

quarterly resource for local church leaders † july/september 2019

ELDER'S DIGEST

THE LORD'S SUPPER



ELDER'S DIGEST 25TH ANNIVERSARY



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EDITOR'S NOTES: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of *Elder's Digest*.

SUBSCRIPTION AND ADDRESS CHANGES: One-year subscription, USD 18.00. Three-year subscription, USD 47.00. Please subscribe at www.eldersdigest.org or send check to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. Please send address changes to garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org.

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THEOLOGY AND LIFE



Jesus' compelling speech—today known as the Sermon on the Mount—ends with a well-known story: Two builders. One storm. Two outcomes. Without referencing Matthew 7, can you remember the point of this story? It is not a trivia question; Jesus Himself shares the point of the story as He tells it. But ask yourself, why did Jesus tell this parable to end His sermon? Can you remember whom the two builders represent?

The answer is quite easy and straightforward—in fact so easy and straightforward that we could easily fall into the temptation of not taking it seriously. The man who builds upon the rock, according to Jesus Himself, represents all who hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice. The man who builds upon the unstable sand represents all who hear the words but do not put them into

practice. What most of us miss here is that *both men are actively build-*

ing. This is not a depiction of one active and one passive follower of Jesus. It is a depiction of two builders, both with lives that involve work. However, only one allows Jesus' words to find root in his life. The other lives a life detached from His words. Jesus ends His most famous sermon with an illustration that should have guided the Christian church through-

out its entire existence—an illustration that exposes the danger of a religion based on hearing alone, with no relation to how one lives. Both forms of life and religion depicted in this parable take work. Yet only one withstands the challenges and difficulties of life.

Sometimes the slowness of church members to put into practice what they hear is not an indication of passivity or laziness, but rather of confusion as to how the words of the Bible should guide our lives and shape our vision of ourselves and the world. Much of a church leader's work is found in bridging real life to the words of Christ. Somewhere along the way, the Christian church fell into a religion of sand. All denominations have fallen into it, including ours. How do we apply the words of Jesus to our lives? We will always be tempted to believe that following Jesus is just a matter of going through the motions of our weekly church practices. But when Jesus told this parable there were no churches, no institutions—just people, and life.

In this and the following editions of *Elder's Digest* we will share a series entitled "The Theology of Life." If theology is effective and in harmony with Jesus' intent, it should point toward a knowledge of God directly connected to life. This study will begin with the book of Galatians. After all, Paul was a master in building bridges between life and the words of Christ.

May you read and allow the Spirit to speak to you. May you ponder on the impact the Words of Life have to life itself. And may you share with your church members and those around you the beauty found in the biblical text as we allow the Spirit to solidify our life and theology upon the foundation of the Rock! **ED**





THE USE OF INSTRUMENTS IN WORSHIP

The Greek philosopher Plato in *The Republic* argued that music could strengthen a person, cause the person to lose his mental balance, or cause the person to lose normal willpower so as to be rendered helpless and unconscious of their acts. Modern research supports this ancient verdict when it comes to the influence of music on the emotions. Obviously, whether one is affected positively or negatively depends upon the type of music used. For instance, certain scales and instruments were thought to have specific ethical powers. So the soft-voiced *kithara* (a stringed instrument), and the austere Dorian mode (scale) were thought to be ennobling. In contrast, the raucous *aulos* (a reed instrument), and the Phrygian mode (gypsy music or contemporary jazz) were thought to have the power to incite people to violence and immorality.

Inasmuch as the emotional impact of music is undisputed, leaders of church music must avoid choosing music that induces feelings, in contrast to allowing the faith to induce the feelings. In other words, church music should contain objective points of reference—that is, the music should anchor the congregation to God.

Augustine argued it is an offense against God for a person to be emotionally moved by a hymn, except from the thought expressed in its text. The question is: What effect does the rhythm or the beat have on you? Are you more interested in the sound or the meaning? Do the tune and lyric inspire noble thoughts and incline your heart to God? Ellen G. White advocated the following standard: “Music . . . rightly employed . . . is a precious gift of God, designed to uplift the thoughts to high and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the soul” (*Messages to Young People*, 291). The ultimate question to evaluate appropriate music might be: Could you imagine Christ listening to it? Would you be comfortable if He suddenly materialized in the pew?

To those who are considering a more contemporary or “celebration” type of music, note this reflection by Robert H. Mitchell:

We would be well to be guided here by the dictionary definitions of “celebration,” which place the emphasis upon *remembering* rather than feelings. Scripture is full of this kind of celebration To celebrate in these terms . . . is to remember who God is and what He has done. It is the remembrance of His mighty acts and the fresh weakness of their meaning for today that, if given opportunity, lead to confidence and hope, courage and anticipation, excitement and joy, and true peace (*Ministry and Music*, 87).

VARIETY OF INSTRUMENTS TO USE IN WORSHIP

Strings and woodwinds incline a worshipper to a meditative, introspective, and serene mood, and are ideal as a preparation for worship. In contrast, brass ensembles add energy and impact to worship. Ellen G. White once attended a worship service in Sweden where a guitar was used as a substitute for organ music. She commented that it was “new to us. . . . A lady . . . was a skillful player on the guitar, and possessed a sweet, musical voice; at public worship she was accustomed to supply the place of both choir and instrument. At our request she played and sang at the opening of our meetings” (*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 195).

Electronic instruments can provide a variety of orchestral combinations of brass, acoustic, and electronic pianos. When specific instrumentation is scarce, a synthesizer can offer chimes for calling a congregation to worship, harpsichord for the offertory, organ for hymns, and a string ensemble for preludes and postludes. The flexibility of such an instrument is inexhaustible. However, percussion instruments like cymbals and drums require judicious use. Negatively, there is always the danger that the instrument can overpower the vocal lines.

Note these further cautions. No instrument of itself is holy or unholy. Thus, develop an approach relating to the choice of instrumental music that values inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, worship rather than performance, and encourages a deep encounter with God rather than superficial entertainment. Our choices of church music should be based on congregational consensus rather than leadership dictatorship.

In conclusion, reflect on this observation by Ellen G. White:

Music can be a great power for good; yet we do not make the most of this branch of worship. The singing is generally done from impulse or to meet special cases, and at other times those who sing are left to blunder along, and the music loses its proper effect upon the minds of those present. Music should have beauty, pathos, and power. . . . Let the voices be lifted in songs of praise and devotion. Call to your aid, if practicable, instrumental music, and let the glorious harmony ascend to God, an acceptable offering (*Evangelism*, 505). ED

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FOUR HYMNS OF SERVICE

IN CHRIST THERE IS NO EAST OR WEST

by John Oxenham (1852–1941)

At the closing days of World War II, two ships were anchored together, one containing Japanese aliens, and the other American soldiers waiting to be repatriated. For an entire day they lined the rails, glaring at one another. Suddenly, the silence was broken as someone began to sing, “In Christ There is No East or West.” Then another on the opposite ship took up the refrain. Soon there was an extraordinary chorus of former enemies uniting to praise God.

The hymn “In Christ There is No East or West” first appeared in London at a pageant opened by the young Winston Churchill. The exhibition was sponsored by the London Missionary Society to depict the triumphs of missionary work and named “The Orient in London.” William Arthur Dunkerley was asked to write the libretto, but he wrote it under the name of John Oxenham. It reflects his strong feelings against sectarianism, expressed by the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for we are all one in Christ Jesus.” Oxenham wrote more than forty novels and twenty volumes of prose and poetry. Much of this writing was on the life of Christ, and he often taught a Bible class. The hymn was first published in 1913, and the tune was composed by Alexander Robert Reinagle, an organist of Austrian descent from Brighton, England.

SO SEND I YOU

by E. Margaret Clarkson (1915–2008)

Hymns have many different and strange birthplaces. “So Send I You” was born in the lumber and gold-mining camps in northern Ontario, Canada in 1937. At the age of twenty-three, Margaret Clarkson, a recent graduate from the Toronto Teacher’s College and University of Toronto, was assigned to teach in these remote towns. While meditating on the words of Jesus in John 20:21, “As the Father hath sent me, so send I you,” she realized that this lonely place was her mission field, where she remained for seven of her thirty-eight years of teaching. The original verses were revised sixteen years later as Clarkson understood the global challenge implied in Jesus’ Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:19. Her published works include textbooks and several books of devotional prose and poetry, as well as twenty hymns.

The tune was composed by John Peterson, a staff member of the Moody Bible Institute in the summer of 1954. The poem, with no name attached, was handed to Peterson. He later wrote, “with the lines of the poem before me, the melody came.” It was first published in the same year, and after Clarkson’s revision, was published by Singspiration in 1963.

WORKING O CHRIST WITH THEE

by William Augustine Ogden (1841–1897)

William Ogden had a varied career: from organizing a male choir for the Indiana Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War to conducting large choirs at conventions in the United States and Canada. He exhibited much musical interest even from childhood. He studied in Boston and in 1870 published his *Silver Song*, a book that sold half a million copies. Two years later, he published another hymnal containing ninety-eight of his tunes and nine hymn texts. He also composed two oratorios and two cantatas.

The hymn “Working O Christ With Thee” emphasizes a partnership between the gospel worker and the Lord Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 6:1, the apostle Paul affirms this partnership when he writes, “We then, as workers together with him.” Interestingly, Ogden uses the phrase “working with Thee” nine times in the four stanzas of the hymn.

While the text of this hymn came from Toledo, Arizona in the United States, the tune was composed in London, England by an Irishman, Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan, who received honorary doctorates in music from Cambridge and Oxford. He composed oratorios, anthems, secular songs, and church and choral music. He is buried in St. Paul’s Cathedral.

O MASTER LET ME WALK WITH THEE

by Washington Gladden (1836–1918)

The March 1879 issue of the magazine *Sunday Afternoon* included a poem written by the editor, Washington Gladden, called “Walking With God.” It also appeared in his *Songs of Praise* in 1880. The four stanzas of the hymn progress from walking with God, to closer communion with God, and ultimately to living with God, which we remember to be the experience of Enoch.

Gladden was born in Pennsylvania, ordained as a Congregational minister in 1860, and authored thirty-two books. He was a recognized leader of the social gospel movement at a time when the Industrial Revolution exploited individuals in the name of economic progress. A popular lecturer, he proclaimed that it was the duty of the Christian church to “elevate the masses not only spiritually and morally, but to be concerned about their social and economic welfare as well.” The hymn teaches that our service for God grows out of an intimate fellowship with Him.

The tune was composed by a Maltese, Henry Percel Smith, who was educated at Oxford, ordained an Anglican priest in 1850, and served parishes in England, France, and Gibraltar. ED

PLANNING FELLOWSHIP MEALS



WHY SHOULD WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP MEALS?

Fellowship dinners provide an opportunity for church members to share ideas of good nutrition, strengthen friendships, and celebrate God's goodness. Even in the days of Israel there was a coming together for feasting and socializing.

As a means of education an important place was filled by the feasts of Israel. . . . Three times a year seasons were appointed for social intercourse and worship. . . . So far as possible, all the household were in attendance, and with them, as sharers of their hospitality, were the stranger, the Levite, and the poor (*Education*, 41–42).

The positive effects of such gatherings are noted in contemporary studies. "Eating together is a symbol of good will in every culture. This simple rite tends to remove barriers to friendship that are often resistant to more ambitious efforts" (*Nutrition in Action*, 253). What better way for family, friends, and visitors to relax together in a spiritual setting than by choosing to fellowship together through sharing a vegetarian meal? Again, the Spirit of Prophecy reveals an even more important reason for this time together: the act of praising God for His goodness for us. "Let mealtime be a cheerful, happy time. As we enjoy the gifts of God, let us respond by grateful praise to the Giver" (*Ministry of Healing*, 385).

HOW OFTEN SHOULD THERE BE A DINNER AND WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

The usual time for a fellowship dinner is after the church service, but the meal should be held at the most convenient time for your church members. Fellowship dinners are to be scheduled in advance so there is time for members to plan and prepare. A set plan for every Sabbath, scheduled each month, makes this possible.

Fellowship meals should be open to all. This includes members, visitors from out of town, Adventists from other churches, and non-Adventist neighbors and

friends from the community. All should be made to feel welcome, remembering the biblical injunction to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (Heb 13:2). Occasionally some church facilities will not accommodate all the members so other arrangements will need to be made.

WHAT FACILITIES ARE NEEDED?

When possible, hold fellowship meals where kitchen facilities have adequate refrigeration, freezing, heating, serving, and seating capacity. Church leaders are encouraged to provide such facilities necessary for the social and health evangelism programs of the church.

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF THE COORDINATOR?

It is suggested that a fellowship dinner coordinator be chosen with several assistants, so that one person is not burdened with the full responsibility. The coordinator assigns the various responsibilities and assures that the mealtime celebration is conducted efficiently. Some churches find it helpful to select hospitality teams to assist the coordinator. The coordinator meets with the committee and the pastor to develop a schedule for the fellowship meals several months to a year in advance.

