

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide

July | Aug | Sept 2013



REVIVAL & REFORMATION



150
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SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH
United for Mission

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**Sabbath
School
Personal
Ministries**

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REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

In every generation, God's Spirit strives to bring revival to the hearts of His people. Revival is an ongoing, daily experience. Each of us should identify with an old hymn that says: "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, / Prone to leave the God I love" (From "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" by Robert Robinson). Deep within, we know these words are true.

Our hearts are, indeed, prone to wander. Our minds drift from the eternal to the mundane. Our thoughts turn so easily from the heavenly to the earthly. Too often we seem to be in bondage to deeply entrenched habits. At times our own attitudes and reactions baffle us.

And that's because our natures are fallen (*Jer. 17:9*) as the result of sin. Our natural tendency is to turn from God's way to our own (*Isa. 53:6*). With the apostle Paul we cry out, "O wretched man that I am" (*Rom. 7:24*), and with David we plead, "Revive me, O LORD, according to your lovingkindness" (*Ps. 119:159, NKJV*).

Revival is all about a God of loving-kindness seeking to deepen His relationship with us. The initiative in revival is His. His Spirit creates longings within us. His Spirit convicts us of our need. His Spirit reveals Jesus' goodness and grace.

Throughout history, God's Spirit has moved mightily in revival. When Israel drifted from God's plan and purposes, God used the young King Josiah to lead the nation back to Him, and a mighty revival followed. At the dedication of the temple, God said to Solomon: " 'If My people who are called by My name will humble

themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land' ” (2 Chron. 7:14, NKJV). God’s heart longing was for Israel to meet the conditions of revival, experience the power of revival, and reveal the light of His love to the entire world.

When God’s people responded to His appeals for revival, He worked mightily in their behalf. This was true for the New Testament Christian church, the Reformation, and the Advent Movement. It will also be true for God’s end-time people. His Holy Spirit will be poured out in its fullness and the earth will be “illuminated with his glory” (Rev. 18:1, NKJV).

This quarter’s lessons focus on the varied aspects of revival and reformation. Together we will probe such questions as, What are the conditions that God has given for the outpouring of His Spirit? Is God waiting for some magical moment to pour out His Spirit on His last-day church? What does it mean to live a Spirit-filled life? Is there anything we can do to cooperate with God in order to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit now? Where does revival and reformation begin?

Ellen G. White described the importance of revival in these words: “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121. Heaven places priority on revival. What could be more important? This quarter, as we study such topics as prayer and revival, the Word and revival, witnessing and revival, a finished work and revival, and other related subjects, let us pray that God will powerfully speak to our hearts and draw us closer to Him.

Why not open your heart to the moving of His Spirit right now? Why not ask Him to do something extra special in your life today? He will answer your prayers, and heavenly blessings will flow in ways that you have not yet imagined.

Revival is all about a God of loving-kindness seeking to deepen His relationship with us. The initiative in revival is His.

A native of Connecticut, U.S.A., Mark Finley, an internationally known evangelist, was a vice president at the General Conference from 2005–2010. After retiring from full-time employment, he became an assistant to the president of the General Conference to work part time with the Revival and Reformation initiative. Pastor Finley and his wife, Ernestine, have three children and two grandchildren.



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Revival: Our Great Need



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Rev. 3:14–21, Heb. 12:7–11, Matt. 25:1–13, Zech. 3:1–5, Song of Sol. 5:2–5.*

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

Laodicea is the last church in Revelation's sequence of seven churches. The name means “a people judged.” It is also a fitting symbol for God's last-day people.

Laodicea was located in an open valley in southwestern Turkey. It was an important financial capital, a fashion mecca, and an educational and medical center. Its inhabitants were independent, self-confident, and rich.

The one vital natural resource that the city lacked, however, was water. The water was piped in via Roman aqueducts from a spring that was five miles south of the city. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm. Jesus uses that symbolism to represent the lukewarm condition of His last-day church, described as self-confident, complacent, apathetic, and spiritually indifferent. It is a church that has lost its passion. It is a church that needs a spiritual revival.

Nevertheless, the Laodicean message is filled with hope. Christ speaks to His people in love, offering to meet their heart needs and revive their deepest spiritual longings.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 6.*

Hope for Lukewarm Laodiceans

Jesus addresses each of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 with a title of Himself that is appropriate for their spiritual condition. The titles He uses in His message to the church of Laodicea ring with the assurance of spiritual renewal for all those who will heed His call.

Read the following Bible passages (*Rev. 3:14, 15; 2 Cor. 1:20; John 3:10, 11; Col. 1:13–17*). **Why do you think that Jesus uses the titles “the Amen,” “the faithful and true witness,” and “the beginning of the creation of God” to address the Laodicean church?**

In Revelation 3:14, the Greek word for “beginning” is *arche*. It can mean “beginning,” in the sense that the one to whom it refers is the beginner of the event or action. In this context, *arche* refers to Jesus as the Beginner, or the first cause of all creation. In other words, He is the Creator (*John 1:1–3; Eph. 3:8, 9*).

This is extremely significant. Jesus, the One who spoke and worlds came into being, the One who created the earth, the One who spoke life into existence—this same Jesus speaks hope to Laodicea. The all-powerful Creator can create new life. He can re-create new spiritual longings in our hearts. He can transform our spiritual lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:14, 15. **What do these texts mean to you?**

Why is the Laodicean message a message of hope? What is it about the introduction to this message of strong rebuke that encourages you? Which of the three titles of Jesus do you identify with the most, and why?

A Loving Rebuke

Read Revelation 3:15, 16. Why does Jesus give the Laodicean church such a strong rebuke? What does it mean to be lukewarm? What other words might Jesus have used in place of “lukewarm”?

Commenting on Revelation 3:15 and 16, Ellen G. White states: “The message to the Laodicean church applies most decidedly to those whose religious experience is insipid, who do not bear decided witness in favor of the truth.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 962. This is a fascinating statement. An insipid religious experience is one that is lifeless. It has the outer husk of Christianity but lacks the substance. It has the external form but lacks the living power. The Laodiceans are not heretics or fiery fanatics; they are, simply, spiritually indifferent. The Laodiceans appear to be good moral people. They have what Paul calls “a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5, NKJV). Jesus speaks of religious people in His day who “draw near to [Him] with their mouth and honor [Him] with their lips, but their heart is far from [Him]” (Matt. 15:8, NKJV).

Read Hebrews 12:7–11; Job 5:17–19; Psalm 94:12; and Proverbs 29:15, 17, and describe God’s purpose in His rebukes.

Our Lord loves His people too much to let them go easily to perdition. He will do whatever it takes to rekindle a spiritual flame in their hearts. His strong rebuke is because of a stronger love. His chastisement is only because of His longing to heal us. The prophet Hosea echoes this sentiment with this call to repentance: “Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up” (Hos. 6:1, NKJV).

Has God ever used painful, even embarrassing, experiences to humble you and draw you closer to Him? What did you learn from these experiences that, ideally, ensures you won’t have to go through them again?

Perception and Reality

There is a gap between what Laodicea says and does. There is an even greater gap between the spiritual experience that Laodicea thinks she has and what she actually does have.

Read Revelation 3:17. What is Laodicea’s evaluation of herself? What is our Lord’s assessment of her? How do you think a people could be so blinded to their true spiritual condition? In what ways might we be blind regarding our own spiritual condition?

One of Satan’s fatal deceptions is to blind us to the reality of our spiritual needs. Some of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day were blind to their own spiritual poverty. They were Bible-reading, Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying “church” members looking for the coming of the Messiah. Yet, many were in darkness regarding the type of spiritual kingdom that He would usher in. Jesus called them “blind guides” (*Matt. 23:24*). Paul writes to the church at Corinth about those “whose minds the god of this age has blinded” (*2 Cor. 4:4, NKJV*). This is why Jesus said that He came for the “ ‘recovery of sight to the blind’ ” (*Luke 4:18, NKJV*). Jesus will restore the spiritual eyesight that we have lost if we allow Him. Every time that Jesus opened blind eyes in the New Testament, He was revealing His desire to open the eyes of our minds in order to enable us to see Him clearly.

Read Matthew 25:1–13. What are the similarities between the foolish virgins and the members of the church at Laodicea?

What ways have you found to keep spiritually alert? Why do you think it is so easy to become spiritually indifferent? What are some ways to counteract religious apathy?

The Divine Remedy

There is hope for Laodicea, just as there is hope for all who are afflicted with spiritual apathy and indifference. Our Lord has the divine remedy. The fact that the Lord speaks to this church shows that hope for the church exists if His people accept and follow His counsel.

Reflect on Jesus' counsel in Revelation 3:18, 19. What does Jesus mean when He talks about "gold refined in the fire," being clothed in "white garments," and our eyes being anointed with "eye salve"? See also 1 Pet. 1:7, Zech. 3:1–5, Rev. 19:7–9, Eph. 4:30.

"Jesus is going from door to door, standing in front of every soul-temple, proclaiming, 'I stand at the door, and knock.' As a heavenly merchantman, he opens his treasures, and cries, 'Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.' The gold he offers is without alloy, more precious than that of Ophir; for it is faith and love.

"The white raiment he invites the soul to wear is his own robes of righteousness, and the oil for anointing is the oil of his grace, which will give spiritual eyesight to the soul in blindness and darkness, that he may distinguish between the workings of the Spirit of God and the spirit of the enemy. Open your doors, says the great Merchantman, the possessor of spiritual riches, and transact your business with me. It is I, your Redeemer, who counsels you to buy of me."—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 7, 1894.

Ellen G. White quotes Revelation 3:20, saying of Jesus, " 'I stand at the door, and knock.' " Jesus knocks; He doesn't break down the door and force His way in. What this means is that, in the end, regardless of what God is willing to do for us, we must make the choice to let Him in. Ask yourself, "How resistant am I to opening the door to Him?" If you are resistant, ask yourself, "Why?" What is holding you back? What sin, what indulgence, don't you want to let go of, or what is it that you find so hard to let go of?

A Relentless Love

Compare Revelation 3:20 to Song of Solomon 5:2–5. What similarities do you find in both instances? What do these passages reveal about God’s love?

The evening meal in the Middle East was and still is extremely important. When the work of the day was over and the men returned from the fields for the evening meal, the entire family gathered around the table. In most instances the extended family lived together. The number at the evening meal often would be quite large. Grandfather and grandmother, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces and cousins, adults and children might be present. In this grand reunion after a hard day’s work, stories were told, experiences shared, and counsel given. It was a time of fellowship. It was a time of warmth and family intimacy. Jesus longs to have fellowship like this with us, as well.

How does Christ’s promise in Revelation 3:21 reveal His heartfelt desire for each one of us?

The book of Revelation mentions God’s throne more than forty times. This is more than in any other book of the Bible. At God’s throne, we join in with the heavenly chorus and joyously proclaim: “ ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing’ ” (*Rev. 5:12, NKJV*). He promises that we can participate in this grand festive scene of rejoicing once the long saga of sin ends.

Christ uses His greatest motivation for His indifferent end-time people. The greatest motivation to wake us from spiritual slumber is Jesus’ endless love, for He longs to spend all eternity with us. If that is not enough to shake us out of our spiritual apathy, what is? If that is not enough to bring us to our knees, seeking revival, what will? His love has provided eternity for us. We have royal blood running through our veins. We are sons and daughters of the King of the universe. We can reign with Him, seated upon His throne forever.

Christ longs to be in fellowship with you. How much do you want to be in fellowship with Him? The answer is simple. How much time do you spend in prayer and fellowship with the Lord? What does your answer tell you about yourself and, perhaps, just how lukewarm you might be?

Further Study: “A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 25, 1902.

“The counsel of the True Witness is full of encouragement and comfort. The churches may yet obtain the gold of truth, faith, and love, and be rich in heavenly treasure. ‘Buy of me gold that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.’ The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ that may be wrought into the character. Purity of heart, purity of motive, will characterize every one who is washing his robe, and making it white in the blood of the Lamb.”—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 24, 1888.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What is so dangerous about being lukewarm? Why can it lead us so easily to spiritual self-deception?
- 2 Why do some Christians seem so radiant and others so indifferent? Is it a matter of different personality types, or is there something deeper? If so, what?
- 3 Discuss with your class ways in which to avoid becoming spiritually indifferent. How can we keep our spiritual experience vibrant and growing? What are things that we can do as a church body, as a whole, to protect ourselves from becoming “lukewarm”?
- 4 Why do you think God would rather have us be “cold” than “lukewarm”? Why isn’t being lukewarm better than being flat-out cold? Hint: what’s more comfortable, being lukewarm or being cold?

Ibrahim's Question

Ibrahim, 9, lives in the country of Azerbaijan. Most people in Azerbaijan are religious, but they are not Christians. Ibrahim loves going with his mother to do missionary work. Often they take a minibus to a village near their home. Ibrahim likes to sit near the driver so they can talk. One day the driver asked Ibrahim some questions: "How many eyes do two birds have?"

"Four!" Ibrahim said. "Now I have a question for *you*. How many days did it take God to create the earth?" The driver didn't know. "It took six days," Ibrahim said. "If you want to know more about what God does, you should buy a book from my mom. It's called *Only Allah Gives Us Peace*."

Some people on the bus heard Ibrahim talking to the driver. One of them asked Ibrahim's mother about the book Ibrahim had mentioned. She told them that the book is about people who are faithful to Allah [God]. "How can we get the book?" a man asked. Ibrahim's mother usually sold the book to help pay their bus fare, but she let Ibrahim give a copy to each of the people on the bus for free.

Ibrahim walked down the aisle giving one to each person. The people smiled and said, "*Sahg-ohl!*" (thank you).

As Ibrahim and his mother got off the bus, he noticed several passengers reading the book he'd given them. *We've just arrived at the village, and already we've shared God's Word with many people*, he realized.

At school, every student takes part in a religion class. One day Ibrahim's teacher read the story of Noah. Then she quizzed the students about the story. "What did God tell Noah to do?" she asked.

Ibrahim raised his hand. "God told Noah to build a boat," he answered. "Yes," the teacher said. "And how long did it take to build the boat?"

"It took Noah 120 years to build the boat and warn the people about the flood.

Ibrahim answered confidently. "But no one chose to enter the boat except Noah and his family—eight people. So, God sent the animals into the boat and closed the door. Then the flood came."

"How do you know so much about this story?" the teacher asked Ibrahim.

"My mother and I read the sacred writings together," Ibrahim said. Ibrahim and his mother share God's message of love in a land where Jesus isn't worshiped as God. Our mission offerings help believers in difficult countries to share God's message of hope with people who've never heard. Thank you for giving so that others can hear God's message of love.

Prayer: The Heartbeat of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Acts 1:4, 8, 14; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Matt. 18:19, 20; 2 Cor. 10:3–5; Ps. 50:23.*

Memory Text: “‘If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!’ ” (*Matthew 7:11, NKJV*).

God moves powerfully as His people pray. Alfred Lord Tennyson was certainly correct when he said, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” The great revivals throughout Scripture were bathed in prayer. The Old Testament records the intercession of the patriarchs and prophets as they sought for revival. Moses, David, and Daniel petitioned the Almighty for power. The book of Acts reveals New Testament believers on their knees storming heaven, seeking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus’ prayer life reveals a constant dependence on His heavenly Father. The gospels give us glimpses of the source of His spiritual power. It was on His knees alone with the Father that the Savior received His greatest strength.

“A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121. During this week’s lesson, we will explore the role that prayer played in some of the great revivals in the Bible.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 13.*

Prayer and Revival in Acts

The believers in Acts were filled with power from on high. The Holy Spirit was poured out in a marked way. Hearts were touched, lives changed. The gospel penetrated the most difficult places, and thousands were converted. In Acts 2, three thousand were added to the church (*Acts 2:41*). Acts 4:4 records that the number of men alone who believed “was about five thousand.” Even many of the religious leaders, who opposed Jesus during His lifetime, became “obedient to the faith” (*Acts 6:7*). The story of this phenomenal growth continues in Acts 9, which said that churches throughout “all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria” were “multiplied” (*Acts 9:31, NKJV*). By Acts 10 to 12 the gospel spanned cultural and geographical boundaries. The Roman centurion and the treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia were baptized. Acts 1 says that about one hundred twenty believers met in the upper room (*Acts 1:13, 15*). The best estimates are that by the end of the first century there were at least one million Christians in the Roman Empire. This is remarkable growth by any standard.

What was the secret?

Look up the following texts. What was a major reason for the growth of the New Testament church? *Acts 1:4, 8, 14; 2:42; 4:31, 33; 6:3, 4.*

Pastor R. A. Torrey was a powerful revival preacher in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He conducted revival meetings in Great Britain from 1903–1905 and throughout North America in 1906 and 1907. Lamenting the busyness of Christians, he stated, “We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions, much machinery but few results.”

Are you too busy to pray? Who can’t relate to that? How can you slow down enough to take the time you need to pray? Think about all the excuses that you have to put it off, the reasons that you give to do other things. In the end, what is it that you are losing by not spending time in prayer?

Jesus' Prayer Life

Compare the following texts: Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, 9:18. What three specific things do these passages reveal about Jesus' prayer life?

“Christ was continually receiving from the Father, that he might communicate to us. ‘The word which ye hear,’ he said, ‘is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.’ ‘The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.’ Not for himself, but for others, he lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God he came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily he received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened him from his slumbers, and his soul and his lips were anointed with grace, that he might impart to others.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 11, 1910.

Examine the passages below. Identify each of the things for which Jesus prayed. How do Jesus' prayers reveal His most important concerns? What is the most distinctive component of each of Jesus' prayers?

John 17:20–24 _____

Luke 22:31, 32 _____

Matt. 26:36–44 _____

Prayer was a vital part of Jesus' life. It was His lifeline to the Father. Daily the Savior renewed His relationship with His Father through prayer. Jesus' prayer life gave Him the courage and strength to face the temptations of the enemy. He came from these prayer sessions with a deepened commitment to do the Father's will. They provided Him with a spiritual freshness and power. Describing one of Jesus' times of prayer, Luke adds, “As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening” (*Luke 9:29, NKJV*). Jesus experienced spiritual refreshing and a renewed experience with the Father each day through His prayer life.

Spend a few moments reflecting on some specific times that God powerfully answered your prayers. How can recalling and reflecting on these experiences deepen your prayer life today?

Praying Together

Although Jesus often spent time alone in prayer, there were multiple occasions when He encouraged His closest disciples to pray with Him. Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus to the mount of transfiguration (*Matt. 17:1, 2*). He urged them to unite with Him in prayer in Gethsemane (*Luke 22:39–46*). There is unusual power in united prayer.

Carefully analyze Matthew 18:19, 20. Summarize Jesus’ statement regarding united prayer.

“The promise is made on condition that the united prayers of God’s people are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer. The power given will be proportionate to the unity of the members and their love for God and for one another.”—Ellen G. White, *The Central Advance*, Feb. 25, 1903.

