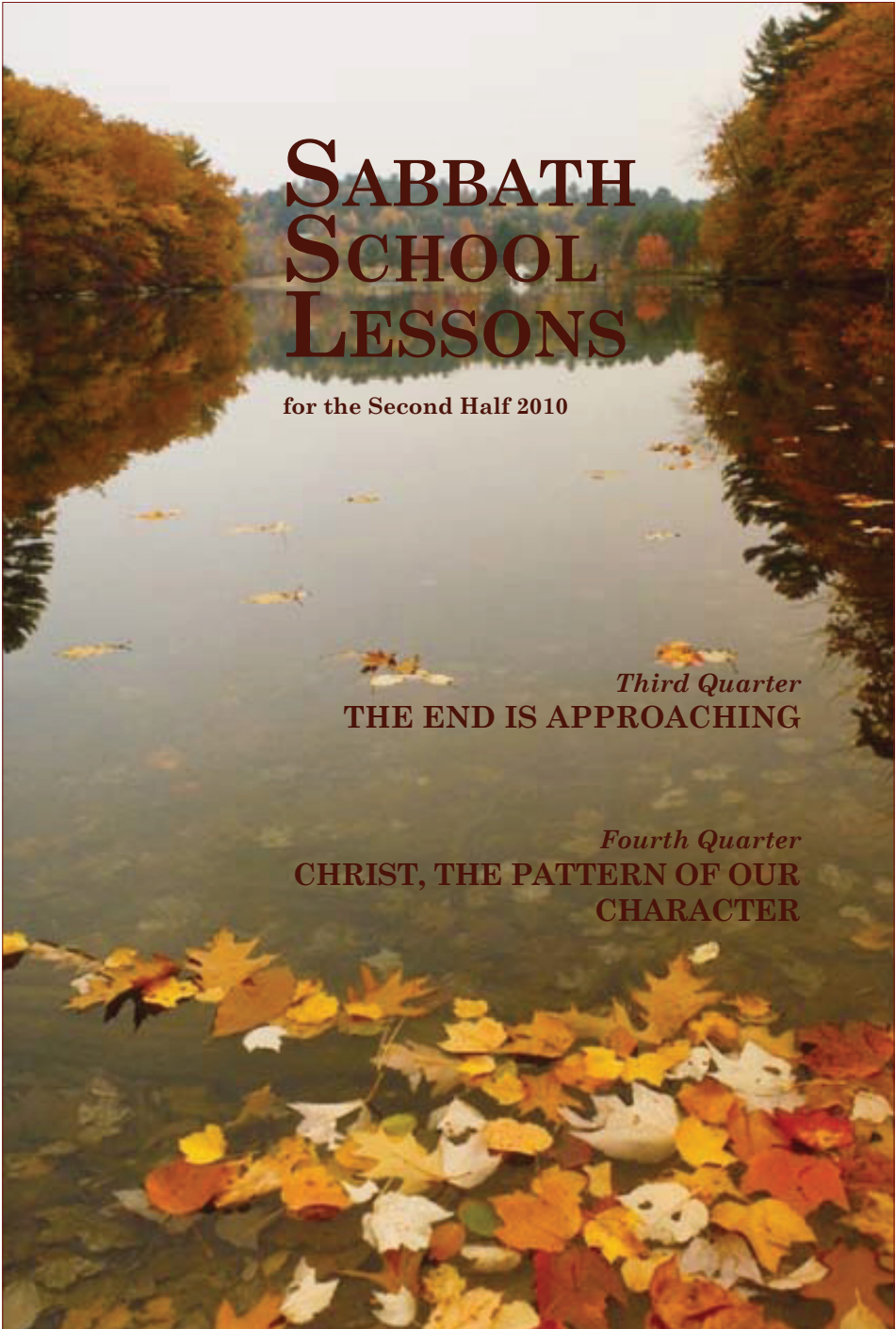




SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2010

Third Quarter

THE END IS APPROACHING

Fourth Quarter

**CHRIST, THE PATTERN OF OUR
CHARACTER**

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**CHRIST, THE PATTERN
OF OUR CHARACTER**

Issued by
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International Missionary Society
Seventh-day Adventist Church
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INTRODUCTION

“We are living in the time of the end”—writes the Spirit of Prophecy. “The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude.

“The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.

“The condition of things in the world shows that troublous times are right upon us. The daily papers are full of indications of a terrible conflict in the near future. Bold robberies are of frequent occurrence. Strikes are common. Thefts and murders are committed on every hand. Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children. Men have become infatuated with vice, and every species of evil prevails.

“The enemy has succeeded in perverting justice and in filling men’s hearts with the desire for selfish gain.... In the great cities there are multitudes living in poverty and wretchedness, well-nigh destitute of food, shelter, and clothing; while in the same cities are those who have more than heart could wish, who live luxuriously, spending their money on richly furnished houses, on personal adornment, or worse still, upon the gratification of sensual appetites, upon liquor, tobacco, and other things that destroy the powers of the brain, unbalance the mind, and debase the soul. The cries of starving humanity are coming up before God, while by every species of oppression and extortion men are piling up colossal fortunes.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 11.

Considering how serious and short our time is, what should be our greatest and first interest in life? What should we constantly do? How do we wish to be found when our Redeemer appears in glory?

Thorough spiritual preparation was necessary before the first coming of Jesus as a human being, as John the Baptist declared: “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He was the one about whom Isaiah the prophet had declared: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.” Matthew 3:1-3.

If this was the case before His first coming, how necessary and urgent is this work today when Jesus is about to come in glory? After His ascension, the door of grace remained open and the church could continue to preach the gospel of salvation to all nations. But in the last days, when the work of grace will have accomplished its mission, this will not be the case. Saved will mean saved forever, and lost will mean lost forever. Dear brothers and sisters, now is the time for preparation and sanctification. Let us spend our time wisely, growing every day in Jesus Christ.

“In consideration of the shortness of time we as a people should watch and pray, and in no case allow ourselves to be diverted from the solemn work of preparation for the great event before us. Because the time is apparently extended, many have become careless and indifferent in regard to their words and actions. They do not realize their danger and do not see and understand the mercy of our God in lengthening their probation, that they may have time to form characters for the future, immortal life. Every moment is of the highest value. Time is granted them, not to be employed in studying their own ease and becoming dwellers on the earth, but to be used in the work of overcoming every defect in their own characters and in helping others, by example and personal effort, to see the beauty of holiness. God has a people upon the earth who in faith and holy hope are tracing down the roll of fast-fulfilling prophecy and are seeking to purify their souls by obeying the truth, that they may not be found without the wedding garment when Christ shall appear.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 306, 307.

Dear brothers and sisters in every country of the world, this is the solemn subject of the Sabbath School Lessons for this quarter. Let us study them carefully and apply them to our experience and daily life, for this is the message for our time. These lessons have been prepared with the great desire that when Jesus comes His bride will be found ready.

Therefore, may the Lord help us that in studying these messages we will be prepared for the full reception of the Lord into our hearts. Be assured, if we receive Him today, He will receive us into glory when the day of the great feast comes, for the wonderful promise is. “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Revelation 19:6-9.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

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Sabbath, July 3, 2010

The End Is Approaching!

“Soon grievous troubles will arise among the nations—trouble that will not cease until Jesus comes. As never before we need to press together, serving Him who has prepared His throne in the heavens and whose kingdom ruleth over all. God has not forsaken His people, and our strength lies in not forsaking Him.”
—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 136.

THE EUPHRATES AND THE TIME OF THE END

- 1. What will happen when the sixth angel pours his vial upon the great river Euphrates? What is prophesied to transpire at the time of the end? Revelation 16:12; Daniel 11:45.**

“As we near the close of this world’s history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living. With them should be linked the teachings of the last book of the New Testament Scriptures.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 547.

“The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 14.

- 2. When will this happen? Who will soon return? Daniel 12:1, 2; Revelation 16:13-15; Matthew 24:34.**

“The return of Christ to our world will not be long delayed. Let this be the keynote of every message.

“The blessed hope of the second appearing of Christ, with its solemn realities, needs to be often presented to the people. Looking for the soon appearing of our Lord will lead us to regard earthly things as emptiness and nothingness.

“The battle of Armageddon is soon to be fought. He on whose vesture is written the name, King of kings, and Lord of lords, is soon to lead forth the armies of heaven.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 406.

IT IS TIME TO WAKE UP!

3. Therefore, what call must again be addressed to us? Romans 13:11, 12.

“... There are many, many in our churches who know little of the real meaning of the truth for this time. I appeal to them not to disregard the fulfilling of the signs of the times, which says so plainly that the end is near. Oh, how many who have not sought their souls’ salvation will soon make the bitter lamentation: ‘The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!’

“We are living in the closing scenes of this earth’s history. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The hours of probation are fast passing. We have no time—not a moment—to lose. Let us not be found sleeping on guard. Let no one say in his heart or by his works: ‘My Lord delayeth His coming.’ Let the message of Christ’s soon return sound forth in earnest words of warning. Let us persuade men and women everywhere to repent and flee from the wrath to come. Let us arouse them to immediate preparation, for we little know what is before us.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 252, 253.

4. What should we be covered with, especially considering the earnestness of time and that not just the governments of this world but even individuals can easily obtain the most terrible nuclear weapons? Romans 13:12-14.

“The Lord is soon to come, and we must be prepared to meet Him in peace. Let us be determined to do all in our power to impart light to those around us. We are not to be sad, but cheerful, and we are to keep the Lord Jesus ever before us. He is soon coming, and we must be ready and waiting for His appearing. Oh, how glorious it will be to see Him and be welcomed as His redeemed ones! Long have we waited, but our hope is not to grow dim. If we can but see the King in His beauty we shall be forever blessed. I feel as if I must cry aloud: ‘Homeward bound!’ We are nearing the time when Christ will come in power and great glory to take His ransomed ones to their eternal home.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 253.

5. Who alone can be at peace in view of the greatly anticipated coming of the Lord? What have all of God's people longed for throughout the ages? 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 6; Revelation 22:7.

"On rocky Patmos the beloved disciple hears the promise, 'Surely I come quickly,' and his longing response voices the prayer of the church in all her pilgrimage, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Revelation 22:20.

"From the dungeon, the stake, the scaffold, where saints and martyrs witnessed for the truth, comes down the centuries the utterance of their faith and hope. Being 'assured of His personal resurrection, and consequently of their own at His coming, for this cause,' says one of these Christians, 'they despised death, and were found to be above it.' –Daniel T. Taylor, *The Reign of Christ on Earth: or, The Voice of the Church in All Ages*, page 33. They were willing to go down to the grave, that they might 'rise free.' –*Ibid.*, page 54. They looked for the 'Lord to come from heaven in the clouds with the glory of His Father,' 'bringing to the just the times of the kingdom.' The Waldenses cherished the same faith. –*Ibid.*, pages 129-132. Wycliffe looked forward to the Redeemer's appearing as the hope of the church. –*Ibid.*, pages 132-134." –*The Great Controversy*, pp. 302, 303.

6. As what is the glorious manifestation of our Saviour described? With what eagerness did the Reformers await the coming of the Lord? When did Luther expect this to happen? Titus 2:13.

"Luther declared: 'I persuade myself verily, that the day of judgment will not be absent full three hundred years. God will not, cannot, suffer this wicked world much longer.' 'The great day is drawing near in which the kingdom of abominations shall be overthrown.' –*Ibid.*, pages 158, 134." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 303.

7. In what manner will Jesus appear the second time? What did Melancthon and Calvin, Knox, Ridley, Latimer, and Baxter say about this event?

"'This aged world is not far from its end,' said Melancthon. Calvin bids Christians 'not to hesitate, ardently desiring the day of Christ's coming as of all events most auspicious,' and declares that 'the whole family of the faith-

ful will keep in view that day.' 'We must hunger after Christ, we must seek, contemplate,' he says, 'till the dawning of that great day, when our Lord will fully manifest the glory of His kingdom.' —*Ibid.*, pp. 158, 134.

"Has not the Lord Jesus carried up our flesh into heaven?" said Knox, the Scotch Reformer, 'and shall He not return? We know that He shall return, and that with expedition.' Ridley and Latimer, who laid down their lives for the truth, looked in faith for the Lord's coming. Ridley wrote: 'The world without doubt—this I do believe, and therefore I say it—draws to an end. Let us with John, the servant of God, cry in our hearts unto our Saviour Christ, Come, Lord Jesus, come.' —*Ibid.*, pp. 151, 145.

