, she knew this was not what she wanted for her life, she knew that God had something better for her. At first she was strong; at first she resisted. Then, slowly but surely, she compromised, one step at a time. In the beginning, the guilt was terrible; but over time it did not bother her as much as before—not until she found herself with an incurable sexually transmitted disease. Then, and only then, did she start to really ponder the reality of her mistakes.

Sexual immorality in and of itself is bad enough. It is sin, and sin damages our relationship with God and with others. But in this day and age, it can be a very real physical hazard. There are numerous sexually transmitted diseases, from herpes to HIV/AIDS, that can be physically devastating. The surest way to protect yourself from these diseases is to follow biblical principles of sexual morality. Sexual pleasure is for a man and a woman within marriage. Period. Anything outside of that is outside of God's plan and is wrong; even worse, it can lead to some very serious physical consequences, as well. Even some secular organizations agree that sexual abstinence outside of marriage is the best choice a person can make.

And not just physical either. The emotional toll can be terrible, especially for women upon whom the stigma for sexual immorality often falls the heaviest, however unjustly.

Of particular concern today is the question of pornography, which since the rise of the Internet is more prevalent than ever. God alone knows how many millions of lives will be ruined through this terrible scourge. There is help for those who get caught up in it; however, for many the shame seems so great that they are afraid to get the help they need.

**What are your temptations, struggles, frustrations, and fears in this area of human life? Whatever your situation, how can you better avail yourself of the promises of God to see you through them?**

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## Acting on Belief

In Romans 12:1, 2, Paul implores the Christian to present himself or herself in wholeness to the Lord in service. The integrity of body, mind, and spirit is brought as a whole to the Lord. This requires integrity in each part of the whole.

Some easily comprehend the importance of pure minds but are lax about their physical bodies. As we have seen, this is not a biblical position. Our bodies are gifts from God, and because of that we are commanded by God to take care of them.

Integrity requires that our actions reflect our belief. Today, there remains little room for debate over the broad principles of healthful living. Medical science teaches what we have known for years now. Exercise is important for the body. If we know this, we show a lack of integrity if we neglect giving our bodies the exercise they need. Fresh, clean water and moderate amounts of sunshine are so very beneficial. Because we know these things, we are called upon to follow them.

In a time when an epidemic of obesity sweeps many nations, few would refute the dangers of gluttony. We must make choices that only we as individuals can make, regarding how much food we eat and the kind we eat, especially if we are having problems with weight. Tobacco is recognized by nearly all as being the world's most rampant killer. The use of substances ranging from alcohol and marijuana to cocaine has gutted the productive lives of millions. The Spirit of Prophecy no longer stands alone in advocating fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and nuts. Even government departments of agriculture recommend a reduction in the consumption of many high-fat flesh foods. In short, how much better to follow a vegetarian diet, especially when we know how much better it is for us.

“True religion and the laws of health go hand in hand. It is impossible to work for the salvation of men and women without presenting to them the need of breaking away from sinful gratifications, which destroy the health, debase the soul, and prevent divine truth from impressing the mind. Men and women must be taught to take a careful view of every habit and every practice and at once put away those things that cause an unhealthy condition of the body, and thus cast a dark shadow over the mind. God desires His light bearers ever to keep a high standard before them. By precept and example they must hold their perfect standard high above Satan's false standard, which, if followed, will lead to misery, degradation, disease, and death for both body and soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 480.

**Review all of your personal health habits. Are you living up to all the light you have? If not, what is keeping you from making the kinds of changes that can do you only good?**

**Further Study:** “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 57.

“There is work for us to do—stern, earnest work. All our habits, tastes, and inclinations must be educated in harmony with the laws of life and health. By this means we may secure the very best physical conditions, and have mental clearness to discern between the evil and the good.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 28.

“Our danger is not from scarcity, but from abundance. We are constantly tempted to excess. Those who would preserve their powers unimpaired for the service of God, must observe strict temperance in the use of His bounties, as well as total abstinence from every injurious or debasing indulgence.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 29.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Look at the last Ellen G. White quote in Friday’s study. What does she mean when she writes that our danger is from excess?
- 2 Sunlight is an important component of good health. Here, too, however, we need a balance: a few minutes of sunlight each day can be a great blessing for us; on the other hand, overexposure can lead to health problems. How do we find the right balance here as with everything else?
- 3 What can your local church do to help with the problem of HIV/AIDS in your local community? Though in some parts of the world, the problem is greater than in others, we all can do at least a small part.
- 4 What can you do to encourage the young people in your church to abstain from sexual activity outside of marriage? Why is this so important? How can the church help, not just in sexuality but in other things, as well, that the young struggle with? How can you help the young (or old, for that matter) make the right choices when it comes to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco? It is one thing to give them dire warnings; it is another actually to do things to help them avoid making the wrong choice or to give them help if they do make mistakes.

## Treasure in the Street

by HILARIO CATUKU

As I walked along the street in Luanda, the capital city of Angola, one day, I noticed a folded paper fluttering on the ground. I picked it up and read the title. “Three Angels’ Messages,” it said. Later at home I read the tract. It spoke about spiritual Babylon, a term that I didn’t know.

I asked some church members what “spiritual Babylon” meant, but no one knew. I read the tract again, and asked God to show me what lesson He had for me from this tract.

One day I felt impressed to ask a classmate about the Ten Commandments. As we talked, he recited the Ten Commandments. When he got to the fourth commandment, I asked him to tell me more about it. He explained that Jesus kept the Sabbath.

I sensed that this was what God was trying to tell me through the tract. But I didn’t know of any church that worshiped on Saturday. Then my classmate invited me to worship with him on Sabbath. I was curious, so I went. I was impressed with the way the members talked about the Bible issues. The pastor’s message touched my heart too.