John Bunyan once commented, “You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.”

As we enter into earnest and heartfelt intercession, the Holy Spirit powerfully works in miraculous ways through our united prayers.

Read Acts 12:1–16. What was Peter’s situation? What was the attitude of the church? What does this passage tell us about the power of united prayer?

No question, in this case Peter had a miraculous deliverance. It was so intense that Peter wasn’t even sure it was real and that he wasn’t in a vision. Only afterward did he realize what had happened. It’s important to note that these texts stated twice that people were praying together. Considering the tough circumstances, it is no wonder. There is no question that we should do the same, especially when we face challenges as a community, such as they did there.

Our Freedom

Have you ever wondered why prayer is so vital? Why do we have to ask Him for the Holy Spirit? Isn't He willing to give the Holy Spirit to us?

The answer to these questions lies in understanding God's respect for our freedom of choice. He has created us with the ability to make moral choices. God is doing everything He can for us and through us before we pray, but He is limited by our choices (*Ps. 78:41, 42*).

In prayer we freely acknowledge our total dependency upon God and give Him the freedom to intervene in our lives. The more we pray, the more we acknowledge His all sufficiency. When we pray, His Holy Spirit prepares our hearts to receive more of Him. The more we pray, the more we allow the Holy Spirit to "crucify" our sinful desires. In the great controversy between good and evil, prayer enables God to work more powerfully in our lives.

Analyze 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. How would you define the expression "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God" (*NKJV*)? What are these weapons? What kind of warfare is Paul talking about here, and why would he use this kind of imagery? How are we to understand the battle in which we are engaged?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we understand the reality of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. We know that it is real and that we all are involved in it. Left alone, we would be hopeless against Satan. Our only hope is our connection with Jesus, and central to that connection is our prayer life—a spiritual weapon for a spiritual battle, a weapon that none of us can do without. If Jesus needed to pray, how much more so do we?

"We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should. Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509.

In what ways have you experienced in your own life the harsh reality of the great controversy between Christ and Satan? How has prayer aided you in this struggle? Where would you be without it?

Effective Prayer

There are many effective ways to pray. Some people have found it helpful to kneel before God with their Bibles open. Then they read a few verses and commune with God about what they are reading.

The Psalms are particularly inspirational as subject matter for prayer. Try meditating upon a particular psalm during your prayer times. Take one verse at a time. Read it aloud, and then talk to God about what the text is saying to you.

Others have found that their most meaningful prayer times are alone with God in some quiet natural setting. Still others have blended singing and prayer.

What do we learn about effective prayer from the following verses?

Pss. 34:1, 50:23, 67:3, 71:6.

David's prayers were filled with adoration or praise. When we meditate upon God's goodness and matchless love, our hearts overflow with praise.

Read Daniel 9:8–13. What kind of prayer is this?

What feature does Paul add to an effective prayer life? *Eph. 5:20.*

What is the meaning of supplication in Ephesians 6:18 and Philippians 4:6, and why is this an important component of prayer?

Though we don't want to give a formula for prayer, a broad outline could be as follows: we start with praise and adoration, thanking God for His goodness to us. We then confess our faults and shortcomings, and then thank God for His forgiveness. We conclude with supplications, making our requests known to Him, all the while seeking an attitude of submission and trust in His divine power.

Has your prayer life not been what it should or could be? What do you need to do differently? Why not make a more concentrated effort to spend more time in prayer? It can change your life.

Further Study: “Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. ‘The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.’ James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. ‘He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.’ Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watch care, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 100.

Discussion Questions:

- ① Why do we need to pray if God knows everything? Though many answers can be given, perhaps the most important one is that we have been told, time and again in the Bible, to pray. Even if we don’t understand how it works, those who pray effectively know that it does work. You might take a medicine that helps to bring healing to your body, even though you don’t know how that medication works. It’s the same with prayer. What other reasons can you give for the importance of prayer, especially as we seek revival and reformation?
- ② Read over prayerfully the Ellen G. White statement found in Friday’s Further Study. Look at all the encouragement that is found in there, especially in the last line that addresses the relationship between God and the praying supplicant. What can you do, what choices can you make, to enter into the kind of close communion with the Lord that is described here?
- ③ In class, talk about the reality of the great controversy and how it’s being manifested in your own church community. Talk about how praying together can help you all work through whatever challenges you are facing.

Show Me Your Church: Part 1

Roger's stomach tightened as he waited to see the director of his school. *I will stay true to God, no matter what this man decides.*

Roger was in his final year of secondary school. Soon he would take the national exams that would grant—or deny—him the right to pursue higher education. Roger had taken the exams before, but when one of the exams fell on Sabbath, he had chosen to honor God rather than take the exam. He had accepted the failing grade as a price he could pay for his faithfulness to God. He planned to try again the next year, but civil unrest in Central African Republic forced his family to flee to the Republic of the Congo. He now faced the same problem in a foreign country.

On the first day of classes in his new school, Roger had gone to the school's director to explain his religious beliefs and ask to be excused from school functions on Sabbath, a regular school day. The director had been polite, but his response was simply "We'll see how it goes." Roger could only hope—and pray—that the man would honor his request.

When Roger looked at his class schedule, he saw that nearly every exam was scheduled for a Sabbath. Roger asked the teachers to give him his exam on another day. Some did, but others refused.

"You are just one student among so many," the director told him. "I am a Christian too. Show me where God says that we must not work on Saturday."

Roger opened his Bible to Exodus 20 and began reading the Sabbath commandment.

"I didn't know that," the director said thoughtfully. "Why don't you worship your God in the morning, and come to school after lunch?" It seemed like such a reasonable request.

Patiently Roger explained the Sabbath, which began at sunset on Friday. He read Bible texts to support his explanation.



The director thought for a moment, and then said, "Show me your church."

Roger sat back. *How can I show him my church?* he thought. *In all of the Congo we have not one church.*

Before Roger could answer, the director made another request. "Can you bring me your church pastor?" Roger smiled. He could bring a pastor.

ROGER WAZOUA [left] is preparing to be a pastor in Africa.

The Word: The Foundation of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Ps. 119:50, 74, 116; Heb. 4:12; 11:3; John 5:39; Heb. 4:1, 2; Acts 20:27–32.*

Memory Text: “Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word” (*Psalms 119:154, NKJV*).

Just as serious Bible study spawned past revival movements, we believe that it will happen again in the last days. The Holy Spirit will move upon a generation of committed Adventist Christians who have discovered His will in His Word and are passionate about proclaiming it to the world.

They will have found grace and strength and hope in His Word; they will have come face-to-face with the matchless charms of Christ in His Word. Thus, God will honor their commitment by pouring out His Holy Spirit in abundance, and the whole world will be lightened with the glory of the three angels' messages. The Holy Spirit will be poured out beyond measure, and the gospel will be carried to the ends of the earth, and Jesus Christ will return (*Matt. 24:14*).

In this week's lesson we will study the role of the Bible in revival and how God's Word can make a life-changing difference in us if we surrender ourselves in faith and obedience to its precepts and truths.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 20.*

Revived Through the Word

Look up each of the verses below. On the first line write the plea. On the second line write the circumstance that led David to make the plea.

Ps. 119:25 (Plea) _____

(Circumstance) _____

Ps. 119:107 (Plea) _____

(Circumstance) _____

Ps. 119:153, 154 (Plea) _____

(Circumstance) _____

In the Psalms, David talks about the blessings of the Word in his own spiritual life. Read the following verses from Psalm 119 and choose a word from each verse that best summarizes the blessings that the psalmist discovered in that Word. *Ps. 119:50, 74, 116, 130, 160, 169, 170.*

David found courage and strength in God's Word. He discovered hope and divine guidance in God's Word. The Word of God brought light to his darkened mind (*Ps. 119:130*). It nourished his famished heart and quenched his thirsty soul (*Ps. 119:81*). When Saul threatened to kill him, he clung to God's promise of deliverance (*Ps. 34:4*). Plagued with guilt after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, he clung to God's promise of forgiveness (*Ps. 32:1, 2*). Perplexed regarding the future, he clung to God's promise of guidance (*Ps. 32:8*). David jubilantly exclaimed, "Your word has given me life" (*Ps. 119:50, NKJV*). The foundation of revival is all about finding new life in God's Word.

How can you learn to draw hope, strength, assurance, and light from the Word of God? That is, how can you have a deeper experience with the Lord through coming to know Him as He is revealed in the Bible?

The Word's Creative Power

Read Hebrews 4:12. The passage states that God's Word is living, powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing our inmost being. How is God's Word alive? What does that mean?

In what way is God's Word different from the intelligent counsel of any other wise teacher, pastor, or counselor? What do the following texts say about the power of God's Word? *Ps. 33:6, 9; Heb. 11:3; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.*

There is value in wise human counsel. We have all been helped by the advice of others. The problem is that human counsel does not carry with it the power to accomplish the kind of change that God's Word can. God's Word is a living, dynamic, powerful agent of change. The same power that was in God's spoken word at Creation is in the Written Word of God. Accepting God's commands and promises by faith, we receive the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish that which Christ commands.

"The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature, and re-creates the soul in the image of God."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 126.

A casual reading of God's Word very seldom produces spiritual revival. Studying the Bible to prove one's own position, or to convince someone else of his or her mistakes, does very little good for our own spiritual life. Change comes when we prayerfully read God's Word, asking the Holy Spirit to give us the power to be more like Jesus. Real transformation takes place when we ask the God of creation to re-create us in His image. Change comes when Jesus' teachings in Scripture become part of our lives, and we live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (*Matt. 4:4*).

**In what ways has the power of God's Word changed your life?
In which areas do you need to see more of that change?**

Jesus and the Word

How are the functions of the Word of God and the Spirit of God similar? Read *John 5:39; 16:14, 15*.

The Word of God bears witness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit also bears witness of Jesus. The Spirit leads us to a deeper experience with Jesus through His Word. The purpose of the Holy Spirit in revival is not primarily to manifest Himself through supernatural signs and wonders but to exalt Jesus through His Word. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not about our power to accomplish great miracles. It is about God's power to transform our lives—and that's what revival and reformation are all about.

The Word of God provides the foundation or the basis for all genuine revival. Our experience flows out of an understanding of God's Word. Our praise and worship spring from minds saturated with the Word. A transformed life is the greatest testimony of true revival.

Positive feelings of praise may accompany revival, but they are never the basis for revival. Any so-called "revival" based solely on external feelings or experience is shallow at best, deceptive at worst. It is an illusion of spirituality, not genuine godliness. When revival is rooted in the Word of God, it is an experience that lasts and makes a difference in our lives and in the lives of the people around us.

The story of Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the Emmaus road reveals the role that the Bible plays in initiating true revival. These followers of Christ were filled with confusion. Gradually, however, He "expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (*Luke 24:27, NKJV*). He repeated the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. Jesus could have worked a miracle to prove His identity or showed the scars in His hands. He did not. Instead, He gave them a Bible study.

Notice their response as they reflected on what had happened that day. "They said to one another, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?' " (*Luke 24:32, NKJV*).

What an example of genuine revival!

Why can't we trust our feelings? How can our feelings deceive us? What role do feelings have in our walk with the Lord, and what role do they not have?

Revival, Faith, and the Word

Speaking of the time just before His return, Jesus said, “‘When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’” (*Luke 18:8, NKJV*). Evidently, faith will be in short supply in the last days.

How might we define biblical faith? Is faith believing that God will give us anything we want? Is faith centered in our desires? Is faith about asking God for what we want and believing we will receive it if we only believe hard enough?

We should know the answers to those rhetorical questions, shouldn't we?

Faith, true faith, is always focused on God's will, not on our wishes. It is trusting in God, believing in His promises, and acting on His Word. Our faith grows as we listen to God's Word and put it into practice (*Rom. 10:17; James 2:17, 18*). Opening our minds to the teachings of God's Word builds faith; and doing what God says—even if it is contrary to our personal desires—prepares us to receive the fullness of the Spirit's power.

Why do some people receive little benefit from reading the Bible?
Heb. 4:1, 2.

Our spiritual experience is revived when we accept and claim God's Word by faith. There is little benefit derived from hastily reading the Bible out of a sense of obligation or duty. We are changed as we internalize what we read, and allow the teachings of the Bible to mold our thoughts and our lives.

Compare the faith of the Roman centurion, the paralytic at Bethesda, and the disciples on the stormy Sea of Galilee (*Matt. 8:8–10, John 5:6–9, Matt. 14:29–33*). What can we learn from each account?

Faith does not grow merely by reading or listening to God's Word. It comes as we claim His promises as our own and when we believe that what He said applies to us personally. God has given each one of us a measure of faith. It is one of Heaven's gifts (*Rom. 12:3*). When we exercise the faith that He has already placed in our hearts, that faith cannot help but grow.

The Word: Revival's Guardian and Safeguard

The Holy Spirit mightily moved through the teaching and preaching of the apostle Paul as he established the Christian church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a city of approximately two hundred fifty thousand people. It was considered the marketplace of Asia. As ships brought their wares from throughout Asia, people flocked to Ephesus to buy fine silk, rare jewels, flavorful spices, hand-woven carpets, exquisite art objects, and exotic foods. It was also the center for the worship of the goddess Diana and the future home of the famed Celsus Library, with 12,000 volumes. The city had a magnificent amphitheater seating 15,000 people. It was used for massive concerts and theatrical productions. Sexual promiscuity was commonplace. If there ever was an unlikely place for Christianity to take root, grow, and flourish—it was Ephesus.

Read Acts 20:27–32. What was Paul's concern for the believers at Ephesus? What was his counsel to the church members in Ephesus? What role did he give to the Word of God?

Read 1 Peter 1:22, 23; James 1:21, 22; 1 John 2:14. Summarize the teachings of Peter, James, and John regarding the importance of the Bible in the life of each Christian. Especially notice the disciples' teaching regarding the impact of the Bible in our spiritual lives.

What similarities do you see in all of the above texts regarding the role of the Word of God? Why, then, must the Word of God be central to spiritual revival, both on a personal and on a corporate level?

Further Study: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God’s work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.

“Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read carefully the Ellen G. White statements in Friday’s Further Study. What role does she give to the Word of God, especially in the context of the last days and the final deceptions? Dwell on the implications of this line: “So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures.” What does this tell us about how we need to be careful about judging truth based only on personal experience or on the way that we feel?
- 2 During the week we read James 1:22, where we are told to be “doers of the Word.” What does that mean, and why is that so essential for us if we are to have any kind of true spiritual revival in our lives? Why is reading about faith and teaching about faith and talking about faith so much easier than living it? Think through your week: how much of a “doer of the Word” were you?

Show Me Your Church: Part 2

Roger asked his pastor to visit his school and explain what Seventh-day Adventists believe and why the congregations in the Republic of the Congo met in houses, sheds, and covered courtyards.

The next day Roger struggled to listen in class while the pastor and the field president met with the school director. The meeting seemed to last forever. Then moments after the pastors left the school, the director stepped into Roger's classroom and said, "From now on no exams will be scheduled for Saturday." Then, looking at Roger, he added, "Now I understand why you honor your Sabbath."

One day Roger's biology teacher urged Roger to consider his future and set aside his faith until he graduated. Roger told him, "I can't do that, sir. God commanded me to keep the Sabbath day holy, and I must obey." Then he told his teacher about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to bow to the king's image and were thrown into the fiery furnace. "These men didn't know if God would choose to save them," he said. "But they preferred to die rather than dishonor God. I can do no less."

The teacher asked Roger where his church met. Roger explained that during the civil war in Congo, the government had confiscated the church's clinic and church building. "Today we have no building." He reached into his book bag and pulled out his Sabbath School lesson quarterly and showed him the map on the back cover. "We are few in the Congo, but we are millions around the world." The teacher was amazed that there were millions of Seventh-day Adventists around the world. He asked many questions about the Seventh-day Adventist Church and what its members believe, and Roger answered them all. He gave the teacher some books by Ellen G. White. Many other teachers and fellow students asked Roger questions about the Bible.

As the national exams approached, the school director asked Roger what he would do if an exam fell on Saturday.

"That's not my problem," Roger said. "My duty is to keep the Sabbath. If that means that I fail the exam, so be it." When the exam dates were posted and no exams were scheduled for Sabbath, Roger knew that God had done this to help him to show others that God honors those who choose to obey.

Today thanks to your Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings, two churches stand as lighthouses in the Republic of the Congo. Your mission offerings do make a difference.

ROGER WAZOUA *passed his exams and is preparing to become a pastor in Africa.*

Witness *and* Service: The Fruit of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 28:19, 20; John 20:21; Acts 2; Acts 22:1–14; John 6:1–11; Acts 8:26–38.*

Memory Text: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth’ ” (*Acts 1:8, NKJV*).

The purpose of revival is to fill our hearts with such a love for Jesus that we long to share this love with every person possible. In genuine revival, our own hearts are awakened to God's goodness, compassion, forgiveness, and power. We are so charmed by His love and transformed by His grace that we cannot be silent.

In contrast, a “revival” that focuses on one's “spiritual experience alone” misses the mark. If it develops attitudes critical of others who do not measure up to one's “standard of holiness,” it is certainly not heaven inspired. If the emphasis of revival is to merely change external behavior rather than to change hearts, then something is wrong.

Changed hearts lead to changed behavior. Genuine revival never leads to self-centeredness or, especially, to self-sufficiency or self-exaltation. Instead, it always leads to a selfless concern for others. When our hearts are renewed by God's grace, we long to bless and serve those who are in need. All genuine revival leads to a renewed emphasis on mission and service.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 27.*

Christ's Parting Commission and Promise

Christ did not establish His church in order for it to simply care for itself. Jesus' parting words focused upon the church's mission. Christ's intention is for His church to look beyond itself. He established it to share the light of His love and the message of His salvation with the world.

Read and summarize the following texts. How does each passage reveal Jesus' heart desire for His church?

Matt. 28:19, 20 _____

Mark 16:15 _____

Luke 24:45–49 _____

John 20:21 _____

Once Christ ascended to heaven, His church was to be a visible manifestation of His love and grace to the world. The disciples had a mission. They had a message to share. They had a task to complete. They were to carry on the work that He had begun.

“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

The burden of Jesus' heart is the salvation of the human race. The apostle Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy that it is the Savior's desire that “all . . . be saved and . . . come to the knowledge of the truth” (*1 Tim. 2:4, NKJV*). The apostle Peter adds that the Lord is “longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (*2 Pet. 3:9, NKJV*).

What in your life shows your interest in outreach to others? Or does anything show it? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your priorities?

Receiving the Promise

The mission of sharing His love and truth with the entire world must have seemed overwhelming to this small group of disciples. The challenge was enormous, the task immense. Its accomplishment in their lifetime might certainly have seemed impossible (as it can in ours). The best estimates are that the population of the Roman Empire in the first century was approximately sixty to seventy million. According to the first chapter of Acts, 120 believers met in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. This is a ratio of 1 Christian to approximately every 500,000 to 580,000 people in the empire. From a human standpoint, Jesus' command to preach the gospel to the world seemed unthinkable.