"The thoughts of the coming of the Lord,' said Baxter, 'are most sweet and joyful to me.' —Richard Baxter, *Works*, vol. 17, p. 555. 'It is the work of faith and the character of His saints to love His appearing and to look for that blessed hope.' 'If death be the last enemy to be destroyed at the resurrection, we may learn how earnestly believers should long and pray for the second coming of Christ, when this full and final conquest shall be made.' —*Ibid.*, vol. 17, p. 500. 'This is the day that all believers should long, and hope, and wait for, as being the accomplishment of all the work of their redemption, and all the desires and endeavors of their souls.' 'Hasten, O Lord, this blessed day!' —*Ibid.*, vol. 17, pp. 182, 183." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 303, 304.

FOR MEDITATION

"Christ continues, pointing out the condition of the world at His coming: 'As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.' Christ does not here bring to view a temporal millennium, a thousand years in which all are to prepare for eternity. He tells us that as it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of man comes again....

"Because we know not the exact time of His coming, we are commanded to watch. 'Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.'" —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 633, 634.

* * *

Armageddon

“Two great opposing powers are revealed in the last great battle. On one side stands the Creator of heaven and earth. All on His side bear His signet. They are obedient to His commands. On the other side stands the prince of darkness, with those who have chosen apostasy and rebellion.” —(*The Review and Herald*, May 7, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 982, 983.

PROMOTERS AND PARTICIPANTS

1. Who will participate in the war of Armageddon, willingly or unwillingly? Revelation 11:18.

“I saw that the anger of the nations, the wrath of God, and the time to judge the dead, were separate and distinct, one following the other; also that Michael had not stood up, and that the time of trouble, such as never was, had not yet commenced. The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the seven last plagues will be poured out.” —*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 116.

2. To whom do the participants thus surrender? Who will never willingly let them go? Revelation 16:14.

“Angels are holding the four winds, which are represented as an angry horse seeking to break loose and rush over the face of the whole earth, bearing destruction and death in its path.

“A terrible conflict is before us. We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held in control is to be let loose. The angel of mercy is folding her wings, preparing to step down from the throne and leave the world to the control of Satan. The principalities and powers of earth are in bitter revolt against the God of heaven. They are filled with hatred against those who serve Him, and soon, very soon, will be fought the last great battle between good and evil. The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory.” —*My Life Today*, p. 308.

- 3. Considering that brethren from the Adventist organization have already taken part in various wars, what can we expect that they will do in the future war if they do not accept the call of reformation? Revelation 3:16, 17; Isaiah 1:21.**

Some of the wars in which members of the Adventist organization are known to have participated include World War I (1914-1918), the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932-1935), World War II (1939-1945), the Korean War (1950), the Vietnam War (1964-1975), the Malvinas War (Falkland Islands) (1982), the Persian Gulf War (1990-1991), and the Iraq War (2003 to the present).

“The people of God were represented to me as in a backslidden state. They have not an eye single to the glory of God. Their own glory is prominent. They seek to glorify themselves and yet call themselves Christians....

“I have tried in the fear of God to set before His people their danger and their sins, and have endeavored, to the best of my feeble powers, to arouse them. I have stated startling things, which, if they had believed, would have caused them distress and terror, and led them to zeal in repenting of their sins and iniquities. I have stated before them that, from what was shown me, but a small number of those now professing to believe the truth would eventually be saved—not because they could not be saved, but because they would not be saved in God’s own appointed way. The way marked out by our divine Lord is too narrow and the gate too strait to admit them while grasping the world or while cherishing selfishness or sin of any kind. There is no room for these things; and yet there are but few who will consent to part with them, that they may pass the narrow way and enter the strait gate.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 444-446.

- 4. With what debatable arguments did the leaders of the church allow their members to take part in this destructive work? Romans 13:1.**

“There is a prospect before us of a continued struggle at the risk of imprisonment, loss of property, and even of life itself, to defend the law of God, which is made void by the laws of men. In this situation worldly policy will urge an outward compliance with the laws of the land, for the sake of peace and harmony. And there are some who will even urge such a course from the Scripture: ‘Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.... The powers that be are ordained of God.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 712.

- 5. What arguments has the Adventist organization presented ever since World War I to encourage the participation of its members in armed conflicts? Nevertheless, what is God's will? Deuteronomy 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25; Proverbs 14:12; Psalm 106:3.**

"We have taken the position that in these circumstances each person should act according to his own conscience." –President of the General Conference A.G. Daniells, in Friedensau, Germany, July 1920, in the *Protokoll der Verhandlung mit der Gegenbewegung* (Minutes of the Discussion with the Opposition Movement), p. 36.

"We grant to each of our church members absolute liberty to serve his country at all times and in all places, in accord with the dictates of his personal conscientious conviction." –*Review and Herald*, March 6, 1924.

"God has given men no liberty to depart from His requirements. The Lord had declared to Israel, 'Ye shall not do ... every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes;' but ye shall 'observe and hear all these words which I command thee.' Deuteronomy 12:8, 28. In deciding upon any course of action we are not to ask whether we can see that harm will result from it, but whether it is in keeping with the will of God. 'There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.' Proverbs 14:12." –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 634.

"Were men free to depart from the Lord's requirements and to set up a standard of duty for themselves, there would be a variety of standards to suit different minds and the government would be taken out of the Lord's hands. The will of man would be made supreme, and the high and holy will of God—His purpose of love toward His creatures—would be dishonored, disrespected.

"Whenever men choose their own way, they place themselves in controversy with God." –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 51, 52.

- 6. By following their country's command, in what dangerous situation did the brethren of the Adventist Church find themselves during World War II? Can a personal freedom that allows people of the same faith to fight against and kill each other on opposing fronts come from God?**

Face to face on the Battlefield. One dark, quiet night, a soldier in his foxhole heard a religious hymn being whistled behind an enemy trench; it was a melody he recognized as a hymn from the Zionslieder [the German Adventist Hymnal]. He climbed up and, after some minutes of listening, asked the whistler with a voice as from the grave: "Are you a brother?"

From the darkness a voice was heard floating over the barren waste that lay between them: “Yes, I am a brother.” After sharing a moment of worship together in the darkness, they returned to their assigned watch in the night—two brothers who lay in deadly peril and who were on opposing sides of the conflict, waiting for the day and the battle to begin again. —Paraphrased from *The Review and Herald*, June 1947.

WE CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS

7. Who will gather the nations for the battle of Armageddon? Can anyone be saved or represent God’s church while taking part in such a war? Revelation 16:14-17.

“When existing evils are not met and checked, because men have too little courage to reprove wrong, or because they have too little interest or are too indolent to tax their own powers in putting forth earnest efforts to purify the family or the church of God, they are accountable for the evil which may result in consequence of neglect to do their duty. We are just as accountable for evils that we might have checked in others, by reproof, by warning, by exercise of parental or pastoral authority, as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.” —*Gospel Workers*, 1892 edition, p. 83.

8. What dual role does Satan play especially during the period of the seventh trumpet? 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

“Through spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith; but at the same time he works as a destroyer. His temptations are leading multitudes to ruin. Intemperance dethrones reason; sensual indulgence, strife, and bloodshed follow. Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 589.

FOR MEDITATION

“The present is a solemn, fearful time for the church. The angels are already girded, awaiting the mandate of God to pour their vials of wrath upon the world. Destroying angels are taking up the work of vengeance; for the Spirit of God is gradually withdrawing from the world. Satan is also mustering his forces of evil,

going forth ‘unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world,’ to gather them under his banner, to be trained for ‘the battle of that great day of God Almighty.’ Satan is to make most powerful efforts for the mastery in the last great conflict. Fundamental principles will be brought out, and decisions made in regard to them. Skepticism is prevailing everywhere. Ungodliness abounds. The faith of individual members of the church will be tested as though there were not another person in the world.” —(Manuscript 1a, 1890) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 983.

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Sabbath, July 17, 2010

Worldliness and Fashion

“It was the adversary of all good who instigated the invention of the ever-changing fashions. He desires nothing so much as to bring grief and dishonor to God by working the misery and ruin of human beings. One of the means by which he most effectually accomplishes this is the devices of fashion, that weaken the body, as well as enfeeble the mind and belittle the soul.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 91.

THE ORIGIN OF FASHION

- 1. What can be said regarding the influence of fashion in the last days? What can no longer be easily differentiated? Who invented fashion and continues to demand that it be followed? Job 15:31; Isaiah 3:16-24.**

“The prophecy of Isaiah 3 was presented before me as applying to these last days, and the reproofs are given to the daughters of Zion who have thought only of appearance and display. Read verse 25: ‘Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.’ I was shown that this scripture will be strictly fulfilled. Young men and women professing to be Christians, yet having no Christian experience, and having borne no burdens and felt no individual responsibility, are to be proved. They will be brought low in the dust and will long for an experience in the things of God, which they have failed to obtain.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 270.

“Satan is constantly devising some new style of dress that shall prove an injury to physical and moral health; and he exults when he sees professed Christians eagerly accepting the fashions that he has invented.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 599.

“There is but one woman in a thousand who clothes her limbs as she should.” —*Healthful Living*, p. 124.

NEGATIVE RESULTS

2. What does fashion arouse in the heart? What danger thus arises? 2 Peter 2:18.

“The love of dress endangers the morals and makes woman the opposite of the Christian lady, characterized by modesty and sobriety. Showy, extravagant dress too often encourages lust in the heart of the wearer and awakens base passions in the heart of the beholder.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 416.

“Fashion rules the world; and she is a tyrannical mistress, often compelling her devotees to submit to the greatest inconvenience and discomfort. Fashion taxes without reason and collects without mercy.... Satan triumphs that his devices succeed so well, and Death laughs at the health-destroying folly and blind zeal of the worshipers at Fashion’s shrine.... “It is a shame to our sisters to so forget their holy character and their duty to God as to imitate the fashions of the world.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 634, 641.

3. Who will turn from those who adhere to fashion and are not converted? How are the latter viewed in heaven? Matthew 5:8; James 4:4.

“I saw that the outside appearance is an index to the heart. When the exterior is hung with ribbons, collars, and needless things, it plainly shows that the love for all this is in the heart; unless such persons are cleansed from their corruption, they can never see God, for only the pure in heart will see Him....

“God will have a people separate and distinct from the world. And as soon as any have a desire to imitate the fashions of the world, that they do not immediately subdue, just so soon God ceases to acknowledge them as His children. They are the children of the world and of darkness.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 136, 137.

FASHION AND THE CHURCH’S RESPONSIBILITY

4. What does following fashion cause in the church? 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 John 2:15-17.

“There is a terrible sin upon us as a people, that we have permitted our church members to dress in a manner inconsistent with their faith. We must

arise at once and close the door against the allurements of fashion. Unless we do this, our churches will become demoralized....

“Do not, my sisters, trifle longer with your own souls and with God. I have been shown that the main cause of your backsliding is your love of dress. This leads to the neglect of grave responsibilities, and you find yourselves with scarcely a spark of the love of God in your hearts. Without delay, renounce the cause of your backsliding, because it is sin against your own soul and against God. Be not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Fashion is deteriorating the intellect and eating out the spirituality of our people. Obedience to fashion is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God. I have been shown that our church rules are very deficient. All exhibitions of pride in dress, which is forbidden in the word of God, should be sufficient reason for church discipline. If there is a continuance, in face of warnings and appeals and entreaties, to still follow the perverse will, it may be regarded as proof that the heart is in no way assimilated to Christ. Self, and only self, is the object of adoration, and one such professed Christian will lead many away from God.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 647, 648.

5. Therefore, what role of God’s church is particularly valuable? Ezekiel 33:7.

“All matters of dress should be strictly guarded, following closely the Bible rule.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 430.

“So far as his opportunities extend, everyone who has received the light of truth is under the same responsibility as was the prophet of Israel....” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 19.

“The words of the prophet declare the solemn responsibility of those who are appointed as guardians of the church of God, stewards of the mysteries of God. They are to stand as watchmen on the walls of Zion, to sound the note of alarm at the approach of the enemy. Souls are in danger of falling under temptation, and they will perish unless God’s ministers are faithful to their trust. If for any reason their spiritual senses become so benumbed that they are unable to discern danger, and through their failure to give warning the people perish, God will require at their hands the blood of those who are lost.