After the worship service, I met the church elder, who gave me some Bible study guides and information on the Sabbath to read during the week. I continued worshiping with my friend on Sabbath.

Several weeks later I told my aunt, with whom I live, that I was attending the Seventh-day Adventist church. She told me that Sabbath is a Jewish tradition; Christians don’t keep the Sabbath. I read Hebrews 4:8–10 to her and explained that this was written after Christ died, meaning that the Sabbath is still valid. She felt betrayed and urged me to give up these false beliefs. But I felt I had found something precious.

I attended school at night, and my classes didn’t end until after sunset on Fridays. I talked to the principal, who allowed me to take my exams earlier on Fridays. But sometimes I still couldn’t finish before the sun set. So I left the remaining answers blank. In spite of this, I passed. I know that God used these experiences to lead me to a deeper faith.

Angola has more than 300,000 Adventist believers, but many more need to hear God’s call out of “spiritual Babylon.” Your offerings help us reach more people for Christ in Angola.

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HILARIO CATUKU is a teenager who lives in Luanda, Angola.



# Optimism: Happiness *and* Healing



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *1 Kings 19:2–18; Psalms 27; 42; Luke 8:14; 10:38–42; Rom. 8:35–39; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10; 1 Thess. 5:16, 17.*

**Memory Text:** “Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (*Lamentations 3:21–23, NIV*).

Two men are in prison. The gaze of one is drawn to the shiny, twinkling stars that bejewel the velvety firmament. As he takes in the beauty of this scene, he is filled with optimism and hope: there is something better beyond the bars! The other person focuses on the muddy ground surrounding the prison cells. Nothing there encourages him, and he becomes less and less optimistic. He is robbed of hope because of the direction of his gaze.

The Scriptures portray issues that apply to us today. We are not spared situations that lead to despair, even for faithful disciples of the Lord. Fortunately, God’s Word has abundant encouragement and fountains of hope and optimism.

Hope enables us to be optimistic even in troubled circumstances. This optimism affects how we feel emotionally and also influences our physical health positively, enhancing our immunity and general well-being.

We often cannot change external circumstances, but we can change our attitude toward them. This week we will look at this principle from a biblical perspective.

**The Week at a Glance:** Optimism and hope can have a very positive impact on our health.

\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 12.

## Depression and Despair

Depression is a common affliction today. Along with the general sadness that accompanies depression, there is the loss of enjoyment of those things that formerly were pleasurable. Sufferers experience tiredness, a sense of worthlessness and hopelessness, and a loss of energy. Sleep is disturbed, and various physical symptoms—digestive problems, headaches, and backache, among others—often result.

If not recognized and treated, depression even may lead to suicide. This is a problem in all age groups, but, in some societies, those 24 years and younger are especially vulnerable.

There are two main kinds of depression. The first occurs in response to unpleasant circumstances of life, such as death, illness, job loss, or a broken relationship. Everyone experiences some of these at one time or another. The other kind of depression is related to chemical imbalances in the central nervous system. This often is genetic and is as much an illness as any disease. We need to be accepting of people with these challenges and avoid judgment and stigmatization.

**Below** are biblical examples of great characters who suffered symptoms of depression. Who were they, and what were their symptoms?

*Psalm 42*

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*1 Kings 19:2–18*

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These two champions of the Old Testament suffered times when their lives were darkened by the overwhelming shadows of despair. David spent days and nights weeping. Elijah was suicidal, but, rather than take his own life, he requested the Lord to perform the deed (*1 Kings 19:4*). In today's terms, he may have lamented that he was the only Adventist upholding the standards!

In His consistently grace-filled way, God deals gently with both David and Elijah. David is impressed that he must place his hope in God (*Ps. 42:11*), and the outcome will be a praise-filled life. Having led him in a still, small voice, God reminds Elijah of his mission and from where his strength comes. Elijah then proceeds to call and start the in-service training of Elisha, who was to take his mantle.

**Everyone at some point struggles with depression. While that is generally unavoidable, you still can make choices that will help avoid potentially depressing situations. What kind of choices are you making—and where will they likely lead?**

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## The Cares of This Life

Optimism and hope often are crowded out of our lives by our busy schedules. We can become so focused on things and work, even good and necessary activities, that we lose out on our relationship with Jesus. This relationship is essential to our growth in all aspects of our lives.

**Read** the following texts. What do they tell us about how we are to live our lives? What are the lessons we can learn from each of these examples?

*Mic. 6:8*

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*Luke 8:14*

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*Luke 10:38–42*

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*Luke 12:16–21*

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Success is coveted and sought after. Individuals often expend long hours in pursuit of this goal. How often we follow after success when our real goal should be that of significance. Is what I do, say, and think significant, or am I like the *successful* farmer in the parable who was to be called to final account and be termed a fool? (See also *Luke 21:34*.)

Martha was engrossed in the essential tasks of providing food and drink for her guests. Like us, she became so busy in the work for the Lord that she neglected the life-giving relationship with the Lord of the work. Jesus reminded her that Mary had chosen more wisely and affirmed the choice of relationship significance over work success.

And sometimes, like the seed, we can be overcome with the cares of this life in just trying to survive. This can encompass assuring the necessities for the family, education for our children, or just keeping up with providing the demands of living on this tumultuous planet. Nurturing our relationship with Jesus impacts every aspect of our lives and allows for the celebration of an optimistic and hope-filled outlook, even in times of distress and pressure.

**How much of what you are doing will be remembered in eternity? In contrast, how much are you doing that will one day be eternally forgotten? What does your answer tell you about yourself, how you're living, and, perhaps, what choices you need to make?**

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## Be Joyful Always

**Read** 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17. How are the two admonitions related?

Three decades ago much was written about praising God in all circumstances, which is fine in principle. Yet, many of these writings heaped guilt on those who were struggling to come to terms with death, loss, tragedy, disability, and heartache, as if these people were being unfaithful to the Lord and not living as real Christians because they were not joyous and happy and full of praise during these crises.