Read Acts 2. What were the results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the mission of the early church?

The results were astounding. The Christian church exploded in growth. Tens of thousands were converted. The message of Jesus' love was carried to the remotest parts of the empire.

Pliny the Younger, governor of the Roman province of Bithynia on the northern coast of modern Turkey, wrote to Emperor Trajan around A.D. 110. Pliny described the official trials he was conducting to find and execute Christians. "Many of every age, of every social class, even of both sexes, are being called to trial and will be called. Not cities alone but villages in even rural areas have been invaded by the infection of this superstition" (Christianity).

This quote is remarkable. It reveals that in a few generations Christianity had invaded nearly every level of society, even in the remote provinces.

Ninety years later, around A.D. 200, Tertullian, a Roman lawyer turned Christian, wrote a defiant letter to the Roman magistrates defending Christianity. He boasted that "nearly all the citizens of all the cities are Christians."

The story of the book of Acts is the story of a revived church committed to witness for its Lord. Spiritual revival always leads to passionate witness. Sharing is the natural outgrowth of a transformed life. Jesus said to His disciples, " 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men' " (*Matt. 4:19*). The closer we follow Jesus, the more we care about what He cares about. If we have little interest in sharing His love with others, it may be because we are following Him at a distance and need a personal spiritual revival.

The Power of Personal Testimony

Religious ritual has little power to change lives. Religious formalism leaves people spiritually barren. Doctrine alone will not transform hearts. The power of New Testament witnessing was rooted in the genuineness of lives changed by the gospel. The disciples were not play-acting. They were not going through the motions. Theirs was not some form of artificial spirituality. An encounter with the living Christ had changed them, and they could not be silent any longer.

What common thread runs through the experiences of Paul and John that made them such powerful witnesses? Acts 22:1–14, Phil. 3:1–7, 1 John 1:1–4.

At Pentecost the disciples were changed people. Something happened to them so that the Spirit could do something through them. The Holy Spirit had done something for them so that He could do something with them. The Spirit overflowed from their lives to refresh the lives of others.

Jesus put it this way: “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (*John 7:38, NKJV*). The root word for “believes” in the Greek here is *pistis*. It means much more than a superficial belief or mere intellectual assent. It is a rock-solid belief or confident trust. It is a dynamic, life-transforming faith in Christ, who poured out His life on the cross for the sins of humanity. Jesus’ point is that when His love quenches our spiritual thirst, this love flows from our hearts to the people around us.

“Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

The most powerful witness is one of a Christian who knows Jesus personally. There is no substitute for the testimony that springs naturally from a heart immersed in Jesus’ love.

What kind of personal testimony do you have that tells of what the Lord has done for you? How can you learn to share it better with others?

A Witnessing Faith Is a Growing Faith

Activity is a law of life. In order to be healthy, our bodies need consistent exercise. Every organ, muscle, and tissue is strengthened and invigorated through exercise. When we neglect exercise, our immune system is compromised, and we become more susceptible to disease.

Something similar happens to us spiritually when we do not exercise our faith through witnessing. The words of Jesus, that “ ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive’ ” (*Acts 20:35*), work themselves out in our own spiritual lives. When we share God’s Word with others, we grow spiritually. The more we love Jesus, the more we will desire to witness of His love. The more we witness of His love, the more we will love Him. Sharing our faith strengthens our faith.

What does Jesus’ miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes teach us about the sharing of our faith? *John 6:1–11*.

The more that we give away our faith, the more our faith multiplies. This law of multiplication is a divine principle of spiritual life. Give and grow, or withhold and wither. Jesus increases our faith as we share it with others, even if our faith is quite small. As we share the Bread of Life with spiritually hungry people around us, Jesus multiplies in our hands, and we end up with more than we started.

When Jesus began, He had five loaves and two fish. After five thousand people were completely satisfied with their meal that day, Jesus had more left over than when He started. There were still twelve baskets remaining.

Jesus’ instructions to His New Testament church are too clear to be misunderstood. He declared, “ ‘Freely you have received, freely give’ ” (*Matt. 10:8, NKJV*). Witnessing is the gentle breeze that fans the sparks of revival into Pentecostal flames. When witness and service do not accompany a revival of prayer and Bible study, the flames of revival are extinguished, and the embers soon grow cold.

It’s true, isn’t it? The more that we witness, the more our faith grows. What has been your own experience with this crucial spiritual truth?

Revival, Witnessing, and Divine Intervention

The thrilling story of the rapid growth of New Testament Christianity in Acts is the story of a revived church witnessing of Jesus' love. It is the story of a church that regularly experienced divine intervention. Witnessing was a way of life for these early believers.

“Daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (*Acts 5:42, NKJV*). Persecution even furthered the cause of the gospel. When persecution scattered the members of the church at Jerusalem, they “went everywhere preaching the word” (*Acts 8:4, NKJV*).

One of the more remarkable examples of divine intervention in Acts is the story of Philip and an Ethiopian government official.

Read the story of Philip instructing the Ethiopian and his response in Acts 8:26–38. What can we take from this story about revival and witnessing?

“An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God’s way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109.

There are three essential elements in revival, and they are prayer, the study of God’s Word, and witnessing. When God’s people seek Him in earnest, heartfelt intercession, and when they saturate their minds with the truths of His Word, and when they passionately witness of His love and truth to others—God divinely intervenes and opens unusual doors for the proclamation of truth.

Be honest with yourself: what do you do when witnessing opportunities come? Do you witness, or do you find some excuse not to? What does your answer tell you about your own need of revival and reformation?

Further Study: “In His wisdom the Lord brings those who are seeking for truth into touch with fellow beings who know the truth. It is the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness. Humanity, drawing its efficiency from the great Source of wisdom, is made the instrumentality, the working agency, through which the gospel exercises its transforming power on mind and heart.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 134.

“God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy,—the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice,—we must participate in His labors for their redemption.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 142.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What is the main idea of this week’s lesson? Are there changes that God is calling you to make in your life? Do your priorities need to be readjusted in any way? What actions might God be calling you to take?
- 2 Dwell more on this amazing spiritual truth that the more we witness for our faith the more our faith grows. Why do you think this is true? Why does this principle make so much sense?
- 3 How often do you witness for your Jesus? If not a lot, ask yourself, Why not? Are you afraid of rejection? If so, think about Jesus and how often He was rejected. If rejection didn’t deter Him, it shouldn’t us. Or do you fail to witness because you are not sure of what to say? If so, what does that tell you about your need for a deeper walk with the Lord?
- 4 During the week we talked a bit about how religious ritual alone cannot bring about a change of the heart. That is so true. At the same time, what is the place of ritual and tradition in our faith and church? In what ways, if any, can ritual and tradition be of value in revival and reformation?
- 5 Why do we get so much satisfaction from being used by God to reach souls for Him?

Zuri's Hope

Zuri, ten, lives in a village in the mountains of central Mexico. The villagers work hard every day. But on festival days, they put aside work and eat and drink and dance and laugh. But Zuri didn't like the festivals. Often the men would get drunk and would fight. Often someone got hurt. Zuri told his father how much he hated the noise and fighting and drinking during the festivals.

"But what can we do?" his father asked. "We live here."

"We could go to the [Seventh-day] Adventist church on festival days," Zuri suggested. "They play games, and everyone has fun, but no one drinks or gets hurt. It's nice."

"How do you know that?" Zuri's father asked.

"I've seen them," Zuri said. Zuri didn't tell his father that he had gone to the church and listened to them sing or gone to the river to watch them hold baptisms.

Father respected Seventh-day Adventists and gave Zuri permission to attend the Seventh-day Adventist church. The next Sabbath Zuri went to Sabbath School. He enjoyed the children's program and decided to go every week. He went to weeknight programs, too, and enjoyed sitting in the front row where he could watch the musicians play their guitars and sing.

When the church planned a social, Zuri invited his parents to attend. They went and enjoyed it. Then he invited them to church, and they went. They were pleased to see how well church members treated Zuri.

One day the pastor announced a baptism. Zuri asked the pastor if he could be baptized. The pastor said that anyone who loves Jesus and wants to follow Him can be baptized. Zuri ran home and told his parents what the pastor had said. They gave Zuri permission to be baptized.

Zuri studied the Bible with the pastor and learned what God expects His followers to do. Zuri eagerly accepted God's instructions and asked to be baptized.

On the day of the baptism Zuri hurried to the river. Often he had stood on the bank and watched others be baptized. This day his parents stood on the bank and watched him be baptized.

Zuri taught his parents what he had learned about following Christ. A few months later Zuri stood once more on the riverbank to watch his parents be baptized.

Today when the village holds festivals, Zuri's family spends the day with their Seventh-day Adventist church family. They invite others to join them, and the church is growing.

Our Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings have helped to build churches and training camps in central Mexico where more people can learn what it means to join God's family.

Obedience: The Fruit of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 26:69–74, Acts 5:28–32, 6:3–10, 9:1–9, Phil. 2:5–8.*

Memory Text: “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5, NKJV).

An illustration of the impact of revival on daily life can be seen in the Welsh Revival of 1904. Evan Roberts and some of his friends began earnestly praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They interceded, studied Scripture, and shared their faith.

The Spirit was poured out in response. Lives were changed. In six months there were one hundred thousand conversions in the small country of Wales. The results of this revival were seen throughout the country. Throughout the day people flocked to churches by the thousands for prayer. The rough cursing coal miners were transformed into kind, courteous gentlemen. Even the pit ponies in the coal mines had to learn new commands because the miners were not cursing at them anymore! Transformed, obedient lives sprang from converted hearts. This is irrefutable evidence of a true revival.

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

The Transformed Life

Revival does not simply result in some warm, fuzzy feeling of supposed closeness to Jesus. It results in a changed life. There were times when the Bible writers felt extremely close to Jesus, and at other times they felt distant. There were times when their spirits soared in ecstasy, and they delighted in the joy of His presence. At other times, they did not feel the nearness of His presence at all.

The results of revival are not necessarily positive feelings. They are a changed life. Our feelings are not the fruit of revival. Again, obedience is. This is evident in the lives of the disciples after Pentecost.

Analyze Peter's reactions before the Cross, after the Resurrection, and after Pentecost. What do you notice? What difference did the Cross, the Resurrection, and Pentecost make in Peter's attitudes?

Matt. 26:69–74: Peter's reaction before the Cross.

John 21:15–19: Peter's reaction after the Resurrection.

Acts 5:28–32: Peter's reaction after Pentecost.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost made a dramatic difference in Peter's life. It transformed him from a weak, vacillating believer to a faith-filled, obedient disciple. Once full of brash words and empty promises, Peter now became filled with faith, courage, and zeal for witnessing. It is a powerful example of what the Holy Spirit can do for anyone surrendered in faith and obedience to our Lord.

The High Cost of Obedience

One of the early examples of faith, and the cost of faith, can be seen in the life of Stephen.

How is Stephen described in the following passages? *Acts 6:3–10, 7:55.*

The infilling of the Holy Spirit led the disciples to live unselfish, godly lives. Their faith led them to obedience. At times the spiritual warfare was fierce, but Jesus, their Savior and Lord, was by their side to strengthen their faith. They were stoned, imprisoned, burned at the stake, and shipwrecked. Their obedience also often came with an unusually high price. Many of the disciples suffered a martyr's death.

In Acts 7, Stephen preaches a magnificent sermon outlining the history of Israel. He describes the experience of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon. Throughout his appeal, Stephen describes God's faithfulness in the light of Israel's unfaithfulness. Stephen concludes his sermon by charging that the religious leaders of Israel violated God's covenant and resisted the influence of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 7:51, 52*).

What happened to Stephen because of His witness for Jesus? What does this teach us about what the cost of faithfulness can be? *Acts 7:54–60.*

Stephen was obedient to the call of God and faithful to the mission of God, even to the point of death. Though we might not all be called to die for our faith, we need to be so committed to our Lord that, if we were called to that, we would not back off but, like Stephen, remain faithful to the end. It's not out of the realm of possibility that someone reading these words right now will one day have to give up his or her life in the cause of the Lord.

What would happen were you to face a life-threatening situation because of your powerful witness? Though you might not be able now to predict what you would do, how have your past actions revealed the way in which you might react if one day you were brought into such a situation?

When the Spirit Surprises

Although Saul was misguided in his fierce persecution of Christians, he thought he was doing God's will in confronting what he believed to be a fanatical sect. As Saul journeyed to Damascus to capture Christians and drag them back to Jerusalem, Jesus dramatically surprised him. Saul's Damascus road experience changed not only his life, but it changed the world, as well.

Read the account of Paul's conversion experience in Acts 9:1–9. Why did the Lord send him immediately to Ananias after this experience? What important lesson is here for us?

“Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

“When, in the midst of his blind error and prejudice, Saul was given a revelation of the Christ whom he was persecuting, he was placed in direct communication with the church, which is the light of the world.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 122.

How did Jesus surprise Ananias? What attitude must Ananias have had in order to follow the Savior's instructions? Acts 9:10–16.

Try to put yourself in the position of Paul after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. What a shock to him. Also, try to put yourself in Ananias' position. What a shock it must have been to him, as well. What do these accounts teach us about the ways in which we might be called by the Lord to face and do things that, at the time, we don't understand? Why, though, must we obey the Lord regardless?

Sensitivity to the Spirit's Call

Throughout his ministry, Paul was guided by the Spirit, convicted by the Spirit, instructed by the Spirit, and empowered by the Spirit. In his defense before King Agrippa, he described the heavenly vision on the Damascus Road. He then testified that the purpose of his ministry to both the Jews and Gentiles was “ ‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” ’ ” (*Acts 26:18, NKJV*).

In light of the Holy Spirit's guidance, what is significant about the apostle Paul's response to his Damascus road vision? Contrast Paul's response to the call of the Holy Spirit to King Agrippa's response. *Acts 26:19–32.*

In direct contrast to Paul, King Agrippa did not yield to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. His own self-inflated importance and egotistical desires were in conflict with the Spirit's prompting for a new life in Christ.

Jesus stated it clearly: “ ‘A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light’ ” (*John 12:35, 36, NKJV*).

As we obediently follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and walk in the light of God's truth, He will continually reveal more light and truth. At the same time, too, the more that we push away the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the more that we resist Him, the harder our hearts will become.

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (*Acts 26:28*). Those are some of the most poignant, powerful, and sad words in all the Bible. In what ways can we be in danger of harboring a similar attitude? For instance, how does compromise in our walk with the Lord reveal the same principle that is seen in Agrippa's words?

Spirit-Led Obedience

The Holy Spirit played a major role in every aspect of Jesus' life. He was "conceived of the Holy Spirit" (*NKJV*) and "anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and with power" (*NKJV*) at baptism—the birth of His ministry (*Matt. 1:20; 3:16, 17; Acts 10:34–38*). Throughout Christ's life, He was obedient to the Father's will (*John 8:29, Heb. 10:7*).

Read **Philippians 2:5–8.** What aspects of a life filled with the Holy Spirit appear in this specific description of Jesus?

He who was "in the form," or the very essence, of God, "made Himself," or as the original Greek text of the New Testament says, "emptied Himself" of His privileges and prerogatives as God's equal and, instead, became "a servant."

Jesus was a servant to the Father's will. He "humbled Himself" and became "obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (*Phil. 2:8*). Jesus provides an example of what a life filled with the Holy Spirit is like. It is a life of willing obedience and humble submission to the Father's will. It is a prayerful life devoted to service and ministry, a life consumed with the passionate desire to see others saved in the Father's kingdom.

The apostle Paul declares that Spirit-filled, New Testament believers have "received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name" (*Rom. 1:5, NKJV*). The heathen, on the other hand, "are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath" (*Rom. 2:8, NKJV*).

In Romans 6:15–23, Paul uses two contrasting expressions, "slaves of sin" (*NKJV*) and "slaves of righteousness" (*NKJV*). In Romans 8:12–17, he describes the "spirit of bondage" and the "Spirit of adoption." What does your own experience with the Lord, with faith, with the struggle against sin, and with acceptance from God tell you about the meaning of these terms?

Further Study: “At the entrance gate of the path that leads to everlasting life God places faith, and He lines the whole way with the light and peace and joy of willing obedience. The traveler in this way keeps ever before him the mark of his high calling in Christ. The prize is ever in sight. To him God’s commands are righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 183.

“The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer’s love and of His saving grace. The men and women, who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 49.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read Acts 5:1–11. What can we learn from this powerful, and to some degree, frightful story? Why do you think that they faced such dire consequences for their actions?
- 2 Dwell on Thursday’s study, which talked about how Jesus “emptied Himself” in order to fulfill what He came here to do. How can we take that principle and apply it to ourselves, in our walk with the Lord? Why, especially, as we seek for revival and reformation in our lives and in the church, is this kind of self-denial and death to self so crucial?
- 3 “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (*Acts 26:28*). In class, talk more about the implications of those fateful words.

A New Leaf

Danilo paced the floor in anger. *What right does Mom have to send me away?* he asked himself. She hasn't been here for me for years.

Danilo's parents had divorced when he was five years old. He and his brother lived with his father, who drank heavily. By the time Danilo was 12, he was drinking too. Then friends offered him cocaine, and soon he was hooked. He started selling cocaine to pay for his own drugs. When his mother found out, she gave him an ultimatum: Go into rehab or go to a boarding school. Fearful for her son, she took Danilo to live far from his friends.

Danilo stopped using drugs for a while, but when he went to live with his dad, he started using drugs again. Danilo needed money for drugs, and a friend suggested that they rob a pizza parlor. But the manager recognized his friend and called the police. The boys were arrested.

While Danilo waited for his father to bail him out, he had time to think about what he had done. He remembered that when he was little his parents had taken him to church and taught him to pray. For the first time in years Danilo prayed. "God, if You take me out of this situation, I'll change my life."

The judge sentenced Danilo to probation. Danilo wanted to change his life, so his father asked a cousin to help enroll Danilo in a Seventh-day Adventist boarding school near the capital city of Brazil. Danilo didn't have money to study at the school, but his cousin helped him to get a part-time job to help to pay his tuition. At school, he started reading the Bible and felt God drawing him to Himself.

Danilo enjoyed his studies and made the best of his second chance. He has given his life to Jesus and is thrilled to know that God is changing his life one day at a time. "I feel free now, freer than I've ever felt. There's no high like the high I get from praising God," he says.

The school sponsors several outreach activities, and Danilo enjoys sharing his new faith with others, especially his parents and brother. He prays that one day the family will be united in Christ, who is changing him completely.

Our mission offerings help to establish and strengthen Seventh-day Adventist schools where young people's lives can change forever. Part of a recent Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is helping to build a church on the campus of Central Brazil Adventist Academy, where Danilo studies and is preparing to become a leader for God. Thank you.