It is the privilege of the watchmen on the walls of Zion to live so near to God, and to be susceptible to the impressions of His Spirit, that He can work through them to tell men and women of their peril and point them to the place of safety. Faithfully are they to warn them of the sure result of transgression, and faithfully are they to safeguard the interests of the church. At no time may they relax their vigilance. Theirs is a work requiring the exercise of every faculty of the being. In trumpet tones their voices are to be lifted, and never are they to sound one wavering, uncertain note.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 361.

6. What is one of the main reasons for spiritual blindness? Revelation 16:15; 1 Kings 18:21.

“In these last days, fashions are shameful and immodest. They are noticed in prophecy. They were first brought in by a class over whom Satan has entire control, who, ‘being past feeling [without any conviction of the Spirit of God] have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.’ If God’s professed people had not greatly departed from Him, there would now be a marked difference between their dress and that of the world.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 189.

DRESS REFORM

7. What is the meaning of reform in dress? Matthew 10:38.

“True dress reform regulates every article of clothing.” —*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 90.

“To protect the people of God from the corrupting influence of the world, as well as to promote physical and moral health, the dress reform was introduced among us.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 598.

“The dress reform is treated by some with great indifference and by others with contempt, because there is a cross attached to it. For this cross I thank God. It is just what we need to distinguish and separate God’s commandment-keeping people from the world.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 171.

FOR MEDITATION

“I beg of our people to walk carefully and circumspectly before God. Follow the customs in dress so far as they conform to health principles. Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good, durable material, appropriate for this age, and let not the dress question fill the mind. Our sisters should dress with simplicity. They should clothe themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. Give to the world a living illustration of the inward adorning of the grace of God.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 414.

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Sabbath, July 24, 2010

Unfaithfulness in Health Reform

“The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, who, if they had conquered on this point, would have had the moral power to gain the victory over every other temptation. But those who are slaves to appetite will fail of perfecting Christian character. The continual transgression of man for over six thousand years has brought sickness, pain, and death as its fruit. And as we draw near the close of time, Satan’s temptations to indulge appetite will be more powerful, and more difficult to resist.” —*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 154.

GLORIFYING GOD

1. **What is our body, and what should we therefore do? What has God given His people so they will be healthy and prepared for the latter rain? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.**

“Many seem to think they have a right to treat their own bodies as they please, but they forget that their bodies are not their own. Their Creator, who formed them, has claims upon them that they cannot rightly throw off. Every needless transgression of the laws which God has established in our being is virtually a violation of the law of God, and is as great a sin in the sight of Heaven as to break the Ten Commandments. Ignorance upon this important subject is sin;...” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 40.

“... The health reform is one branch of the great work which is to fit a people for the coming of the Lord. It is as closely connected with the third angel’s message as the hand is with the body.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 69.

GRAVES OF LUST

2. **What did unconverted people covet in the past, which influenced the children of Israel? Numbers 11:4.**

“If light is turned from in one case, it will be disregarded in another. It is just as much sin to violate the laws of our being as to break one of the ten commandments, for we cannot do either without breaking God’s law.

We cannot love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength while we are loving our appetites, our tastes, a great deal better than we love the Lord.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 45.

“A diet of flesh meat tends to develop animalism. A development of animalism lessens spirituality, rendering the mind incapable of understanding truth.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 576.

“I was instructed that the use of flesh meat has a tendency to animalize the nature, and to rob men and women of the love and sympathy which they should feel for every one. We are built up from that which we eat, and those whose diet is largely composed of animal food are brought into a condition where they allow the lower passions to assume control of the high powers of the being....” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 390.

3. What serious consequences resulted for all who were overcome by carnal desires? What happens to those in our days who are overcome by the same lust or are only half converted to the principles of health reform? Numbers 11:20, 33, 34; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 7, 11.

“God gave the light on health reform, and those who rejected it rejected God.” —*General Conference Bulletin*, April 6, 1903.

“The eating of food that does not make good blood is working against the laws of our physical organism, and is a violation of the law of God. The cause produces the effect. Suffering, disease, and death are the sure penalty of indulgence.” —(Letter 123, 1899) *Evangelism*, p. 265.

“Many who are now only half converted on the question of meat eating will go from God’s people to walk no more with them.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 382.

“In the book *Living Temple* there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 200.

“The Saviour presents to us something higher to toil for than merely what we shall eat and drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. Eating, drinking, and dressing are carried to such excess that they become crimes. They are among the marked sins of the last days, and constitute a sign of Christ’s soon coming. Time, money, and strength, which belong to the Lord, but which He has entrusted to us, are wasted in superfluities of dress and luxuries for the perverted appetite, which lessen vitality, and bring suffering and decay. It is impossible to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God when we continually fill them with corruption and disease by our own sinful indulgence.” —*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 12.

- 4. According to the Faithful Witness, what will happen to those who are lukewarm and remain in this condition? What substances detrimental to health must be discarded? Revelation 3:15, 16; Matthew 7:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 10:31.**

“Tea, coffee, and flesh meats, produce an immediate effect. Under the influence of these poisons the nervous system is excited. In some cases, for the time being, the intellect seems to be invigorated and the imagination more vivid. Because this is the result of these stimulants, many conclude that they really need them, and continue the use of those things which produce for the time being such agreeable results. But there is always an after result. There is reaction.” —*The Health Reformer*, August 1, 1875.

- 5. What will happen to those who receive light that will benefit their health but do not walk accordingly? What remedies should we use when needed? Matthew 7:23; 1 John 3:3-8.**

“Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature’s remedial agencies and how to apply them. It is essential both to understand the principles involved in the treatment of the sick and to have a practical training that will enable one rightly to use this knowledge.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 366.

“... The sooner we as a people stand on the principles of health reform, the greater will be the blessing that will come to those who would do true medical work. There is a work to be done in treating the sick with water and teaching them to make the most of sunshine and physical exercise. Thus in simple language we may teach the people how to preserve health, how to avoid sickness. This is the work our sanitariums are called upon to do. This is true science.” —*Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 137.

PREPARATION IN DUE TIME

- 6. What do we need to do today to be prepared on the great day when our Lord appears? Matthew 7:22-25.**

“December 10, 1871, I was again shown that the health reform is one branch of the great work which is to fit a people for the coming of the Lord. It is as closely connected with the third angel’s message as the hand is with

the body. The law of ten commandments has been lightly regarded by man; but the Lord would not come to punish the transgressors of that law without first sending them a message of warning. The third angel proclaims that message....

“Men will never be truly temperate until the grace of Christ is an abiding principle in the heart....

“Circumstances cannot work reforms. Christianity proposes a reformation in the heart. What Christ works within, will be worked out under the dictation of a converted intellect. The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed....” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 69, 35.

7. What call is made to us so we may be clean and walk in the way of sanctification? 2 Corinthians 7:1.

“One step in the wrong direction prepares the way for another. The least deviation from right principles will lead to separation from God, and may end in destruction. What we do once we more readily do again; and to go forward in a certain path, be it right or wrong, is more easy than to start.” —*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 32.

“This means that they must unlearn and cast away the supposed wonderful knowledge of how to treat disease with poisonous drugs. They must go to God’s great laboratory of nature, and there learn the simplest methods of using the remedies which the Lord has furnished.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16, p. 247.

“Medicines have no power to cure, but will most generally hinder nature in her efforts.” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 452, 453.

“There are many ways of practicing the healing art; but there is only one way that Heaven approves. God’s remedies are the simple agencies of nature, that will not tax or debilitate the system through their powerful properties.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 301.

8. What is expected of all members and workers who have received the light of health reform? 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

“If light is turned from in one case, it will be disregarded in another. It is just as much sin to violate the laws of our being as to break one of the ten commandments, for we cannot do either without breaking God’s law....

“Why do some of our ministering brethren manifest so little interest in health reform? It is because instruction on temperance in all things is opposed to their practice of self-indulgence. In some places this has been the great stumbling block in the way of our bringing the people to investigate and practice and teach health reform. No man should be set apart as

a teacher of the people while his own teaching or example contradicts the testimony God has given His servants to bear in regard to diet, for this will bring confusion. His disregard of health reform unfits him to stand as the Lord's messenger." —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 45, 453, 454.

FOR MEDITATION

"God has shown that health reform is as closely connected with the third angel's message as the hand is with the body. There is nowhere to be found so great a cause of physical and moral degeneracy as a neglect of this important subject....

"Whoever turns from the light in one instance hardens his heart to disregard the light upon other matters. Whoever violates moral obligations in the matter of eating and dressing, prepares the way to violate the claims of God in regard to eternal interests...." —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 71, 72.

"If men and women perseveringly live in accordance with the laws of life and of health, they will realize the blessed results of an entire health reform." —(*The Signs of the Times*, January 6, 1876) *Temperance*, p. 163.

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Sabbath July 31, 2010

Marital Problems

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

BATTLING AGAINST EVIL

1. Even if we think differently, what is sin? Matthew 5:28; James 1:14, 15.

"Jesus takes up the commandments separately, and explains the depth and breadth of their requirement.... He declares that by the evil thought or the lustful look the law of God is transgressed. One who becomes a party to the least injustice is breaking the law and degrading his own moral nature." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

"When the thought of evil is loved and cherished, however secretly, said Jesus, it shows that sin still reigns in the heart. The soul is still in the gall

of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. He who finds pleasure in dwelling upon scenes of impurity, who indulges the evil thought, the lustful look, may behold in the open sin, with its burden of shame and heart-breaking grief, the true nature of the evil which he has hidden in the chambers of the soul. The season of temptation, under which, it may be, one falls into grievous sin, does not create the evil that is revealed, but only develops or makes manifest that which was hidden and latent in the heart. As a man 'thinketh in his heart, so is he;' for out of the heart 'are the issues of life.' Proverbs 23:7; 4:23."—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 60.

2. How does the apostle Paul describe the battle against sin? 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7.

"There must be a revival of the strait testimony. The path to heaven is no smoother now than in the days of our Saviour. All our sins must be put away. Every darling indulgence that hinders our religious life must be cut off. The right eye or the right hand must be sacrificed if it cause us to offend. Are we willing to renounce our own wisdom and to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child? Are we willing to part with self-righteousness? Are we willing to give up our chosen worldly associates? Are we willing to sacrifice the approbation of men? The prize of eternal life is of infinite value. Will we put forth efforts and make sacrifices proportionate to the worth of the object to be attained?"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 222.

LIVING WITH JESUS

3. What has to be crucified? How is this possible? Galatians 2:20; 5:24.

"We must war against temptations without and within. We must gain the victory over self, crucify the affections and lusts; and then begins the union of the soul with Christ."—*Lift Him Up*, p. 340.

"When the apostle Paul, through the revelation of Christ, was converted from a persecutor to a Christian, he declared that he was as one born out of due time. Henceforward Christ was all and in all to him. 'For to me to live is Christ,' he declared. This is the most perfect interpretation in a few words, in all the Scriptures, of what it means to be a Christian. This is the whole truth of the gospel. Paul understood what many seem unable to comprehend. How intensely in earnest he was! His words show that his mind was centered in Christ, that his whole life was bound up with his Lord. Christ was the author, the support, and the source of his life."—(*The Review and Herald*, October 19, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 903.

4. What will be the position of a true Christian concerning moral purity? What can happen if we allow even one sinful trait of character to continue? Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 16:13.

“Every Christian must stand on guard continually, watching every avenue of the soul where Satan might find access. He must pray for divine help and at the same time resolutely resist every inclination to sin. By courage, by faith, by persevering toil, he can conquer. But let him remember that to gain the victory Christ must abide in him and he in Christ.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 403.

“Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. The prevalence of a sinful desire shows the delusion of the soul. Every indulgence of that desire strengthens the soul’s aversion to God. The pains of duty and the pleasures of sin are the cords with which Satan binds men in his snares.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 53.

SIN’S CONSEQUENCES

5. Who is truly aware of his own sin? Proverbs 16:2.

“There are few who feel true sorrow for sin, who have deep, pungent convictions of the depravity of the unregenerate nature. The heart of stone is not exchanged for a heart of flesh. Few are willing to fall upon the Rock and be broken.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 218.