We do not always rejoice in all situations. Jesus certainly did not (*Matt. 26:38, John 11:35*), and who is going to accuse Him of being unfaithful? Job, too, though faithful to the Lord, does not appear very joyful for most of the book that bears his name. On the contrary, he is a miserable and wailing wreck.

Yet, even amid all the pain and tragedy of life, we still can have cause for joy and optimism, no matter how much these reasons might feel buried beneath the woes and cares that so greatly trouble us. And that is because, thanks to Jesus and the promises we have from Him, we know that these things only are temporary; that these things have not taken God by surprise; and that despite it all, and how hard and incomprehensible our sufferings are, God loves and cares about us. It is when we live amid suffering that we cling to these promises, that we cling to the hope before us, that we can find reason for joy and optimism, even among the worst situations.

**What** hope and optimism can you draw from these promises?

*Rom. 8:31*

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*Rom. 8:35–39*

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*1 John 3:1*

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*Rev. 21:4*

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**What other Bible promises can you cling to, to give you reasons to be optimistic and hopeful, even amid trying circumstances? How have these texts helped you work through difficult situations?**

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## Laughter and Healing

**Read** 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10. What is Paul saying here, and how can we apply this principle in our own lives, especially in times of distress?

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Norman Cousins, the author of a book called *Anatomy of An Illness*, was the editor of a popular magazine in the United States for about thirty years. In 1964 he was struck down by a disease that affected his collagen, the body's connective tissue. He suffered great pain. He had a hard time moving his fingers, his limbs, even his jaw. He found it hard to turn over in bed. Meanwhile, lumps started forming all over his body, as well. Once the diagnosis was made, the doctors prescribed all sorts of painkillers and sedatives, things like aspirin and codeine, and other drugs, including many different sleeping pills. At one point, his body started to have a reaction to the drugs, and he broke out in hives that were even more painful than the disease itself. Things were looking bad for Norman, especially because only one in about five hundred patients ever recovers from this disease.

Finally, fed up with all these medications and their bad side effects, he started to watch a popular TV show called *Candid Camera*. In bed he would laugh and laugh at the antics. Almost immediately he noticed a change. The more he laughed, the better he felt. The nurse would sometimes read him humorous stories that would make him howl with glee. Over time, the tests showed that he was getting better. Before long, the lumps on his body began to shrink, and he returned to his job. Soon after, the man who had found it hard to turn over in bed was playing tennis, playing golf, riding horses, and playing the piano!

Though no one is saying that laughter is the solution to all our medical problems, there is no question that a good attitude can have a positive impact on our health.

**So often attitude is something that you can control if you really want to, is it not? What is your general attitude? How can you learn to be more optimistic? How should focusing on the Cross and what it reveals about God help you have a more positive outlook on life?**

## A Merry Heart—Practical Optimism!

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (*Prov. 17:22*).

Yes, there are physical benefits to laughter and joyful thinking. Laughter exercises the lungs and stimulates the circulatory system. As a result, increased oxygen enters the blood. Laughter acts as a relaxant, and in the long term it can be associated with mild decreases in blood pressure. Laughter increases the production of the chemical endorphins that soothe and relax the mind, relieve pain, elevate the mood, and increase immune cell activity. This optimism and merry heart will be entirely appropriate, because they are founded on the knowledge that God is in control of our lives.

We know that it is not possible or feasible to be happy and to laugh continuously. We can, however, seek to have a positive attitude.

**Read** Isaiah 26:1–4. How can you apply this passage practically in your life?

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When our minds are steadfast and we trust in Him, we reap definite benefits. Studies have shown that viewing others in a positive and benevolent way can beneficially impact our resistance to infection (as well as make us pleasant to be around!). As we cultivate and nurture our relationship with Christ, our physical health is benefited, and we can find the kind of emotional and spiritual healing that can aid physical healing, too.

We are faced with a choice in Proverbs 17:22: a merry heart does good; a broken spirit has negative effects on our total being. David learned the importance of this choice and reminded himself of God’s preserving role in this ongoing struggle.

**Read** Psalm 27. What hope is presented here? How can we apply these words to ourselves?

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**There is ample evidence that a vibrant relationship with God impacts our total well-being. What changes do you need to make in order to have a better relationship with the Lord?**

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Mind Cure,” pp. 241–259, in *The Ministry of Healing*.

“Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father’s house?”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251.

“Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope. From it shines the light of the Saviour’s love; and when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fulness of joy; for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling in faith at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 209, 210.

“In this hope of a sure inheritance in the earth made new, the early Christians rejoiced, even in times of severe trial and affliction. “Ye greatly rejoice,” Peter wrote, “though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, . . . ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 517, 518.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 Do you know someone who is suffering from depression? If so, what can you do to help? So often a kind word or even a friendly gesture can go a long way in making someone feel better. What can your class or the church do to help those with depression?
- 2 Proverbs 3:7, 8 reads, “Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.” How does this fit in with the lesson this week?
- 3 Next time you are feeling down, make a concentrated effort to dwell on positive things. Think about God’s love. Read some Bible texts that you especially like. Praise the Lord in song and in prayer. You might be surprised at how much better you feel.
- 4 Though the emphasis this week has been on our feelings and the importance of feeling good, we must remember that faith is not feeling. In other words, just because we are feeling down, depressed, or discouraged does not mean we have lost our connection with God. What is the difference between faith and feeling, and why is it important to know that difference?