DANILO BARROS is a student at Central Brazil Adventist High School.

Confession *and* Repentance: The Conditions of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Acts 5:30–32, 2 Cor. 7:9–11, Lev. 5:5, 1 John 1:9, Heb. 12:17, Ps. 32:1–8.*

Memory Text: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (*Proverbs 28:13, NKJV*).

Throughout Scripture, both repentance and confession have prepared the way for spiritual revival. God has always prepared His people to do a great work for Him by leading them to godly sorrow for their sins. Once we acknowledge our sins and confess them, we are on track to have victory over them.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (*2 Pet. 3:9*). Repentance and confession are two prerequisites needed in order for us to receive the Spirit’s power in abundance.

In this week’s lesson, we will trace the importance of true repentance in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it is revealed in the book of Acts. We will also contrast true repentance with false repentance. Most of all, we will discover that repentance is a gift that the Holy Spirit gives in order to help us to reflect Jesus’ love to those around us.

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

Repentance: God's Gift

During the weeks before Pentecost, the disciples earnestly sought God in prayer. Acts 1:14 says that they were in “one accord in prayer and supplication.” This experience of “one accord” reveals a strong unity and harmony among Christ’s followers that would not have been possible without repentance and confession. Prayer and confession prepared them for what was going to come.

Read Acts 5:30–32. What important points can we take from what Peter said here?

Peter makes two critical points. First, repentance is a gift. As we open our hearts to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives us the gift of repentance. Second, the disciples themselves were witnesses in their own lives of the reality of repentance. They not only preached repentance, they experienced it.

“As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. . . . As they meditated upon His pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ’s character.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 36.

Repentance and confession are common themes throughout Acts (*Acts 17:30, 31; 26:19, 20*). It is “the goodness of God” that leads us to repentance; it is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that brings us to the realization of our need for a sin-pardoning Savior. At the same time, we must remember that the Holy Spirit does not fill unrepentant hearts (*Rom. 2:8; Acts 2:38, 39; 3:19*). The Holy Spirit fills hearts emptied of selfish ambition, of the desire for personal recognition, and of the drive for personal glory.

Why is it so difficult to acknowledge our sins and repent of them? Why is it so easy to let self get in the way of true repentance?

True Repentance Defined

How does the apostle Paul describe true repentance? *2 Cor. 7:9–11.*

Repentance is a God-initiated sorrow for sin. It also includes a decision to forsake whatever specific sins that the Holy Spirit brings to mind (*Ezek. 14:6, Zech. 1:4*). Genuine repentance does not lead Christians into a state of deep depression because of their sinful natures or deeds. “Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation” (*2 Cor. 7:10, NKJV*). It leads us, instead, to focus on Jesus’ righteousness, not our sinfulness. It produces a “diligence” in “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (*2 Cor. 7:11, Heb. 12:2*).

Throughout the New Testament, we see that the enormity of our sin is never greater than the enormity of His grace. For “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (*Rom. 5:20, NKJV*). This was certainly true in the apostle Paul’s experience.

Read 1 Timothy 1:14–17 and Acts 26:10–16. What do these passages tell you about Paul’s sinfulness and Jesus’ righteousness?

When the apostle Paul realized that he was persecuting the Lord of glory, he was driven to his knees in genuine repentance and confession. Throughout his entire life he never tired of telling the story of his own sinfulness and God’s grace. His repentance did not leave him in a state of depression; instead, it drove him into the arms of an all-loving and forgiving Savior. The confession of his sin did not leave him feeling guiltier than before. His focus was not on how unrighteous he was but on how righteous Jesus was.

Have you ever felt that you were the “chief” of sinners? Or, if not the chief, still too sinful to be saved? How can you learn to rest in the assurance that Christ’s righteousness is enough to save you?

True Repentance and Confession

What spiritual principles do we learn from Leviticus 5:5; 1 John 1:9; Isaiah 1:16–18; and Acts 26:19, 20 regarding the nature of true repentance and confession?

Genuine repentance is always accompanied by confession of specific sins. The Holy Spirit does not give us vague feelings of guilt. He convicts us of our definite shortcomings.

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 38.

The purpose of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit is to reveal our need of the saving grace of Christ. Repentance does not make God love us more; rather, it enables us to appreciate His love more. Confession does not earn God’s forgiveness; it instead enables us to receive His forgiveness. God does not love us more when we repent or love us less when we fail to. His love for us is constant. The only variable is our response to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The truth is that our hearts are hindered from receiving the abundant blessings that God has for us while our spiritual arteries are clogged with the sludge of sin. Sin deadens us to the Spirit’s prompting and makes it harder for us to respond to Him. Repentance and confession open the clogged channels of our spiritual hearts so that we may receive the overflowing of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power.

However much we long for forgiveness when we confess and repent, we must remember that this is a two-way street. That is, how do we respond to those who have treated us wrongly and who ask for forgiveness? Who, though totally undeserving of our forgiveness, do we need to forgive anyway, and why is it so important for us to forgive?

True and False Repentance Contrasted

There are some very specific examples in the Bible of people who sought repentance but were not forgiven by God. They wept. They were sorrowful. They confessed their sin but were not forgiven. Read the accounts of Pharaoh, Balaam, Esau, and Judas in Exodus 12:29–32, Numbers 22:32–35, Hebrews 12:17, and Matthew 27:4.

What common thread do you see running through each story in regard to repentance and/or confession?

One phrase in Hebrews 12:17 sums it up well. Speaking of Esau, the passage says that “when he wanted to inherit the blessing” (*NKJV*) he repented. Like Pharaoh, Balaam, and Judas, Esau’s heart was not broken over the pain that his sin had brought to his family or to the heart of God. His concern was over the birthright he had lost. He was sorry that he had not received that which he believed to be rightfully his. His motives were not pure. His sorrow was for himself. False repentance focuses upon the consequences of sin as opposed to the sin itself.

The law of sowing and reaping is a divine law. It is true that sin brings dire consequences, but repentance is not consumed with the negative results of sin. It is concerned, instead, with the dishonor and sorrow that our sin has brought to God.

True repentance is always characterized by at least three things: First, a sorrow that our sin has broken God’s heart. We are hurt because we hurt the One who loves us so much. Second, there is an honest confession of the specific sin that we have committed. True repentance is not laced with excuses for our behavior. It does not place blame on someone else. It takes responsibility for our actions. Third, true repentance always includes the decision to turn away from our sin. There can be no genuine repentance unless there is a corresponding reformation in the life. False repentance, on the other hand, is self-centered. It is concerned with the consequences of our sin. It is an emotional state of sorrow because our sins often bring negative consequences. It makes excuses and lays the blame on someone else. It is unconcerned about the changing of behavior unless the change will personally bring its own rewards.

Confession's Healing Power

Confession lances the boil of guilt and allows the poisonous pus of sin to drain. Confession is healing in many ways. It opens our hearts to receive God's grace. Through confession we accept the forgiveness that Christ freely offers us from the Cross. Confession is healing because it allows us to receive grace. Confession also breaks down barriers between us and other people. It heals relationships.

Read Psalm 32:1–8. What does this teach us about confession and repentance?

Read Acts 24:16. The apostle Paul strove for a “conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men.” What does that mean?

Is guilt good or bad? It all depends. If the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and the guilt of that sin drives us to Jesus, guilt is good. If we have already confessed our sin and continue to feel guilty, the guilt may become destructive. “This feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross of Calvary. The sense of sinfulness has poisoned the springs of life and of true happiness. Now Jesus says, ‘Lay it all on Me. I will take your sins. I will give you peace. Banish no longer your self-respect, for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are mine. Your weakened will I will strengthen; your remorse for sin I will remove.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 305. The answer to guilt is Jesus. His grace abolishes the destructive guilt sin lays upon us.

There are times we may have confessed our sins and we still feel guilty. Why? One reason might be that the devil is attempting to rob us of the assurance of salvation. He loves to steal away the blessed assurance of forgiveness and salvation that we have in Jesus. Second, the Holy Spirit may be pointing out something that exists between us and another individual. If we have hurt another individual, our troubled conscience will be eased when we confess our wrong to the person whom we have hurt.

How has guilt impacted your relationship with the Lord and with others? What can you do to help to alleviate the burden of guilt that you carry? Even if you have done wrong and the guilt is in a sense justified, what promises can you claim from the Bible to help you to move on?

Further Study: “Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. The work that we have to do on our part is plainly set before us: ‘Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.’ Isaiah 1:16, 17. ‘If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.’ Ezekiel 33:15.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 39.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What crucial lesson about forgiveness can we learn from Jesus’ willingness to forgive those who nailed Him to the cross? If He was willing to do that, how much more so should we be willing to forgive those who have hurt us?
- ❷ In your own experience, how has confession of sin been a blessing to you? In what ways has it helped you in your relationship, not only with the Lord but with others?
- ❸ Though we read this week about the need, at times, to confess to other people whom we have wronged, why must we always be very careful in what we say to others?
- ❹ True repentance, we have read, includes a putting away of sin. What happens, however, if we—struggling with that sin—fall into it again? Does that mean our repentance wasn’t sincere? Does it mean we cannot be forgiven for it again? If this were true, what hope would any of us have? How are we to understand the nature of biblical repentance while always keeping in mind the reality of our sinful natures?
- ❺ From what we have studied this week, why is repentance a vital component in the whole issue of revival and reformation? How do the terms *revival* and *reformation* contain within themselves the idea that we do need to repent?

The Newspaper Ad

Alexei scanned the classified ads of his local newspaper in Siberia, Russia. He wanted to be sure that his ad for home improvements was attractive and his prices competitive. His eyes fell on the religious section of classified ads. The ads there offered to tell people's fortunes or read their palms. *So many ads for Satan, and not one for Christ*, Alexei thought. He grabbed a paper and scribbled the words "I will tell you about Christ" and he added his telephone number. The next day he placed the ad in the paper.

His phone began ringing. Most callers had their own advertisements in the paper and wanted to know what Alexei would tell people about Christ. Some wanted to argue theology. Alexei wondered whether his advertisement would reach anyone who was searching for God.

The phone rang again, and Alexei offered a cheerful "Hello."

"I want to know about Christ," a weathered voice said. The men spoke for several minutes, then the caller invited Alexei to visit him.

An elderly man answered Alexei's knock. The two men talked several minutes, and then the older man said, "I'm old, and I'm not well. I want to know about God while I have time." Alexei opened his Bible and read several verses about God. Then they watched an evangelistic video. For 10 days the two studied God's Word together. Alexei's new friend is eager to learn more.

Normally Alexei doesn't answer his phone on Sabbath because most calls are about work. But recently he received several calls from the same person on Sabbath. *Maybe it's an emergency*, Alexei thought. He answered the phone.

"Are you a Christian?" a young man asked. Alexei answered his question. "I'm Vitaly," the caller said. "I just got out of prison, and I need to talk to you."

The two met, and Vitaly told Alexei that while he was in prison, a Seventh-day Adventist woman had sent him *The Great Controversy*. He had read it and wanted to know more about God. Then he found Alexei's newspaper advertisement.

Vitaly now attends the Seventh-day Adventist church and is eager to know God personally. "I know that Alexei's advertisement was God calling me," Vitaly says.

Alexei now knows that God called him to place that ad in the paper. "People are searching for spiritual insight; I want to introduce them to Jesus."

God uses simple things to draw people to Him. Our prayers and our mission offerings strengthen God's work around the world. Our own ministry strengthens God's work at home. What ministry has God given you?

ALEXEI continues sharing his faith in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, where part of a recent Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is helping to build a new church for a growing congregation.

Revive

US AGAIN

MARK A. FINLEY

“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs”

(Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 121).

Revival always begins with one man, one woman, one boy, or one girl on his or her knees, seeking God. You can be that one person who is used of God to bring the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your home, your church, and your world.



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Unity: The Bond of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 17:9–11, 20–24; 1 Cor. 12:12–18; Acts 4:32, 33; 1:8; 15:1–31; Matt. 18:16–20.*

Memory Text: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (*Ephesians 4:1–3, NKJV*).

Unity is an essential ingredient of revival. Conflict, division, and strife do not create an environment for nurturing revival. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on a church that had united in Christ's mission to the world. Their petty differences were subordinate to the call of Christ's larger mission. Striving for supremacy ceased in the light of Christ's commission to reach the lost with the gospel. If the early followers of Christ were busy vying for power, the work would have been stymied from the start. Instead, convicted by the Holy Spirit to die to self, they were united in purpose and mission.

In short, where there is no unity, there can be no revival. Where jealousy, envy, and jostling for supremacy reign, the Holy Spirit's power is withheld. How crucial, then, that we learn how to break down the barriers that sometimes separate us so that we can enter into the unity that Christ seeks for His church.

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

Answering Christ’s Prayer for Unity

John 17 contains Jesus’ great intercessory prayer. It reveals what was on His mind at that momentous hour of earth’s history.

Read John 17:9–11, 20–24. **What was Jesus’ heartfelt longing? Why was this so important? How did the disciples’ relationship to one another demonstrate genuine Christian faith?** See Acts 4:32, 33.

The “oneness,” or unity, of the disciples prepared their hearts for the reception of the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power. Christ’s prayer for His church was fulfilled. They surrendered their differences. Love prevailed. Strife was banished.

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:32, 33, NKJV).

This passage links the disciples having “one heart and one soul” with their “great power” in witnessing. In the challenging circumstances of first-century Jerusalem at a time when Christianity was unpopular, these committed Christians shared their resources. They supported one another. They laid aside their personal ambitions. Their unselfish attitudes and generosity of spirit prepared them to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power for witnessing.

“Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. All differences had been put away.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 20.

Why is the fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer in John 17 so important for our church? What does Jesus’ desire for the unity of the first-century church reveal about His desire for our church today?

New Testament Illustrations of Unity

The New Testament world of the first century was divided by caste, social status, and gender. It was a society in social turmoil. The concepts of equal rights, freedom, and human dignity were not the accepted norms.

Then Christianity burst upon the scene. It created a social revolution. Jesus' teachings of equality, justice, concern for the poor, and respect for the marginalized appeared radical. At the same time, New Testament believers united around the core values of Creation and Redemption. They taught that all human beings were created by God and that Redemption was made available to all people through the cross of Christ. The Cross showed that each person, regardless of his or her worldly status, was of immense value in God's sight.

How do the following images illustrate the way in which different believers, regardless of their backgrounds, blend into a harmonious whole? *1 Cor. 12:12–18; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5.*

What images could be more powerful to illustrate unity in the church? The apostle Paul uses the body to illustrate the church and its members. The body is closely knit. Its members are interrelated and mutually dependent upon one another. All parts have their function. If one part of the body suffers, the entire body suffers (*1 Cor. 12:18–26*).

Peter adds the illustration of a spiritual building with the members as stones, each fitting perfectly into the construction of a glorious temple that will glorify Jesus' name. In these illustrations, each member is intimately linked. It was this bond of loving unity in a world of fractured relationships, power struggles, and divisive schisms that was to be a powerful argument for Christianity. Jesus stated this universal truth clearly: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (*John 13:34, 35, NKJV*).

How well does your local church reflect the unity spoken about here? Ask yourself, too: are you helping to bring unity, or what attitudes might you be harboring that could be adding to the problem?

Elements of Unity: Our Mission and Message

The unity experienced by the New Testament believers was based on far more than emotional warmth between members.

Read Acts 1:8, 4:33, 5:42, 9:31, and 28:28–31. What was the all-consuming passion of the New Testament church? How did this passion unite them?

The disciples were consumed with something much larger than themselves. Christ's commission to take the gospel to the entire world swallowed up their personal ambitions. The church cannot reach the community with the gospel until it is united, but it will never be united until it is consumed with the preaching of the gospel.

Mission is a great unifying factor. The early believers rallied around mission. The life, death, resurrection, priestly ministry, and return of our Lord bound them together. New converts were anchored in the "apostles' doctrine" (*Acts 2:41, 42, NKJV*). The teachings of Jesus provided the foundation for their unity.

The apostle Peter uses the term "present truth" (*2 Pet. 1:12*). The message of "present truth" in Peter's day united the church and propelled it forward with a prophetic impetus: Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. They were united with an urgent, present-truth message regarding the fulfillment of prophecy.

Now, in the final days of earth's history, God has given His people an urgent, present-truth message, as well (*Rev. 14:6–12*). It is the message of "the everlasting gospel" in the context of judgment, of obedience, and of the Lord's return. This is what unites Seventh-day Adventists as a worldwide family. If this message was watered down, given a secondary place, or treated as a relic of the past, the unity of the church would be fractured, and its mission would lose its urgency. If the church's message is either misunderstood or distorted, its mission will be unclear. It is the proclamation of the prophetic message of the Three Angels that gives Seventh-day Adventists the reason for our existence.

How connected are you with our message and mission? Or look at it this way: why are you a Seventh-day Adventist? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Church Organization: The Structure for Unity

The New Testament reveals that the early church had a definite organizational structure. This structure helped to preserve the doctrinal purity of the church and keep it focused on mission.

In Acts 6, a small group of disciples met together to solve the problem of the distribution of food to the widows of the Greek converts. They selected deacons to solve the dilemma. Church members respected the authority of these church leaders.

When the apostle Paul was converted on the Damascus Road, he was directed to Ananias, a representative of the church (*Acts 9:10–17*).

After Paul's baptism by Ananias, the Holy Spirit directed him to meet with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem in order to confirm his ministry (*Acts 9:26–30*).

In Acts 20 Paul met with the church elders from Ephesus to urge them to be on guard against false teachers and their heresies (*Acts 20:17, 27–32*).

How did the New Testament church solve a major dispute over circumcision? *Acts 15:1–31*.

The Jerusalem Council saved the first-century church from a serious schism. Church organization with administrative authority was essential in preserving the doctrinal integrity of the New Testament church. In this instance, local church representatives were sent to Jerusalem to participate in doctrinal discussions, which would have serious implications for the future of the church. Once this representative group came to a consensus, they wrote out their decision in a committee action and circulated it throughout the churches where the problem had originated: Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (*Acts 15:23*).

Members accepted the decision of the Jerusalem Council and rejoiced that the Holy Spirit had guided them to an answer to their dilemma (*Acts 15:30–35*).

If you are a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, then you are involved in the church structure. What is your role in that structure, and how might you be more constructively involved?

Achieving Unity

The closer we come to Jesus, the closer we come to one another. We see with new spiritual eyesight. The Spirit of Christ enables us to view one another differently. The little things that once bothered us are reframed by the grace of Christ. Cherished hostilities are relinquished in the light of His magnificent grace. Old scores and disputes are, as much as possible, set aside. Barriers are broken down. The gospel heals broken relationships.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out in its fullness on Pentecost, the attitudes of the disciples toward one another were dramatically changed. In the light streaming from the Cross, they saw one another differently.

“Every Christian saw in his brother a revelation of divine love and benevolence. One interest prevailed; one subject of emulation swallowed up all others. The ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ’s character and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 48.