The schedule may need approval from the church board. Advanced planning allows for coordination with other church activities and gives ample time for advertising the dates to the congregation. The coordinator assigns responsibilities to committee members to ensure that fellowship meals run smoothly. Individuals assigned to host the guests will help members and visitors feel welcome. Acting as gracious hosts, they show new members and visitors where to take food and explain the serving and seating arrangements. These assistants help newcomers integrate into the celebration experience.

Individuals assigned to receive and prepare the food for serving contribute to the quality and timeliness of the meal. Hot food should be served hot; and cold food, cold. Recipes containing milk and egg prod-

ucts, which may promote the growth of harmful bacteria, should be kept hot or cold. Advanced planning and assignments will help ensure the meal starts on time. Directions will be needed regarding the variety and amount of food to be served at the beginning of the meal and when empty dishes are to be removed and replaced with food held in reserve. Beverages must also be resupplied as needed.

Individuals assigned to oversee the table decorations and serving arrangements help set the mood for a special mealtime celebration. Attractive garnishes for the dishes may be provided by the assistants. Dining tables may be decorated simply for the season or occasion. Places may be set with eating utensils and beverages prior to the meal. On some occasions arrangements can be made to serve banquet style. These assistants can be responsible for the disposable supplies as well as overseeing the cleanup and putting the facilities back in order.

HOW SHOULD THE MEALS BE PLANNED?

Adequate planning is necessary so that the fellowship dinner provides an opportunity to experience vegetarian cuisine at its best. One of the most important functions of the coordinator and the committee is planning the menu, recipes, and the amount of food needed. Fellowship meals may consist of a full dinner menu to include: entrees, cooked vegetables, starchy foods, salads and/or relishes, breads, beverages, and simple healthful desserts. Other ideas for meal planning include soup and salad menus, theme menus, holiday type meals, ethnic cuisine, and “build your own” meals from simple ingredients such as a baked potato bar, salad, or sandwich bar. Still another option is a light supper menu appropriate for the occasion such as soup(s) and fruit salad(s) served with a variety of breads and crackers.

HOW WILL THE MEAL BE ORGANIZED?

The fellowship dinner committee is charged with the responsibility for planning the church meals. If unplanned, potluck encourages members to bring whatever they choose. Often this method yields an abundance of one type of food rather than a balance. It also risks providing less healthful food than when planned. However, there are alternative ideas to consider:

- Assigning food items alphabetically by the first letter of the last name. For example, persons whose last names begin with A–F would bring an entree; G–K, a vegetable and bread; L–O, a tossed salad and nuts; P–S, a fruit dessert; and T–Z, contribute to a fruit juice recipe.
- Assign Sabbath School classes on specific Sabbaths to be responsible for the meal.

ARE THERE GUIDELINES AS TO THE TYPES OF RECIPES THAT SHOULD BE CHOSEN?

Choose meatless recipes that are delicious, nutritious, and attractive.

- Give special attention to the flavor, color, texture, and shape.
- Choose recipes that are relatively easy to prepare and contain readily available ingredients.
- Choose recipes people will desire to try at home.
- Consider the individual needs of the congregation when selecting recipes. If there are members who are complete vegetarians, have special dietary needs or ethnic food preferences, effort should be made to provide for their needs.
- We suggest selecting recipes which are low in cholesterol, saturated fat, salt, and high in fiber. Alter recipes containing eggs, whole milk, and high fat aged cheese with egg whites, low-fat or skim milk, and fresh cheeses such as cottage, ricotta, or low-fat mozzarella.
- We suggest omitting all irritating spices and condiments such as black pepper and mustard from recipes.
- Whenever possible, choose entree and vegetable recipes that will hold their heat. Loaves, casseroles in sauce, and beans or vegetables in hot liquids are examples.
- Promote fresh fruit and whole grain desserts rather than those high in refined sugar, refined flour, fat, and salt.
- Select pure fruit or vegetable juices, or caffeine-free cereal beverages rather than high-sugar drinks. Only non-alcoholic beverages should be served.
- Provide printed recipes for entrees, salads, healthful desserts, and beverages to encourage people to try nutritious, vegetarian meals at home.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE GOALS FOR OUR CHURCH DINNERS?

- Provide a meal that celebrates the Sabbath.
- Provide an opportunity for church members to enjoy social and spiritual fellowship.
- Demonstrate Christian hospitality in a delightful environment.
- Share the benefits of vegetarian cuisine with friends, visitors, and members.
- Provide an educational opportunity as an alternative or in addition to cooking schools.

Encourage participants to choose a limited variety of dishes that are attractive, nutritious, and delicious rather than an excessive variety of food.

ED

By the General Conference Nutrition Council

THE OWNER AND THE STEWARD

Fraud is a problem in this world. We encounter it on a daily basis when people pretend to be someone they are not. In a Brussels marathon a trainer switched roles with his athlete and ran twelve kilometers pretending he was the other person. It was estimated that in 1984 approximately ten thousand American physicians had not finished their studies but had bought papers to falsely attest they had received doctoral degrees. That is fraud! But there is an even greater fraud in which almost all humanity is involved—knowingly or unknowingly.

I. THE REAL OWNER

1. *The Owner*

- God is the real owner of all things (1 Cor 10:26; Ps 50:10–12; Hos 2:8; Hag 2:8).
- Jesus came to His own (John 1:11). The context tells us He is the real owner because He is our Creator and Savior (John 1:3, 29).

According to Scripture, it is very clear that God owns everything. This is easy to acknowledge, but it hits us hard when we look at what this includes: all material possessions, our time, our gifts and talents, our body, and fellow humans.

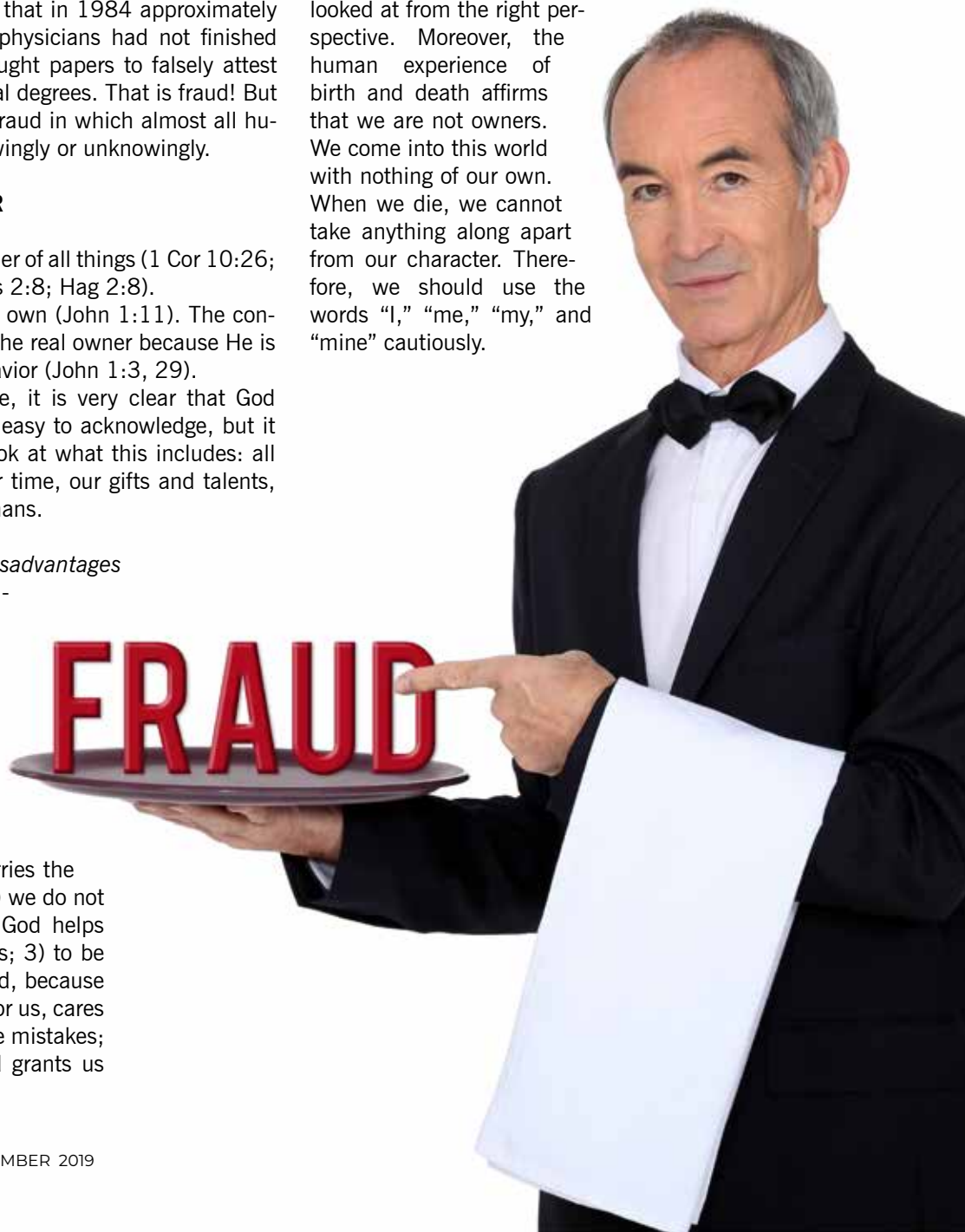
2. *Advantages and Disadvantages*

Apparent disadvantages that God is the Owner: 1) We are not independent, but are subject to God; 2) we do not enjoy absolute freedom; and 3) we are accountable for what we do.

Advantages that God is the Owner: 1) God carries the ultimate responsibility; 2) we do not need to worry, because God helps us in good and bad times; 3) to be dependent on God is good, because God knows what is best for us, cares for us, and does not make mistakes; 4) the freedom that God grants us

surpasses the so-called freedom of the adversary because God always gives us freedom of choice; and 5) we live a happy life of inner peace, joy, and love.

The apparent disadvantages listed above are even advantages, if looked at from the right perspective. Moreover, the human experience of birth and death affirms that we are not owners. We come into this world with nothing of our own. When we die, we cannot take anything along apart from our character. Therefore, we should use the words “I,” “me,” “my,” and “mine” cautiously.



3. Examples

(1) The King of Assyria (Isa 10:12–19). In his speech the king makes about five mentions of “I” and about three of “my” (depending on the translation). He makes the mistake of thinking he is the owner. According to verse 15 he is only an axe, saw, club, or rod—that is, a tool to be used. However, he does not consider himself a tool in the hand of God but makes himself owner. Therefore, God’s judgment comes upon him (vv. 16–19).

(2) The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matt 21:33–41). Again, these people behave as if they were owners, and they mistreat God’s servants.

(3) David’s Prayer (1 Chr 29:11–16). David is quite different. He acknowledges that God is the one to whom everything belongs. In his prayer he speaks about God constantly (“yours/your” about nine times and “you” eight times, depending on the translation).

II. THE STEWARD

1. The Parable in Luke 12:16–21

The main character of this parable is rich, probably intelligent and well respected, but with the wrong goals for his life (1 Cor 15:32). He practically denies the existence of God, and he thinks that he can control the future, but in reality he is extremely poor. His life is meaningless and useless.

The rich man has not learned the lesson that everything belongs to God and that he is called to administer God’s property. Speaking about himself constantly (“I” about six times and “my” five times, depending on the translation) he reveals he is an egotist without pity and concern for the poor, and by usurping God’s property he proves to be a thief.

2. Status and Responsibility of a Steward

To be a steward means to preserve, multiply, and utilize the property of the owner in an adequate way. To some extent a steward is a partner of and coworker with the boss. He carries important responsibilities. This makes his life meaningful.

All humans, whether or not they realize and accept it, are stewards. They are stewards of all that God has entrusted to them: material things, time, body, faculties, fellow humans, environment, and the gospel. Even in the future kingdom of God they will remain stewards (Luke 19:17).

What can a boss expect from his employees? What can God expect from us?

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT GOD OWNS EVERYTHING. THIS IS EASY TO ACKNOWLEDGE, BUT IT HITS US HARD WHEN WE LOOK AT WHAT THIS INCLUDES: ALL MATERIAL POSSESSIONS, OUR TIME, OUR GIFTS AND TALENTS, OUR BODY, AND FELLOW HUMANS.

- Respecting the will of the boss and acting accordingly (John 6:38)
- Making the cause of the boss first priority (Matt 6:33)
- Faithfulness (1 Cor 4:2)
- Trust (Mark 11:22)

What can the employee expect from the employer? What can we expect from God? The employee can expect “reward”—that is, blessings in this life such as food, clothing, a place to live, joy, peace, serenity, love, and a wonderful eternal life. And yet salvation is always God’s gift

and cannot be earned. Our service as stewards is a response to His gracious provisions.

III. WHY FRAUD?

Why do humans not recognize that they are only stewards and that everything belongs to God and has to be administered according to His will? Some people do not know it. They have not been confronted with this truth directly. Others do not want to recognize it. They prefer to play God on an earthly level. They want to be independent and do not trust God. They believe they would miss out on life if they returned everything to God. They love sin.