## Lead Me to Truth

by FOLORUMSO ALAWODE AJIBADE

I grew up in a church and knew well its doctrines. But I felt that some things my church taught were wrong. I read the Ten Commandments, and I knew that they prohibited worshiping idols. But when I asked the priest why we prayed before statues, he said that the images were like pictures of family members in our home. Still, it didn't seem right.

Finally I asked God to lead me to His truth. And God answered my prayer. One day as I sat in my home, I had what must have been a vision, in which I saw a banner with the words, "Seventh-day Adventist Church." I had seen a few Adventist churches in my life, but I knew nothing about what the church teaches and had never worshiped in one.

The next day, Sabbath, a Voice told me, "Go, and worship today." Another voice countered, "Don't go today; go next week." I dared not tarry. I prepared and went to the nearest Adventist church.

When I arrived, someone took my name and welcomed me as a visitor. I told them, "I am not a visitor. I will become part of this church from today." I found the people having a Bible study. Later I learned that this was Sabbath School.

I met the pastor and told him of my vision, and he came to my house several times a week to study the Bible with me. Others came to visit as well. I was glad for this.

When members of my former church asked me why I wasn't coming to church, I told them that God has sent me to the Adventist Church, and there I have found salvation.

I was baptized a few months later. I am so happy to have found the truth in Jesus. I'm only sorry that I hadn't prayed years ago that God would show me these truths. I will devote the rest of my life to sharing the gospel with everyone I meet. Leading people to Christ has become my life.

Thank you for your mission offerings, which helped bring the light of truth to this soul who was in darkness.



FOLORUMSO ALAWODE AJIBADE (left) lives in western Nigeria.



# Nutrition *in the* Bible



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 1:26–30; 7:1, 2; 8:20; Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14; Prov. 23:19–21; Acts 10:1–28; Rom. 14:17; 1 Tim. 4:1–5.*

**Memory Text:** “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (*1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV*).

**A** writer argued against belief in God, in the supernatural, or in any spiritual realities at all. He believed only in the material world, only in material things.

“Man is,” he said, “what he eats. Period.”

However extreme his position, he does have a point, at least somewhat. Though we certainly are more than what we eat, what we eat helps make us what we are. Our blood, bones, fat, and tissues all are fed by the food we put in our bodies. We know that if we stopped eating, we would die. We know, too, that our food impacts our physical being in many ways. Anyone who has ever eaten too much, or eaten the wrong things and become sick, knows how much food impacts us physically—and mentally, as well. Indeed, diet can impact our thoughts, which should not be surprising, because our brain is central to thought, and our brain is affected by the foods that feed it.

This week we will take a look at diet, this very important component of a healthy lifestyle.

**The Week at a Glance:** A good diet is a very important factor in living a healthy lifestyle.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 19.*

## The Original Diet

**Read** Genesis 1:26–30. What does it tell us about the original diet? What might it mean that both humans and the animals had a similar diet?

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God planted a garden full of fruits and nuts for the nourishment of our first parents. We only can speculate how different this produce may have been from what is available to us today, and we assume there was a wide variety of colorful, tasty treats, a great variety of fruits and nuts in the large cornucopia provided by God. We can imagine the tree of life, planted near the beautiful river, bearing 12 crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves were for healing of all peoples and for the prevention of all diseases and sickness. This is how the apostle John describes the tree in Revelation 22:2, 3; this description of life in Eden is so brief, and we are left with many unanswered questions, but we do know Adam and Eve enjoyed food from one tree in the Garden that is no longer available to us.

Scientific research has confirmed that a vegetarian diet is healthier than a diet high in meat full of saturated fat. The Adventist Health Study, conducted by Loma Linda University, compared Seventh-day Adventist church members in the United States who share similar demographics and lifestyles except for two different categories of diet. When those who eat a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet (plant food plus eggs and milk) were compared to omnivores who included red and white meats in their diet, the vegetarians had less heart disease, less types of cancers, less hypertension, less diabetes, less dementia, and less osteoporosis—leading to an increased life expectancy. The Adventist vegetarians enjoyed eight to ten additional healthy years of life by eating more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts. They also ate less refined grain products, sugar, and prepared foods. Other studies conducted in Europe, Australia, and South America confirm these findings, and more than four hundred reports on the health of Seventh-day Adventists have now been published in scientific journals.

**Some people tend to make diet the central focus of their religion, the idea being the stricter the diet, the holier the person. At the same time, why is it important that we watch our diet and seek to eat as healthfully as we can?**

## The Post-Flood Diet

As Christians we should not forget the fact that the first sin of humanity dealt with appetite. Adam and Eve were told not to eat of a certain tree (*Gen. 2:16, 17*), and they ate of it anyway (*Gen. 3:6*). This was sin, pure and simple. Hence, however much we must be careful not to make an idol out of diet, we must not diminish its importance. In the midst of so many voices, we need to seek wisdom in order to find the right balance in how we should eat and drink.

**Read** Genesis 9:3, 4 and compare it with Genesis 1:26–30. What change came to the human diet because of the Flood? Why do you think this happened? How does this change reflect an even greater disharmony brought to the earth because of sin?

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Only after the Flood, with so much vegetation destroyed, did God give humans permission to eat animals. What a major shift in the whole balance of relationship between man and beast. We are so used to it today that we surely do not realize what an incredible change this must have been.

**Read** Genesis 7:1, 2; 8:20. How do these verses dispel the idea that the distinction between clean and unclean meats began with the Jewish nation?