List some of the practices that fostered unity among first-century Christians. Why are these practices so powerful in bringing believers together? *Matt. 18:16–20; Acts 1:14; 12:5, 12; 6:7; Matt. 28:16–20.*

Hoping or wishing for unity does not bring it about. The New Testament church prayed together and talked together. They studied God’s Word together, and together they shared their faith. Prayer, Bible study, and witnessing are powerful elements that create, foster, and sustain the unity of the church. As we pray for one another, we are drawn closer together. Participating in an evangelistic outreach to the community creates a sense of oneness or togetherness. A living, dynamic, unified, and revived church is one whose members are praying together, studying God’s Word, and reaching out to their community.

What are some of the forces at play that threaten the unity of your local church, or even the church as a whole? Why is it important to understand what these forces are and to be ready to deal with them?

Further Study: “In these first disciples was presented marked diversity. They were to be the world’s teachers, and they represented widely varied types of character. In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action. This unity it was Christ’s object to secure. To this end He sought to bring them into unity with Himself.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 20.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Why is a unified church structure so important for us? What would happen to our mission, to our message, and to our church as a whole if congregations, conferences, unions, or divisions were to go their own way? Imagine the chaos that would ensue.
- 2 In class, answer the question: Why am I a Seventh-day Adventist?
- 3 However important unity is for the church, are there some things that are even more important? If so, what? For instance, in dealing with those who preached doctrines with which he disagreed, Paul wrote this: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (*Gal. 1:8, 9*). What happened to unity here, at least with these people?
- 4 Dwell more on the issue of how our message and mission are crucial to our whole identity as Seventh-day Adventists. After all, what would our purpose be without our message, which no one else is preaching to the world? At the same time, what other things unite us as Seventh-day Adventists? That is, though we would have nothing were it not for our mission and message, what else do we have that helps to define us, and why are these important, as well?
- 5 Why is unity so crucial for any revival and reformation among us?

The Disobedient Daughter

Irunga stepped outside the mud hut that was her father's home. She had hoped that he would understand that becoming a Christian didn't mean she was rejecting her family's traditions. She loved her family, but now God was more important.

Irunga is a Herero, a tribal people living in northern Namibia. She grew up watching her grandfather sit before the holy fire and talk to the ancestors, asking them to tell God the family's concerns.

When she was ten years old, she went to live with her uncle and attend school in the little town nearest to her family's settlement. While studying, she attended a Protestant church and accepted Jesus as her Savior. She knew that her family would be unhappy, but when her grandfather accused her of deserting their culture, she was deeply hurt. They called her a disobedient daughter. Saddened, Irunga returned to town.

A friend introduced her to some Seventh-day Adventist missionaries and their interpreter, Kapitango. Irunga enjoyed talking with the missionaries, but she had no intention of becoming a Seventh-day Adventist. However, as her friendship with Kapitango grew, so did her interest in his faith. In time she accepted the Seventh-day Adventist faith, and the young couple decided to marry. But marriage in Irunga's culture is complicated, and parents often take years to decide to allow their young people to marry.

Kapitango's parents asked Irunga's parents for permission for the couple to marry, and they agreed. But just before the wedding, they withdrew their permission. Kapitango and Irunga decided to marry anyway.

Religion continues to be a wedge between Irunga and her family, who still refuse to listen to her testimony. But Irunga hopes that one day they will share her love for Jesus. She is her village's only contact with Seventh-day Adventists.

Irunga and her pastor-husband work with a group of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to reach the Herero and Himba people of Namibia. They are developing Bible stories told in the oral traditions of her people. The stories, recorded onto MP3 players, are making a difference in people's lives, and Irunga hopes that one day soon they will reach her own family.

Part of a recent Thirteenth Sabbath Offering has gone to help make these MP3 players available to more Himba and Herero people so that they can hear for themselves that God is not distant or uncaring but loving and forgiving.

Thank you for giving to missions and the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering and making it possible for others to hear the story of salvation for themselves.

IRUNGA NDJAMBA *shares her faith in northern Namibia.*

Discernment: The Safeguard of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 17:3; 1 John 2:3–6; Matt. 23:27, 28; 2 Thess. 2:9–12; 1 Cor. 12:4–7.*

Memory Text: “Consider how I love Your precepts; revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness. The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (*Psalm 119:159, 160, NKJV*).

Early in my ministry I studied with a family in rural Tennessee. One day a large man walked into the room smoking a big cigar. He then declared that the Lord had healed him from lung cancer!

I have reflected upon this experience often. This man sincerely believed that the Holy Spirit had miraculously healed him. However, did his belief that he was healed make it true? Are signs and wonders always evidence of the Holy Spirit's working? Can we base our faith on signs and wonders alone? What role might signs and wonders have in a false revival?

In the context of revival, we need to ask, Is it possible that the devil can create a false religious excitement and leave the impression that a genuine revival has occurred?

This week we will study the spiritual indicators of genuine revival and contrast them with the obvious signs of false ones. Knowing the difference between the two will help to save us from the enemy's delusions.

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

God's Will and His Word

All true spirituality is focused on knowing God and doing His will (*John 17:3, Heb. 10:7*). Any so-called “revival” that focuses on experience rather than commitment to obey God’s Word misses the mark completely. The Holy Spirit will never lead us where God’s Word does not. The Holy Spirit leads us into the Word (*2 Tim. 3:15, 16*). The Word of God is the foundation and heart of all true revival.

What do the following passages in Psalm 119 reveal about revival and God’s Word? List all the spiritual qualities that God’s Word develops in our lives. *Ps. 119:25, 28, 49, 50, 67, 81, 105, 116, 130, 154*. What do these promises mean in practical terms in our experience with the Lord?

In Jesus’ sermon about the Bread of Life, He explained the essence of all revival and the foundation of all spiritual life. He declared, “ ‘It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life’ ” (*John 6:63, NKJV*). Jesus’ statement is extremely significant. The Holy Spirit, who is the Source of all spiritual revival, speaks through God’s Word in order to give to those who grasp it by faith a deep spiritual life. Revival occurs when the Holy Spirit impresses Jesus’ words upon our minds. This is why the Savior said, “ ‘ “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” ’ ” (*Matt. 4:4, NKJV*).

“In many of the revivals which have occurred during the last half century, the same influences have been at work, to a greater or less degree, that will be manifest in the more extensive movements of the future. There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead. Yet none need be deceived. In the light of God’s word it is not difficult to determine the nature of these movements. Wherever men neglect the testimony of the Bible, turning away from those plain, soul-testing truths which require self-denial and renunciation of the world, there we may be sure that God’s blessing is not bestowed.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 464.

The essence of true revival is discovering God’s will as manifest in God’s Word. Jesus lived a life filled with the Holy Spirit. From His birth to His death, He was led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

God's Love and His Law

Revival is all about knowing Jesus. It is a reawakening of the spiritual faculties of the soul. It is a personal and vital experience with the Savior. Knowing Jesus—really knowing Him as a friend—is the essence of all revival. From the depth of his personal experience with Jesus, the apostle Paul shared that he is praying for the Ephesians to “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (*Eph. 3:19, NKJV*).

This is in contrast to the story of the end-time virgins, five of whom had an outer form of godliness and religion but lacked an intimate experience with Jesus. Referring to their great need, Jesus said, “‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you’” (*Matt. 25:12, NKJV*).

Knowing God always leads to obedience. God's law reveals His love. A deeper relationship with Christ leads to a greater desire to please Christ. Obedience is the fruit of love. The more we love Him, the more we will desire to obey Him. Any so-called revival that does not emphasize repentance for the times that we have willfully broken His law is suspect. Religious fervor may stimulate a temporary religious high, but lasting spiritual change will be lacking.

For the apostle John, what are the evidences that one really knows God? *1 John 2:3–6; 4:7, 8, 20, 21.*

In these passages John makes two crucial points. First, knowing God leads to keeping His commandments. Second, loving God leads to loving one another. John's point is clear. Genuine spirituality results in a changed life. The heart of revival is not a warm sensation of feeling close to Jesus. It is a transformed life filled with the joy of serving Jesus. God's great goal in all revivals is to draw us closer to Him, to deepen our surrender to His purpose for our lives, and to release us for witness and ministry in His cause.

How are you in your own personal relationships? What do those relationships tell you about your own walk with the Lord? In what ways might you need to progress in both your relationship with God and with others?

Formalism, Fanaticism, and Faith

One of the challenges of true revival is breaking through the icy surface of cold formalism while at the same time avoiding the fiery flames of fanaticism. Formalism is rigidly locked in the status quo. It is satisfied with the external husks of religion while it denies the living reality of faith. Fanaticism tends to go to extremes. It goes off on religious tangents. It tends to be unbalanced, focusing on one aspect of faith to the neglect of all others. Fanaticism is often self-righteous and judgmental. The apostle Paul longed that the Christian church “no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (*Eph. 4:14, NKJV*).

What do we learn about cold formalism in Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees? *Matt. 23:27, 28; Luke 11:39, 40; Mark 7:5–9.*

What do we learn about those who thought that signs and wonders proved that they were Jesus’ faithful followers? *Matt. 7:21–23.*

The deeper issue in both of these experiences is the commitment of the heart. Signs and wonders can never take the place of authentic biblical faith. They are not substitutes for surrendering to the will and Word of God. The essence of real revival is a faith so deep that it leads to an obedient life that is committed to do God’s will. A biblically based revival echoes John’s words, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (*1 John 5:4, NKJV*).

“What kind of faith is it that overcomes the world? It is that faith which makes Christ your own personal Saviour—that faith which, recognizing your helplessness, your utter inability to save yourself, takes hold of the Helper who is mighty to save, as your only hope.” —Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, p. 21.

Which side do you tend to lean toward: formalism and tradition or experience and excitement? If, perhaps, you lean too much toward one side or the other, how can you find the right balance?

Ministry and Miracles

False revivals often place their major emphasis on miracles. Genuine revivals focus on ministry. False revivals emphasize spectacular signs and wonders; genuine revivals recognize that the greatest miracle is a changed life.

The healing miracles of Jesus testified to the fact that He was the Messiah. As our compassionate Redeemer, the Savior was concerned with alleviating human suffering. But He was even more concerned with the salvation of everyone whom He touched with His healing grace. The purpose of Jesus' redemptive ministry was to "seek and save" lost humankind (Luke 19:10). Speaking to the religious leaders regarding the paralytic, Jesus declared, " 'But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins' "—then He said to the paralytic, " 'Arise, take up your bed and go to your house' " (*Matt. 9:6, NKJV*). The crowd's response to this miracle was to glorify God (*Matt. 9:8*).

Miracles were an outgrowth of Jesus' redemptive ministry, but they were not the main reason He came to earth.

What can we learn from these texts about how people can be deceived in the last days? *2 Thess. 2:9–12; Matt. 24:11–13, 24; Rev. 19:20.*

These people are deceived by false miracles "because they did not receive the love of the truth." When the desire for the spectacular is far more important than the desire for a new life in Christ, the mind is open to deception. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus concludes with Jesus' insightful words, " 'But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" ' " (*Luke 16:31, NKJV*). In other words, spectacular signs and marvelous wonders can never take the place of understanding and then following God's Word. Obedience to God is primary; signs and wonders, if and when they come, are always only secondary.

What kind of miracles have you experienced in your own life, in your own walk with the Lord? What have you learned from them? How important are they to your faith?

Fruits and Gifts

What are some of the prime reasons that God gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit to His church? *1 Cor. 12:4–7, Rom. 12:4–8, Eph. 4:11–16.*

The gifts of the Holy Spirit may be divided into two large categories: some gifts are qualities, other gifts are callings. For example, the gifts of helps, hospitality, exhortation, and teaching are qualities that God imparts to individual believers (*Rom. 12:6–8*). The gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers are callings given to individual believers (*Eph. 4:11, 12*). Both categories serve a similar purpose. They have been imparted by the Holy Spirit to strengthen the spiritual life of the church and equip it for mission. Spiritual gifts are not an end in themselves. They have been given by God for the benefit of His church.

What does the apostle Paul mean when he uses the expression “Walk in the Spirit” in Galatians 5:16? Read Galatians 5:22–25, and list each fruit that comes from walking in the Spirit. *See also John 15:1–7.*

Any so-called revival that has little interest in the fruit of the Spirit but is obsessed with possessing the gifts of the Spirit is dangerous. If God gave the gifts of the Spirit in abundance to believers who were not manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, the church would become the center of selfish exhibitionism. For God to turn on Heaven’s power when the spiritual power lines are frayed would produce only disastrous results. Beware of movements that concentrate on the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit rather than on obedience to God’s will and a transformed character that reveals the fruit of the Spirit.

What do you say to someone who has experienced what he or she judges to be a supernatural manifestation from God? How can you help him or her to know if it truly were from God or from the other side? How does our understanding of the reality of the great controversy help us when we seek to understand who or what can be behind miracles?

Further Study: “The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 328.

“The apostle’s earnest words of entreaty were not fruitless. The Holy Spirit wrought with mighty power, and many whose feet had wandered into strange paths, returned to their former faith in the gospel. Henceforth they were steadfast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. In their lives were revealed the fruits of the Spirit—‘love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ The name of God was glorified, and many were added to the number of believers throughout that region.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 388.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Dwell more on the contrast between cold formalism and unbridled fanaticism. Or, are they always in contrast? That is, could a church be fanatical and coldly formal at the same time? If so, how might that be made manifest? Why would either extreme, or both, be detrimental to revival and reformation? What about your own local church? Where does it stand in this area? How could you help it to find the right balance?
- 2 What evidence, if any, can we see of false revivals going on in the world? How can we know that they are false? On the other hand, would it be wrong to believe that God is working a revival among those who, though loving the Lord, don’t know the things that we do?
- 3 In class, go over your answer to Thursday’s question regarding someone who thinks that he or she has had a supernatural experience with God. What can you learn from each other’s answers?

Mila's Prayers

Mila [MEE-lah] is six years old, but already she's a prayer warrior. She prays for people until God answers.

One day at school Mila saw her teachers outside during their break smoking cigarettes. Mila knows that smoking is dangerous, so right there she prayed for them. "Dear Jesus," she said, "please help my teachers know that smoking is bad for them. Help them to stop smoking before it makes them sick. Amen."

That evening when Father arrived home, he saw Mila sitting on the couch with her head bowed. He wondered if something was wrong. He touched her and asked if she was OK. Mila looked up and said, "I'm fine. I'm just praying for my teachers. They smoke, and I don't want them to get sick."

Daddy knew about Mila's prayer ministry. He sat down beside her and asked, "Would you pray for a woman at work? She smokes too." Mila smiled and bowed her head. She prayed for Daddy's friend at work and for her teachers. Mila kept praying for her teachers and her father's friend every day.

Several weeks later, Daddy came home from work and told Mila that his friend at work had stopped smoking. The woman told him that one day she had suddenly lost her desire to smoke and hadn't smoked again. Daddy knew that the woman had tried to stop smoking many times before, but she had failed.

"What day did you stop smoking?" he asked. The woman thought for a minute and then told him the date. "That was the day after my daughter started praying for you," he said. Daddy told the woman that Mila had been praying that she would stop smoking. She was surprised that a child's prayer could help her to stop smoking when nothing else could.

"My teachers still smoke," Mila said. "And I'm still praying for them. Sometimes I tell them that smoking is bad for them and that I'm concerned about them. I've told them that I'm praying for them. My teacher says that she wants to stop smoking," Mila added. "I'm sure God will answer my prayers."

God answers our prayers, but He never forces someone to do something against their wishes. When we pray for others, God works in their hearts and in ours to answer those prayers. When we pray that people will meet God and accept Jesus' love, we must be willing to help make that happen if God calls us.

Our mission offerings help to provide tools to lead others to Christ, no matter where they are. Thank you for giving so that others can meet God.

Reformation: The Outgrowth of Revival



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Chron. 20:17–20; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rev. 2:1–6; Rom. 1:16, 17; Rev. 14:6, 7, 12.*

Memory Text: “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (*Hebrews 2:11, NKJV*).

Revival is an ongoing process. Daily our Lord invites us into the joy of His presence. Just as Israel was nourished by the manna that fell from heaven, Jesus spreads out a spiritual banquet for us every day. Daily our souls are nourished, our spirits refreshed, and our hearts revived as we kneel quietly before His throne, meditating upon His Word. True spiritual renewal leads to a change in our thought patterns, habits, and lifestyle; it’s what we call a “reformation.”

“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen” (*2 Pet. 3:17, 18, NKJV*). The term *reformation* simply refers to this “growing in grace”; it is allowing the Holy Spirit to align every aspect of our lives with God’s will. In those areas where we have drifted from obedience, revival reawakens our longings to please God. Reformation leads us to make the challenging choices to surrender anything that stands between us and Him.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 31.*

The Prophet's Appeal for Reformation

God often sent His prophets to lead Israel into revival. Reformation regularly accompanied these times of revival. It is important to notice that even when God's people drifted away from Him, they were still His chosen people. Again and again, He sent His messengers to guide them back. The examples of revival and reformation recorded in the Old Testament often have similar characteristics.

Revival and reformation occurred in the Old Testament when there was a renewed heart commitment to obey God's will. When Israel "turned to its own way" and "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (*Judg. 21:25*), God withdrew His blessing, and the nation faced disaster and defeat.

In one instance, when God's people faced one of their greatest challenges—a battle with the Ammonites and Moabites—King Jehoshaphat showed remarkable spiritual leadership. Throughout the crisis, the king sought to keep the eyes of all Israel focused on the power of God (*2 Chron. 20:12*).

The king recognized a critical point in sustaining all revival and reformation. What earnest counsel did he give his people? What spiritual pattern do we discover here for revival and reformation?

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–20 and summarize King Jehoshaphat's instructions to Judah.

"God was the strength of Judah in this crisis, and He is the strength of His people today. We are not to trust in princes, or to set men in the place of God. We are to remember that human beings are fallible and erring, and that He who has all power is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater."—Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 217.

Jehoshaphat's experience illustrates the essence of revival and reformation. He led Israel into a united time of fasting, praying, trusting, and obeying God.

How can you learn, in your own times of stress and challenges, to apply the spiritual principles revealed here? What is the only way to truly exercise faith?

Paul's Appeal for Reformation in Corinth

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses great concern regarding their spiritual condition. Many members had drifted from God's ideal. The situation was serious, including sexual immorality that, Paul says, was not seen even among the pagans (*1 Cor. 5:1*). A whole host of problems arose that Paul had to address. In light of this background, it is not difficult to understand why the Corinthian church needed revival and reformation.

What counsel did Paul give the Corinthians regarding their spiritual lives? What is the main idea in the following texts? *1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 9:24–27; 13:13; 15:1, 2, 27, 28.*

The apostle Paul urged them to steadfastly hold on to their faith and make God's glory the primary goal of their lives. He reassured the Corinthians of his love and assured them that the power of God was greater than any temptation they faced (*1 Cor. 10:13*).