But we can make a decision today. We can ask God for forgiveness for having taken His place by acting as if we were the owners of what we are and what we have. We can return God’s property to Him and happily accept Him as our Lord. We can ask Him for His help in administering what belongs to Him. ED

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ADDING MEMBERS THROUGH STUDIES: HOW YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT

>PART 6 OF 8

Part 5 of this series explained how to safely deal with sensitive subjects, the importance of using reliable references where necessary, and obtaining a decision on each subject presented. Part 6 discusses how to determine a person's spiritual interest through the power of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of your own spiritual journey.

Discovering the level of a person's interest in spiritual things is of primary importance, since without this knowledge it is impossible to broach the topic of giving him or her Bible studies. This is a delicate process and requires three things: 1) a commitment to share the gospel, 2) the courage to inquire, and 3) the skill to do so without causing offence.

THE OPPORTUNE MOMENT

Most people are hesitant to talk about their spiritual interest—even if they *are* quite interested—so you must not assume that they will eventually tell you unprompted. The longer you wait, the harder it is to inquire. This is because 1) friendship usually breeds casualness, which lessens the urgency to ask, and 2) the prime moment, when a person is most receptive to this inquiry, usually occurs early on. The Holy Spirit maneuvers things around so that a peak opportune moment is reached when all contributing factors for maximum impact are present, and when this moment is not seized, the best moment is lost. This doesn't mean that a lesser moment can't be effective—indeed it can be—but it will take more effort. And sometimes, tragically, an opportune moment never arises again. This is why the serious soul winner must always be on guard for that special moment when the Holy Spirit has arranged things for him or her to strike.

The primary reason most people postpone (or avoid entirely) inquiring about a contact's spiritual interest is a lack of courage; the second most common reason is a lack of skill. Some have a burning desire to inquire, but are simply too timid. One way to break this hesitation is to learn from more experienced people. After a few successful attempts, your efforts will become bolder and bolder until you can do it with self-confidence, ease, and grace. Reaching this point requires a great deal of patience and love for people. You cannot expect people to accept within an hour something you took years to understand yourself.

Ultimately, it is usually we ourselves who, guided by the Holy Spirit and through developing the proper skills, bring about the opportune moment. Pray that God will open the contact's heart and show you the appropriate approach for that specific contact. These two components, when combined, make it almost impossible to fail.

INTRODUCING AN INQUIRY

Those with experience in personal evangelism can usually make an inquiry during the first contact with a person, if the following conditions are present: 1) The contact is sufficiently intelligent and/or knowledgeable to dialogue meaningfully, 2) the contact is willing to talk to you in a friendly manner, 3) the contact speaks your language (or you speak his or her language) well



enough to understand each other, and 4) you have at least fifteen minutes of private, uninterrupted time together.

After the introductions, you should, if possible, first allow the other party to learn about you. Asking about your contact first usually prompts him or her to return the pleasantries and ask about you, which may then make it difficult to steer the conversation into the spiritual inquiry process. Nonetheless, it is still possible to make the inquiry if the sequence of conversation isn't to your advantage. You will just have to be clever in turning the conversation around to them again. Typical warm-up questions at this time are: Where are you from originally? Are you single or married? What is your profession or what degree(s) do you have? What are you studying? When will you finish? Do you like what you're doing? Do you plan to continue in your current profession? Do you have brothers or sisters? Are your parents living?

KEY QUESTIONS AND COMMON RESPONSES

After the initial warm-up questions, you can begin asking key questions to help find out where he or she stands religiously. For instance, you could ask, "What is your religious background?" If the answer is something like "I don't have much to do with religion," then you could ask, "Were your parents religious people? Did they go to church?" If the answer is "No," then you might ask, "Was there a problem? Did you ever find out why they were neutral?" You will have to dialogue according to the answers you get, but always keep the conversation low-key and respectful.

One of the most common answers to the question, "What religion do you belong to?" is, "We all believe in the same God," implying that detailed religious beliefs don't really make much difference. This response might indicate the person does not want to continue with that direction of conversation. What should you do in this case? You could say, for example, "You're right, but in my case I've found that how I believe in God has made a lot of difference in my life, because I've seen that God is really interested in me and especially how I relate to Him. I've actually had quite an interesting experience with God, and as I've learned more about His teachings I've been able to grow a lot

more than I thought I would when I just knew Him as God. Now I'm a better person because of it." Hopefully this will lead you into a more intense conversation about spiritual things.

If you get positive answers to your questions about their spiritual interest, like "Yes, I believe in God," or "I was raised as a Christian but haven't been very active in the last several years," or "I like going to church but I'm just too busy," then it may be an opportunity to give your own testimony. Share how God has played an important role in your life, and how getting right with God and studying His Word regularly made all the difference in your life, and how making the effort to put God first has blessed your life.

THE OBJECTIVES

The most important objective of the conversation is to *discover whether or not that person has a genuine interest in spiritual things*. With practice and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you should be able to determine where your party is spiritually. Not many people will declare they want nothing to do with God and terminate the conversation on the spot. Don't be intimidated by a short or blunt answer. Be diplomatic but persistent. The second most important objective of the conversation is to *get a commitment to take Bible studies*. Sometimes, if you are adept enough in managing the conversation, you will get a commitment for studies at the very first engagement.

It should never take more than two contacts, or three at the most, to accomplish these two objectives. When you are committed to sharing the love of God with your fellow human being and have made it a determined practice to make spiritual inquiries with new contacts, and when you have invited the Holy Spirit to guide you and be your partner, you will be amazed at your success in these endeavors. God will even lead to you people who are interested in spiritual things when He sees that you are a faithful and skillful inquirer and can successfully bring people to the foot of the cross. The reward is a joy that fills your whole being with spiritual euphoria. ED

Lamar Phillips is a retired minister and church administrator who served for thirty-nine years in six world divisions.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER >PART 1

Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Faith #15: The Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians (1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:23–30; Matt 26:17–30; Rev 3:20; John 6:48–63; 13:1–17).

The Lord's Supper is first mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–25; Luke 22:7–23). It was instituted by Jesus and focuses on Jesus. It is unthinkable to celebrate the Lord's Supper, also called Communion or Eucharist, without reference to Jesus.

Although linked to the Passover, the Lord's Supper is seen to be a new and unique institution in the New Testament, one that has become an integral part of Christianity down through the centuries.

Interestingly enough, the Lord's Supper is not mentioned in the Gospel of John, though Jesus' speech about the bread of life in John 6 seems to contain a reference to it.

On the other hand, foot washing—the other ordinance instituted by Jesus Himself—is found in John's Gospel alone, and not in the Synoptics. Rather than being contradictory, these Gospel accounts are complementary. Both ordinances, the Lord's Supper and foot washing, are part of the Passion Narrative in all four Gospels.

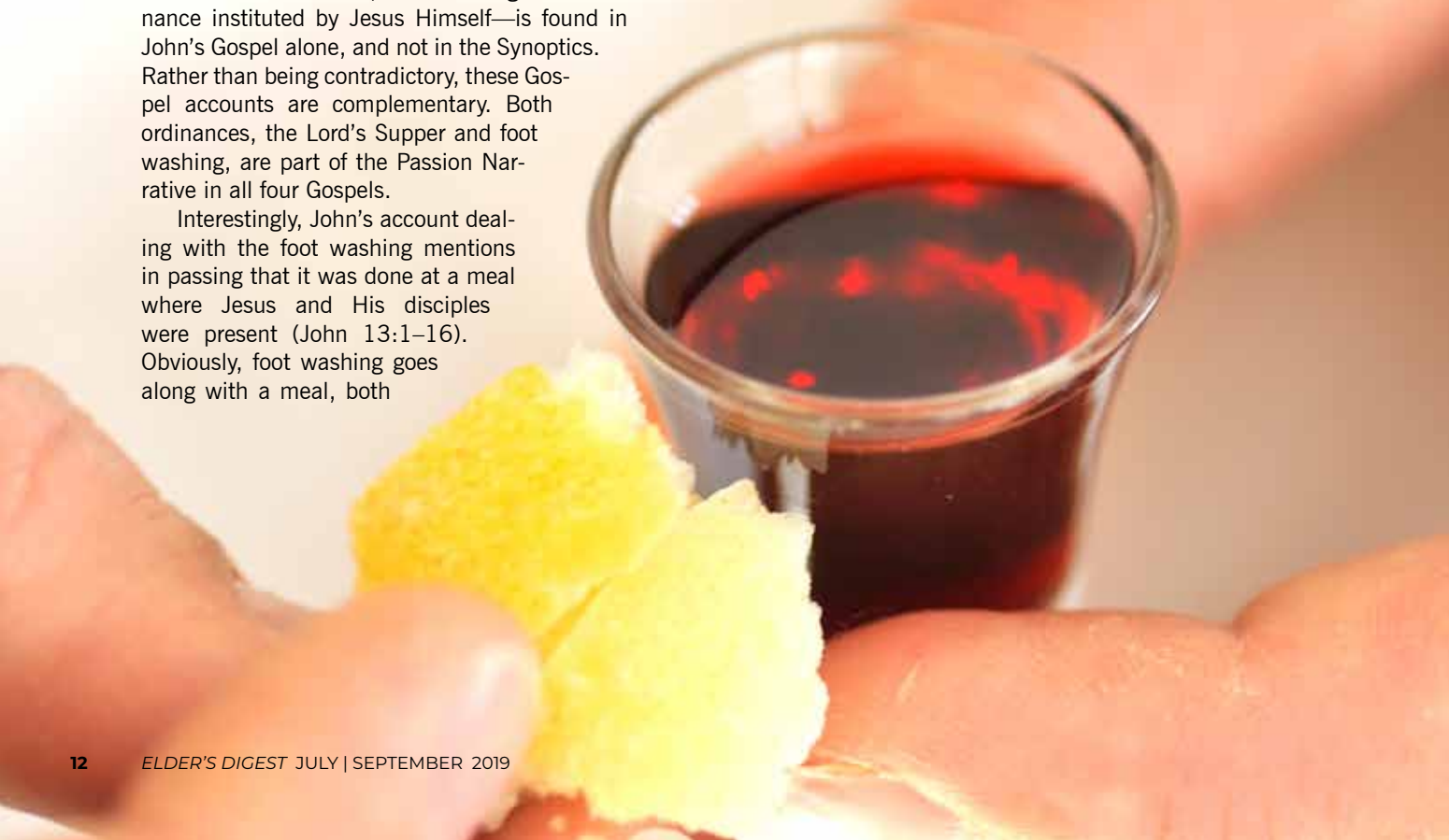
Interestingly, John's account dealing with the foot washing mentions in passing that it was done at a meal where Jesus and His disciples were present (John 13:1–16). Obviously, foot washing goes along with a meal, both

in terms of the regular customs of the day and in terms of the ceremonial meanings that Jesus attached to these two actions.

FOOT WASHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The earliest references to washing feet are found in Genesis.¹ There foot washing precedes participating in a meal (Gen 18:4–5; 24:32–33).² Therefore, it seems best for Christians to celebrate both ordinances in conjunction with foot washing preceding the Lord's Supper and preparing participants for it.

Old Testament references show that it was a custom of that time and an act of courtesy and hospitality to offer



visitors water for washing their feet. Obviously, no spiritual meaning was attached to this type of foot washing.

In the book of Exodus, however, the priests had to wash their hands and feet before serving at the sanctuary.³ In this case, the idea of cleanliness and purity is present, which allowed a priest to serve his people in the presence of God. This kind of purity seems to have surpassed mere bodily cleanliness. A holy God was to be approached by pure people.

With few exceptions, people during Old Testament times seemed to have washed their own feet after having received some water (Gen 18:4; 2 Sam 11:8). Sometimes the act may have been performed by a servant. According to 1 Samuel 25:41, the wife of Nabal was willing to wash the feet of David's men.

Although foot washing was not uncommon and contained the concept of cleanliness, Jesus gave it a new meaning and used a new approach.

FOOT WASHING AND THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Washing feet is mentioned again in 1 Timothy 5:10. Opinions are divided over whether or not this passage refers to the ordinance of foot washing. Whereas S. Horn holds "that foot washing was practiced in the early church is attested by Paul" (1 Tim 5:10),⁴ H. Kiesler seems to understand it as "a gracious mark of hospitality" as also found in Luke 7:44.⁵ The emphasis on washing the feet of "saints," or God's people, seems to make it more likely that 1 Timothy 5:10 stresses participation in the ordinance of foot washing.

When it comes to the Lord's Supper, we find additional information outside the Gospels. In Acts we hear that the early Christians "were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

The phrase "breaking of bread" points to the eating of a meal. It may include the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is not always in view when we read this phrase,⁶ although it is quite probable that the Lord's Supper is referenced in Acts 2:42.



The previous verse talks about receiving the Word, baptism, and people being added to the church. Verse 42 continues with religious activities and ends with prayer. The breaking of bread may very well refer to the Lord's Supper.