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These verses prove that the difference between clean and unclean meats did not originate with the Jewish economy. How could it have, when there were no Jews or Jewish nation at this time? No question, when God called the Jews out and made them a separate people under the covenant with Him, He gave them a detailed revelation of the distinction regarding clean and unclean meat. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 provide very extensive expositions on this topic. Though a certain amount of debate exists in the theological and even the medical world regarding the reasons for the distinction, the health component seems one of the most obvious reasons. Many of the animals deemed unclean do not exactly constitute the most healthful things a person can put in his or her body (such as rats, pigs, snakes, and vultures), do they? If, as we believe, God wants us to take care of our bodies, it would make sense that He would show us what things are not good for us to eat.

## Food in the New Testament

As we saw yesterday, the distinction between clean and unclean foods did not start with the Jewish nation. Nevertheless, many today assert that in New Testament times, the Bible obliterated this distinction, and it does not matter now what people eat.

Yet, that really does not make a whole lot of sense, if you think about it. Diet, after all, plays such an important role in our health; thus, it is very hard to imagine why the New Testament would show no concern about diet, which is so crucial to healthful living.

**Read 1 Timothy 4:1–5. What is Paul saying? Does this mean that we can now eat unclean meat?**

In this particular case, Paul was dealing with future heresies that would forbid believers to partake of two things that God gave humanity at creation, food and marriage. The foods involved are all foods that God had created for human consumption. Paul's words here should not be taken to mean that unclean foods were "created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth" (*1 Tim. 4:3, NIV*). Otherwise, what? A rat should be "eaten with thanksgiving"?

In his letters to the Romans and the Corinthians (*Romans 14, 1 Cor. 8:4–13, 10:25–28*), Paul addressed the implication for Christians of the widespread practice in the Gentile world of offering flesh food to idols. Early Christians struggled with the question of whether the eating of such food was an act of pagan worship. Those strong in their faith did not believe it was, and thus they could eat all edible things offered to idols. Those who did not have such a strong faith used only vegetables, which were not offered to idols. Paul urged that no one should despise those who eat only vegetables or judge those who "eat all things" suitable for food.

**What's wrong with using Acts 10 as proof that the New Testament has done away with the clean/unclean distinction in regard to human diet? See Acts 10:28.**

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Where are you in the whole question of diet? What improvements do you know that you should make in what you eat, in how you eat it, or even in the amount you eat?

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## A Balanced Diet

**“Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Prov. 23:19–21). What important health principle do we find in these verses? How can we learn to apply this principle to ourselves, in the area of health and temperance?**

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“In order to know what are the best foods, we must study God’s original plan for man’s diet. . . . Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables . . . prepared in as simple and natural a manner as possible are the most healthful and nourishing. They impart a strength, a power of endurance, and a vigor of intellect that are not afforded by a more complex and stimulating diet.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 295, 296.

Just because someone is a vegetarian does not automatically mean that he or she is eating a healthy diet; at the same time, just because someone eats some meat does not automatically mean he or she is defiling their body temple. Other factors for a good diet are important, as well.

You could be a vegetarian and yet at the same time be consuming too much fat, too much salt, or too much sugar, all of which can lead to a variety of serious health issues, things like diabetes, heart attacks, stroke, and cancer.

Or you simply could be consuming too much food in general. You can be on the strictest total vegetarian diet possible, and yet, because you eat too much, you could become overweight with some very negative health consequences.

In diet, as with all things, temperance is important. Too much of even good food can be detrimental to your health. In general, the idea is to eat a wide variety of healthy food, certainly enough to meet all your nutritional needs, while at the same time not overeating and taxing the system. As with everything in health, balance is the key.

**Our church does not make vegetarianism a test of fellowship. And it should not either. Many faithful Adventists choose not to be vegetarians. What, though, are the advantages of being a vegetarian, if you are in a position to get enough of the right foods for a proper diet?**

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## Diet Today

**“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17). How are we to understand this text in the context of the whole question of diet and health? What are some of the extremes that we need to avoid?**

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As Seventh-day Adventists, we should be very thankful for the counsels we have been given on health. The best medical science affirms the basic principles of the kind of diet we advocate. In Ellen G. White’s last address to the General Conference in 1909, she counseled, “We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God’s people.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 159. In other words, if we are in a position to eat this way, we should seek to do it. It does not make us righteous, it does not make us holy, and it certainly does not put us in a position to judge those who do not eat the way we think is best. It can, though, make us healthier, and who does not want good health?

Today, nutritionists often display what is called a food pyramid, a diagram that shows what the best foods are and the amounts that should be consumed. At the base of the pyramid are the whole grains: breads, pasta, and brown rice. These should be eaten in the largest quantities, about six to eleven servings per day. The next level includes fruits and vegetables, recommending about five to nine servings per day. Next are dairy products and eggs, about two to three servings a day. These can be important for vegetarians, in order to make sure that we get enough vitamin B<sub>12</sub> in our diet. Total vegetarians should take vitamin B<sub>12</sub> supplements. The next group, almost at the top (which means these should be eaten in even smaller amounts), includes legumes, nuts, seeds, and meat alternatives for vegetarians. A nonvegetarian diet would include fish, fowl, and meat, but only in moderate quantities. Finally, at the top, which means one should consume the smallest amounts, are fats, oils, sweets, and iodized salt.

Our health is a precious gift. Diet plays an important role in health. How wise, then, for us to seek to do the best we can in what we eat. How important for us to exercise self-discipline and self-control when tempted to eat what we know is not good for us. God gave these truths to us for our benefit. When we ignore them, we hurt ourselves and, as so often is the case, others are made to suffer, as well.

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*.

From the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, we read: “Christian behavior . . . means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures.”

Twenty-second fundamental belief: “*The original diet*. The Bible does not condemn the eating of clean animals. But God’s original diet for man did not include flesh foods because He did not envision the taking of any animal’s life and because a balanced vegetarian diet is the best for health—a fact for which science offers mounting evidence.