How did the Corinthian church respond to Paul's counsel? *2 Cor. 7:8–12.*

Paul was overjoyed with the Corinthians' response. Although he still had concerns, he wrote, "I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything" (*2 Cor. 7:16, NKJV*). What a change. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul chastised them as "carnal." In his second letter he expressed complete confidence in their new experience with God. The Holy Spirit brought the Corinthians spiritual renewal. This revival brought a corresponding reformation. Reformation led to changed habits, changed lives, and changed relationships. The Corinthians still faced spiritual challenges. They had their share of trials, but they made significant advances in their Christian faith. Revival and reformation are not some panacea to solve all of our spiritual problems. They are part of an ongoing faith journey.

Revelation's Appeal for Reformation in Ephesus

The seven churches described in Revelation 2 and 3 are representative of the Christian church throughout the centuries. This is a view that has been taken by Bible students throughout the centuries. Seventh-day Adventist expositors have historically taken this position, as well.

The angel instructs John to “ ‘write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this’ ” (*Rev. 1:19, NKJV*). The vision of the seven churches relates to the past, the present, and the future. It records the triumphs of God's church, as well as its failures. It shares the church's victories, as well as its defeats. Although the seven churches can represent a historical continuum of Christian faith down through the centuries, there are vital lessons in each one of these churches for God's people today.

Ephesus, for instance, provides a striking illustration of heaven's appeal for revival and reformation.

Read Revelation 2:1–6. What are the good things about this church? But what are the problems, as well?

Ephesus, here, is equated with the New Testament church from approximately A.D. 31 to A.D. 100. These early Christians were zealous for their faith. They labored unceasingly for the advancement of the gospel. The disciples diligently preserved the doctrinal purity of the church. They had no tolerance for heresy and were fierce defenders of truth.

As time went on, however, the members began to lose their “first love.” They substituted duty for devotion. Doing Jesus' work became more important than their relationship with Him. Gradually and almost imperceptibly, their experience with Jesus began slipping away. They were laboring hard to defend the faith, but something vital was missing in their own spiritual experience. Love for Jesus and for one another was desperately lacking.

What was it like when you first came to know Jesus? How can you still maintain that “first love”? Why is it so important that you do so? What things threaten to turn you away from that love?

Luther's Appeal for Reformation

When we think of the word *reformation*, our minds are naturally drawn to the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther. Until then, western Christianity was for the most part locked in tradition. The tenets of the church overshadowed the teachings of Jesus. Tradition became more quoted than Scripture. Multitudes were dominated by fear. They had little or no assurance of salvation. Confused and bewildered, they struggled to believe that God really longed to save them.

It was at this crucial point of religious history that God raised up Martin Luther, among others, to lead His people into a thorough reformation. Luther had struggled with the guilt of his own sins for years until the light of the gospel broke through.

Read the following passages from Romans. Why did they make such a powerful impact on Luther's life? Why are they so vital in leading us to a revival of faith and reformation? *Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21–25; 5:6–11; 8:1–4.*

“Sinners can be justified by God only when He pardons their sins, remits the punishment they deserve, and treats them as though they were really just and had not sinned, receiving them into divine favor and treating them as if they were righteous. They are justified alone through the imputed righteousness of Christ. The Father accepts the Son, and through the atoning sacrifice of His Son accepts the sinner.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 194.

Understanding grace is life transforming. It is the very essence of Christianity. God's unmerited, undeserved grace is the cornerstone of our faith. Through the life, death, resurrection, and priestly ministry of Jesus, the gift of eternal life is ours. Receiving it by faith, we have the assurance of salvation.

Revival has to do with appreciating the gift of grace every day. There is nothing more spiritually uplifting than the daily rejoicing in the goodness and grace of God. Reformation is simply living out this grace in all that we do.

Dwell on the great hope that salvation is found in what Christ has done for you. Why must that truth be the foundation of any revival and reformation in your life?

Heaven's Appeal for an End-Time Reformation

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a reform movement. It was raised up by God to restore biblical truths lost sight of many centuries ago. Although the Holy Spirit worked powerfully through the Reformers, there were vital truths that they did not fully understand. God still had more truth to reveal to His people.

God is not interested in our understanding truth merely in order to fill our minds with more religious knowledge. Biblical truths are windows into His very heart. They reveal something about His character. The more clearly that we understand the truths of His Word, the more completely we will understand the depth of His love. False doctrine distorts His character. Truth unmask the devil's lies and reveals who he really is (take, for instance, eternal torment in hell as a prime example of what lurks in Satan's heart).

From the inception of the great controversy in heaven, Satan has attempted to malign the character of God. He has lied about God's intentions toward His creatures. But, in the life that He lived, in the truths that He taught, and in the death that He died, Jesus revealed what His heavenly Father was really like.

Read God's end-time message of revival and reformation (*Rev. 14:6, 7, 12*). **Read carefully what is said there. What do these verses teach us about the character of God?**

God's end-time message of the "everlasting gospel" includes a call to obedience to God's will in the light of the judgment hour. The judgment reveals to the whole universe both the justice and mercy of God. In an age of evolution, Jesus' message of reformation also calls His people back to worship the Creator on the true Bible Sabbath. The Sabbath is a stunning rebuke to the error of Darwinian evolution and to the harsh and violent depiction of God that it presents.

What does it mean that the whole foundation of these messages is the "everlasting gospel"? How can you daily have the assurance that this gospel message is for you, whatever your mistakes? Why is it so important that you daily claim the gospel message for yourself?

Further Study: “A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 25, 1902.

“Whatever may be their profession, it is only those who are world servers at heart that act from policy rather than principle in religious things. We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God. To men of principle, faith, and daring, the world is indebted for its great reforms. By such men the work of reform for this time must be carried forward.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 460.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In the call for revival and reformation, what must come first, revival or reformation, and why?
- 2 Why are revival and reformation things of the heart more than anything else? Why must they start individually, with each of us making a conscious choice to renew our walk with the Lord, to draw closer to Him, and to seek more earnestly than ever to do His will? What is the danger of waiting for the person next to you in the pew to do this, or waiting for the pastor to initiate this? Why must you, yourself, now, make the choice to surrender even more fully to the Lord so that He will work in you?
- 3 Nothing could kill the call to revival and reformation more than a harsh and judgmental spirit toward those who don't seem to live up to the standards that we think they should. How can we learn to avoid that dangerous pitfall while at the same time stand for the truths that have been entrusted to us?

Home at Last

Sade Belo was born to Seventh-day Adventist parents in a village in the Solomon Islands. He loved swimming and began competing in swim meets in school. He qualified to travel to other islands of the South Pacific to compete, but during this time he lost his way spiritually.

He completed high school and married a woman from a charismatic church. Sade attended church with her and was asked to be a pastor. He enjoyed his church work, but often thought of the faith he had left behind. The Sabbath still held a special place in his heart. He was glad when his eldest son joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

When a Seventh-day Adventist pastor held some meetings in his area, Sade attended. He listened to the messages on prophecy and earth's final days. Sade realized that even though he was a pastor, he was a prodigal son. During one meeting he asked Jesus to take his life completely and guide him back to the faith he had once known.

He told his wife of his conviction to return to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and invited her to study the Bible with him. He explained to his congregation that he had been convicted that he must follow the Bible and rejoin the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He and his wife were baptized in 2008.

Some members of the charismatic church asked to study the Bible in order to learn what had impressed their former pastor to become a Seventh-day Adventist. Sade focused on the beauty of God's gift of the Sabbath as he explained what had drawn him to the Seventh-day Adventist faith. "The Sabbath isn't so much about choosing to obey God's commandment to honor a particular day," he says. "It's more about accepting a gift of fellowship with God."

Sade has a new mission now, to reach people who are just discovering the beauty of the Sabbath and those who once knew it but have fallen away. "I'm grateful that God was patient with me and has led me back home to the [Seventh-day] Adventist faith. I thank God for those in my family, including my older son, who prayed for me for so many years. Your mission offerings help in many ways to share God's love with others. Many people in the Solomon Islands don't understand the faith I've learned to love. I want to share God's love and the beauty of His Sabbath with His children who live in the heart of the Solomon Islands."

Reformation: The Willingness to Grow *and* Change



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 John 2:1–9, Phil. 2:12–14, Matt. 26:31–35, John 20:24–29, Luke 15:11–21, John 5:1–14.*

Memory Text: “He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (*James 4:6, 7, NKJV*).

Before Pentecost, the disciples had significant spiritual needs. Their understanding of God’s plan was clouded. They failed to comprehend Jesus’ mission. After they were touched by divine grace, Christ’s love broke their hearts. They experienced revival and reformation.

A revival is simply a reawakening of deeper spiritual longings. It is an intensifying of our spiritual desires as our hearts are drawn closer to God through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Revival does not imply that we have had no previous experience with Jesus; rather, it calls us to an experience that is deeper and richer. Reformation calls us to grow and change. It appeals to us to move beyond the status quo, spiritually. It invites us to reexamine our lives in the light of biblical values and to allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to make any changes necessary in order to live in obedience to God’s will.

This week we will study the lives of New Testament believers who experienced growth and change in their own spiritual experience.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 7.*

The Grace to Grow

The lives of the disciples showed constant spiritual growth as they walked with Jesus. When Christ first called His disciples, their attitudes and actions certainly did not reflect the loveliness of His character.

Read Luke 9:51–56 and Matthew 20:20–28. How do these passages reveal James’ and John’s thinking?

James and John had some serious character flaws. They were not prepared to represent Christ’s love to the world. They were not qualified to proclaim a message of grace to others who had not changed their own lives.

In spite of their serious defects of character, James and John longed to reveal Jesus’ character more fully. They longed for transformation and reformation in their own attitudes. Growth and change are part of our Christian experience.

Read 1 John 2:1–9. What do these verses reveal about the great changes that came over John during the years following Jesus’ death? What do they teach us about what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

It’s so easy to get discouraged over our own spiritual growth, especially as we truly want to have revival and reformation in our lives. When discouraged, when feeling as if you are a spiritual failure and that you are going to be lost, what promises can you claim that will show you why you must never give up, and why, despite your faults, you can have assurance of salvation?

The Power to Choose

Change comes at the point of choice. Reformation occurs as we choose to yield to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and surrender our wills to God's will. God will never force or manipulate our wills. He respects our freedom. His Spirit impresses our minds, convicts our hearts, and prompts us to do right, but the choice to respond to the Holy Spirit's appeals is, always and only, our own.

Read **Philippians 2:12–14.** How does this passage show the necessity of cooperating with God in our growth in grace? What does Paul mean by “work out your own salvation”? What does he mean by “it is God who works in you”?

It is not possible for us to work out what God has not already worked in. As He works in us through His supernatural power, we are able to make the choices to “work out” through our lives the grace and strength that He has worked into our lives.

“As finite, sinful man works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, it is God who works in him, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But God will not work without the co-operation of man. He must exercise his powers to the very utmost; he must place himself as an apt, willing student in the school of Christ; and as he accepts the grace that is freely offered to him, the presence of Christ in the thought and in the heart will give him decision of purpose to lay aside every weight of sin, that the heart may be filled with all the fullness of God, and of his love.”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 134.

Reformation occurs as we cooperate with God by choosing to surrender to Him anything that the Holy Spirit points out as not being in harmony with His will. Unless we make those choices (sometimes very painful ones too), then positive, spiritual change will not occur.

God will not rip some selfish thought out of our minds. He will not mysteriously snatch away unhealthy habits or secret indulgences. He convicts us of sin. He convinces us of right, but we must choose. Once we do, He empowers our choices, but it is we ourselves who have to daily, even moment by moment, make those choices.

What does it mean to cooperate with God in the working out of our salvation? What doesn't it mean? When was the last time that you felt deeply convicted over something and, through God's grace, overcame, no matter how difficult the struggle?

Confidence and Doubt

What was wrong with Peter's attitude before the Cross? *Matt. 26:31–35.*

Peter was no match for the wiles of the evil one. He attempted to face Satan's temptations in His own strength. Filled with a sense of self-inflated confidence, he had little idea of the crisis that was coming. Alone in Pilate's courtyard and trembling at the sound of a servant girl's questioning, Peter denied His Lord (*Matt. 26:69–75*). Jesus had warned Peter earlier, " 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren' " (*Luke 22:31, 32, NKJV*). Jesus' statement provides a fascinating analysis of Peter's spiritual condition. Trusting in his own strength, Peter drifted from his Lord. This is why Jesus used the expression, "when you have returned to me." Peter needed a spiritual awakening. He needed a change of attitude. He needed reformation.

Read *John 20:24–29*. What does this passage reveal about Thomas? What lessons can we take from this for ourselves?

Both Peter and Thomas had one striking feature in common. They approached faith from a very human perspective. Peter placed confidence in what he could do; Thomas, in what he could see. They depended on their faulty human judgment. But Pentecost made a difference. A transformed Peter fearlessly preached, and three thousand were baptized on Pentecost (*Acts 2:41*). Peter realized that he certainly had no strength to heal a lame man, but Jesus had that power and a miracle took place (*Acts 3:2–9*). When the authorities attempted to silence his voice, Peter proclaimed, " 'For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard' " (*Acts 4:20, NKJV*). Peter was a changed man. Thomas was changed also. It is believed that he sailed to India to preach the gospel. Though not much more is said about him, we can be sure that he had become a new man after Pentecost, as well.

Who are you more like in temperament, Peter or Thomas? What can you learn from their experiences so that you don't make similar mistakes?

The Conviction to Return

Read Luke 15:11–21. What specific attitudes and actions led the prodigal to decide to return home? What principles of revival and reformation do we discover in this passage?

Revival can be defined in different ways. However it may be defined, one factor ought not be missed: revival is coming home. It is a heart hunger to know the Father's love in a deeper way. Reformation is the choice to respond to the Holy Spirit's leading for change and growth. It is the choice to give up whatever stands in the way of this closer relationship with God. The prodigal could not have both the pigpen and the Father's banquet table.

Simply put, the young man missed home too much to remain where he was. There was an aching in his heart to return. It is this heartache for the presence of God that leads us to long for revival and reformation. It is this heart cry for the warm embrace of the Father that motivates us to make necessary changes in our lives too.

As the young man prepared to return home, he planned his apology in advance. He must have rehearsed it again and again. Read his speech in Luke 15:18, 19 and his father's interruption in verses 20–24. What does this interruption reveal about the father's attitude toward his son and God's attitude toward us?

Although his son was far from the father's eyes, he was not far from his heart. The father's eyes searched the horizon for his son each day. The greatest motivation to make changes in our lives is the desire to no longer break the heart of the One who loves us so much. When the boy was wallowing around in the mud with the pigs, the father suffered more than his son. Revival occurs when God's love breaks our hearts. Reformation occurs when we choose to respond to a love that will not let us go. It takes place when we make the difficult choices to give up those attitudes, habits, thoughts, and feelings that separate us from Him.

How is the statement “ ‘ “my son was dead and is alive again” ’ ” an insightful definition of true revival? What is it like to be dead and then alive again?

The Faith to Act

Jesus revealed the Father's compassion and love through the miracles that He performed. He healed palsied bodies in order to reveal an even greater ability to heal palsied souls. He restored twisted arms and legs in order to demonstrate His greater desire to restore twisted hearts and minds. Jesus' miracles teach us something about how to exercise faith. They teach us valuable lessons about growth and change.

One of Jesus' most powerful illustrations of the power of faith is found in the miracle of the sufferer at the pool of Bethesda. The poor man lay by the pool for thirty-eight years. He was hopeless. His life seemed doomed to wretchedness, poverty, and suffering until Jesus came.

Read John 5:1–14. Why do you think Jesus asked the man, “Do you want to be made well?” (*John 5:6, NKJV*). Isn't it rather obvious that anyone suffering for so long would want to be healed? What was Jesus' motive here? What was the man's response? *John 5:7*.

Jesus did not listen to the man's excuse. He did not counter the excuse with an argument. He simply said, “Rise, take up your bed and walk” (*John 5:8, NKJV*). The essential question was, Would this poor sick man believe the word of Christ and act upon it in spite of what he was experiencing? As soon as the man resolved to act upon the word of Christ, He was made whole. Jesus' gift of healing was in His word. Christ's word carried with it the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish that which Christ declares.

“If you believe the promise,—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed,—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It is so if you believe it.

“Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say, ‘I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.’”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 51.

Why is it so important to believe God's promises for forgiveness, especially when we feel so condemned and guilty for our sins? Why must forgiveness precede reformation in our lives? Why is it important to believe that we can overcome through Christ's power in our lives, even now?

Further Study: “Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing’ (John 15:5). From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God. Unless the Holy Spirit works upon the human heart, at every step we shall stumble and fall. Man’s efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. . . . Never leave the impression on the mind that there is little or nothing to do on the part of man; but rather teach man to cooperate with God, that he may be successful in overcoming.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 381.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Growth comes in the Christian life as we claim God’s promises by faith, believing that He will do just what He says. What are the promises made to us here? *1 John 1:7–9, Phil. 4:13, James 1:5–8, Rom. 8:31–39*. How can you learn to believe them for yourself? More important, what choices can you make that will help these promises to become more real in your life?
- 2 Dwell more on this idea of working out your own salvation with “fear and trembling.” In class, talk about what that means, especially in terms of salvation by faith alone. What should we fear; what should cause us to tremble?
- 3 When was the last time, like Peter, that you made a promise to God that you, however sincere at the time you made it, utterly failed to follow through on it? What did you learn from that mistake? What principles can we find in the Bible that will enable us to have the victories that we are promised?

Samba Jean's Dilemma

Samba Jean loved going into the forest near his mountain home in central Madagascar to collect herbs for his magic. Although his family calls themselves Christians, his father sees no problem mixing Christian beliefs with witchcraft. He uses sticks and bones to determine who has cursed someone, and he uses magic and traditional herbs to break curses, bring good luck, and heal his clients.

When Samba Jean was 14, a friend invited him to attend evangelistic meetings. Samba Jean listened intently as the preacher read from God's Word. He heard things that were so different from what his father and his priest had taught him. *Who is right?* he wondered. As he learned more, he became convinced that the Seventh-day Adventist pastor who read from the Bible was teaching the truth. He realized that his father's powers were from the devil.

Samba Jean spent many restless nights trying to decide what he must do with the new truths he was discovering. *What will the devil do to me if I refuse to help my father?* he wondered.

Samba Jean's father tried to force the boy to take part in his witchcraft ceremonies, but Samba Jean refused. The boy wanted to commit his life completely to God in order to be free of the devil's power. But his parents insisted that he attend their church.

Samba Jean asked the pastor to baptize him but allow him to continue attending his parents' church to keep the peace. But the pastor explained that baptism means giving up all other religions and accepting only God's truth.

As Samba Jean continued attending Bible studies, he realized that he must leave his family's faith and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When he told his parents, his father refused to speak to him. Other family members called him a traitor.