Clearer evidence is found in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. In chapter 10 Paul discusses the issue of idolatry. He asks how fellowship with Christ and with evil spirits go together. He argues that participation in the Lord's Supper and participation in a pagan cult ceremony are incompatible.

In chapter 11 he deals with an abuse of the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian church, and even reports Jesus' own words when He instituted the Lord's Supper. As in the Gospels, the focus is on the Lord and His gracious provisions.

THE BEAUTY AND MEANING OF FOOT WASHING

Both foot washing and the Lord's Supper have been understood and practiced differently by Christians throughout the centuries. In some cases, Christians avoid one or both ordinances; in others, they celebrate the Lord's Supper on a daily basis and build their faith on an actual repetition of Christ's sacrifice.

They may argue for transubstantiation, consubstantiation, the symbolic character of the emblems and the special presence of the Lord, or the sacramental nature of the Lord's Supper, which seems to be considered automatically effective independent of the attitude of the receiver. In the case of some, the ordinances are too sacred to participate in. In the case of others, there is difficulty keeping a balance between what is common and what is holy.

What is the theological meaning of the ordinances of foot washing and the Lord's Supper?

Starting with foot washing, the following elements should be stressed:

The Lord's love (John 13:1). Foot washing stresses the Lord's love. The paragraph containing the account of how Jesus instituted it is encircled by the principle of love.

John 13:1 emphasizes Jesus' love: love for His disciples, and even for Judas Iscariot, who became His enemy (John 13:1–4, 10–11). In spite of what He knew would happen soon, He served the traitor as He did the rest of His disciples. In doing this, Jesus showed us how to live. Love, not retaliation, is the principle of the kingdom.

As soon as Judas had left Jesus and the group of disciples, Jesus (according to John's Gospel) issued His new commandment: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34–35). Foot washing is an act of sacrificial love.

The Lord's service and humility (John 13:4–5). The Old Testament references to foot washing do not report a single case in which a superior washed the feet of an inferior. Abraham, it seems, did not wash the Lord's feet but did at least provide water for His feet to be washed

(Gen 18:4). But Jesus, God of eternity, stooped down to wash His disciples' and His enemy's feet.

His condescension did not stop with His lowly birth or with His hard life as a refugee and a laborer. The Word who was God, and through whom all things are made (John 1:1–3); the one who could say, “Before Abraham was born, I Am” (John 8:58); He who stated that “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30); and whom Thomas would call “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28); took a towel, girded Himself, and washed His disciples' feet.

Other masters are served by their followers. This Master serves His followers, all of them. Jesus humbled Himself (Phil 2:8). Obviously it is not enough for us to exhibit humility; the Lord wants us to bow down and wash each other's feet. This may seem objectionable, inconvenient, and even humiliating, but the Lord wants us to do it. The ordinance of foot washing is designed “to wash away all feeling of pride, selfishness, and self-aggrandizement.”⁷ Foot washing is a sign of willing service and humility.

The Lord's means to stress equality before God and fellowship with one another (John 13:13–16). Although Christianity does not do away with all social distinctions, before God all differences of rank, status, race, gender, and age no longer count. The Christian master bows down and washes the feet of his slave, who is in fact his brother in Christ. In this sense, foot washing is in many ways a critique of social injustice. It encourages intimate fellowship among all the members of the church.



The Lord's means for believers to have full fellowship with Jesus (John 13:8). Peter, who wanted to prevent Jesus from serving him, had to recognize that such a decision would mean separation from Jesus. “Peter would much rather wash Jesus' feet than that Jesus should wash his feet; he would prefer to lay down his life for Jesus than that Jesus should lay down His life for him.”⁸ But we cannot save ourselves.

Washing each other's feet recognizes that we are always dependent on our Lord for salvation. He served us first, and we have part with Him. Therefore, we serve others and also enjoy fellowship with them.

The Lord's cleansing (John 13:10). Foot washing is

associated with cleansing. It is evident from the way Jesus spoke to His disciples about His act of washing their feet that a symbolic cleansing is intended, rather than a mere cleansing from the dust of the road. The end of verse 10 shows that Judas was not clean because he had made the decision to become the traitor.

Thus, the concept of cleanliness deals with moral purity and moral defilement. Even after having been washed completely at the beginning of our walk with the Lord, further cleansing through the act of foot washing is necessary.

The figurative language of John 13:10 seems to refer to baptism and compares it to foot washing.⁹ The term *louo* (“to bathe,” “to wash”) is used in Hebrews 10:22 to describe baptism.¹⁰ Members of the Christian community commit sins even after having been baptized. These postbaptismal sins require forgiveness. Foot washing points to the fact that Jesus is willing to wash away these sins and cleanse us.¹¹ We need forgiveness, and forgiveness is granted to us.

The Lord's command (John 13:14–16). Jesus calls us to follow His example. He has washed the feet of His disciples. We wash the feet of our fellow believers. As Jesus set an example in being baptized (and we follow Him), as He set an example of how to celebrate the Lord's Supper (and we follow Him), so Jesus set an example in washing the disciples' feet—and we are to follow Him in this also. We, the servants, are not greater than the Master, and discipleship involves imitating the Lord and Teacher.

The Lord's blessing (John 13:17). Finally, Jesus declares those blessed, fortunate, and happy who participate in foot washing. It is not an empty ritual. Maybe we have to detect anew its deep meaning and implications and gain a greater blessing by thoughtfully washing each other's feet. A blessing is waiting for us. ED

¹ E.g., Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24.

² See also Judg 19:21.

³ Exod 30:19, 21; 40:31.

⁴ Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1979), 386.

⁵ Herbert Kiesler, “The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederer (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 592.

⁶ See, e.g., Luke 24:30, 35; and probably Acts 2:46.

⁷ Kiesler, “The Ordinances,” 594.

⁸ R. V. G. Tasker, John, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 155.

⁹ See Kiesler, “The Ordinances,” 593; Tasker, John, 158.

¹⁰ In both cases the perfect participle of the verb is used.

¹¹ See 1 John 1:7, 9 in which cleansing from sin comes through the blood of Jesus when sinners confess their transgressions.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

"AFTER THIS MANNER THEREFORE PRAY YE: OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME"—MATTHEW 6:9, KJV

INTRODUCTION

So does Christ, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, introduce the Lord's Prayer. Ever since, the prayer that bears His name has been kept sacred by the centuries, been the cornerstone of Christian worship and instruction, and polished bright by the lips of millions. Given us by the Lord Himself, it is a perfect model of how to pray. No prayer is more beautiful; none is more comprehensive; none links the heart more intimately with God.

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

St. Luke hints that it was the sight of Jesus at prayer that made one of His disciples ask for instruction as to how to set about it. "Jesus was at prayer. When He ceased, one of His disciples said, 'Lord, teach us'" (Luke 11:1). The immediate reason behind the request was the example of Jesus Himself. That is suggestive. A prayerful life, with a character to match, is a better invitation to prayer than many exhortations.

Jesus knew that to learn how to pray, how to enter into the place of the Most High, was the most important lesson man could learn. Centuries before the rabbis stressed that importance in the saying, "He who prays surrounds himself with a wall that is stronger than iron." So Jesus was quick to answer the request, and in so doing gave His inquirer the disciples' prayer, which we know as the Lord's Prayer.

II. THE TWO VERSIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

The New Testament contains two versions of the prayer. Matthew gives us the longer text, comprising seven separate petitions, and his version has been used in Christian liturgy from the beginning (Matt 6:9–13). According to Luke's version, Christ improvised the prayer in answer to a request from one of the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

III. THE PRACTICALITY OF THE PRAYER

What Jesus taught in this prayer is revolutionary. Its brevity, its warmth, its candor set it apart from the "vain repetitions" of heathen prayers, referred to by one author as a "substitution of self-hypnotism for prayer." No wonder, then, that early Christians seized eagerly on it. Within a century after Christ's death, it was a basic feature of the Christian service and all Christians were expected to recite it three times a day.

Tertullian said of this prayer, "How many doctrines are at once discharged in the use of the Lord's Prayer! The honoring

of God, in the Father, the testimony of faith, in the name; the offering of obedience in the will; the remembrance of hope, in the kingdom; the petition for life, in the bread; the confession of debts, in the prayer; the anxious care about temptation, in the call of defense."

IV. THE EXCLUSIVITY OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer only a disciple can pray; it is a prayer only one who is committed to Jesus Christ can take upon his lips with any meaning. In uttering the Lord's Prayer, we profess to come before God:

1. As children—"Our Father"
2. As worshippers—"hallowed be Thy name"
3. As subjects—"Thy kingdom come"
4. As servants—"Thy will be done"
5. As suppliants—"give us"
6. As sinners—"forgive us"
7. As vulnerable—"lead us not into temptation"
8. As helpless in danger—"deliver us from evil"
9. As fully trusting in His all sufficiency for time—"for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory"
10. As confiding abiding for eternity—"for ever"
11. Amen—"so let it be"

V. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer consists of seven petitions. Note the order: the first three petitions have to do with God and His glory. This means God is given His supreme place, and then—and only then—we turn to ourselves and our needs and desires; thus the second four petitions, according to Martin Luther, "contain the whole policy and economy of temporal and house government and all things necessary for this life."¹

William Barclay in his commentary on Matthew explains: "First, it asks for *bread*, for that which is necessary for the *maintenance of life*, and thereby brings the needs of the *present* to the throne of God. Second, it asks for *forgiveness* and thereby brings the *past* into the presence of God. Third, it asks for *help in temptation* and thereby commits all the *future* into the hands of God. In these three brief petitions, we are taught to lay the present, the past, and the future before the footstool of the grace of God."² To which I would add: the fourth petition is a request to "deliver us from evil," which is the deep-seated root of all our woes. Barclay further suggests that "these petitions brings the whole of life to the presence of God: it is also a prayer which brings

the whole of God to our lives. When we ask for *bread* to sustain our earthly lives, that request immediately directs our thoughts to *God the Father*, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life. When we ask for *forgiveness*, that request immediately directs our thoughts to *God the Son*, Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. When we ask for help for future temptation [and protection from the Evil One], that request immediately directs our thoughts to *God the Holy Spirit*, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and Guardian of our way."³

Is the Lord's Prayer the best of all prayers? Christ never meant to impose it on the world as an exclusive formula, supplanting such intensely human gestures of the heart as prayers of thanksgiving and grace, prayers for friends in trouble, for recovery from illness, for a safe journey, for justice, for freedom, and for peace. Still, the Lord's Prayer is the only prayer that Jesus taught, and divine inspiration gives it a status all its own. As a means of devotion, it covers all our major needs—the soul and the body. It is a prayer for all seasons, and it is not surprising that millions of believers recite it regularly. Not a minute passes but that the Lord's Prayer, somewhere, is rising to heaven. Thus, all of Christendom lauds the Creator.

Finally, the Lord's Prayer is a gift from God. It is the simplest form of communion with Christ: when we utter them we are one with Him; His thoughts become our thoughts, and we draw near to God through Him. It is also the simplest form of communion with our fellow men, in which we acknowledge that He is our common Father and that we are His children.

CONCLUSION

The Lord's Prayer may be committed to memory quickly, but it is slowly learned by heart. To use it when it is most needed, to truly know what it means, to believe it, is hard. ED

Note: In the following issues of *Elder's Digest* I will provide a sermon or prayer meeting series that will not only enhance your understanding of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer but to incite you to kneel down and thoughtfully make this prayer your own.

¹ Martin Luther, *Table Talks*, cccxxix.

² William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster & John Knox, 2001), 199.

³ *Ibid.*

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

"OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN"

INTRODUCTION

The mood of the Lord's Prayer is set with the first two words (Matt 6:9). The first word fractures the hermit's life. This plural prayer is not for an only child, but a brotherhood. It smashes barriers, splits the walls of exclusivity, bursts the little whispering circles, and shouts welcome, ringing far and wide. The second word hits even harder: "Are we not all children of one Father?" Stepping into God's presence with a collected mind, detached from the disturbances of the day, we address Him with the term—*Abba* in Aramaic, Jesus' mother tongue—that Christ Himself had on His lips, and which is best translated as "Papa." There is no trace of awe with which a fearful people might approach its sovereign lord. We count on God's benevolence. Between supplicant and listener a relationship of trust is established. We have come as children. By authorizing us to approach God in this way, Christ gives us the benefit of His own intimate relationship with the Father.

What is the value of the word "Father" in our relationships?

I. THAT GOD IS NOT IMPERSONAL

What good is an impersonal God? When we discover that the God to whom we pray has the name and heart of a *father* it makes literally all the difference in the world. The springs of this truth about the paternalism of God were rooted in Jesus' Bible, the Old Testament. The Psalmist wrote, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him" (Ps 103:13). And Malachi could exclaim, "Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us?" (2:10). Hosea, in a moving passage, called Israel the *son* of God (11:1). The later chapters of Isaiah return several times to this thought: "You, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name" (63:16). And Jesus *in extremis* used this familiar form of address: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46, quoting Ps 31:5). Jesus teaches us to see one who can best be thought of in the tender terms of fatherly love, one without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground—our *Father*.