6. What is the state of morality in many cases today, including in the marriage relationship? Matthew 24:37-39.

“Impurity is today widespread, even among the professed followers of Christ. Passion is unrestrained; the animal propensities are gaining strength by indulgence, while the moral powers are constantly becoming weaker.... The sins that destroyed the antediluvians and the cities of the plain exist today—not merely in heathen lands, not only among popular professors of Christianity, but with some who profess to be looking for the coming of the Son of man. If God should present these sins before you as they appear in His sight, you would be filled with shame and terror.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 218 (1882).

According to certain statistics, in one country in Europe the number of separations and divorces has grown considerably in the last ten years. In the year 1995, out of 1,000 marriages 158 ended in separation and 80 in divorce;

10 years later, separations increased to 272 and divorces to 151. This means that in the last few years, separations and divorces have increased at a rate of 57%.

In North America, the problem is even worse. For the past decade, the overall American divorce rate has been at around 50% for first marriages. The statistics become more depressing for each successive marriage, with 65% of second marriages ending in divorce and even higher rates for third marriages and beyond.

THE LAW OF EDEN

7. On the other hand, what divine principle came from Eden in regard to marriage, which was established for all time? Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5, 6; 1 Corinthians 7:39.

“He [Christ] referred them to the blessed days of Eden, when God pronounced all things ‘very good.’ Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall ‘leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one’ (Genesis 2:24), He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the Eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 63, 64.

FOR MEDITATION

“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honorable’ (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

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Moral Degeneracy

“If you have any hope of being finally exalted to join the company of the pure, sinless angels and to live in an atmosphere where there is not the least taint of sin, cherish modesty and virtue. Nothing but purity, sacred purity, will stand the grand review, abide the day of God, and be received into a pure and holy heaven.” —*Counsels on Health*, pp. 611, 612.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REMNANT

1. What should be the position of true Adventists in regard to moral purity? Revelation 14:12.

“Seventh-day Adventists, above all other people in the world, should be patterns of piety, holy in heart and in conversation.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 568.

“The people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming.” —*Evangelism*, p. 695.

“Seventh-day Adventists, who profess to be looking for and loving the appearing of Christ, should not follow the course of worldlings.... Commandment-keeping Adventists occupy a peculiar, exalted position. John viewed them in holy vision and thus described them: ‘Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 450.

TERRIBLE CONDITIONS

2. Nevertheless, what is the general situation? Revelation 3:15; 1 Peter 2:11.

“The people of God are unready for the fearful, trying scenes before us, unready to stand pure from evil and lust amid the perils and corruptions of this degenerate age.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 446.

“But all who profess to keep the commandments of God are not possessing their bodies in sanctification and honor. They can have a powerful influence if they will be sanctified by the truths they profess.” —*A Solemn Appeal*, p. 142.

“Their own vileness will terrify them in that day which is soon to come upon us, a day when ‘the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.’ Oh, that terror might now lay hold upon them, that they might have a vivid sense of their condition and arouse while there is mercy and hope, confess their sins, and humble their souls greatly before God, that He might pardon their transgressions and heal their backslidings!” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 446.

3. What circumstances prevail among the people of God? What warning was given as early as 1870? Luke 22:46; Matthew 20:16.

“I have tried in the fear of God to set before His people their danger and their sins, and have endeavored, to the best of my feeble powers, to arouse them. I have stated startling things, which, if they had believed, would have caused them distress and terror, and led them to zeal in repenting of their sins and iniquities. I have stated before them that, from what was shown me, but a small number of those now professing to believe the truth would eventually be saved....” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 445.

THE ARMOR OF THE OVERCOMERS

4. What armor will be worn by every sincere child of God to fight against evil? Ephesians 6:11-18.

“They have not on the armor of righteousness, and are unprepared to war against the prevailing iniquity. Many are not obeying the commandments of God, yet they profess so to do. If they would be faithful to obey all the statutes of God they would have a power which would carry conviction to the hearts of the unbelieving.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 446, 447.

LEAVE THE BROAD WAY

5. Why will many among the people of God not reach the goal? Where are those who are indifferent, impenitent, and disobedient actually walking? Matthew 7:13, 14; 1 Kings 18:21.

“The way marked out by our divine Lord was too narrow and the gate too strait to admit them with their grasp upon the world, or while cherishing selfishness, or any corruption. All these there was no room for, and there are but few who will consent to part with these things, that they may pass the narrow way, and enter the strait gate.” —*Appeal to the Battle Creek Church*, p. 10.

6. What happens with a sin that is not confessed and abandoned? Ezekiel 24:13; Romans 6:16; 2:9.

“By continuing their course of sin, they are violating their consciences, hardening their hearts, and stiffening their necks, just the same as though the testimony had been borne directly to them. In passing on and refusing to put away their sins and correct their wrongs by humble confession, repentance, and humiliation, they choose their own way, and are given up to the same, and are finally led captive by Satan at his will. They may become quite bold because they are able to conceal their sins from others and because the judgments of God do not come in a visible manner upon them. They may be apparently prosperous in this world. They may deceive poor, shortsighted mortals and be regarded as patterns of piety while in their sins. But God cannot be deceived.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 447, 448.

A SOLEMN MESSAGE TO GOD’S PEOPLE

7. Therefore, what solemn message comes to God’s people now? Romans 6:12, 13.

“Professed Christians, if there is no further light given you than that contained in this text [Romans 6:12, 13], you will be without excuse if you suffer yourselves to be controlled by base passions....

“The most solemn message ever committed to mortals has been intrusted to this people, and they can have a powerful influence if they will be sanctified by the truths they profess. They profess to be standing upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, keeping all of God’s commandments; therefore, if they indulge in sin, if they commit fornication and adultery, their crime is of tenfold greater magnitude than the classes I have named who do not acknowledge the law of God binding upon them.” —*Appeal to the Battle Creek Church*, pp. 23, 17.

FOR MEDITATION

“... The people who profess to keep the law of God, He corrects, He reproves, He points out their sins, and lays open their iniquity; because He wishes to separate all sin and wickedness from them, that they may perfect holiness in His fear, and be prepared to die in the Lord, or for translation to heaven. God will rebuke, reprove, and correct them, that they may be refined, sanctified, elevated, and finally exalted to His own throne.” —*Appeal to the Battle Creek Church*, p. 20.

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Other Temptations

“He [the apostle Paul] entreated those who were followers of Jesus in heathen communities not to walk ‘as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God ... because of the blindness of their heart,’ but ‘circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.’ Ephesians 4:14, 13, 17, 18; 5:15, 16. He encouraged the believers to look forward to the time when Christ, who ‘loved the church, and gave Himself for it,’ would ‘present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing’—a church ‘holy and without blemish.’ Ephesians 5:25, 27.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 470.

DO NOT MIX DARKNESS AND LIGHT

1. What danger do God’s children constantly face? James 4:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

“It was by associating with idolaters and joining in their festivities that the Hebrews were led to transgress God’s law and bring His judgments upon the nation. So now it is by leading the followers of Christ to associate with the ungodly and unite in their amusements that Satan is most successful in alluring them into sin. ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean.’ 2 Corinthians 6:17. God requires of His people now as great a distinction from the world, in customs, habits, and principles, as He required of Israel anciently. If they faithfully follow the teachings of His word, this distinction will exist; it cannot be otherwise. The warnings given to the Hebrews against assimilating with the heathen were not more direct or explicit than are those forbidding Christians to conform to the spirit and customs of the ungodly. Christ speaks to us, ‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.’ 1 John 2:15. ‘The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.’ James 4:4. The followers of Christ are to separate themselves from sinners, choosing their society only when there is opportunity to do them good. We cannot be too decided in shunning the company of those who exert an influence to draw us away from God. While we pray, ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ we are to shun temptation, so far as possible.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 458, 459.

- 2. Can the lusts of the flesh please God? What does He say to His people through the Spirit of prophecy regarding football and boxing? Romans 8:5-8.**

“Some of the most popular amusements, such as football and boxing, have become schools of brutality. They are developing the same characteristics as did the games of ancient Rome. The love of domination, the pride in mere brute force, the reckless disregard of life, are exerting upon the youth a power to demoralize that is appalling.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 500.

- 3. What will happen if passion and personal desire determine one's decisions and practices? Are milder or less brutal sports beneficial? Romans 8:12, 13.**

“Other athletic games, though not so brutalizing, are scarcely less objectionable because of the excess to which they are carried. They stimulate the love of pleasure and excitement, thus fostering a distaste for useful labor, a disposition to shun practical duties and responsibilities. They tend to destroy a relish for life's sober realities and its tranquil enjoyments. Thus the door is opened to dissipation and lawlessness with their terrible results.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 500, 501.

TURNING FROM WORLDLY PRACTICES

- 4. What should be our attitude toward the practices of the world that are actually a form of idolatry? Considering what they can cause, what instruction did the Spirit of prophecy give regarding such sports as tennis and cricket? Titus 2:12; Romans 13:14.**

“In the night season I was a witness to the performance that was carried on on the school grounds. The students who engaged in the grotesque mimicry that was seen, acted out the mind of the enemy, some in a very unbecoming manner. A view of things was presented before me in which the students were playing games of tennis and cricket. Then I was given instruction regarding the character of these amusements. They were presented to me as a species of idolatry, like the idols of the nations.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 350.

“God ordained that the beings He created should work. Upon this their happiness depends. Healthy young men and women have no need of cricket, ball playing, or any kind of amusement just for the gratification of self to pass away the time. There are useful things to be done by every one of God’s created intelligences. Someone needs from you something that will help him.” —*Atlantic Union Gleaner*, January 6, 1904.

The ball playing mentioned above does not refer to the games of children, who throw and bounce balls, but rather to the sports so passionately practiced and watched by young people and adults and promoted in the media. —Carlos Kozel.

“I entreat the students in our schools to be sober-minded. The frivolity of the young is not pleasing to God. Their sports and games open the door to a flood of temptations. They are in possession of God’s heavenly endowment in their intellectual faculties, and they should not allow their thoughts to be cheap and low.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 366.

5. **As converted believers, can we continue enjoying what we did in our past life when we were in the world? What amusements does heaven also condemn, many of which were invented after Sister White’s death? Titus 3:3; Romans 6:17; Ephesians 5:8.**

“There are amusements, such as dancing, card playing, chess, checkers, etc., which we cannot approve because Heaven condemns them. These amusements open the door for great evil. They are not beneficial in their tendency, but have an exciting influence, producing in some minds a passion for those plays which lead to gambling and dissipation. All such plays should be condemned by Christians....” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 498.

CHANGED IDEAS AND CONDUCT

6. **If we have not yet experienced it, what should happen with the old man and his behavior? On what ground are those who go to billiard halls? Galatians 5:24; Ephesians 4:22-24.**

“There are students who visit the billiard rooms, and who engage in card playing, flattering themselves that there is no danger. Since their object is merely amusement, they feel perfectly safe. It is not the lower grade alone who do this. Some who have been carefully reared, and educated to look upon such things with abhorrence, are venturing upon the forbidden ground.” —*Christian Education*, p. 33.

7. How should we use the time we have left? 1 Peter 1:14; 4:2, 3; 2 Peter 3:11, 14.

“The Christian life is constantly an onward march. Jesus sits as a refiner and purifier of His people; and when His image is perfectly reflected in them, they are perfect and holy, and prepared for translation. A great work is required of the Christian. We are exhorted to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Here we see where the great labor rests. There is a constant work for the Christian. Every branch in the parent vine must derive life and strength from that vine, in order to yield fruit.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 340.

FOR MEDITATION

“All who name the name of Christ need to watch and pray and guard the avenues of the soul, for Satan is at work to corrupt and destroy if the least advantage is given him.

“It is not safe for us to linger to contemplate the advantages to be reaped through yielding to Satan’s suggestions. Sin means dishonor and disaster to every soul that indulges in it; but it is blinding and deceiving in its nature, and it will entice us with flattering presentations. If we venture on Satan’s ground, we have no assurance of protection from his power. So far as in us lies, we should close every avenue by which the tempter may find access to us.

“Who can know, in the moment of temptation, the terrible consequences which will result from one wrong, hasty step! Our only safety is to be shielded by the grace of God every moment, and not put out our own spiritual eyesight so that we will call evil, good, and good, evil. Without hesitation or argument we must close and guard the avenues of the soul against evil.