Samba Jean took his stand for God and is trying to share his faith with his family. But his father insists that his witchcraft has all the power he needs. To keep the Sabbath holy, Samba Jean stays at the church all day on Sabbath so he won't be told to work. He tells those who visit his father that he no longer believes in witchcraft, that God is more powerful than his father's witchcraft. Some of his father's clients are studying the Bible with him now.

"I pray that soon my parents will give up their false beliefs and surrender to God," Samba Jean says.

Our mission offerings help us to reach people such as Samba Jean around the world. Thank you for giving so that others can meet the Savior.

SAMBA JEAN lives in the hills near Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Reformation: Thinking New Thoughts



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Col. 3:1, 2; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; 10:3–5; Rom. 12:2, 3; John 10:10; Matt. 5:13–15.*

Memory Text: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (*Colossians 3:1, 2, NKJV*).

Isaac Watts is credited with more than seven hundred fifty hymns, many of which are sung by thousands of Christians today. On one occasion, a parade was held in London in Watts' honor. People thronged the streets to get a glimpse of this famous man. As his carriage passed under a balcony filled with spectators, one lady was astonished that this short, elderly man now hunched over in old age had written such mighty hymns. She shrieked, “What, you are Isaac Watts?” Watts motioned for the carriage to stop. He stretched himself up to his full frame and exclaimed, “Madame, could I in fancy grasp the poles or hold creation in my span, I would still be measured by my mind, for the mind is the measure of a man.”

Isaac Watts was right. The mind is the measure of a man, and reformation is about our minds. If we have a reformation in our thinking, we will have a reformation in our actions. Reformation occurs as the Holy Spirit brings our thoughts into harmony with Christ's thoughts. When that happens, our actions will follow.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 14.*

The Mind Matters

Our thoughts will ultimately dictate our behavior. The way that we think influences the way that we act. The converse is also true. Repeated actions influence our thoughts. The Christian is a “new creation.” Old thinking patterns have been replaced by new ones (2 Cor. 5:17).

When a sailboat embarks on its seaward journey, the sails are set. The set sails give the boat its direction. Throughout the journey, the sails need to be reset in order to maintain the correct course. If the sails are neglected, the boat will veer off course very quickly. Like those sails, our thoughts give direction to our spiritual lives. When the apostle Paul admonishes Christians to “set your mind on things above” (Col. 3:2, *NKJV*), he is urging us to focus our thoughts heavenward. Our minds are shaped by what we put into them. Our thoughts are molded by what we spend our time dwelling upon.

What miracle of grace takes place in our own lives as we behold God’s glory in His Word? 2 Cor. 3:17, 18.

As we behold Jesus in His Word, we are changed. New thoughts replace old ones. By beholding Him, we become more like Him. “It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 555.

Reformation is all about looking to Jesus. It is about Jesus filling our minds. It is about Jesus shaping our thoughts. It is about Jesus guiding our actions. When we behold Jesus, He will lead us to higher standards than a mere rigidity to rules. We cannot really look to Jesus and remain the same. When we think His thoughts, we have only one desire, and that is to do His will.

What counsel would you give to a person struggling to make Jesus a priority in his or her thinking process? What does the Bible mean when it talks about “beholding” or “looking to Jesus”?

The Mind's Filters

There are some parents who are so concerned about their children's Internet viewing habits that they have installed filters to block out certain sites. Others have done something similar with television. The purpose of these electronic filters is to let some things in while keeping others out. God has provided a "spiritual filter" for our minds. It has been carefully crafted to allow only those things into our minds that will build our spiritual experience with Jesus.

What practical instruction does Paul give to his fellow Christians as a filter designed to guard their minds from the intoxicating influences of evil? How does this counsel apply today to our television, Internet, and movie-viewing habits? *Phil. 4:7, 8; Rom. 12:2.*

Here is one simple reality. It is not possible to develop deeply spiritual thoughts if we feed our minds with violence, immorality, greed, and materialism. Our senses are the gateway to our minds. If our minds are bombarded with the stimulating scenes of Hollywood's entertainment, they will be molded by these sensual experiences rather than by the principles of God's Word. Multiple millions of dollars are spent by media producers to manipulate our emotions, condition our thinking, and shape our values. We can be assured that the basic question that these entertainment gurus ask is not, "How can these productions prepare people for the soon return of Jesus?" The bottom line that motivates them the most is money. Seventh-day Adventist Christians preparing for the second coming of Christ should reflect carefully before sacrificing their souls on the altar of the world's entertainment.

There is a great cathedral with three large wooden entrance doors in Milan, Italy. Etched above the left-hand door are these words: "All that pleases is for a moment." Over the right-hand door, these words stand out in bold relief: "All that troubles is but for a moment." And emblazoned in bold letters over the center door is this poignant phrase: "That alone endures which is eternal." Ask yourself: How often do you think about what's eternal? How do your choices reflect those thoughts?

The Mind's Safeguard

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 4:7, NIV*). This is a wonderful promise but one that we have to actively seek in order to make it real in our lives.

There are many ways in which we can let down our guard. We can let in the cesspool of this world's entertainment. Our minds might be overcome by anger, bitterness, and resentment. They may be submerged in an ocean of intoxicating pleasure or addictive habits. The good news is that Jesus has promised to safeguard our minds—if we let Him.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. When Paul says that the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal” (*NKJV*) but spiritual, what does he mean? What are carnal weapons? What are spiritual weapons? The apostle also talks about “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (*2 Cor. 10:5, NKJV*). What does he mean, and how can it be accomplished?

Billy Graham is quoted as saying, “You cannot stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from nesting in your hair.” In other words, thoughts will rush into our minds. There are varying sights, sounds, and smells that stimulate certain thoughts. Different experiences evoke different emotions. We cannot always choose the thoughts that race through our minds. We can choose whether we will dwell upon them and allow them to dominate our thinking. To bring each thought into obedience to Christ is to surrender our minds to Jesus. Carnal thoughts are not banished by merely wishing them away. They are driven out as the mind is filled with something else. The mind focused on the positive principles of God's Word is the mind “safeguarded” and “kept” by God's grace from the wiles of the evil one.

When Paul says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 2:5, NKJV*), what specifically does he mean? How is it possible for us to have the mind of Christ? Where does the word *let*, or *allow*, in the text place responsibility for change?

Mind/Body Relationships

The ancient Greeks taught a form of dualism; that is, they believed that there was a great distinction between our bodies and our souls. In contrast, Scripture teaches that human beings are an integrated unit of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Whatever affects one part of the human frame affects all parts. The disciples taught that physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health were interconnected and could not be separated.

How is this idea reflected in 1 Thessalonians 5:23?

For the New Testament believers, physical, mental, and emotional well-being are indissolubly linked to spiritual well-being. The apostle Paul appealed to believers to “glorify God in their bodies.” He believed that all humanity was bought with a price and we are not our own (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20*). Caring for our bodies by adopting a more healthful lifestyle does much more than add a few more years to our lives; done with the right motives, it can be an act of worship itself.

How do Romans 12:2, 3; John 10:10; and 1 Corinthians 10:31 show the intimate relationship between our physical and spiritual health?

The Holy Spirit does not limit Himself to one aspect of our lives when He convicts us of our need for growth. Reformation is not one-dimensional. The Spirit longs to bring our lives into total conformity to the will of Christ in every area. If there are physical lifestyle practices not in harmony with His will, God invites us to surrender them for His glory. Satan wants to control our minds through our bodies; Jesus longs to control our bodies through our minds. Our bodies are a temple, not a funhouse. By following heaven’s principles, we can live more joy-filled, productive, abundant, healthy lives.

What are the personal experiences that have shown you just how inseparable the link is between our physical and spiritual natures? What choices can you make to help to bring them into more beneficial harmony?

Images of Influence

There are numerous images that Jesus uses to describe Himself and His church. One is “light.” He is “the light of the world” (*John 8:12*). He is also the “true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (*John 1:9, NKJV*). He encourages us to “walk while you have the light” and “believe in the light” (*John 12:35, 36, NKJV*).

Compare Matthew 5:13–15 with Philippians 2:14–16. What is our Lord’s goal for His people in this world? What does that mean in practical terms? How can we be what we are called to be?

The goal of all revival and reformation is to allow the light of Christ’s love, grace, and truth to shine through our lives. Light shines in contrast to darkness. Jesus has called His people to live a lifestyle distinctly different from that which is lived in the world in order to demonstrate the superiority of His way of life. He calls us to be compassionate, caring, and concerned in a world of selfishness, greed, and egotism. He calls us to uphold high standards in entertainment in a society intoxicated with pleasure (*Col. 3:1, 2*). He calls us to healthful living at a time when millions are dying too young from self-inflicted degenerative diseases (*John 10:10*). In the midst of an immodest, sex-centered, jaded generation, Jesus calls us to something different. He calls us to modesty, propriety, and moral purity (*1 Pet. 3:3, 4*).

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah gave a clarion call to Israel for reformation about seven hundred years before Christ. His words speak with relevance to a church waiting for the return of our Lord. “ ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’ ” (*Isa. 55:8, 9, NKJV*). God’s ideal for His church and for us as individuals is higher than what we can imagine. All of heaven longs to reveal His character of love through His people.

Look at the standards that mark your lifestyle. In what ways (if any) do they reveal that you are a follower of Jesus and that your life is set on something other than this fading world?

Further Study: “Many profess to be on the Lord’s side, but they are not; the weight of all their actions is on Satan’s side. By what means shall we determine whose side we are on? Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Upon whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are on the Lord’s side, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. We have no friendship with the world; we have consecrated all that we have and are to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 262.

“It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Savior’s love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 419.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What terms does Paul use to describe the high calling of God’s people? *2 Cor. 5:18–20; 6:17, 18*. What do these images mean in practical terms? How do our lives show that Paul is talking about us?
- ❷ If we are honest, we can read and claim all the Bible promises we want, but unless we make a conscious choice at the moment of temptation to set our minds on the things that we should, we will succumb to temptation. What principles or practices have you found helpful in controlling your thoughts when tempted?
- ❸ What would you respond to someone who says that, “Yes, my thoughts are not always what they should be, but my actions and lifestyle are above reproach”?
- ❹ Along with the wonderful spiritual and doctrinal truths that we have been given as Seventh-day Adventists, we have the health message, as well. How can we learn to better integrate these principles into our lives and into our outreach and witness? What role should the health message have in revival and reformation?

Such a Little Thing

Twelve-year-old Yvette walked along the dusty path, carefully balancing the plastic water jug on her head. She didn't want to spill even a drop of water. She passed children walking toward a nearby school. They were dressed in dark skirts or trousers and white shirts. Yvette's steps slowed as she thought about the children learning to read and write and do math. Sometimes she could hear them reciting their lessons aloud in the little school. She sighed heavily and walked faster. Her mother was waiting at home. There were meals to prepare, a garden to water, and clothes to wash.

Jean Claude walked along the narrow path gently prodding the family's cow with a large twig. He tapped her away from a neighbor's property as she searched for fresh grass to eat. His stick kept her safely away from the nearby road where cars and trucks whizzed past.

Jean Claude paused and looked up at the green patchwork gardens on the hills that surrounded his home. The honk of a large truck stirred the boy from his thoughts, and he hurried to catch up with the cow.

The happy voices of children floated on the warm afternoon breeze. Jean Claude used his branch to nudge the cow off the pathway so the children could pass without getting dirty. He watched them pass and wondered if he would ever go to school. His father explained that they couldn't afford to buy him a school uniform or school supplies. But in his heart Jean Claude continued to hope that someday he could join the children in the school.

Schools in Rwanda no longer charge tuition, but many children, such as Yvette and Jean Claude, still can't study because they don't have school uniforms or supplies. Without an education, these children will continue living in the cycle of poverty into which they were born.

A school uniform is such a little thing. But it makes a big difference to a child who can't go to school without one. Recently Seventh-day Adventist children around the world helped to provide school uniforms through the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Because of their gifts, children such as Jean Claude and Yvette can now attend a Seventh-day Adventist school.

Our mission offerings and our Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings help to make a world of difference to people we may never meet by providing schools, clinics, evangelistic opportunities—and even school uniforms—to reach them for Christ. Thank you for faithful support of mission through your offerings.

Reformation: Healing Broken Relationships



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Tim. 4:11, Philem. 1–25, 2 Cor. 10:12–15, Rom. 5:8–11, Matt. 18:15–17.*

Memory Text: “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (*Romans 5:10, NKJV*).

Even after Pentecost, the relationship between believers was at times strained. The New Testament records repeated examples of the way that church leaders and individual members dealt with such challenges. These principles are extremely valuable for the church today. They reveal the positive results that can come when we use biblical principles to deal with conflicts.

In this week's lesson we will focus on restored relationships. Great spiritual revivals in the past fostered healed relationships. Movements of the Holy Spirit involve bringing people closer to God and to one another. They include breaking down the barriers in our relationship with God and breaking down barriers in our relationships with one another. In short, the greatest demonstration of the power of the gospel is not necessarily what the church says but how the church lives.

“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*John 13:35, NKJV*). Without this love, all our talk about revival and reformation will come to naught.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 21.*

From Fracture to Friendship

Paul and Barnabas worked together in witnessing for Jesus. But they had some strife between them (*Acts 15:36–39*). Paul could not trust one as fearful as John Mark. The potential dangers of preaching the gospel had caused John Mark at one point to desert Paul and Barnabas and return home.

“This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 170.

Although God used all these men, the issues between them needed resolution. The apostle, who preached grace, needed to extend grace to a young preacher who had disappointed him. The apostle of forgiveness needed to forgive. John Mark grew in the affirming mentorship of Barnabas and, eventually, Paul’s heart was apparently touched by the changes.

How do Paul’s letters from prison to Timothy and the church at Colossae reveal his renewed relationship with John Mark and a new confidence in this young preacher? *Col. 4:10, 11; 2 Tim. 4:11.*

Although details of Paul’s reconciliation with John Mark may be sketchy, the biblical record is clear. John Mark became one of the apostle’s trusted companions. Paul highly recommended John Mark as a “fellow worker” to the church at Colossae. At the end of Paul’s life, he strongly encouraged Timothy to bring John Mark with him to Rome because he was “useful to me for ministry” (*NKJV*). Paul’s ministry was enriched by the young preacher, whom he had obviously forgiven. The barrier between them was broken, and they were able to work together in the cause of the gospel.

How can we learn to forgive those who have hurt or disappointed us? At the same time, why does forgiveness not always include a complete restoration of a previous relationship? Why does it not always need to?

From Slave to Son

While he was imprisoned in Rome, Paul met a runaway slave named Onesimus who had fled from Colossae to Rome. Paul personally knew Onesimus' master. The Epistle of Philemon is Paul's personal appeal to his friend regarding a restored relationship with the runaway slave.

Relationships mattered to Paul. The apostle knew that fractured relationships are detrimental to spiritual growth. Philemon was a church leader in Colossae. If he harbored bitterness toward Onesimus, it would color his Christian witness.

Read Philemon 1–25. What important principles about restored relationships can we find here? Remember, the key word is principles.

At first glance it is somewhat surprising that Paul did not speak more forcefully against the evils of slavery. But Paul's strategy was far more effective. The gospel, ideally, breaks down all class distinctions (*Gal. 3:28*). The apostle sent Onesimus back to Philemon, not as a slave but as his son in Jesus and Philemon's "beloved brother" in the Lord (*Philem. 16*).

Paul knew that runaway slaves had little future. They could be apprehended at anytime. They were doomed to a life of destitution and poverty. But now, as Philemon's brother in Christ and willing worker, Onesimus could have a wonderful future. His food, lodging, and job could be made secure under Philemon. The restoration of a broken relationship could make a dramatic difference in his life. He became a "faithful and beloved brother" and colaborer in the gospel with Paul (*Col. 4:9*).

Drawing from the principles of the gospel as seen here, what can you take away that can help you to deal with whatever stresses and strains, even fractures, you have in relationships with others?

From Comparison to Complement

As we saw in an earlier lesson, the church at Corinth had deep problems. What principles does Paul outline in 1 Corinthians 3:5–11, 12:1–11, and 2 Corinthians 10:12–15 for healing and restoration, all of which are so vital to revival and reformation?

In these passages, the apostle outlines critical principles of church unity. He points out that Jesus uses different workers to accomplish different ministries in His church, even though each one is laboring together for the building up of God's kingdom (*1 Cor. 3:9*).

God calls us to cooperation, not competition. Each believer is gifted by God to cooperate in ministering to the body of Christ and serving the community (*1 Cor. 12:11*). There are no greater or lesser gifts. All are necessary in Christ's church (*1 Cor. 12:18–23*). Our God-given gifts are not for selfish display. They are given by the Holy Spirit for service.

All comparisons with others are unwise, because they will make us feel either discouraged or arrogant. If we think that others are far "superior" to us, we will feel despondent when we compare ourselves to them. If we think our labors for Christ are more effective than the work of others, we will feel proud. Both of these attitudes cripple our effectiveness for Christ. As we labor within the sphere of influence that Christ has given us, we will find joy and contentment in our witness for Christ. Our labors will complement the efforts of other members, and the church of Christ will make giant strides for the kingdom.

Can you think of someone whose gifts in ministry have made you jealous? (Not too hard, is it?) At the same time, how often have you felt proud of your gifts in contrast to those of others? The point is, Paul's concerns are an ever-present reality in fallen beings. Regardless of the side on which we fall, how can we learn the unselfish attitudes that are necessary in order to avoid the pitfalls here?

From Friction to Forgiveness

What is forgiveness? Does forgiveness justify the behavior of someone who has horribly wronged us? Is my forgiveness dependent on the offender's repentance? What if the one with whom I am upset does not deserve my forgiveness?

How do the following passages help us to understand the biblical nature of forgiveness? *Rom. 5:8–11; Luke 23:31–34; 2 Cor. 5:20, 21; Eph. 4:26–30.*

Christ took the initiative in reconciling us to Himself. It is the “goodness of God [that] leads you to repentance” (*Rom. 2:4, NKJV*). In Christ, we were reconciled to God while we were yet sinners. Our repentance and confession do not create reconciliation. Christ's death on the cross did; our part is to accept what was done for us.

It is true that we cannot receive the blessings of forgiveness until we confess our sins. This does not mean that our confession creates forgiveness in God's heart. Forgiveness was in His heart all the time. Confession, instead, enables us to receive it (*1 John 1:9*). Confession is vitally important, not because it changes God's attitude toward us but because it changes our attitude toward Him. When we yield to the Holy Spirit's convicting power to repent and confess our sin, we are changed.

Forgiveness is also so crucial for our own spiritual well-being. A failure to forgive someone who has wronged us, even if he or she does not deserve forgiveness, can hurt us more than it hurts him or her. If an individual has wronged you and the pain festers inside because you fail to forgive, you are allowing that person to hurt you even more.