“The diet God ordained in the Garden of Eden—the vegetarian diet—is the ideal, but sometimes we cannot have the ideal. In those circumstances, in any given situation or locale, those who wish to stay in optimum health will eat the best food that they can obtain.” —*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* 2nd ed. (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), p. 318.

The General Conference Nutrition Council, in their Position Statement of 2006, titled *Vegetarian Dietary Guidelines*, states, “We recommend the generous use of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits; a moderate use of low-fat dairy products (or nutritional equivalent alternatives); legumes, nuts, and seeds; a very limited use of foods high in saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar, and salt.”

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 What are some of the dietary challenges that you face in the area where you live? Is there an abundance of food that can lead to eating not only the wrong foods but also to overeating? Or is there a struggle to get enough of the right foods? What can you as a class do to help those who could be struggling either way?
- 2 What are the extremes in diet that we need to avoid?
- 3 How should our understanding of the nature of humanity impact our understanding of how important our physical bodies are? In other words, because we do not believe that the soul is immortal and can exist independently of the body, should not we then have even more reason to take care regarding how we treat our bodies? Explain.
- 4 Many new Seventh-day Adventists do not know a thing about a healthy diet. How can we help them learn about this important topic in a balanced way that doesn’t push them into extremism or turn them off?

# The Little School That Could

by SARAH KIDEN

Like most church schools, the primary school in Yei, a city in southern Sudan, was established with more faith than financing. Three teachers were appointed, and they set up their classrooms in the church sanctuary until the members could build a school. In Sudan, as in many developing countries, most teachers are high school graduates with no specific teacher training.

When the school grew to 200 students, church members could wait no longer. They built a four-classroom school constructed of poles plastered with mud and covered by a thatched roof.

The school continues to grow and has become an important part of religious outreach in the city of Yei. Church members produce a radio program for the local Christian radio station, and children from the school have become an important part of the programming. They take turns reciting Bible verses and singing songs on the live radio programs. This radio program has helped boost the church's outreach into the community and has increased the school's enrollment, as well.

People in the community often ask how the children can learn so many Bible verses and so many songs. And some ask how their children can be a part of the Yei Seventh-day Adventist Primary School.

Enrollment continues to increase, and today more than seven hundred students study there. The school has added more classrooms and teachers to accommodate the increased enrollment. And more children want to study there.

Emerging from a civil war that spanned several decades and destroyed most public buildings, Sudan struggles to provide an education for its children. The few schools that exist can't accommodate the thousands who want to learn to read and write. Churches have stepped into the gap and provide the bulk of education in southern Sudan.



Textbooks are another challenge. Relief agencies have provided a few textbooks for teachers in schools, but the children have none. They must write down everything that they need to learn. It is slow progress, but it is the only way for now.

Your mission offerings support education in Sudan and around the world. Thank you for your support and your prayers.

SARAH KIDEN *teaches at Yei Seventh-day Adventist Primary School in southern Sudan.*



# Social Support: *The Tie That Binds*



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 1:27, John 1:1–3, Rom. 14:7, 1 Cor. 12:14–26, 1 Corinthians 13, Gal. 6:2, Eph. 4:1–16.*

**Memory Text:** “ ‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’ ” (*John 13:34, 35, NIV*).

It is very clear that being unloved, lonely, and isolated increases the likelihood of various risky behaviors. Disease and premature death from all causes rises by 200 to 500 percent or more in such individuals. Saddest of all, isolation deprives us of the joy of everyday life, the joy that comes from satisfying and fulfilling relationships. One study was conducted on 170 military wives receiving prenatal care at a military hospital. The research showed that women without emotional and psychological support had three times as many complications as those with adequate support.

Anything that promotes a sense of isolation may lead to illness and suffering. That which promotes love and intimacy, connection, and community is healing and brings health. And no wonder, because, as humans, we were meant to live in community and fellowship with one another.

With these ideas in mind, we come to the final week in our study about health and temperance, and our topic deals with the important question of interpersonal relationships and how these can impact our physical well-being.

**The Week at a Glance:** Loving one another is the distinguishing characteristic of the disciples of Christ. Love blesses not only the recipient but the giver, as well.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 26.*

## The Original Image

As human beings, we are so immersed in sin that we often can forget just how bad it is, just how much it has affected us. It is not easy to realize how far we have fallen, because we have been down for so long.

**Read** Genesis 1:27. How does the fact that Jesus Himself is God help us understand better what it means to have been made in the image of God? How does knowing about Jesus help us understand the kind of characters our first parents had at the Creation?

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The Bible is clear: we were made in the image of God. It is clear, too, that Jesus is God (*see John 1:1–3*). Thus, in the beginning, humans reflected somewhat the moral character of Jesus. The Jesus who loved us so much that He stooped down and took on our humanity in order to save us—that is what humans were originally like. The Jesus who was willing to minister to others by washing the feet of His betrayer—that is what humans were somewhat like. The Jesus who, even while dying on the cross, took time to comfort the dying thief—that is what humans were like. The Jesus who cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (*Luke 23:34*)—that is what humans were to some degree like before sin entered.

The unselfish love and concern for others that marked Jesus’ life also must have been reflected to some degree in Adam and Eve before the Fall, who were from creation made “in the image of God.”

Hence, the idea of being like Jesus means being remade into the image in which we were originally created. And it is obvious from looking at Jesus, from seeing how He lived and how He treated people and how He loved even His enemies, that at the heart of Christ’s character was unselfish love for others. As humans, then, we originally were made to love and care unselfishly for those who were around us. That is certainly part of what it means to have been made in the image of God.

We were made, therefore, to love and to be loved, and this we cannot do in a vacuum. We need people to love, just as people need to be loved. This is what community and family are all about.