II. THAT GOD IS NOT ANYONE'S PERSONAL POSSESSION

If God is Father, He is the Father of all. The Lord's Prayer does not teach us to pray "My Father"; it teaches us to pray "Our Father." Some twenty seconds are required to say the sixty-six words of the Lord's Prayer.

During that time, most of us have not noticed that one little word—the word "I"—is never mentioned. Nothing indicates more clearly the spirit in which we pray. There is no room here for egoism. It is as members of the brotherhood of man that we face the Creator; and what we ask for ourselves, we ask also for others. The phrase "Our Father" involves the elimination of self. The fatherhood of God is the only possible basis of the brotherhood of man.

III. THAT GOD IS NOT ONLY INTIMATE BUT ALSO MAJESTIC

Attached to the phrase "Our Father" is "which art in heaven." Here is no handshaking relationship with God. Here is no sentimentality in religion. Here is no grandfather in heaven whose only concern it is (as C.S. Lewis put it) that at the end of the day it should be said that a good time was had by all. There is something awe-inspiring in the phrase "which art in heaven." "God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few"—it was a timely warning the ancient writer gave (Eccl 5:2). This sense of the majesty and holiness of God is the "antiseptic element" in our religion that saves it from lapsing into an easy-going sentimentalism.

The phrase is a reminder that he who would come into the presence of God can only come as a worshipping sinner. For in worship I hold myself, sinner that I am, to attention in the presence of the All-holy; weak as I am, in the presence of the All-mighty; ignorant as I am, in the presence of the All-knowing. I press my sinfulness close to His forgiveness, my weakness to His strength, my ignorance to His wisdom. I come in silence, ready to wait on the God who speaks and who is always there before me. I come in awe to the God of majesty.

I come, too, as a member of a worshipping community, sharing in corporate need. As already mentioned, I do not pray "my Father" but "our Father." Thus, there is the sense in which the fatherhood of God embraces the whole world. He causes His sun to shine on just and unjust alike. "God so loved the *world*." The love and compassion of God go out to His entire creation. (This great doctrine has as its corollary the doctrine of the brotherhood of man; if God is Father of all and I am His child, all men are my brethren.)

• Hence springs the Christian hatred of all barriers of race, of segregation, of anything that degrades personality or uses persons as the mere means of another's pleasure.

• Hence springs the Christian concern over social issues, and the Christian participation in reforms that make for the total welfare of persons as persons.

• Hence springs the Christian conviction that involvement in social issues is part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian disciple.

IV. THAT GOD IS POWERFUL

In human love there is so often the tragedy of frustration. We may love a person and yet be unable to help him achieve something, or to stop him from doing something. Human love can be intense—and quite helpless. Any parent with an erring child, or any lover with a wandering loved one knows that. But when we say "Our Father in heaven" we place two things side by side. We place side by side the *love* of God and the *power* of God. William Barclay reminds us, "When we pray 'Our Father in heaven' we must ever remember the holiness of God, and we must ever remember the power that moves in love, and the love that has behind it the undefeatable power of God."¹

V. THAT GOD HAS AN EXCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CHILDREN

Interestingly, in Mark's Gospel Jesus calls God "Father" only six times, and never outside the circle of the disciples. Therefore, in a deeper and more limited sense, God can only be the Father of those who respond to His love, and of those who, in obedience to Him, are willing to share in the discipline of the life of His family, the church. Indeed one must say that the idea of the church is implicit in the idea of the divine Fatherhood. This doctrine is no "optional extra" added on by later generations to the originally simple teaching of the Galilean prophet. Fatherhood implies a family; a family implies obligations, and a family table. "When ye pray, say, 'Our Father.'"

CONCLUSION

So the Master taught. So the Master teaches. So we falteringly learn.

"Lord, teach us to pray."

"Our Father which art in heaven." ED

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: The New Study Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster and John Knox, 2001), 204.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

PETITION ONE: "HALLOWED BE THY NAME"

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to the Lord's Prayer, God is in His heaven—all-powerful, all-knowing, surveying His creation from a lofty height. Our thoughts must rise to Him. And so we now pray that His very name, and thus His sacred person, be hallowed by all men. The two questions emerging from this plea are: what does "hallowed" mean, and what significance is attached to a "name" in Hebrew culture?

I. THE MEANING OF "HALLOWED"

The word translated "hallowed" is part of the Greek verb *hagiazesthai*. This verb is connected with the adjective *hagios*, and means "to treat a person or a thing as *hagios*." This adjective has two meanings. The basic meaning is "holy," but more importantly it means "different" or "separate." In other words, if a thing is *hagios* it is *different* from other things, and a person who is *hagios* is *separate* from other people. So a temple is *hagios* because it is *different* from other buildings. A priest is *hagios* because he is *separate* from other men.

So what does this petition mean? "Let God's name be treated differently from all other names; let God's name be given a position which is absolutely unique."¹

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "NAME" IN THE HEBREW CULTURE

In traditional cultures, a "name" simply means the name by which a person is called, such as George or John or Mary. By contrast, in Hebrew, the "name" means the *nature*, the *character*, and the *personality* of the person.

This becomes clear when we see how the Psalmist used "name." For instance, Psalms 20:7 says, "Some boast of chariots and some horses, but we boast of the *name* of the Lord our God." This means while some put their trust in human and material aids and defenses, the Psalmist will remember the *nature* and *character* of God; he will remember what God is like, and that memory will give him confidence (cf. Ps 9:10). A further example is in Exodus 34:6–7 where the name of God is, in other words, the sum of God's attributes (read the text).

Now if we put the biblical meaning of "hallowed" (to regard as different) together with the Hebrew usage of "name" (nature, character, personality), then when we pray, "Hallowed by Thy name" it means, "Enable us to give you the unique place which your nature and character deserve and demand." In other words, this first petition in the

Lord's Prayer demands that we give God the reverence He is due.

William Barclay suggests that in all true reverence there are four essentials:

1. Reverence implies a belief that God exists. The Bible makes no attempt to prove the existence of God. It is a self-evident truth. To a Bible writer, any attempt to prove the existence of God would be superfluous simply because they experienced God every moment of their lives. Those who seek for proof that God exists might reflect on the words of Kant who said "the moral law within us, and the starry world above us" drive us to God.

2. Reverence requires a knowledge of God. The God we know has three great qualities: holiness, justice, and love. We must reverence God not only because He exists, but because He is the God we know Him to be. May this idea of God be a treasure on which our hearts rest and hold separate from all contamination of our own thoughts about God.

3. Reverence involves a constant awareness of God. To reverence God means to live in a "God-filled" world, to live a life in which we never forget God. Such an awareness is not confined to church or so-called holy places; it is rather an awareness that invades all aspects of our lives. This awareness is not spasmodic, acute at certain times and places, or totally absent at others. It is like an omnipresent consciousness of His abiding presence.

4. Reverence is obedience and submission to God. Summarily, reverence is knowledge plus submission. Martin Luther asked, "How is God's name hallowed amongst us?" and his answer is, "When both our life and doctrine are truly Christian"—that is to say, when our intellectual convictions, and our practical actions, are in full submission to the will of God. May our obedience and submission be guarded as "the holy and reverend name of the Lord."²

III. THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE DECALOGUE

One question remains: Is there a relationship between the first petition of the Lord's Prayer and the third commandment of the Decalogue?

To answer that question we must ask: What did it mean to a biblical writer to desecrate the name of God? How did he conceive that it could be defiled, dishonored, or treated as though it were not sacred? No doubt very often in Jewish history it was thought that the name of God was desecrated if some ritual taboo was disobeyed—if

a prescribed sacrifice was not offered or if a corpse was touched. But the prophets taught, in many a stinging phrase, that it was possible to be ritually correct and at the same time ethically wrong and in *this* way the name of God was desecrated.

The third commandment originally had little if anything to do with the use of what we call "bad language." To "take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain" was to fail in the ethical duty of keeping a vow or fulfilling an obligation solemnly made to one's neighbor. If, conversely, such an obligation was kept, then the name of God was hallowed.

The name of God is desecrated when the poor are crushed, when a widow is denied her rights, when unjust scales are used in commerce, when sexual immorality takes place (e.g. Amos 2:7, RSV—"a man and his father go in to the same maiden, so that My holy *name* is profaned. But when the name of God is hallowed all facets of everyday life and ethics are affected. William Neil comments, "To take God's name '*in vain*' is to refuse to take seriously the claim of God to command our obedience in social, political and economic affairs as well as in our private lives."³

CONCLUSION

How can we translate this petition into our everyday lives? You have some great task to do, some great decision to make: You begin it with prayer, "hallowed be Thy name"; you complete it with the *Gloria*, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." That task, that decision, will not be far from the will and purpose of God. You have some small task to do with hand or brain—a letter to write, a visit to pay, a chore to labor at: You begin with "Hallowed by Thy name"; you end with the *Gloria*. It will become an act of worship. F. T. Pelgrave got near to the mark in his hymn, "O Thou not made with hands":

"Where in life's common ways
With cheerful feet we go;
Where in His steps we tread,
Who trod the way of woe;
Where He is in the heart,
City of God, thou art' –

Yes, and there the Name of God is hallowed." ED

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster and John Knox, 2001), 205.

² *Ibid.*, 206–208.

³ William Neil, *One Volume Bible Commentary*, 91.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

PETITION TWO: "THY KINGDOM COME"

INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist was surrounded by excited crowds when he shouted in the desert, "The kingdom of heaven is near." The sense of anticipation grew when, a little later, Jesus echoed John's words as He began His ministry in Galilee. "The time has come," He exclaimed, "The kingdom of God has come near" (Mark 1:15).

God's kingdom was obviously central to Jesus' mission and message. When He taught His disciples how to pray, He told them to ask God, "May your kingdom come." When He sent His disciples out on their first preaching expeditions, it was the kingdom of God that was to be at the heart of the good news they were told to spread (Matt 10:7).

Jesus used the phrase often and described the preaching of the kingdom as an obligation laid upon Him (Luke 4:43; 8:1; Mark 1:38). But while there are more than one hundred references to it in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it occurs only rarely in the New Testament outside the Gospels, and the Old Testament does not mention it at all. It was special to Jesus.

When the Baptist's hearers were told, "The King is coming," what would they have expected? Their image of a king would have had three major features: a person of *power, status,* and a person who would be a *national figurehead.* The great moment of God's royal intervention and subsequent defeat of Israel's enemies, forecast so urgently by the Old Testament prophets, was about to arrive. In fact, with Jesus' arrival on the world scene, it had already come. In Jesus, the kingdom of God had become a reality.

I. THE MEANING OF THE KINGDOM

Nevertheless, Jesus' expectant audience was in for a shock. He certainly was the promised King, but He turned their ideas about God's rule upside down.

- They were expecting a *display of power,* but Jesus taught them that the focal point of God's kingdom was the gentle, merciful empowerment of the weak and disabled members of society. He crushed the powers of evil in a stunning series of miracles and taught that His kingdom was for the suffering, not the rich and powerful (Matt 5:3, 10).

- They were expecting a *parade of status,* but God's King was not born with a silver spoon in His mouth. He began His human life in the squalor of a stable (Phil 2:5–8). He turned His back on conventional royal respectability by spending His

time with those whom the rest of society regarded as inferior—lepers, foreigners, and women. And He left life carrying a cross, not waving a royal banner.

- They were expecting a *national figurehead,* to rid their land of Roman occupation and establish Jewish supremacy. Jesus refused to fill that political role. There was to be no passport control that favored Jews at the entry point to God's kingdom (Matt 28:18–20).

II. THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

In Jesus' hands the kingdom of God becomes a dynamic idea—"rule" rather than "realm." In the New Testament the kingdom of God is not the territory over which God reigns as an earthly king reigns; it is the sovereignty of God, a state and condition of things in which God rules and reigns supreme.

To be a citizen of the kingdom of God is to accept and obey its laws, as would be required for citizenship in any earthly kingdom. If the kingdom of God means the sovereignty of God, then no man can be within that kingdom unless he submits himself to the lordship of God in perfect obedience to His requirements. But the qualification for entering it is not the right kind of birth certificate, but rather a radically changed lifestyle characterized by repentance and faith. There are patterns of behavior totally incompatible with a genuine submission to God's rule. For example, no man can enter without a forgiving spirit (Matt 18:3) or without a certain attitude toward his fellow men (Matt 25:31–46).

While there are certain conditions of entry to the kingdom, there are things in life that can conspire to keep a man out of the kingdom—for instance, riches (Mark 10:23–25) or the inability to make a clear-cut decision (Luke 9:6). Further, the invitation to enter the kingdom can be *refused* (Matt 22:1–14), the opportunity to enter the kingdom can be *lost* (Matt 25:1–13), and the privilege of entering the kingdom can be *taken away* (Matt 8:11, 21–43).