Forgiveness is releasing another from our condemnation because Christ has released us from His condemnation. It does not justify another's behavior toward us. We can be reconciled to someone who has wronged us because Christ reconciled us to Himself when we wronged Him. We can forgive because we are forgiven. We can love because we are loved. Forgiveness is a choice. We can choose to forgive in spite of the other person's actions or attitudes. This is the true spirit of Jesus.

How can focusing on the forgiveness we have in Christ help us to learn to forgive others?

From Rancor to Restoration

Read Matthew 18:15–17. What three steps does Jesus give us to help us to resolve conflicts when we are wronged by another church member? How are we to apply these words in our contemporary situations?

Jesus' desire in giving the counsel of Matthew 18 is to keep conflict in as small a group as possible. His intent is that the two people involved solve the problem themselves. This is why Jesus declares, " 'If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone' " (*Matt. 18:15, NKJV*). As the number of people involved in a conflict between two individuals increases, the more contention is created. People take sides, and the battle lines are drawn. But when Christians attempt to settle their differences privately, and in the spirit of Christian love and mutual understanding, a climate of reconciliation is created. The atmosphere is right for the Holy Spirit to work with them as they strive to resolve their differences.

There are times when personal appeals for conflict resolution are ineffective. In these instances, Jesus invites us to take one or two others with us. This second step in the reconciliation process must always follow the first step. The purpose is to bring people together, not drive them farther apart. The one or two who join the offended party are not coming to prove his or her point or to join in blaming the other individual. They come in Christian love and compassion as counselors and prayer partners in order to participate in the process of bringing two estranged people together.

There are occasions when all attempts to solve the problem do not work. In this case, Jesus instructs us to bring the issue before the church. He is certainly not talking about interrupting the Sabbath morning worship service with an issue of personal conflict. The appropriate place to bring the issue, if the first two steps have not helped to reconcile the two parties, is the church board. Again, Christ's purpose is reconciliation. It is not to blame one party and exonerate the other.

"Do not suffer resentment to ripen into malice. Do not allow the wound to fester and break out in poisoned words, which taint the minds of those who hear. Do not allow bitter thoughts to continue to fill your mind and his. Go to your brother, and in humility and sincerity talk with him about the matter."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 499.

Further Study: “When the laborers have an abiding Christ in their own souls, when all selfishness is dead, when there is no rivalry, no strife for the supremacy, when oneness exists, when they sanctify themselves, so that love for one another is seen and felt, then the showers of the grace of the Holy Spirit will just as surely come upon them as that God’s promise will never fail in one jot or tittle.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 175.

“If we stand in the great day of the Lord with Christ as our refuge, our high tower, we must put away all envy, all strife for the supremacy. We must utterly destroy the roots of these unholy things, that they may not again spring up into life. We must place ourselves wholly on the side of the Lord.”—Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 190.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Read Colossians 3:12–17 in class. Discuss the Christian qualities that the apostle Paul encourages the church at Colossae to seek. Why are these qualities the basis for all conflict resolution? How do they guide us in carrying out the principles that Jesus gives us in Matthew 18:15–18?
- ❷ Look again at Colossians 3:12–17 and the teachings found in these verses. Why are these things so utterly essential for the revival and reformation that we so desperately need in the church?
- ❸ If we look at our church, that is, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a whole, what is the greatest thing holding us back from the kind of revival and reformation that will be needed in order to reach the world? Is it our teachings and doctrines? Of course not. These are the very things that God has given us to proclaim to the world. The problem lies solely in us, in our interpersonal relationships, our petty jealousies, our bickering, our selfishness, our desire for supremacy, and a whole host of other things. Why must you, yes, you, not the person next to you in the pew, not the pastor—but you, yourself—plead for the power of the Holy Spirit to bring the changes that have to occur in you before we will see revival and reformation in the whole church?

The Power of Faith

I come from an influential family in central India and grew up worshipping stone gods. My parents wanted the best education for me, so they enrolled me in a Seventh-day Adventist secondary school. We didn't know what "Adventist" meant then.

I liked the school and made friends quickly. One friend, Amith, invited me to his home on Saturday. I was surprised that he and his family weren't watching television but instead were talking about something called the "Sabbath." When I asked Amith what the Sabbath was, he invited me to church the next Saturday. I was curious, so I went.

Inside the church I recognized some people I knew from school. To my surprise, the sermon was on the Sabbath. The pastor read Bible texts and explained why the Sabbath was so special. I didn't know Christ, but by the time we left church I understood the Sabbath.

I attended church with Amith every week. I loved the worship service, and the hymns brought me peace. The Bible lessons were simple but profound. Christianity was so different from my family's religion.

I often joined a classmate for her family's worship. They explained difficult Bible texts, and I began reading the Bible for myself. The Creation story was so different from what I had been taught. I knew I had to follow God, not my family's gods.

I told my parents that I had decided to follow Jesus and would no longer worship the gods I had once worshiped. But they didn't give up. One day they asked me to go with them on a religious pilgrimage—to carry their luggage, they said. But when I realized that they wanted me to take part in the temple rituals, I knew I couldn't do it. I didn't want to argue with them, so I left the train at the next station and returned home.

When my parents returned, they asked me why I had left them. I explained that God forbids worship of other gods. We sat for five hours as I explained what I could about God, Creation, Jesus' life and death, and His second coming. Finally my parents nodded. They didn't understand my new faith, but they let me follow my convictions.

I thank God for leading me to the Seventh-day Adventist high school. It changed my life. I now teach young people, knowing that they can share their faith with their families. It's my way of giving back.

Our mission offerings help to build strong Seventh-day Adventist schools around the world where thousands of young people find Christ every year. Thank you for supporting missions.

The Promised Revival: God’s Mission Completed



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Matt. 28:18–20; James 5:7, 8; Zech. 10:1; Matt. 3:11; Rev. 18:1; 19:11–16.*

Memory Text: “Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (*James 5:7, 8, NKJV*).

The challenge of preaching the gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages to the entire world may seem impossible. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing rapidly, it is not keeping up with the population. There are multiple areas of the world where the name “Seventh-day Adventist” (much less our message) is not known.

The reality of this harsh fact leads to serious questions. Is it possible for the gospel to be preached to the entire world in this generation? Will there be some unusual breakthrough that will dramatically speed up the proclamation of the three angels’ messages? There is always one thing to keep in mind when we discuss this topic: the mission is God’s, and He will accomplish it. At the same time, however, we must remember that we have been called to a crucial role in that final work, as well.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 28.*

The Promised Power

Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20 is accompanied by His great promise. What is that promise, what does it mean in a practical sense, and how can we draw comfort from it? Why is that promise so important to us?

The disciples preached not in their strength but in Christ's. According to Paul, in fact, the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven in just a few short years (*Col. 1:23*). Although some might question the precise meaning of Paul's words, it is undeniable that the gospel made a powerful impact on first-century society. It changed the world. Christ promised His disciples that He would " 'send the Promise of My Father' " and they would receive " 'power from on high' " (*Luke 24:49, NKJV*). The Savior added, " 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' " (*Acts 1:8, NKJV*).

No matter how challenging the task, the promises of God are sure. Jesus' statement that " 'this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come' " (*Matt. 24:14, NKJV*) is a promise. The proclamation of the gospel to the entire world may seem impossible, but God's power will overcome every obstacle. Every person on planet Earth will have a reasonable opportunity to hear and understand God's message of love and truth before the return of our Lord (*see Rev. 18:1*).

"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere." —Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 277.

God will finish His work. He will pour out His Spirit in mighty power and accomplish what seems impossible according to all human planning.

What are ways that you can, in your immediate sphere, be a more effective witness for the Lord? That is, what can you do to help to see the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14?

The Early and Latter Rain

Both the Old and New Testaments use the symbolism of water to represent the Holy Spirit. The prophet Isaiah quotes the words of our Lord, “ ‘I will pour water on him who is thirsty. . . . I will pour My Spirit on your descendants’ ” (*Isa. 44:3, NKJV*). Isaiah uses a common Hebrew literary device called parallelism. The second phrase in the passage explains the first. The prophet Joel also discusses the symbolism of water. God promises to water Israel’s fields, then declares, “ ‘And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh’ ” (*Joel 2:28, NKJV*). Jesus uses the symbolism of water to represent the Holy Spirit (*John 7:37–39*).

What are the two symbols that each of the following texts use regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? *Joel 2:21–24; 28–32; James 5:7, 8*. **How** are we to understand what they mean?

In Bible times, sowing and plowing took place from the middle of October, shortly after the falling of the early rains. These early rains brought the seed to germination and nurtured its early growth. The latter rain came in the late spring to bring the ripening fruit to harvest. The barley harvest and other grain harvests were spring events, followed by the fruit harvest in the summer and fall.

God uses the symbolism of the early and latter rain in two ways. The early rain of the Spirit fell upon the disciples at Pentecost in order to launch the Christian mission. The latter rain will be poured out on God’s church at the end of time in order to complete His mission on earth. The term *early rain* also refers to the daily work of God’s Spirit convicting, instructing, guiding, and empowering each believer. The *latter rain* is a term used to describe a special endowment of God’s Holy Spirit on Christ’s church just before the coming of Jesus.

“Under the figure of the early and the latter rain, that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest, the Hebrew prophets foretold the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God’s church. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. . . .

“But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ ”
—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 54, 55.

Prerequisites for the Latter Rain

What do the following texts tell us about the preparation needed in order to receive the Holy Spirit's power in its fullness? *Acts 1:14, Zech. 10:1, Acts 3:18–20, 4:31, Ps. 119:25, John 6:63.*

The Scriptures invite us to ask God for the Holy Spirit (*Luke 11:13*). The disciples believed Christ's promise, waited in unity, and prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:8, 14*). The reason that God asks us to pray for the Holy Spirit is not that He is unwilling to give us the Spirit but that we are not prepared to receive it. As we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God works on our hearts to lead us to deeper repentance. Praying in small groups with other church members draws us into a closer bond of unity and fellowship. Both prayer and Bible study prepare our minds to be sensitive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

What is the natural result of spiritual renewal in our lives? Where does all spiritual revival and reformation lead? *Ps. 51:10–13; Acts 4:13, 20; 5:33; 8:4.*

All spiritual revival and genuine reformation lead to a passionate desire to witness. When our hearts are filled with a deep appreciation for everything that Jesus has done for us, then, like Peter and John, “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (*Acts 4:20, NKJV*). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early rain on the day of Pentecost empowered the disciples to effectively witness. Their witness was so powerful that a rebellious mob in Thessalonica screamed in fear that “these who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (*Acts 17:6, NKJV*).

Just as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost enabled the disciples to be a formidable witness to their generation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power will empower God's church to reach the world in the final generation. It will take nothing less than latter-rain power to complete God's mission on earth, and God offers nothing less. Heaven's most precious gift is offered in infinite supply in order to accomplish the most urgent and important task ever entrusted to His church.

The early disciples turned the world “upside down” with their preaching and witness. Why isn't that said of us?

The Baptism of Fire

Both the Old and New Testaments use a variety of symbols, such as water, wind, and oil, to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist links another image, that of fire, to the work of the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16*).

There are many who have misunderstood John's statement. The passage does not say, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit or with fire" (*NKJV*). It says, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The second expression, "and with fire," explains the first expression, "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of fire. The word *baptism* in the New Testament is used 80 times and refers to total immersion.

Read the following passages and describe what the symbolism of fire represents in the Bible. *Exod. 3:2-4; 24:17; 1 Kings 18:24; Mal. 3:2, 3; Acts 2:1-4; Heb. 12:29.*

The symbolism of fire is a symbol of the glory, presence, and power of God manifest in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. To be baptized with fire is to be immersed in the glory of God's presence through the Holy Spirit in order to witness in His power. Moses met God at the burning bush and then left the glory of His presence in order to witness to Pharaoh. Elijah witnessed to Israel in the glory of God's fiery presence on Mount Carmel. When tongues of fire fell on Pentecost, the disciples witnessed in languages that they had never before known. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is immersion in the presence and power of God in order that we can effectively witness of His glory. Once again, in the last days of earth's history, God's people will be immersed in His presence, filled with His power, and sent out to witness of His glory to the world.

The earth will be filled with the glory of God. "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (*Hab. 2:14, NKJV*). In prophetic vision, John saw an angel messenger descend from heaven and "the earth was illuminated with his glory" (*Rev. 18:1, NKJV*).

God's glory, His loving character, will be revealed through the power of the Holy Spirit to a waiting world and a watching universe. Every person on planet Earth will have the opportunity to both hear and understand God's last-day message.

God's glory, His loving character, will be revealed to the world. How can you, right now, in your own sphere, reveal that glory in your life? What will that require on your part?

The Great Controversy Ended

The entire book of Revelation can be summarized in just a few words: *Jesus wins, Satan loses.*

Read Revelation 12:17; 17:13, 14; 19:11–16. What is the central message of these passages?

Here is good news: the same Jesus who defeated Satan on the cross will come again and triumph over the powers of hell and put a full end to evil (*Rev. 19:19–21; Ezek. 28:18, 19*). Evil will not have the last word. Poverty and pestilence will not have the last word. Sickness and suffering will not have the last word. Chaos and crime will not have the last word. Disease and death will not have the last word.

Instead, God will.

Until then, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing everything possible to reach every person. God's heart aches over a lost world. Soon His people will reveal to the world, in both the witness of their words and their works, Jesus' amazing grace and truth.

Of course, Satan will do everything in His power to oppose this witness. The final crisis will break upon this world. Jesus will pour out His Spirit in latter-rain power, and the work of God on earth will be finished.

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

The work of God on earth will be finished. Jesus will come. All heaven and earth will rejoice. There is no more important priority in our lives than experiencing a revival of God's grace in our hearts daily and inviting His Holy Spirit to make us into His image (*1 John 3:1–3*).

Our world is falling apart. Who can't see that? Is there anything that matters more than opening our hearts to Jesus and pleading for the revival and reformation so needed, not just by each one of us individually but by our church as a whole? What would happen if our own hearts were totally surrendered to Him and we were completely devoted to spreading this message to the world?

Further Study: “The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ In the statement above, Ellen G. White wrote: “The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God.” In class, discuss what you think that means. What does it not mean? After all, our message is very logical, very reasonable, and it comes with some very powerful arguments in its favor. How are we to understand, then, what she is telling us?
- ❷ What spiritual application do the promises God gave to His people in the Old Testament have for His church today? *Deut. 11:13–18, Hos. 6:1–3, 10:12.*
- ❸ Dr. Stephen Hawking, one of the world’s greatest scientists, called the concept of an afterlife a “fairy story for people afraid of the dark.” Why does a statement like that show just how crucial and hopeful our message is for a world that knows neither God nor His love?
- ❹ Though we don’t know when Jesus is going to come back, we do know that we want Him to and that we want this sin-sick world to end and a new sinless world to begin. That’s why we believe revival and reformation are so crucial to us as a people, and it’s why our leaders are calling us to it. In the end, though, it will not come by anything other than the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and that will not happen until we, as individuals, make a conscious choice to surrender ourselves with all our hearts and souls and minds to the Lord. How can we, without judging others, without making comparisons among ourselves, do our part to encourage one another to be prepared for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

I Want to Serve!

Marquan loves Jesus and wants everyone to know about Him. When he was five, he wanted to learn to read so he could read the Bible for himself. One day he asked his pastor for a job at church. The pastor invited him to tell the children's story. Marquan did a good job and was invited to speak more often. Then one day the pastor asked him to preach.

"Me? I'm only eight years old," Marquan said, surprised.

"It doesn't matter how old you are." The pastor smiled. "God can use anyone who is willing."

I'm just a kid, Marquan thought. *What would I preach about? Would people even listen to a child?* Marquan promised to pray about it.

Marquan's grandmother told him that the prophet Jeremiah had thought he was too young to preach, too, but God had told him that he must share the love of God with everyone God sent him to. Marquan decided that God was asking him to preach. His father helped him to write his first sermon, and then Marquan memorized it.

Marquan felt a little nervous on the day he was to preach. But he remembered God's words to the prophet Isaiah, "I have put my words in your mouth" (*Isaiah 51:16, NIV*). Marquan knew that God was with him, and his nervousness went away.

People at other churches in his town heard about the boy's sermon, and they invited him to speak at their churches. Marquan accepted the invitations, for he had promised God that he would do whatever God asked him to do. He prayed that his sermons would be a blessing to everyone who heard them.

When Marquan was 12, his pastor offered him a new challenge. "The church is planning a three-week Revelation Seminar, and we would like you to lead it," the pastor said. Preparing and preaching 21 sermons was a huge commitment for a young boy. But Marquan prayed about it and felt sure that God wanted him to do it.

The church held the meetings in a rented hall. On opening night some 250 people came. Many returned each night to hear a young boy preach God's Word.

"I've learned that if we're willing, God can use anyone to tell others about Jesus," Marquan said. "It doesn't matter how old you are; Jesus just wants you to be willing to tell others about Him."

God has blessed us with truths that millions don't know. It's our duty to share these truths. We can tell others, we can pray for them, and we can give mission offerings so that those whom we may never meet will have a chance to hear that Jesus loves us.

MARQUAN BUCHANAN *shares his faith in his hometown in Arkansas, United States.*

Ellen G. White recommended focusing our highest attention on the sanctuary because “the sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work in behalf of men.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 488, 489.

The sanctuary discloses the heart of God. The greatest revelation of the love and character of God was at the cross. To help us to understand better what this great sacrifice meant, God devised the earthly sanctuary, a pictorial representation of the plan of salvation. This earthly sanctuary, however, only modeled the heavenly one, which is the true center of God’s presence and of His activity in the universe. The sanctuary formed the template to help us to understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest.

Our study of *The Sanctuary*, the fourth quarter 2013 guide by Martin Pröbstle, will explore God’s sanctuary, both His earthly model and the heavenly original, and bring us close to the presence of God.

Lesson 1—The Heavenly Sanctuary

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **God’s Residence** (*Psalms 102:19*)

MONDAY: **Throne Room** (*Psalms 47:6–9; 93:1, 2*)

TUESDAY: **Worship in Heaven** (*Revelation 4 and 5*)

WEDNESDAY: **Courtroom** (*Psalms 11:4–7*)

THURSDAY: **Place of Salvation** (*Hebrews 2:17*)

Memory Text—*1 Kings 8:49, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: We know that God is actively working on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary.

Lesson 2—“Heaven” on Earth

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The First “Sanctuary” on Earth** (*Genesis 3:8*)

MONDAY: **Copy of the Pattern** (*Exodus 25:9, 40; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, 24*)

TUESDAY: **Jesus as the Sanctuary** (*John 2:19–21*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Church as the Sanctuary** (*1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16*)

THURSDAY: **New Creation** (*Revelation 7:15–17*)

Memory Text—*Hebrews 8:5, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: God has used concepts relating to the heavenly sanctuary to reveal truth.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.