**Dwell more on this idea about what it means to have been made in the image of God and that Jesus is God. How does this fact help us understand just how fallen we are and how much we need a Savior? More so, how should this help us understand why we need to treat people better than we often do?**

## People: Social Beings

People are social beings. Not long after Adam was created, God provided a companion for him. He said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (*Genesis 2:18, NIV*). We need one another.

Hence, a crucial point regarding this reality must be understood.

**Read** Romans 14:7. What important principle is found in this text? How have you experienced the powerful reality of this truth?

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In life or death, we impact others, especially those in our family. The responsible caring for our own health brings blessings not only to ourselves but to those with whom we share our lives.

**What** do the following texts tell us about how social relationships were meant as a blessing for us? *Gen. 2:18, Eccles. 4:9–12, 1 Cor. 12:14–26, Gal. 6:2.*

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Because good relationships positively influence both our own and others’ lives, we should learn to give and receive graciously. It is incorrect to say, “It’s my body, and it’s nobody’s business but mine.” Society pays, directly or indirectly, for every person’s poor health choices. Human life, a precious creation of God, is of utmost worth and is deserving of preservation. In many places the value of life is not appreciated; for the Christian, every person is valuable. It is important to invest not only in your own health but also in the health of others.

A doctor studied the importance of social ties and social support in relationship to disease and mortality rates. The close social, cultural, and traditional ties of the Japanese culture made for exemplary health outcomes. The better the social ties, the better the health. He further indicated that social isolation results in poorer health and higher mortality rates. Meaningful social relationships positively influence physical, mental, and emotional behaviors.

**In what ways have you benefited from a social network? How can you help others in the same way you have benefited? Do you tend to take more from the network, or give more? What does your answer say about you?**

## Unity in Redemption

All humanity is related through our common ancestry (*Acts 17:26*). We're related, too, through the love that God has for all of us. Everyone may be redeemed by Christ's precious blood, because God wants no one to be lost (*2 Pet. 3:9*).

The Bible is clear that through redemption in Jesus, all barriers between us should be brought down, because we are the same before the Lord: sinners in need of God's grace.

**How** does Paul describe the people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus? *Eph. 4:1–16*. What does this mean in terms of how we should relate to one another?

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No one hates his or her own body (*Eph. 5:29, 30*). All parts of the body interact to function effectively. If one part of the body suffers, all functions are affected. The closer we are to others, the more readily and powerfully we feel the impact of their problems.

When we interact socially and helpfully with others, it improves health. Two hundred seventy-six healthy volunteers were exposed to the common cold virus. The effect of a variety of interpersonal relationships was explored. Those reporting the fewest types of relationships had more than four times the risk of developing a cold than those reporting greater numbers of relationships. These differences were not explicable by factors such as immunity, smoking, exercise, amount of sleep, alcohol intake, and so forth. It was shown that the *diversity* of relationships was more important than the total number of people with whom the individuals interacted. Mutually supportive, diverse relationships increased resistance to infection, at least according to this study.

All this points to what we have been talking about all this quarter: our emotional, mental, and spiritual health can have a powerful impact on our physical health. Central to our emotional and spiritual health are the kinds of interpersonal relationships we share with others.

Sure, there are times when most everyone wants to be alone, but that is not the same as being part of a larger community that can act as a support group, especially in times of need.

**How can you better involve yourself in the life of your church community? How much death to self will it take to be more involved? What gifts do you have that can benefit others?**

## Support One Another

Recognizing the outstanding benefits of service one to another, we can understand why Mrs. White made this statement in *Medical Ministry*: “Christian kindness and earnest consecration are constantly to be manifest in the life.”—Page 204. A person can have all the theological knowledge in the world, but if the person is not kind, loving, and caring about others, what good does this knowledge do? This seems to be very much the theme of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. It would do us all some good to read that chapter over often, even daily and then ask ourselves how well we are following what Paul says there.

**What** do the following verses teach us about how we are to relate to one another?

*John 13:35*

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*Rom. 15:7*

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*Eph. 4:32*

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*Col. 3:13*

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*1 Thess. 4:18*

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*James 5:16*

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*1 Pet. 3:8*

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*1 Pet. 4:9*

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*1 John 1:7*

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An outstanding virtue of the Christian is to follow the example of Jesus in loving people despite their weaknesses. Jesus loved His disciples regardless of their many shortcomings and failures. He was caring and inclusive, even when he was rejected and betrayed. We are called to do the same. This can happen only as Christ works in our lives, and He can do that only to the extent that we surrender and allow Him to. As we grasp just how much grace and mercy have been extended to us by God, we can start doing the same to others. Loving the loving and the kind is relatively easy; most anyone can do that. It is when we are called to love the unloving, the ones who are hard to get along with, the ones who treat us nastily and unfairly—then it takes the grace of God working in us.

**How well do you love those who are not so easy to love? How can you learn to do better in that area? How would Jesus treat that person? Go and do likewise.**

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## Serve One Another

The life of Jesus on earth was a life of service. From the earliest days of His ministry right up until the end, He was serving humanity. In fact, according to the Bible, He still is serving us today (*Heb. 2:17, 18*).

**We** each have been created with specific spiritual gifts for service. What are the various spiritual gifts and services found in the following verses?

*Rom. 12:4–8*

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*1 Cor. 12:1–5*

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*Eph. 4:8–11*

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As we have seen, as human beings, we were made to love others, as Jesus loved. And when we do this, we do not simply benefit others. We benefit ourselves, as well.

Think for a moment how good you feel when you reach out and help others, when you selflessly give of yourself with no intention of getting anything back for yourself. Something inside us is touched. There is a sense of well-being; we get a satisfaction that, really, nothing else can match. And that is because, by giving of ourselves, we are living as we were meant to live. We are doing what we were originally created to do.