Conversely, all who submit to His sovereignty and place themselves under His dominion find that His royal power is immediately available to cancel the power of their past sin, and by His Spirit and His presence are enabled to overcome their present sin (1 Cor 6:9–10).

It should be noted that nowhere in the teaching of Jesus is the kingdom defined. Yet it is illustrated by parable, and its invitations and demands are consistently stressed. The kingdom is indeed a

present reality. The kingdom is *preached* (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:15). The kingdom is *proclaimed* (Luke 9:60). The good news of the kingdom is *announced* (Luke 8:1). The kingdom may be *received* (Mark 10:15). The kingdom may be *entered* (Matt 5:20). The kingdom is *within* you, or *among* you (Luke 17:21). Only a reality, which is already given and already present, can be spoken of in such terms.

There is also a "now, but not yet" dimension to Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God. Although God's rule is powerfully present in His own words and actions, His stories-with-a-purpose (the parables) paint word pictures of slow growth as the kingdom (now His church) is gradually established, like yeast in dough or a small seed's slow transformation into an impressive tree (Matt 13:31–33).

The final outcome, however, is inevitable. When Jesus comes again to wind up the history of the world as we know it, the kingdom of God will be displayed in total triumph. This, then, is an eschatological prayer. We look up and forward—up to God who reigns, and forward to the day of victory when the enemy's death sentence is pronounced (1 Cor 15:25). Like it or not, all creation will submit to His *power.* His royal *status* will be blazoned from one end of the universe to the other. And He will emerge as His church's great *figurehead* as it demonstrates "the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph 1:23; see also Phil 2:9–11; Matt 24:30).

CONCLUSION

Finally, the kingdom of God begins within, but it is to make itself manifest without. It is to penetrate the feelings, habits, thoughts, words, and acts of him who is the subject of it. For this we pray when we say, "Thy kingdom come." We desire that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords will reign over our lives, which are His, and which He has redeemed. ED

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SERMON NOTES

ALL ABOUT COSMETICS

DOES THE BIBLE SAY ANYTHING ABOUT COSMETICS?

I presume you want to know what the Bible says about cosmetics to see how it applies to your own life. But before I mention the few texts that mention them directly, some background information concerning ancient practices could be useful.

COSMETICS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

It has been suggested that makeup originated in magical beliefs and the concern for personal protection. It was probably seen as a way of hiding one's identity in order to be protected from evil spirits. But evidence also points to two main reasons for using cosmetics: hygienic or medical, and beautification. Hygiene was probably the primary one. That seems to have been the case in Egypt, where painting the eyelids offered protection from eye diseases. The makeup repelled flies that produced eye inflammation, and also protected the skin from drying in the heat of the sun. Makeup was almost a natural disinfectant.

Painting the eyelids and cheeks was soon perceived to be a way of enhancing a person's appearance. In the case of the eyes, the eyebrows and upper eyelids were painted one color and the lower line of the eye was painted with a different color. This type of makeup framed the eyes and gave the illusion of being larger than they were. The colors were usually black and green, although other combinations are known. Egyptians and Babylonians used makeup on their cheeks and lips. The pastes were commonly made from roots, flowers, berries, and minerals, and were used by both men and women.

Preparation for a wedding included a beautification process of cleansing and adornment, with making up the eyes as the last element in the process. Facial treatments were particularly common in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. We have recipes from Egypt for ointments that supposedly removed wrinkles and other signs of aging. Greek women put on a beauty mask before going to bed and used milk to remove it in the morning. The emphasis on makeup as a means of beautification was sometimes associated with seduction, and when exaggerated, was considered a characteristic of prostitutes.

If you have a question about church policy or procedure, let us know! Every quarter we address these issues in our "Question and Answer" column, and we would love to hear from you! E-mail us at garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org.

BIBLICAL MATERIALS

There is very little evidence related to the use of cosmetics in Israel. We know that Israelites used cosmetics, because archeologists have found utensils associated with the production and application of cosmetics. It is impossible to say how widespread the practice was, but it is logical to conclude that it was at least common among Israel's upper classes. The three biblical passages that mention makeup provide little information. In preparation to meet Jehu, Jezebel "put on eye makeup, arranged her hair and looked out of a window" (2 Kgs 9:30). Her specific purpose for this beautification is not clear. Was she trying to seduce him? Was she using the makeup to protect herself from evil? The text implies that she dressed and adorned herself as a queen to confront her enemy. Her beauty did not save her. Makeup is associated with seduction in Jeremiah 4:30, where Israel is described as a woman whom the Lord asks, "Why dress yourself in scarlet and put on jewels of gold? Why highlight your eyes with makeup? You adorn yourself in vain. Your lovers despise you." Enhanced beauty through makeup would not deliver her from her enemies. The same ideas are expressed in Ezekiel 23:40. The tone of both passages is negative. Those three texts imply that makeup was known and used by Israelite women, that it contributed to the beautification of the woman, and that there were limits to its value.

MAKEUP TODAY

Makeup is very common among women and is becoming so among men. The fundamental purposes continue to be hygienic and aesthetic. The Bible does not give any specific guidelines concerning its use, but biblical principles should guide us in its use. First, the Bible does not deny the value of a good appearance and a concern for health. Second, the Bible places the emphasis on inner beauty over physical beauty. Finally, modesty should be the norm when addressing this particular issue. Modesty describes a demeanor that expresses itself in self-respect, discretion, and the avoidance of extremes, based on the fact that we are children of God and representatives of our Lord. ED

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DEACONS AND DEACONESSES AS BIBLE WORKERS¹

Deacons and deaconesses of the first-century Christian church taught God's Word and brought converts into the church. Philip not only conducted an evangelistic meeting; he also conducted a one-on-one Bible study (Acts 8:5–8, 26–40; 21:8). Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, gave Bible studies to Apollos, “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures” (Acts 18:24–28). Therefore, it is expected that the deacons and deaconesses of today's church will teach God's Word and win converts.

The advantage of having deacons and deaconesses, rather than hired non-members, serve as Bible workers for their local church is that deacons and deaconesses will remain and nurture the new converts; hired Bible workers will eventually leave. Also, because new converts get attached to the Bible workers, when the workers leave, there is the possibility that the converts will eventually leave.

To equip deacons and deaconesses to serve as Bible workers of the church, the pastor should help facilitate their training. He may choose to train them himself or have someone who is currently serving or has previously served as a Bible worker to train them.

For many people, making the initial contact is the most frightening part of the process of giving Bible studies. Some are afraid of talking to people who are struggling with lifestyles that they have never experienced, such as drug addiction, prostitution, and homelessness. To overcome this fear, one must understand that people who are struggling with these issues are experiencing the same human emotions that all humans experience when struggling with any issue. The issues may be different, and the way people deal with their emotions is different, but the emotions are the same. Therefore, when trying to witness to or enroll people in Bible studies, deacons and deaconesses should use their personal testimony to make an emotional connection with their potential students. All sinners without Christ are empty, lonely, miserable, hopeless, sad, etc. Everyone has experienced these emotions, regardless of his or her lifestyle. As Bible workers, deacons and deaconesses are to help those with whom they come in contact to understand that

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES SHOULD USE THEIR PERSONAL TESTIMONY TO MAKE AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION WITH THEIR POTENTIAL STUDENTS.

only Jesus can heal their damaged emotions and fill the void in their lives caused by sin.

Here is an example of a personal testimony. It is divided into four sections.

Section 1: My life before I met Christ. Before I met Christ, I was empty, lonely, and miserable. I did everything I

knew to do to try to fill the void in my life. I tried losing myself in the crowd to forget about who I was, because I didn't like who I was.

Section 2: How I realized I needed Christ. When everything I tried didn't work; when the mornings after the late-night parties left me feeling more miserable and less fulfilled; when I recognized that my so-called friends were just using me; and when I was dying inside and feeling hopeless because of unemployment and discouragement, I realized that I needed Christ.

Section 3: How I became a Christian. I read a book written by an entertainer that I admired; surprisingly, he talked about God and faith. This caused me to reflect on my Christian upbringing, so I decided to give God another try. I started praying, reading my Bible, and listening to preaching on the radio. I saw God answering my prayers. I saw my life changing.

Section 4: The difference Christ has made in my life. Now that I have Christ in my life, I am complete. The void has been filled. I have peace, joy, and hope. The search is over. I no longer have to live a sinful life trying to find fulfillment. Jesus has set me free!

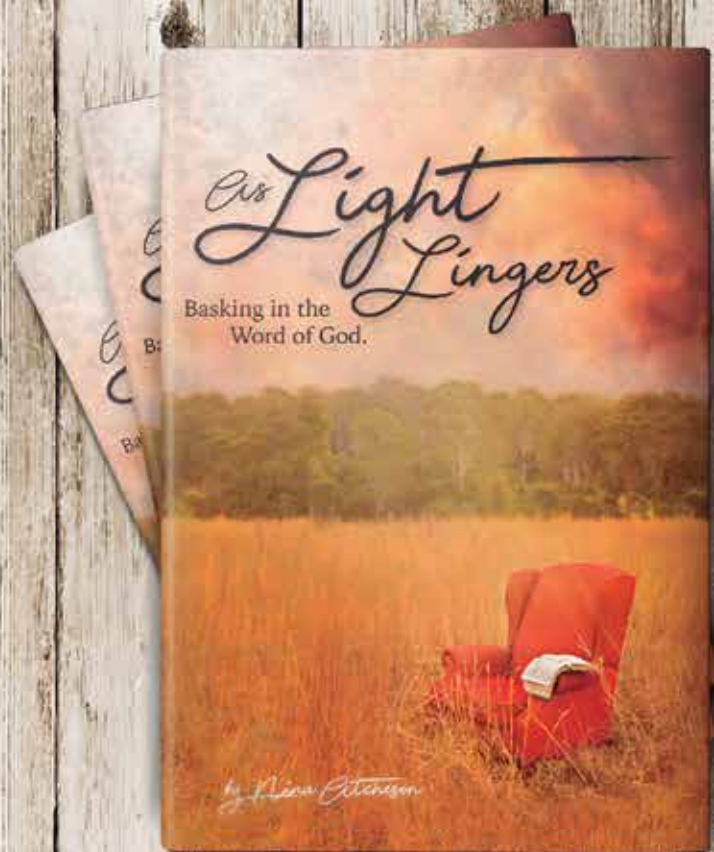
As deacons and deaconesses prepare to accept the challenge of serving as Bible workers for their church, they should write out their personal testimony and memorize it. Also, they must learn to adapt their testimony to relate to different situations. **ED**

¹ Materials in this article were taken from the book written by the author, *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model*, Huntsville, AL: AVA, 2011).

Vincent E. White, Sr., D.Min., is a retired pastor and author of *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model*; *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model Workbook*; and *Problem-Solvers and Soul-Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses*.

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”

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ANECDOTES AND HUMOR

>PART 2

On the Enemy's Ground. As soon as a preacher comes down from the position a minister should ever occupy, and descends to the comical to create a laugh over his opponent, or when he is sarcastic and sharp, and rails upon him, he does that which the Saviour of the world did not dare to do; for he places himself upon the enemy's ground.

Pure Provender With No Chaff. The preaching of the Word should appeal to the intellect, and should impart knowledge, but it should do more than this. The words of the minister should reach the hearts of the hearers. Neither is it the object of preaching to amuse. Some ministers have adopted a style of preaching that has not the best influence. It has become a habit with them to weave anecdotes into their discourses. The impression thus made upon the hearers is not a savor of life unto life. Ministers should not bring amusing stories into their preaching. The people need pure provender, thoroughly winnowed from the chaff. "Preach the Word," was the charge that Paul gave to Timothy, and this is our commission also.

The minister who mixes storytelling with his discourses is using strange fire. God is offended, and the cause of truth is dishonored, when His representatives descend to the use of cheap, trifling words.

My brethren, you are required by our Saviour to take heed how you witness for Him. You need to go deeper and still deeper in the study of the Word. You have all classes of minds to meet, and as you teach the truths of the sacred Word, you are to manifest earnestness, respect, and reverence. Weed out storytelling from your discourses, and preach the Word. You will then have more sheaves to bring to the Master. Remember that in your audience there are those who are constantly harassed by temptation. Some are wrestling with doubt, almost in despair, almost hopeless. Ask God to help you to speak words that will strengthen them for the conflict.

Irrelevant Anecdotes. Ministers should not make a practice of relating irrelevant anecdotes in connection with their sermons; for this detracts from the force of the truth presented. The relation of anecdotes or incidents that create a laugh or a light thought in the minds of the hearers is severely censurable. The truth should be clothed in chaste, dignified language; and the illustrations used should be of a like character.