“Every Christian must stand on guard continually, watching every avenue of the soul where Satan might find access. He must pray for divine help and at the same time resolutely resist every inclination to sin. By courage, by faith, by persevering toil, he can conquer. But let him remember that to gain the victory Christ must abide in him and he in Christ.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 402, 403.

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Improper Gatherings

“While we are seeking to refresh our spirits and invigorate our bodies we are required of God to use all our powers at all times to the best purpose. We can, and should, conduct our recreations in such a manner that we shall be better fitted for the more successful discharge of the duties devolving upon us, and our influence will be more beneficial upon those with whom we associate. We can return from such occasions to our homes improved in mind and refreshed in body, and prepared to engage in the work anew with better hope and better courage.” —*Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students*, p. 336.

A SPECIAL PLACE

1. **What can and should God’s church be upon this earth? John 1:51; Genesis 28:16, 17.**

“If the people of God would appreciate His word, we should have a heaven in the church here below. Christians would be eager, hungry, to search the word. They would be anxious for time to compare scripture with scripture....” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 193.

IMPROPER GATHERINGS AND PLACES

2. **How does the Lord prove the sincerity of our faith? What does He require of us? Matthew 7:16-20; Isaiah 52:11; 2 Corinthians 6:17.**

“Every true follower of Jesus will have sacrifices to make. God will prove them, and test the genuineness of their faith. I have been shown that picnics, donations, shows, and other gatherings of pleasure, the true followers of Jesus will discard. They can find no Jesus there, and no influence which will make them heavenly minded, and increase their growth in grace. The word of God obeyed, leads us to come out from all these things and be separate. The things of the world are sought for, and considered worthy to be admired and enjoyed by all those who are not devoted lovers of the cross, and are not spiritual worshipers of a crucified Jesus.” —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4b, pp. 78, 79.

3. What kind of gatherings and excursions does the Lord forbid? 1 Corinthians 15:33; 5:6, second part.

“There are modes of recreation which are highly beneficial to both mind and body. An enlightened, discriminating mind will find abundant means for entertainment and diversion, from sources not only innocent, but instructive. Recreation in the open air, the contemplation of the works of God in nature, will be of the highest benefit.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 496.

“But there has been a class of social gatherings in _____ of an entirely different character, parties of pleasure that have been a disgrace to our institutions and to the church. They encourage pride of dress, pride of appearance, self-gratification, hilarity, and trifling. Satan is entertained as an honored guest and takes possession of those who patronize these gatherings.

“A view of one such company was presented to me, where were assembled those who profess to believe the truth. One was seated at the instrument of music, and such songs were poured forth as made the watching angels weep. There was mirth, there was coarse laughter, there was abundance of enthusiasm, and a kind of inspiration; but the joy was such as Satan only is able to create. This is an enthusiasm and infatuation of which all who love God will be ashamed. It prepares the participants for unholy thought and action. I have reason to think that some who were engaged in that scene heartily repented of the shameful performance.

“Many such gatherings have been presented to me. I have seen the gaiety, the display in dress, the personal adornment. All want to be thought brilliant and give themselves up to hilarity, foolish jesting, cheap, coarse flattery, and uproarious laughter. The eyes sparkle, the cheek is flushed, conscience sleeps. With eating and drinking and merrymaking, they do their best to forget God. The scene of pleasure is their paradise. And Heaven is looking on, seeing and hearing all....” —*Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students*, pp. 339, 340.

4. What do many people think? Who imposes his authority upon them? 1 Peter 5:8.

“Many think it is of little importance what they do. It will do no harm for them to attend this concert, or unite with the world in that amusement, if they wish to do so. Thus Satan leads and controls their desires, and they do not consider that the results may be most momentous. It may be the link in the chain of events which binds a soul in the snare of Satan and determines his eternal ruin.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 92, 93.

- 5. What difference is there between picnics, like the ones mentioned above, and the excursions supported by the Testimonies? Psalms 22:25; 40:9, 10; 111:1.**

“Let several families living in a city or village unite and leave the occupations which have taxed them physically and mentally, and make an excursion into the country, to the side of a fine lake, or to a nice grove where the scenery of nature is beautiful. They should provide themselves with plain, hygienic food, the very best fruits and grains, and spread their table under the shade of some tree or under the canopy of heaven. The ride, the exercise, and the scenery will quicken the appetite, and they can enjoy a repast which kings might envy.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 501.

- 6. What friendly social gatherings are pleasant to the Lord? Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.**

“Gatherings for social intercourse are made in the highest degree profitable and instructive when those who meet together have the love of God glowing in their hearts, when they meet to exchange thoughts in regard to the word of God or to consider methods for advancing His work and doing good to their fellow men. When the Holy Spirit is regarded as a welcome guest at these gatherings, when nothing is said or done to grieve Him away, God is honored, and those who meet together are refreshed and strengthened.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 502, 503.

- 7. Where is the best recreation for body, mind, and spirit? What places did the Lord Jesus choose when He needed rest and recreation? Psalms 19:1-6; 97:6, first part.**

“The Saviour’s life on earth was a life of communion with nature and with God. In this communion He revealed for us the secret of a life of power....

“The childhood of Jesus, spent in poverty, had been uncorrupted by the artificial habits of a corrupt age. Working at the carpenter’s bench, bearing the burdens of home life, learning the lessons of obedience and toil, He found recreation amidst the scenes of nature, gathering knowledge as He sought to understand nature’s mysteries. He studied the word of God, and His hours of greatest happiness were found when He could turn aside from the scene of His labors to go into the fields, to meditate in the quiet valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside or amid the trees of the forest. The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, search-

ing the Scriptures, or in prayer. With the voice of singing He welcomed the morning light. With songs of thanksgiving He cheered His hours of labor and brought heaven's gladness to the toilworn and disheartened.

"During His ministry Jesus lived to a great degree an outdoor life. His journeys from place to place were made on foot, and much of His teaching was given in the open air. In training His disciples He often withdrew from the confusion of the city to the quiet of the fields, as more in harmony with the lessons of simplicity, faith, and self-abnegation He desired to teach them. It was beneath the sheltering trees of the mountainside, but a little distance from the Sea of Galilee, that the Twelve were called to the apostolate and the Sermon on the Mount was given." —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 51-53.

FOR MEDITATION

"We are of that class who believe that it is our privilege every day of our lives to glorify God upon the earth; that we are not to live in this world merely for our own amusement, merely to please ourselves. We are here to benefit humanity and to be a blessing to society; and if we let our minds run in that low channel that many who are seeking only vanity and folly permit their minds to run in, how can we be a benefit to our race and generation? how can we be a blessing to society around us? We cannot innocently indulge in any amusement which will unfit us for the more faithful discharge of ordinary duties.

"Between the associations of the followers of Christ for Christian recreation, and worldly gatherings for pleasure and amusement, will exist a marked contrast.... Our gatherings should be so conducted, and we should so conduct ourselves, that when we return to our homes we can have a conscience void of offense toward God and man; a consciousness that we have not wounded or injured in any manner those with whom we have been associated, or had an injurious influence over them." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 336, 337.

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Continual Deception

“Parents should endeavor to keep out of the home every influence that is not productive of good. In this matter some parents have much to learn. To those who feel free to read story magazines and novels I would say: You are sowing seed the harvest of which you will not care to garner. From such reading there is no spiritual strength to be gained. Rather it destroys love for the pure truth of the word. Through the agency of novels and story magazines, Satan is working to fill with unreal and trivial thoughts minds that should be diligently studying the word of God. Thus he is robbing thousands upon thousands of the time and energy and self-discipline demanded by the stern problems of life.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 411.

DECEPTIVE READING MATERIAL

1. **What do many people do nowadays? Who keeps the majority of followers in his hands by means of corrupt and entertaining reading material and all kinds of novels? Revelation 12:9, first part; Ecclesiastes 12:14.**

“Young ladies will read novels, excusing themselves from active labor because they are in delicate health. Their feebleness is the result of their lack of exercising the muscles God has given them.... These ladies are not Christians, for they transgress the fifth commandment. They do not honor their parents.... They eat, and sleep, and read novels, and talk of the fashions, while their lives are useless.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 35.

“Children need proper reading which will afford amusement and recreation and not demoralize the mind or weary the body.... Most children and young people will have reading matter; and if it is not selected for them, they will select it for themselves. They can find a ruinous quality of reading anywhere, and they soon learn to love it; but if pure and good reading is furnished them, they will cultivate a taste for that.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 411.

2. **What do too many Christians do today for which they will have to give account to the Lord? What can be said of gossip, which is so popular in the mass media? Ephesians 4:29-31; Matthew 12:36, 37.**

“Your frivolous conversation, in common with that of other of the young people, was disgusting. There was nothing noble and elevated in the turn your minds took. It was common chitchat and gossip, the silly, vain laugh, the jesting, and the joking. Angels have written the scenes you have acted over and over again.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 180.

“Those who love society frequently indulge this trait until it becomes an overruling passion. To dress, to visit places of amusement, to laugh and chat upon subjects altogether lighter than vanity—this is the object of their lives. They cannot endure to read the Bible and contemplate heavenly things. They are miserable unless there is something to excite. They have not within them the power to be happy; but they depend for happiness upon the company of other youth as thoughtless and reckless as themselves. The powers which might be turned to noble purposes, they give to folly....” —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 430, 431.

WORLDLY ENTERTAINMENT

3. **What is forbidden by heaven to the true children of God due to their corrupting influence upon spirit, soul, and body? What can be said about the theater, movies, the circus, video games, and Internet entertainment? 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Matthew 6:24; 1 John 2:15-17.**

“Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school for morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements. The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence as the desire for intoxicating drink strengthens with its use. The only safe course is to shun the theater, the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 516.

A newspaper wrote the following concerning children who go to movies: "Over a certain period of time, they watched 1,914 scenes of beating, 1,286 quarrels between husband and wife, 1,350 drunken bouts, 1,060 kidnappings, 1,120 divorces, 1,179 thefts, 1,171 fires and deaths, and 765 suicides." According to statistics in one European country, every child, before finishing primary school, has watched an average of 8,000 murders and 100,000 violent acts on TV. Every 28 minutes one watches a crime, and every 21 minutes someone is wounded on the screen! The spectator is bombarded with fights, insults, and death every five minutes! This shows that many films are nothing but schools of crime. Anyone who wants to educate his children to become decent adults should not allow them to watch those films or go to the movies or similar places.

4. Is there a difference among the theater, movies, videos, and films available on the Internet? Would Jesus watch any of those programs if He lived among us? John 14:30; 8:12.

Regarding the effect that the programs of certain mass media have upon people, a magazine wrote some years ago: "This wonderful invention is probably the most subtle means of the enemy to deceive and snare the soul of man.... Its result is the corruption of morals and the loss of the soul. Although there are thousands of our brothers and sisters who do not go to the theatre or movies (it is lamentable that there are some who do), nevertheless many among these thousands who do not go to those amusement places allow the enemy to bring the theatre and movies into their own homes....

"Lessons of iniquity: Many who broadcast ... are educating our dear young people in the art of making love and breaking hearts as well as of crime. What difference is there between those who sit in a cinema or theatre and those who sit in their homes and watch the same things,... laughing at nonsense as do the ones who go to movies? Let us remember that 'the thought of foolishness is sin.' Proverb 24:9.

"It is time that parents stopped, looked, and listened, because the enemy has already taken many off guard. Slowly, stealthily, and unexpectedly, he has introduced into our homes things that captivate and infatuate young people and cause them to join him in his downward march to adventure, immorality, and crime.... Parents wonder why their children are not more pious, more reverent and respectful. But they themselves listen to light songs and jazz, to what is vulgar and vile, and very little to sacred things; therefore good music and holy things are absolutely insipid to them.... Much time is wasted searching channels for something good, while common, profane, low, and wicked things come to our ears. Just think about the good that would result if time wasted on Sabbath or any other day would be spent in prayer or in the study of the Bible and Testimonies. It is sad to admit, but it is a fact that many listen to vulgar, low, and vile things while their angel is writing, 'Found wanting.'" —*Adventist Review*, February 1, 1937, p. 13.

“And above all is the influence that many messages have upon the heart and life, such as love stories, comedies and tragedies, funny or frivolous conversations, degrading music, police reports, and thousands of other programs that poison the source of life.... We cry out, with justified reason, against the bad influence of the movies.... May God help us not to place ourselves purposely at the mercy of the devil.” —*Adventist Review*, July 11, 1938, p. 13.