As we have seen, a positive mental outlook on life can have a positive impact on us physically, as well. Our body reacts better when we feel positive, happy, and fulfilled. No wonder, then, that scientific studies have shown positive medical benefits that arise from doing good for others. It makes perfect sense: by helping others, we feel better, and when we feel better, our physical being is improved. What a perfect combination!

**“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love”** (*Gal. 5:13, NIV*). What does it mean to serve one another in love? How can you take these words and apply them in a practical way in your own life right now? Think of someone whom you can “serve in love” and do it, even if it takes self-denial on your part. After all, there is no question—someone out there needs you.

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**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Creation,” pp. 44–51, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “Social Purity,” pp. 567–671, in *Counsels on Health*; “Saved to Serve,” pp. 95–107, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “Development and Service,” pp. 497–502, in *The Ministry of Healing*.

“Many feel that it would be a great privilege to visit the scenes of Christ’s life on earth, to walk where He trod, to look upon the lake beside which He loved to teach, and the hills and valleys on which His eyes so often rested. But we need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sickbed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great cities, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation.

“We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing, and to inspire hope in the hopeless.

“The love of Christ, manifested in unselfish ministry, will be more effective in reforming the evildoer than will the sword or the court of justice. These are necessary to strike terror to the lawbreaker, but the loving missionary can do more than this. Often the heart that hardens under reproof will melt under the love of Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 105, 106.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 Dwell more on the idea that, as beings made in the image of God, our first parents were somewhat like Christ, even though they still had a lot to learn. How does this help us understand our need for a Savior? (After all, we can compare ourselves to Jesus and see just how far we have fallen.)
- 2 Consider your church situation and discuss with your Sabbath School class whether the quality of fellowship could be improved. What can you do to improve the level of fellowship within your church? What could your class do to strengthen relationships within your church body? How well does your church deal with those who have special needs, such as shut-ins?
- 3 In class talk about the benefits and happiness that come from serving others. Why do we get so much satisfaction from serving others? What things hold us back from doing this more often? How can we, through the power of Christ, fight against the inherent selfishness in us that keeps us focused on ourselves and our own needs rather than on the needs of others? What is your own experience with selfishness? That is, how have you seen in your own life just how ultimately unsatisfactory and empty existence can be when lived selfishly?

## Planting Seeds

by HUBERT XAVIER

My friends and I were relaxing after lunch one day in Grenada, an island in the Caribbean, when a man walked up to us. He pointed his finger at me and said, “The Lord has something for you to do.” Then he turned and walked into the busy marketplace.

We stood there trying to figure out what had just happened. We searched for the man, but he had disappeared. My friends laughed the incident off, but I thought about it a lot. I went to church, but I wasn’t close to God.

Then one day a woman came into the store where I worked and asked me, “Son, have you given your life to Christ yet?” I had never seen her before, and her comment surprised me. “Lady, I’m preparing to do so,” I told her, surprised. She walked away, and when I searched for her a moment later, she had gone. No one else had seen her. *Could God be trying to tell me something?* I wondered.

I told a friend about these incidents, and he invited me to the Seventh-day Adventist church’s Sunday evening Bible study service with him. I went and enjoyed it, so I continued attending. He invited me to attend worship on Sabbath morning, but I had to work. Finally I got up the courage to ask my boss for Saturday morning off so I could go to church.

My friend and I studied the Bible together; and after attending evangelistic meetings, I became convinced that I had found God’s true church. I decided to become an Adventist. But my boss refused to give me Sabbaths off. My relatives urged me to just go to church on Sunday, but I knew what I had to do. I quit.

I found temporary work and threw my energies into working for God, but that didn’t feed me. One day there was no food in my house. I knelt and told God that I was hungry and begged for some food. A knock at the door interrupted my prayer. It was a church elder. “I was passing by and felt impressed to stop and see how you are doing,” he said. He gave me ten dollars and smiled. And so God provided.

Eventually I found work with a company where I don’t have Sabbath problems. As I wait on customers, I tell them what God is doing in my life and invite them to try Jesus too. I’m planting seeds in their hearts and pray that God will make those seeds grow, just as He did in my life.

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HUBERT XAVIER lives in Grenada, an island in the Caribbean.



Next quarter's Bible study guide will seek to uncover the great truth of salvation by faith alone as revealed in the book of Romans. The great truths that Paul sought to clarify to readers in his day are not restricted to his first intended audience. His words have reverberated across the centuries, teaching millions the wonderful news of the gospel and its foundational doctrine of justification by faith. This will be the focus of study for this quarter in our guide titled *Redemption in Romans*, written by the late Don Neufeld.

## Lesson 1—Paul and Rome

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: Date and Place (*Rom. 16:1, 2*)

MONDAY: Personal Touch (*Rom. 15:20–27*)

TUESDAY: Paul Reaches Rome (*Acts 28:16*)

WEDNESDAY: Called to Be Saints (*Rom. 1:7*)

THURSDAY: World Reputation (*Rom. 1:8*)

**Memory Text**—*Romans 1:8*

**Sabbath Gem:** While it is important to understand the context in which Paul wrote the book of Romans, it still contains a powerful message for God's church today.

## Lesson 2—Jew and Gentile

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: Better Promises (*Heb. 8:6*)

MONDAY: Jewish Laws and Regulations (*Leviticus 12, 16, 23*)

TUESDAY: "What Must I Do to be Saved?" (*Acts 15:1–12*)

WEDNESDAY: "No Greater Burden" (*Acts 15:5–29*)

THURSDAY: The Galatian Heresy (*Gal. 1:1–12*)

**Memory Text**—*John 1:17*

**Sabbath Gem:** Obedience to God's moral law is as much a part of the New Covenant as it is of the Old Covenant.

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