Comic Illustrations. A minister of the gospel should not be regardless of his attitude. If he is the representative of Christ, his deportment, his attitude, his gestures, should be of such a character as will not strike the beholder with disgust. Ministers should possess refinement. They should discard all uncouth manners, attitudes, and gestures, and should encourage in themselves humble dignity of bearing. They should be clothed in a manner befitting the dignity of their position. Their speech should be in every respect solemn and well chosen. I was shown that it is wrong to make coarse, irrelevant expressions, relate anecdotes to amuse, or present comic illustrations to create a laugh. Sarcasm and playing upon the words of an opponent are all out of God's order.

Amusing Stories. My brother, you need to examine more closely the discourses you present to the people. The object of your ministerial labors is not to amuse. It is not to convey information alone, not merely to convince the intellect. The preaching of the Word should appeal to the intellect and impart knowledge, but it comprises much more than this. The heart of the minister must reach the hearts of the hearers. Some have adopted a style of preaching that does not have a right influence. It has become a habit with them to cheapen their discourses by the relation of anecdotes. The impression thus made upon the hearers is not a savor of life unto life. You should not bring amusing stories into your preaching. The people need pure provender, thoroughly winnowed from all that is not food. "Preach the Word," was the charge that Paul gave to Timothy, and this is your commission.

No Clowns in the Pulpit. I warned you against clownishness in the desk or before the people. Do you not sometimes bring this acting into the sacred desk? You please the world; you attract the world. Is this an evidence that you are having a deep spiritual piety, sanctified to God through the Spirit? ED

This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp. 272—275, by Ellen G. White.



WE ARE THE *Message!*



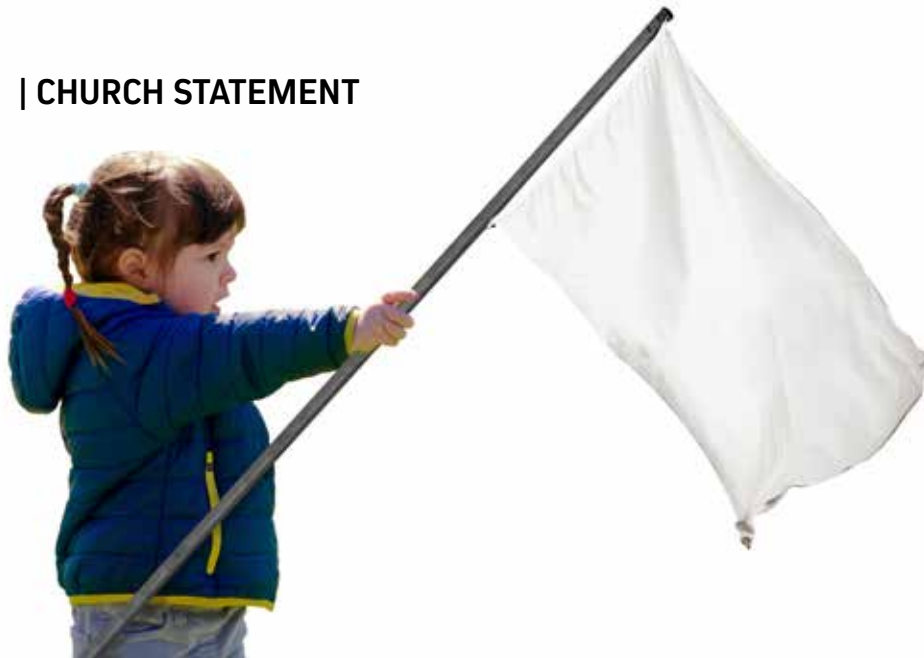
“You yourselves
are our letter,
written on our
hearts, known and
read by everyone.”

2 Corinthians 3:2

PASTOR'S
APPRECIATION
DAY

OCTOBER 12, 2019





CALL FOR PEACE

We are living in an increasingly unstable and dangerous world. Recent events have resulted in a heightened sense of vulnerability and personal or corporate fear of violence. Throughout the world, countless millions are haunted by war and apprehension and are oppressed by hate and intimidation.

TOTAL WAR

Humanity has, since the middle of the last century, been living in an age of total war. Total war implies the theoretical possibility that, except for the providence of God, earth's inhabitants could wipe out their entire civilization. Nuclear weapons and biochemical arms of mass destruction are aimed at centers of population. Whole nations and societies are mobilized or targeted for war, and when such war erupts it is carried on with the greatest violence and destruction. The justification of war has become more complex, even though advances in technology make possible greater precision in destroying targets with a minimum of civilian casualties.

A NEW DIMENSION

While both the United Nations and various religious bodies have proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century as a decade for the promotion of peace and security in the place of violence in its various forms, a new and insidious dimension of violence has emerged: organized international terrorism. Terrorism itself is not new, but worldwide terrorist networks are. Another new factor is the appeal to so-called divine mandates as the rationale for terrorist activity under the guise of culture war, or even "religious" war.

The rise of international terrorism makes it clear that it is not only a nation or state that makes war, but

human beings in various combinations. As one of the leading founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church pointed out a century ago, "The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin."¹ Indeed, human nature is prone to violence. From a Christian perspective, all this inhumanity is really part of a cosmic war, the great controversy between good and evil.

TERRORISM EXPLOITS THE CONCEPT OF GOD

Terrorists, in particular those having motivations based on religion, claim that their cause is absolute and that taking lives indiscriminately is fully justified. While they claim to be representing the justice of God, they wholly fail to represent the great love of God.

Furthermore, such international terrorism is totally at odds with the concept of religious liberty. The former is based on political and/or religious extremism and fundamentalistic fanaticism which arrogate the right to impose a certain religious conviction or worldview and to destroy those who oppose their convictions. Imposing one's religious views on other people, by means of inquisition and terror, involves an endeavor to exploit and manipulate God by turning Him into an idol of evil and violence. The result is a disregard for the dignity of human beings created in the image of God.

While it is inevitable that nations and people will try to defend themselves by responding in a military way to violence and terror—which sometimes results in short-term success—lasting answers to deep problems of division in society cannot be achieved by using violent means.

THE PILLARS OF PEACE

From both a Christian and practical perspective, any lasting peace involves at least four ingredients: dialogue, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Dialogue - There needs to be dialogue and discussion in place of diatribe and the cry for war. Lasting peace does not result from violent means, but is achieved by negotiation, dialogue, and, inevitably, political compromise. In the long run, reasoned discourse has superior authority over military force. In particular, Christians should always be ready to “reason together,” as the Bible says.

Justice - Unfortunately, the world is rampant with injustice and a fallout of injustice is strife. Justice and peace join hands, as do injustice and war. Poverty and exploitation breed discontent and hopelessness, which lead to desperation and violence.

On the other hand, “God’s word sanctions no policy that will enrich one class by the oppression and suffering of another.”²

Justice requires respect for human rights, in particular religious liberty which deals with the profoundest human aspirations and undergirds all human rights. Justice requires nondiscrimination, respect for human dignity and equality, and a more equitable distribution of the necessities of life. Economic and social policies will either produce peace or discontent. Seventh-day Adventist concern for social justice is expressed through the support and promotion of religious liberty, and through organizations and departments of the Church which work to relieve poverty and conditions of marginalization. Such efforts on the part of the Church can, over time, reduce resentment and terrorism.

Forgiveness - Forgiveness is usually thought of as necessary to heal broken interpersonal relationships. It is highlighted in the prayer Jesus asked His followers to pray (Matt 6:12). However, we must not overlook the corporate, societal, and even international dimensions. If there is to be peace, it is vital to drop the burdens of the past, to move beyond well-worn battle grounds, and to work toward reconciliation. At a minimum, this requires overlooking past injustices and violence; and, at its best, it involves forgiveness which absorbs the pain without retaliating.

Because of sinful human nature and the resulting violence, some form of forgiveness is necessary in order to break the vicious cycle of resentment, hate, and revenge on all levels. Forgiveness goes against the grain of human nature. It is natural for human beings to deal in terms of revenge and the return of evil for evil.

There is, therefore, first of all the need to foster a culture of forgiveness in the Church. As Christians and church leaders, it is our duty to help individuals and nations to liberate themselves from the shackles of past violence and refuse to reenact year after year, and even generation after generation, the hatred and violence generated by past experiences.

Reconciliation - Forgiveness provides a foundation for reconciliation and the accompanying restoration of relationships that have become estranged and hostile. Reconciliation is the only way to success on the road to cooperation, harmony, and peace.

We call upon Christian churches and leaders to exercise a ministry of reconciliation and act as ambassadors of goodwill, openness, and forgiveness. (See 2 Cor 5:17–19.) This will always be a difficult, sensitive task. While trying to avoid the many political pitfalls along the way, we must nevertheless proclaim liberty in the land—liberty from persecution, discrimination, abject poverty, and other forms of injustice. It is a Christian responsibility to endeavor to provide protection for those who are in danger of being violated, exploited, and terrorized.

SUPPORT OF QUALITY OF LIFE

Silent efforts of religious bodies and individuals behind the scenes are invaluable. But this is not enough: “We are not just creatures of a spiritual environment. We are actively interested in everything that shapes the way we live and we are concerned about the well-being of our planet.” The Christian ministry of reconciliation will and must “contribute to the restoration of human dignity, equality, and unity through the grace of God in which human beings see each other as members of the family of God.”³

Churches should not only be known for spiritual contributions—though these are foundational—but also for their support of quality of life, and in this connection peacemaking is essential. We need to repent from expressions or deeds of violence that Christians and churches, throughout history and even more recently, have either been involved in as actors, have tolerated, or have tried to justify. We appeal to Christians and people of good will all around the world to take an active role in making and sustaining peace, thus being part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

PEACEMAKERS

The Seventh-day Adventist Church wishes to stand for the uncoercive harmony of God’s coming kingdom. This requires bridge-building to promote reconciliation between the various sides in a conflict. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, “You will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell” (Isa 58:12). Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, wants His followers to be peacemakers in society and hence calls them blessed (Matt 5:9).

CULTURE OF PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates what may be the second largest worldwide parochial school

system. Each of its more than 6,000 schools, colleges, and universities is being asked to set aside one week each school year to emphasize and highlight, through various programs, respect, cultural awareness, non-violence, peacemaking, conflict resolution, and reconciliation as a way of making a specifically “Adventist” contribution to a culture of social harmony and peace. With this in mind, the Church’s Education Department is preparing curricula and other materials to help in implementing this peace program.

The education of the church member in the pew, for nonviolence, peace, and reconciliation, needs to be an ongoing process. Pastors are being asked to use their pulpits to proclaim the gospel of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation which dissolves barriers created by race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and religion, and promotes peaceful human relations between individuals, groups, and nations.

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

While peacemaking may seem to be a forbidding task, there is the promise and possibility of transformation through renewal. All violence and terrorism are really one aspect of the ongoing controversy, in theological terms, between Christ and Satan. The Christian

has hope because of the assurance that evil—the mystery of iniquity—will run its course and be conquered by the Prince of Peace and the world will be made new. This is our hope.

The Old Testament, despite the record of wars and violence, looks forward to the new creation and promises, like the New Testament, the end of the vicious cycle of war and terror, when arms will disappear and become agricultural implements, and peace and knowledge of God and His love will cover the whole world like the waters cover the oceans. (See Isa 2:4, 11:9.)

In the meantime, we need, in all relationships, to follow the golden rule, which asks us to do unto others as we would wish them to do unto us (see Matt 7:12), and not only love God, but love as God loves (See 1 John 3:14, 15; 4:11, 20, 21). ED

¹ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 163.

² *Ibid.*, 187

³ Quote from Pastor Jan Paulsen, President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on April 18, 2002 in Silver Spring, MD. USA.

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Sister White knew long ago that when our local churches hear the stories and become a part of mission work abroad, their home churches would be revitalized and grow. Here at Adventist World Radio, we want to assist all churches in having a passion for mission and increasing the faith of church members.

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short videos are a great way to let your congregation know how God is working around the world. Take a few moments to share how they can apply what they see in the video with your church and community. What is the video calling *your church* to do?

2. Use them for vespers or sermons. Use our 30-minute videos when you may not have a speaker or have a larger period of time to fill. Many multi-church districts use them on weeks the pastor is not with them.

3. Use them in AY and club ministries. Help inspire the next generation to have a missionary spirit.

4. Share them on your social media pages. If your church has a social media page, why not link our videos directly from Facebook or YouTube?

We pray that these stories will inspire you and your churches as you see how God is working around the world. Find our videos at awr.org/videos ED

Alyssa Truman is the Adventist World Radio Marketing Manager at the General Conference world headquarters.