If some 70 years ago it was necessary to think seriously about such matters, what can we say of our day, when the mass media is much more pervasive and has a far more dangerous influence?

A GREAT DANGER TO SPIRITUALITY

5. **If such programs are so dangerous, how should an Adventist Reformer regard the theater, cinema, opera, popular concerts, circus, soap operas, and spectator sports, all of which are so destructive to one's spirituality? John 8:34; Revelation 3:16; Philippians 4:8.**

6. **Where do all such literature, films, programs, and presentations come from—heaven or the abyss? What kind of fire do they represent? Leviticus 10:1-6. Who produces this material to corrupt the world? Revelation 12:12; 11:18, last part; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 7.**

The vision of the narrow path clearly stated where such things originate. “As we heard the sounds of mirth and revelry that seemed to come from the abyss below, we shuddered. We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war song and the dance song. We heard instrumental music, and loud laughter, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway. Much of the time we were compelled to suspend our whole weight upon the cords, which increased in size as we progressed.” —*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 191.

7. **In their actions, do the professed people of God show that they are in connection with Him or with the powers of darkness? Are they then holding to the cords of faith that are suspended along the narrow path, or do they remain in the abyss? Galatians 6:7; Matthew 7:16.**

“Many prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so; but what will be done in the end thereof? What will be the decision when their work, with all its results, shall be brought in review before God?”

“The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith. Again, he declares: ‘Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.’ Ah, no. Today sin is cherished and excused. The sharp sword of the Spirit, the word of God, does not cut to the soul. Has religion changed? Has Satan’s enmity to God abated? A religious life once presented difficulties and demanded self-denial. All is made very easy now. And why is this? The professed people of God have compromised with the power of darkness. There must be a revival of the strait testimony....” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 222.

FOR MEDITATION

“The path to heaven is no smoother now than in the days of our Saviour. All our sins must be put away. Every darling indulgence that hinders our religious life must be cut off. The right eye or the right hand must be sacrificed if it cause us to offend. Are we willing to renounce our own wisdom and to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child? Are we willing to part with self-righteousness? Are we willing to give up our chosen worldly associates? Are we willing to sacrifice the approbation of men? The prize of eternal life is of infinite value. Will we put forth efforts and make sacrifices proportionate to the worth of the object to be attained?”

“Every association we form, however limited, exerts some influence upon us. The extent to which we yield to that influence will be determined by the degree of intimacy, the constancy of the intercourse, and our love and veneration for the one with whom we associate. Thus by acquaintance and association with Christ we may become like Him, the one faultless Example.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 222, 223.

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Sabbath, September 4, 2010

False Revivals

“There is need today of such a revival of true heart religion as was experienced by ancient Israel. Repentance is the first step that must be taken by all who would return to God. No one can do this work for another. We must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols. When we have done all that we can do, the Lord will manifest to us His salvation.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 590.

“Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His word.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 464.

GENUINE REVIVAL

1. **How can one recognize a genuine awakening? Matthew 4:17; 1 John 3:3-10, 1.**

“These souls brought forth fruit meet for repentance. They believed and were baptized, and rose to walk in newness of life—new creatures in Christ Jesus. Not to fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God to follow in His steps, to reflect His character, and to purify themselves even as He is pure.... The vain and supercilious became serious and unobtrusive. The profane became reverent, the drunken sober, and the profligate pure. The vain fashions of the world were laid aside....

“Revivals brought deep heart-searching and humility.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 461, 462.

SENSATIONAL REVIVALS

2. **How do the powers of darkness work to satisfy the religious interests in a deceitful and lukewarm way until it is too late? 2 Timothy 4:3; John 8:44.**

“But many of the revivals of modern times have presented a marked contrast to those manifestations of divine grace which in earlier days followed the labors of God’s servants....

“Unless a religious service has something of a sensational character, it has no attractions for them....

“The converts do not renounce their pride, and love of the world....

“There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead....

“The desire for an easy religion, that requires no striving, no self-denial, no divorce from the follies of the world, has made the doctrine of faith, and faith only, a popular doctrine;...” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 463, 464, 472.

3. What do such revivals always weaken or totally obliterate? 1 John 2:3, 4.

“Erroneous theories of sanctification, also, springing from neglect or rejection of the divine law, have a prominent place in the religious movements of the day. These theories are both false in doctrine and dangerous in practical results; and the fact that they are so generally finding favor, renders it doubly essential that all have a clear understanding of what the Scriptures teach upon this point.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 469.

GENUINE SANCTIFICATION

4. What is true sanctification connected to? Genesis 2:3; Revelation 14:12.

“Let none deceive themselves with the belief that they can become holy while willfully violating one of God’s requirements. The commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God....

“The world is given up to self-indulgence. ‘The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,’ control the masses of the people. But Christ’s followers have a holier calling. ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean.’ In the light of God’s Word we are justified in declaring that sanctification cannot be genuine which does not work this utter renunciation of the sinful pursuits and gratifications of the world.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 472, 475.

5. How does sanctification take place? Philippians 3:13, 14.

“The Scriptures plainly show that the work of sanctification is progressive. When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood

of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun. Now he is to 'go on unto perfection;' to grow up 'unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'" —*The Great Controversy*, p. 470.

NOMINAL SANCTIFICATION

6. Why are the powers of darkness able to seduce Christians so easily through false revivals and movements? 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

"The sanctification now gaining prominence in the religious world, carries with it a spirit of self-exaltation, and a disregard for the law of God, that mark it as foreign to the religion of the Bible. Its advocates teach that sanctification is an instantaneous work, by which, through faith alone, they attain to perfect holiness. 'Only believe,' say they, 'and the blessing is yours.' No further effort on the part of the receiver is supposed to be required. At the same time they deny the authority of the law of God, urging that they are released from obligation to keep the commandments. But is it possible for men to be holy, in accord with the will and character of God, without coming into harmony with the principles which are an expression of His nature and will, and which show what is well-pleasing to Him?" —*The Great Controversy*, p. 471.

7. Nevertheless, what mistake should God's children not make? Philippians 4:4-7.

"While the Christian's life will be characterized by humility, it should not be marked with sadness and self-depreciation. It is the privilege of everyone so to live that God will approve and bless him. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that we should be ever under condemnation and darkness. There is no evidence of true humility in going with the head bowed down and the heart filled with thoughts of self. We may go to Jesus and be cleansed, and stand before the law without shame and remorse. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Romans 8:1." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 477.

FOR MEDITATION

"I saw that God has honest children among the nominal Adventists and the fallen churches, and before the plagues shall be poured out, ministers and people will be called out from these churches and will gladly receive the truth. Satan knows this; and before the loud cry of the third angel is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think

that God is with them. He hopes to deceive the honest and lead them to think that God is still working for the churches. But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the fallen churches, and take their stand with the remnant.” —*Early Writings*, p. 261.

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Sabbath, September 11, 2010

False Awakenings and Miracles

“Even in the midst of the great deceptions of the last days, when delusive miracles will be performed in the sight of men in behalf of satanic theories, it is our privilege to hide ourselves in Christ Jesus. It is possible for us to seek and to obtain salvation. And in this time of unusual peril, we must learn to stand alone, our faith fixed, not on the word of man, but on the sure promises of God.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 490.

DECEPTIVE MIRACLES

- 1. Is it possible for preachers to perform miracles even when they do not preach the message of God? Therefore, is it correct to consider miracles as a test of faith? Matthew 24:24; Deuteronomy 13:1-4.**

“Today we need to speak the truth with holy boldness. The testimony borne to the early church by the Lord’s messenger, His people are to hear in this time: ‘Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.’ Galatians 1:8.

“The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles. It was this he hoped to make a test question with the Israelites at the time of their deliverance from Egypt.” —(Manuscript 43, 1907) *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 52.

WE NEED EARNEST PREPARATION

- 2. What should grow in us, and what is the only thing that we can hold onto? Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 4:10.**

“Satan is a diligent Bible student. He knows that his time is short, and he seeks at every point to counterwork the work of the Lord upon this earth. It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory and a repetition of the persecutions of the past are blended. They will walk in the light proceeding from the throne of God. By means of the angels there will be constant communication between heaven and earth. And Satan, surrounded by evil angels, and claiming to be God, will work miracles of all kinds, to deceive, if possible, the very elect. God’s people will not find their safety in working miracles, for Satan will counterfeit the miracles that will be wrought. God’s tried and tested people will find their power in the sign spoken of in Exodus 31:12-18. They are to take their stand on the living word: ‘It is written.’ This is the only foundation upon which they can stand securely. Those who have broken their covenant with God will in that day be without God and without hope.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 16.

3. Therefore, who are in the greatest danger? Hebrews 10:23; 3:6; Ephesians 4:14.

“Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of Satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test, they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected, they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 621, 622.

4. Therefore, what should we take time to do? Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

“Angels record every prayer that is earnest and sincere. We should rather dispense with selfish gratifications than neglect communion with God. The deepest poverty, the greatest self-denial, with his approval, is better than riches, honors, ease, and friendship without it. We must take time to pray.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 622.

FALSE MIRACLES WILL INCREASE

5. When will Satan’s wiles and miracles reach their peak? 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9.

Satan's wrath, deceitful works, and acts of destruction will increase more and more the closer we approach the end and will reach their final climax in the great time of trouble.

"Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons.... By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world's Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing, and will profess to have revelations from Heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures.

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air, 'Christ has come! Christ has come!' The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands, and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

6. How far have satanic miracles already reached? Therefore, what is very near? Mark 14:41.

Some years ago, amazing miracles started taking place in South and Central America, performed by North American Protestant evangelists, mostly Pentecostal, who caused great agitation and admiration in that part of the world. Two of the most popular were H. and O., who travelled through all of the countries and islands of South and Central America. They had extraordinary success and were received with great excitement and enthusiasm by thousands of people in the large cities of those countries. Frequently about 200,000 people attended their meetings, and it was said that thousands were healed. Satan is working very openly. People who are tormented by sorrow, suffering, and all kinds of sickness throw themselves into his arms without a second thought. To explain such miracles, many of them say, 'It does not matter where the power to work those miracles comes from; the main thing

is that we are healed.” The world is ripe. Satan has almost everyone in his hands. Has not the time come for us to go to the people, fully determined to explain to the world who is actually working those miracles and seducing them? Surely. We want to fulfill our duty. Does God not permit these events to take place now so we may all wake up and fulfill our duty to give the world the message it has to hear before everything is destroyed?

The following appeared in a Mexican magazine: “Protestant evangelist T.H., who was born in Texas 50 years ago, came to Buenos Aires for the first time on April 14, 1955. Soon afterward, the Huracan and Atlanta stadiums were crowded with men, women, and children, rich and poor, many of them bedridden, blind, dumb, or epileptic, and all eager to hear him preach. Later, he preached in Rosario, Santa Fe, and Mar de Plata. 200,000 people attended the meetings.

“‘Glory be to God,’ shouts Brother H. in English, without minding that he does not speak a single word of Spanish. ‘Raise your arms to God!’ he shouts again, and a local evangelist translates: ‘Elevad los brazos a Dios!’ At the beginning, the crowd listens to him in perfect silence, but then they begin to move. Amid the groans and hallelujahs, the paralytics stand up and walk, the blind recover their sight, and the deaf can hear. At least this is what T.H.’s followers declare.”

It is time for our young brethren to make the decision to work in faraway countries to fulfill their duty before it is too late.

THE MEANS OF DEFENSE

7. What means has the Lord given us to be protected from being deceived? Ephesians 6:16, 17; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:105.

“Our efforts to resist the attacks of Satan must be earnest and persevering. He employs his strength and skill in trying to turn us out of the right way. He watches our going out and our coming in, that he may find opportunity to hurt or destroy us. He works most successfully in darkness, injuring those who are ignorant of his devices. He could not gain advantage if his method of attack were understood.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 308.

“Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures, and who have received the love of the truth, will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 625.

FOR MEDITATION

“Christ’s example is before us. He overcame Satan, showing us how we may also overcome. Christ resisted Satan with scripture. He might have had recourse to His own divine power, and used His own words; but He said: ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth

of God.’ To the second temptation He said: ‘It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’ Christ’s example is before us. If the Sacred Scriptures were studied and followed, the Christian would be fortified to meet the wily foe; but the word of God is neglected, and disaster and defeat follow.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 45, 46.

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12

Sabbath, September 18, 2010

Spiritualism

“The work of Satan as an accuser began in heaven. This has been his work on earth ever since man’s fall, and it will be his work in a special sense as we approach nearer to the close of this world’s history. As he sees that his time is short, he will work with greater earnestness to deceive and destroy. He is angry when he sees a people on the earth who, even in their weakness and sinfulness, have respect to the law of Jehovah. He is determined that they shall not obey God. He delights in their unworthiness, and has devices prepared for every soul, that all may be ensnared and separated from God. He seeks to accuse and condemn God and all who strive to carry out His purposes in this world in mercy and love, in compassion and forgiveness.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 167, 168.

SPIRITUALISM IN ANCIENT TIMES

- 1. How old is spiritualism? Where were wizards and sorcerers found early in history? Genesis 3:4, 5; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; Deuteronomy 18:10.**

“Satan has long been preparing for his final effort to deceive the world. The foundation of his work was laid by the assurance given to Eve in Eden: ‘Ye shall not surely die.’” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 561.

“The great original lie which he told to Eve in Eden, ‘Ye shall not surely die,’ was the first sermon ever preached on the immortality of the soul. That sermon was crowned with success, and terrible results followed.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 342.

- 2. Who consulted a spiritualist in the old times, knowing that it was contrary to God’s will? 1 Samuel 28:7-19.**

“Saul had a full knowledge of the character of necromancy. It had been expressly forbidden by the Lord, and the sentence of death was pronounced against all who practiced its unholy arts. During the life of Samuel, Saul had commanded that all wizards and those that had familiar spirits should be put to death; but now, in the rashness of desperation, he had recourse to that oracle which he had condemned as an abomination....

“Disguising himself, Saul went forth by night with but two attendants, to seek the retreat of the sorceress. Oh, pitiable sight! the king of Israel led captive by Satan at his will! What path so dark for human feet to tread as that chosen by one who has persisted in having his own way, resisting the holy influences of the Spirit of God! What bondage so terrible as that of him who is given over to the control of the worst of tyrants—himself!” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 676.

ORIGIN OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM

3. **In the time of the apostles, what did modern spiritualism begin with? When and how did the more modern form begin? Acts 8:9, 11; 13:6-8.**

“The mysterious rapping with which modern Spiritualism began was not the result of human trickery or cunning, but was the direct work of evil angels,...” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 553.

“The beginnings of modern spiritualism.... In 1848 mysterious rappings were heard in the home of the Fox family at Hydesville, a community about thirty-five miles east of the city of Rochester, New York. At a time when there were various conjectures as to the cause of the rappings, Ellen White announced, on the authority of the vision given to her, that they were a manifestation of spiritualism, that this phenomenon would develop rapidly, and in the name of religion would gain popularity and deceive multitudes, developing into Satan’s last-day masterpiece of deception.” —*Early Writings*, p. 300, Appendix.

PROPHECIES OF THE FUTURE

4. **What does Satan know? Therefore, what does he plan to achieve through spiritualism? Revelation 12:12, last part; 13:13, 14.**

“The crisis is stealing gradually upon us.... The highest excitement prevails, yet probation’s hour is fast closing, and every case is about to be eternally decided. Satan sees that his time is short. He has set all his agencies at work that men may be deceived, deluded, occupied and entranced, until the

day of probation shall be ended, and the door of mercy be forever shut.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 636.

“Satan is a diligent Bible student. He knows that his time is short, and he seeks at every point to counterwork the work of the Lord upon this earth.... And Satan, surrounded by evil angels, and claiming to be God, will work miracles of all kinds, to deceive, if possible, the very elect. God’s people will not find their safety in working miracles, for Satan will counterfeit the miracles that will be wrought. God’s tried and tested people will find their power in the sign spoken of in Exodus 31:12-18. They are to take their stand on the living word: ‘It is written.’ This is the only foundation upon which they can stand securely. Those who have broken their covenant with God will in that day be without God and without hope.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 16.

He knows that the Lord’s coming is at the door. He is convinced that he cannot prevent this event, just as he could not kill the child Jesus. He has only one way, and that is to try to imitate Christ’s coming shortly before the Saviour appears. He will induce the whole world, through great signs and spiritualistic miracles, to reject God’s law and to acknowledge and worship him as christ, exalting Sunday as the day of worship. We are approaching this event; and the more frequent and powerful Satan’s miracles are in this world, the more convinced we should be that Jesus is coming very soon. Satan is in a hurry to deceive everyone and keep him bound under his spiritualistic delusion until the Saviour’s coming.

5. According to the Scriptures, what will happen before Jesus returns? 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9, 10.

“It was by satanic aid that Pharaoh’s magicians were enabled to counterfeit the work of God. Paul testifies that before the second advent of Christ there will be similar manifestations of satanic power. The coming of the Lord is to be preceded by ‘the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10. And the apostle John, describing the miracle-working power that will be manifested in the last days, declares: ‘He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.’ Revelation 13:13, 14. No mere impostures are here foretold. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan’s agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 553.

6. Is it not amazing that inscriptions and signs have appeared in the earth, along with deceptions from the powers of darkness? What is behind this? Matthew 24:3-5.

“Now, in unmistakable language, our Lord speaks of His second coming, and He gives warning of dangers to precede His advent to the world. ‘If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.’... As one of the signs of Jerusalem’s destruction, Christ had said, ‘Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.’... But this prophecy was spoken also for the last days. This sign is given as a sign of the second advent. Even now false christs and false prophets are showing signs and wonders to seduce His disciples. Do we not hear the cry, ‘Behold, He is in the desert’? Have not thousands gone forth into the desert, hoping to find Christ? And from thousands of gatherings where men profess to hold communion with departed spirits is not the call now heard, ‘Behold, He is in the secret chambers’? This is the very claim that spiritism puts forth. But what says Christ? ‘Believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 631.

Is this not important for us? In what condition are we as the people of God, who through the holy angels and their Prince have thousands of times received the promise that the Lord will come soon? Do the children of God seriously believe in this solemn event, the most solemn of all? Do they show their faith by genuine repentance and works that reveal their conversion and preparation? May God in His grace grant this!

THE TIME OF DISTRESS IS NEAR

7. Therefore, what is just ahead of us? John 14:30; Revelation 3:10.

“Just before us is ‘the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.’ Revelation 3:10. All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome. Satan ‘works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness’ to gain control of the children of men, and his deceptions will continually increase. But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. ‘Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee’ (verse 10), is the

Saviour's promise. He would sooner send every angel out of heaven to protect His people than leave one soul that trusts in Him to be overcome by Satan."
—*The Great Controversy*, p. 560.

FOR MEDITATION

"Among the most successful agencies of the great deceiver are the delusive teachings and lying wonders of spiritualism. Disguised as an angel of light, he spreads his nets where least suspected. If men would but study the Book of God with earnest prayer that they might understand it, they would not be left in darkness to receive false doctrines. But as they reject the truth they fall a prey to deception." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 524.

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*Please read the Missionary Report
from Japan on page 61*

Storms and Preparations

“I was shown that a terrible condition of things exists in our world. The angel of mercy is folding her wings, ready to depart. Already the Lord’s restraining power is being withdrawn from the earth, and Satan is seeking to stir up the various elements in the religious world, leading men to place themselves under the training of the great deceiver, who work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in the children of disobedience. Already the inhabitants of the earth are marshaling under the leading of the prince of darkness, and this is but the beginning of the end.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 49.

DESTRUCTIVE WINDS

- 1. What events are taking place under satanic cover? Revelation 11:18; Matthew 24:6, 7.**

“Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another, for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 589.

FATAL INFLUENCES

- 2. Is this limited to loss of life in war? How are the minds and souls of multitudes being corrupted? 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15; 2 Thessalonians 2:10.**

“If men resist the warnings the Lord sends them, they become even leaders in evil practice; such men assume to exercise the prerogatives of God—they presume to do that which God Himself will not do in seeking to control the minds of men. They introduce their own methods and plans, and through their misconceptions of God they weaken the faith of others in the truth, and bring in false principles that will work like leaven to taint and corrupt our institutions and churches. Anything that lowers man’s conception of righteousness and equity and impartial judgment, any device or precept that brings God’s human agents under the control of human minds, impairs their

faith in God; it separates the soul from God; for it leads away from the path of strict integrity and righteousness.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 366.

3. What will Satan achieve under the cover of spiritualism? Isaiah 8:12.

“Church members love what the world loves and are ready to join with them, and Satan determines to unite them in one body and thus strengthen his cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism. Papists, who boast of miracles as a certain sign of the true church, will be readily deceived by this wonder-working power; and Protestants, having cast away the shield of truth, will also be deluded. Papists, Protestants, and worldlings will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and they will see in this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 588, 589.

THE TRUTH DARKENED

4. What has been diminished? What is rarely heard any more? John 18:37; 2 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Timothy 4:4.

“There are but two parties. Satan works with his crooked, deceiving power, and through strong delusions he catches all who do not abide in the truth, who have turned away their ears from the truth and have turned unto fables. Satan himself abode not in the truth; he is the mystery of iniquity. Through his subtlety he gives to his soul-destroying errors the appearance of truth. Herein is their power to deceive. It is because they are a counterfeit of the truth that spiritualism, theosophy, and the like deceptions gain such power over the minds of men. Herein is the masterly working of Satan. He pretends to be the saviour of man, the benefactor of the human race, and thus he more readily lures his victims to destruction.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 365.

The Protestant churches have completely lost the determined spirit of the old Reformers: “Here I stand. I can do no other; may God help me. Amen.” They are no longer grounded on faith in Jesus. They all say: “We are all alike; we have the same God,” etc. Even the Catholic Church says this. According to them, everyone is saved. All such churches and sects are based on false miracles.

- 5. What was the result of the World Council of Churches meeting in Evanston, Illinois, USA, in 1954, where 163 Protestant and Orthodox churches and sects were represented? Are efforts still being made for unification? Psalms 83:3; 56:6.**

One of the main speakers at the World Council of Churches gathering in Evanston, Illinois, on January 16, 1955, clearly described the efforts made to unite all churches. He also pointed out that the church and the state should not be separated. He emphatically declared that by observing Sunday and attending church services on that day communism would be kept at bay. For this reason he appealed to all to join the “Lord’s Day Alliance” and require the minority (who keep another day) to do the same by means of law (Sunday law).

- 6. What will soon happen? Who is already laying the foundation for this? Revelation 13:12-18.**

“The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

We know about the efforts that Rome is continually making to unite with the Protestant churches, their many sects, and non-Christian religions.

“The people turned upon their ministers with bitter hate and reproached them, saying, ‘You have not warned us. You told us that all the world was to be converted, and cried, Peace, peace, to quiet every fear that was aroused. You have not told us of this hour; and those who warned us of it you declared to be fanatics and evil men, who would ruin us.’ But I saw that the ministers did not escape the wrath of God. Their suffering was tenfold greater than that of their people.” —*Early Writings*, p. 282.

CALL TO PREPARATION

- 7. What should we do now while there is still time? Matthew 26:38-46.**

“In the warning to ‘watch and pray,’ Jesus has indicated the only safe course. There is need of watchfulness. Our own hearts are deceitful; we are

compassed with the weaknesses and frailties of humanity, and Satan is intent to destroy. We may be off our guard, but our adversary is never idle. Knowing his tireless vigilance, let us not sleep, as do others, but ‘watch and be sober.’ The spirit and influence of the world must be met, but they must not be allowed to take possession of the mind and heart....

“We are living in an age when all should especially give heed to the injunction of the Saviour: ‘Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.’ Let everyone bear in mind that he should be true and loyal to God, believing the truth, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.... The Lord is willing to help us, to strengthen and bless us; but we must pass through the refining process until all the impurities in our character are burned away. Every member of the church will be subjected to the furnace, not to consume, but to purify.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 409, 485.

FOR MEDITATION

“I call upon you who are not ready for the last great controversy to wake up. You are not watching for that which is soon coming upon the earth. Human instrumentalities under the control of fallen angels, are seeking to gather in their harvest. Those who would find themselves under the protection of the angels of God must live wholly for God’s glory, prepared to stand in their lot and in their place. They are to be faithful and true, even as Daniel was, a man called by the Lord, ‘greatly beloved,’ a man who felt the need of praying and confessing his sins. Those who do as Daniel did are not asleep, but are keenly alive to their exposure to the enemy’s malignant devices. They see that their only safety is in keeping the commandments of God. They pray as Daniel prayed, confessing their sins and finding pardon.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 104.