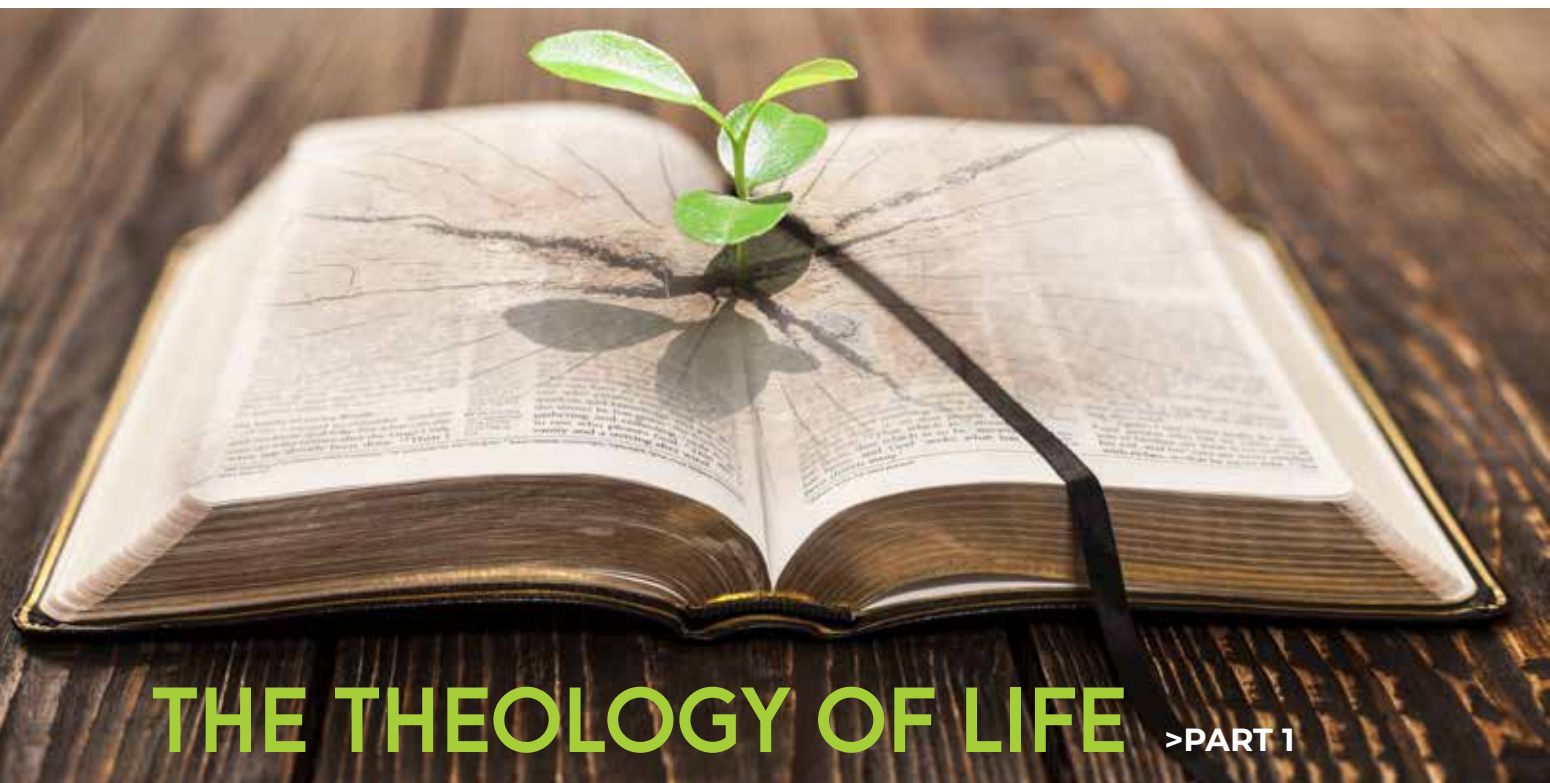
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THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE >PART 1

BIBLICAL THOUGHT - 1

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel."—Galatians 1:6

Last year I was invited by a good friend to visit a non-Adventist congregation in São Paulo, Brazil. As I sat down to hear the pastor speak, he opened up his sermon with the verse above. I was floored. I could not even concentrate on the sermon. I pulled out my phone and began re-reading the book of Galatians, which I had not read in a long time. What is Paul talking about when he says there is a different gospel going around the church of Galatia? As I read through the book, the problem became clear to me. The problem in Galatia was not that the new converts had to choose between the gospel of the grace of Christ and some other gospel without Christ—that is, some other religion. The problem in Galatia was the choice between the gospel of the grace of Christ and a new gospel where the grace of Christ was not sufficient for salvation.

This "different" gospel was taught and practiced by those who were attempting to re-introduce ancient Jewish practices into the new Christian church, making everything that Jesus had done through the cross and the resurrection, irrelevant to their salvation. To sum up the problematic idea: if people believed that salvation was based on their sacrifices and efforts for God, they

would never understand and experience the grace that Jesus offered; they would never understand that the religion of the Bible is completely based on what God does for us, and not what we do for God.

As Adventists this is a hard truth to swallow. Even though we are thousands of years apart from the church in Galatia, the shadow of the same problem still hovers over us. We too constantly flirt with religion that is shaped and executed upon the foundation of our own works. And in doing so, we do not realize that we too are deserting the gospel of the grace of Christ for a different gospel.

By diving into the book of Galatians we can dust off these ancient lessons that are so necessary for our time, just as they were for the church in Galatia. It is my prayer that as you read the verses in this series you embrace the grace of Jesus; you embrace the true Gospel where we can come as we are to Jesus. He invites us saying: "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28).

BIBLICAL THOUGHT - 2

"For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb

and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being.”—Galatians 1:13–16

In Galatians 1:6, the biblical thought was centered on how the church in Galatia had quickly departed from the gospel of the grace of Jesus to another gospel where grace was not sufficient for salvation, where humans had to contribute to their salvation. As we move further in the reading, Paul begins to evaluate his own experience and journey with God.

Paul was an up-and-coming leader within the Jewish community. As Paul himself says, he was “extremely zealous” for the traditions and customs of the Jewish people. But this zeal created hate against Jesus and His followers. Jesus frequently taught in the Gospels about the importance of transcending the righteousness of the Pharisees. Jesus said, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees . . . you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). Before meeting Jesus, Paul subscribed to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—that is, “doing what was right” based strictly upon what was written. When seeing Jesus and His followers through the lens of the law

and this righteousness, Paul persecuted them—even to their death. This blind zeal for what was written led to death. But when Paul met Jesus, everything changed.

His physical blindness was only a sign of his spiritual blindness, and through this blindness he learned to see things anew. Before meeting the Lord, Paul saw Jesus and His followers through the lens of the law, but now, Paul saw the law through the lens of Jesus! And within this new righteousness—one that surpassed that of the Pharisees, that “did what was right” not to earn favor but because one already had God’s favor—Paul ceased persecuting people, and began *servi*ng people. His ministry was grounded on the love and the grace of Christ for all people. His ministry “revealed Jesus,” as Paul writes, in himself! This new zeal led to new life!

May you interpret your relationships, your church, your family life and all things around you through the lens of Jesus. And may you see in every circumstance of your life an opportunity for love, for forgiveness, and for peace. May your righteousness, your “doing what is right,” exceed the legalism of the Pharisees, and may your life also be a “revelation” of Jesus Christ. **ED**

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JOYS AND CHALLENGES OF THE PASTORAL FAMILY

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THE FIGHT OF YOUR LIFE



THE BATTLE

In the summer of 2015, I spent four weeks as a Bible worker for an evangelistic series in San Antonio, Texas. One afternoon, I, my visiting partner, the local pastor, and an evangelist went to visit a house. We hopped out of our cars and knocked on the door of a house toward the end of the street. A shy woman named Maria answered the door. She had asked us to come to her home and pray that certain disturbances would leave. She was afraid her house was haunted by supernatural forces.

We sat around her kitchen table and she described how the lights would flash on and off even though no one had touched the switches. The television would turn on in the middle of the night while everyone was asleep. Items around the house would suddenly fall from counters or tables even though she was careful that nothing was placed near the edge. She told us she was concerned about her adult son's strange music and violent and evil video games.

Maria asked us to pray over her and her house that the demons would leave. She took us to her bedroom and the five of us knelt around her bed. We prayed, claiming God's promises from Scripture, praying that the devil be rebuked in the name of Jesus and that Maria would have the courage to follow Him.

As we stood to leave, a few trinkets fell off the shelf and one of us nonchalantly placed them back, not thinking anything of it. Maria showed us to the door with a smile and an expression of deep peace on her face. As we headed for the door we heard a loud crash outside. We all rushed out to see what had happened.

Maria's experience was just one manifestation of something bigger going on in our world. The interaction between the physical world and the supernatural is real and ongoing, but sometimes we don't even see it. This story points us to something bigger: God and Satan were struggling over Maria's life and her allegiance. Just as a supernatural enemy invaded Maria's home, he has also invaded the world and caused it to plunge into a great controversy between good and evil, a battle for the soul of every human being. Sometimes

it is as dramatic as what happened to Maria, but other times the devil uses more subtle tactics to tempt us away from God.

THE ENEMY

In the parable of Matthew 13:24–30, Jesus tells the story of a farmer who instructs his servants to sow wheat in the field. But while the servants are not looking, an enemy sows tares among the wheat, plotting to destroy the crop. Wondering what to do, the servants explain the situation to the master. The master replies, "An enemy has done this!" Ellen G. White tells us "the teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels."¹ From this story we can learn an important lesson on how God deals with His people.

Who is this enemy? Like the curtain being pulled back to open a play, the beginning of the Bible opens to reveal the main character: God Himself. The scene is creation. God creates the world to be good—very good! Enter stage left: Adam and Eve, our first parents—the first humans to exist in all of time. As any good romantic drama unfolds, they fall helplessly in love with each other and with their God. But lurking in the shadows, just out of view, is the villain—the enemy.

We can read the story in Genesis 3. Eve finds herself face-to-face with the most beautiful serpent with the most sinister suggestion: "God doesn't want what's best for you." But Eve had a choice. She could believe the serpent's lie or believe in the one who spoke truth. I'm sure she looked at that tree long and hard. But here, that first seed was planted—that bad seed among the wheat.

So where did this enemy come from? Who was this serpent hanging out in a tree? We turn to Ezekiel 28:12–17 for the answer. God had created this perfect being. Speaking of Lucifer before his fall, God said: "You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you."

God had created this person with a seal of perfection and beauty and he was anointed as a cherub. Lucifer (Satan) was blameless in all his ways (v. 15), until unrighteousness was found in him. He was a trader and trafficker of deceit (vs. 16–17). Verse 16 says that Satan was filled with violence and he sinned. His heart was lifted up because of his beauty, but he chose to go another way.

God had the power to squash the devil to pieces. And wouldn't that have been great for us all! We would never have had to live a life of sin. However, if God had eliminated Satan immediately, the whole universe would have questioned God's love. Ellen G. White adds,

Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character.¹

Pulling out the evil too soon would end up hurting the good seed too soon. Sin must be allowed to take its full course for the character of God to be vindicated. The great controversy is not about power, it's about the character of God—namely, His justice and love. And there is more to this controversy than God.

THE STRUGGLE

Paul tells us, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). We see this played out in Paul's own life. In Romans 7:15, he talks about his inner conflict. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." As we go back and forth debating with ourselves, there is something bigger going on: both God and Satan want our hearts, our allegiance and loyalty.

The prophet Jeremiah says our hearts are desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). Not only are we trying to win the struggle in our hearts, but our heart is working against us. We are at a double disadvantage. We have internal sinful desire coupled with external luring temptations. We seem hopeless, doomed by our very nature.

There is good news, however: there is someone who can set us free. In Romans 7 Paul tells us it's Jesus Christ! His death on the cross and resurrection is the source of our victory. In Matthew 28:18 we see Christ

has the power. In Ezekiel 36:2–27 we see that God wants to give us a new heart. It is up to us to accept the power of Christ and the new heart He gives.

THE CHOICE

So how do we tap into His power? Paul says in Romans 8:11, "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you." We will have victory and triumph over the devil when we choose to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and allow the Holy Spirit to reign inside us, giving us the power to overcome. By our union with Christ we secure the victory. This was evident in the life of Paul, who had made it his life's mission to destroy the kingdom of God. He became a changed man when he encountered Jesus on the way to Damascus and allowed the Spirit to dwell in him, and he spent the rest of his life advancing the kingdom of God. The same God who gave Paul victory will work in our lives and give us the victory too.

As we rushed out of Maria's house that summer afternoon, we saw that a car from across the street had driven in reverse and crashed into a terrace wall outside Maria's house. The car was still running and we hurried to see if the person inside was alright. But there was no one in the driver's seat. The neighbor across the street came over, explaining that she saw her car rolling out of her driveway on its own accord!

We had prayed for Maria and she gave her life to Jesus, but the devil did not want to leave her alone. He had planned another opportunity to discourage her and win her back. Before we left that afternoon we encouraged Maria and prayed with her again. We told her that she had made a choice to commit herself to God, to put Him first. The devil did not like that but God would be with her and protect her. She was visibly shaken, but as we prayed and she determined to continue with her decision, an aura of peace came around her again.

Today, you and I have the opportunity to choose Christ in the middle of the great controversy. In this time of conflict there is a battle going on for your heart, mind, and soul. But you have the choice! Choose Christ and allow the Spirit to live within you so that you might have the victory. It will be the best choice you will ever make. ED

¹ Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1900), 72.

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