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MISSIONARY REPORT FROM JAPAN

To be read on Sabbath, September 25, 2010

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, October 2, 2010*

Japan is a country that is very well known for its wealth and advanced technology. It consists of four major islands and more than 4,000 small islands, covering 145,880 square miles, or 377,915 square kilometers (land and water). With 130 million people (872 per square mile), the country is very densely populated and also very strong economically. Most of the people are atheist or Buddhist.

It has been well over a century since the message of Revelation 18 began to be sounded to the world. It is a message that will enlighten the whole world with the glory of God. But the work of the remnant church that has to spread this mighty angel's message has been relatively powerless in East Asia. There was no remnant church in Japan before 2009.

In East Asia, our church was first rooted in South Korea, an East Asian country, in 2000 through the efforts of Brother Branko Cholic. The Korean church has been putting forth efforts to take the message to China, Mongolia, and Eastern Russia ever since. It also tried to share the message in Japan as opportunities arose, but it was not easy. Indifference to the Christian faith in Japan and the great expense of missionary activities made it very hard to work in this country.

With much prayer, we looked for an opening to start the Lord's work in Japan. It came on February 15, 2009, when a Japanese sister who had belonged to another movement made the decision to become a member of our church.

It was an amazingly rapid work. There were other dear souls who belonged to the same movement who also recognized the IMS as the true Reform Movement. Although it was very difficult for them to leave their former church relationship, they all decided to join our church as soon as they learned about the message.

After just three months, we had the first camp meeting and conference in Okinawa, the southern island of Japan. During those meetings three souls were baptized and the mission was organized with 12 members. Since the work in Japan has been so delayed, they wanted immediately

to put the evangelistic efforts into high gear. They do not yet have their own place of worship, so they need a church building urgently. And funds are needed to support the fledgling ministry. Some of our sisters in Okinawa are nurses, and they have a dream of establishing a sanitarium on this beautiful island.

In Japan the cost of living is very high, so with the few members in the newly established Japanese Field it seems impossible to cover the needs of the Lord's work in Japan very quickly. But the members decided to go forward by faith, for they know that their great need and their sincere pleading with God will be met by His mercy and your generous offerings. I earnestly appeal to you for your earnest prayers and generous offerings so the gospel may be spread quickly throughout Japan, an advanced country that is nevertheless in great spiritual want, and the glory of the Lord may be revealed.

—Masahiko Matsumoto
Your brothers and sisters in Japan
and Japanese Field President

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Fourth Quarter 2010

**CHRIST, THE PATTERN
OF OUR CHARACTER**

INTRODUCTION

“The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul. In the beginning God created man in His own likeness. He endowed him with noble qualities. His mind was well balanced, and all the powers of his being were harmonious. But the Fall and its effects have perverted these gifts. Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man. To bring him back to the perfection in which he was first created is the great object of life—the object that underlies every other. It is the work of parents and teachers, in the education of the youth, to cooperate with the divine purpose; and in so doing they are ‘laborers together with God.’ 1 Corinthians 3:9.

“All the varied capabilities that men possess—of mind and soul and body—are given them by God, to be so employed as to reach the highest possible degree of excellence. But this cannot be a selfish and exclusive culture; for the character of God, whose likeness we are to receive, is benevolence and love. Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us is to be employed for His glory and for the uplifting of our fellow men. And in this employment is found its purest, noblest, and happiest exercise.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595.

“A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 332.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

The Special Sabbath School Offering is for
JAPAN

*Remember to give your offering
as an expression of love and gratitude.*

1

Sabbath, October 2, 2010

Man's Character in the Beginning

“Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God. Man is very dear to God, because he was formed in His own image.” —*My Life Today*, p. 126.

MAN AT CREATION

- 1. What description is given of Adam at his creation? Genesis 1:26, 27; Psalm 8:5-7.**

“Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is ‘the express image’ (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

“Man is God's workmanship, His masterpiece, created for a high and holy purpose; and on every part of the human tabernacle God desires to write His law. Every nerve and muscle, every mental and physical endowment, is to be kept pure.” —*Temperance*, p. 142.

- 2. What noble dignity characterized man's existence and life? Ecclesiastes 7: 29, first part.**

“God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil. He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance. Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life.” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 13.

3. Why were Adam and Eve's faithfulness and loyalty tested? Genesis 2:16, 17.

"God created man for His own glory, that after test and trial the human family might become one with the heavenly family. It was God's purpose to repopulate heaven with the human family, if they would show themselves obedient to His every word. Adam was to be tested, to see whether he would be obedient, as the loyal angels, or disobedient." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 344.

"Our first parents, though created innocent and holy, were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. God made them free moral agents, capable of appreciating the wisdom and benevolence of His character and the justice of His requirements, and with full liberty to yield or to withhold obedience. They were to enjoy communion with God and with holy angels; but before they could be rendered eternally secure, their loyalty must be tested. At the very beginning of man's existence a check was placed upon the desire for self-indulgence, the fatal passion that lay at the foundation of Satan's fall." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

4. Did Adam and Eve pass the test? Genesis 3:6.

"If he stood the test, his instruction to his children would have been only of loyalty. His mind and thoughts would have been as the mind and thoughts of God. He would have been taught by God as His husbandry and building. His character would have been moulded in accordance with the character of God." —(Letter 91, 1900) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1082.

5. Created lower than the angels, could man attain to their exalted position?

"The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels. The mysteries of the visible universe—the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge' (Job 37:16)—afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 50, 51.

“The Lord has given man capacity for continual improvement, and has granted him all possible aid in the work. Through the provisions of divine grace we may attain almost to the excellence of the angels.” —(*The Review and Herald*, June 20, 1882) *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 9.

“Great as is the shame and degradation through sin, even greater will be the honor and exaltation through redeeming love. To human beings striving for conformity to the divine image there is imparted an outlay of heaven’s treasure, an excellency of power, that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 163.

AFTER THE FALL

6. Immediately after the fall, how was Satan’s lying and accusing character revealed in Adam and Eve’s behavior? John 8:44, second part; Genesis 3:12, 13; Revelation 12:10, second part.

“Adam could neither deny nor excuse his sin; but instead of manifesting penitence, he endeavored to cast the blame upon his wife, and thus upon God Himself: ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.’...”

“When the woman was asked, ‘What is this that thou hast done?’ she answered, ‘The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.’ ‘Why didst Thou create the serpent? Why didst Thou suffer him to enter Eden?’—these were the questions implied in her excuse for her sin. Thus, like Adam, she charged God with the responsibility of their fall. The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies; it was indulged by our first parents as soon as they yielded to the influence of Satan, and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 57, 58.

7. How was Satan’s murderous character revealed in their first son, Cain? John 8:44, first part; Genesis 4:8.

“When Cain saw that his offering was rejected, he was angry with the Lord and with Abel; he was angry that God did not accept man’s substitute in place of the sacrifice divinely ordained, and angry with his brother for choosing to obey God instead of joining in rebellion against Him....

“He angrily reproached his brother, and attempted to draw him into controversy concerning God’s dealings with them.... Reason and conscience told him that Abel was in the right; but he was enraged that one who had been wont to heed his counsel should now presume to disagree with him, and that he could gain no sympathy in his rebellion. In the fury of his passion he slew his brother.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 74.

“To dwell forever in this home of the blest, to bear in soul, body, and spirit, not the dark traces of sin and the curse, but the perfect likeness of our Creator, and through ceaseless ages to advance in wisdom, in knowledge, and in holiness, ever exploring new fields of thought, ever finding new wonders and new glories, ever increasing in capacity to know and to enjoy and to love, and knowing that there is still beyond us joy and love and wisdom infinite—such is the object to which the Christian’s hope is pointing.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 363.

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Sabbath, October 9, 2010

Christ Reveals God’s Character to the World

“What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God. God sent His Son into the world, His divinity clothed with humanity, that man might bear the image of the invisible God. He made known in His words, His character, His power and majesty, the nature and attributes of God. Divinity flashed through humanity in softening, subduing light. He was the embodiment of the law of God, which is the transcript of His character.” —(MS 77, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131.

SEEING THE FATHER IN JESUS

1. What was a major part of Jesus’ mission? Matthew 11:27.

“From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was ‘the image of God,’ the image of His greatness and majesty, ‘the outshining of His glory.’ It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God’s love—...

“Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. ‘I do nothing of Myself,’ said Christ; ‘the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.’ ‘I seek not Mine own glory,’ but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through

the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19, 21.

2. How did God manifest His love for man? 1 John 4:9, 10.

“To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world’s dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, ‘with healing in His wings.’ Malachi 4:2.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

“Christ was the channel through which the mercy, love, and righteousness might flow from the heart of God to the heart of the sinner. ‘He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9).” *—Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 396.

3. How did He reveal His character to Moses? Exodus 34: 5-7.

“The glory of God is His character. While Moses was in the mount, earnestly interceding with God, he prayed, ‘I beseech thee, show me Thy glory.’ In answer God declared, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.’ The glory of God—His character—was then revealed: ‘The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty’ (Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7).” *—God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 322.

JESUS’ PURPOSE

4. What was the Saviour’s primary purpose in coming to this earth? Galatians 1:3-5.

“Sin is a hateful thing. It marred the moral beauty of a large number of the angels. It entered our world and well-nigh obliterated the moral image of God in man. But in His great love, God provided a way whereby man might regain the position from which he fell in yielding to the tempter. Christ came to stand at the head of humanity, to work out in our behalf a perfect character. Those who receive Him are born again.” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 21.

“Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 37, 38.

5. How did Christ reveal His Father while living on this earth, and what does He expect of His followers? John 14:6-10.

“This character was revealed in the life of Christ. That He might by His own example condemn sin in the flesh, He took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh. Constantly He beheld the character of God; constantly He revealed this character to the world.

“Christ desires His followers to reveal in their lives this same character. In His intercessory prayer for His disciples He declared: ‘The glory [character] which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me’ (John 17:22, 23)....

“No greater gift than the character that He revealed, can Christ ask His Father to bestow upon those who believe on Him. What largeness there is in His request! What fullness of grace every follower of Christ has the privilege of receiving!... O that we might more fully appreciate the honor Christ confers upon us! By wearing His yoke and learning of Him, we become like Him in aspiration, in meekness and lowliness, in fragrance of character.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 322.

WISDOM, POWER, AND GRACE

6. How did Jesus intervene to restore the image of God in man? Ephesians 2:5; Titus 3:4-7.

“Christ gave His life to make it possible for man to be restored to the image of God. It is the power of His grace that draws men together in obedience to the truth.

“God desires us to reach the standard of perfection made possible for us by the gift of Christ. He calls upon us to make our choice on the right side, to connect with heavenly agencies, to adopt principles that will restore in us the divine image. In His written Word and in the great book of nature He has revealed the principles of life. It is our work to obtain a knowledge of these

principles, and by obedience to cooperate with Him in restoring health to the body as well as to the soul....

“Jesus has opened to everyone a way by which wisdom, grace, and power may be obtained. He is our example in all things, and nothing should divert the mind from the main object in life, which is to have Christ in the soul, melting and subduing the heart. When this is the case, every member of the church, every professor of the truth, will be Christlike in character, in words, in actions.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, pp. 103, 110.

7. Why did God send His Son into the world? John 3:16, 17; 1:14-18.

“The Son of God came down to this earth that in Him men and women might have a representation of the perfect characters which alone God could accept. Through the grace of Christ every provision has been made for the salvation of the human family. It is possible for every transaction entered into by those who claim to be Christians to be as pure as the deeds of Christ. And the soul who accepts the virtues of Christ’s character and appropriates the merits of His life is as precious in the sight of God as is His own beloved Son.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 60.

FOR MEDITATION

“Taking humanity upon Him, Christ came to be one with humanity, and at the same time to reveal our heavenly Father to sinful human beings. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone able to reveal the character of the Deity to mankind. He was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of men; yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was a stranger and sojourner on the earth—in the world, but not of the world; tempted and tried as men and women today are tempted and tried, yet living a life free from sin. Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 422, 423.

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Sabbath, October 16, 2010

Jesus' Character Revealed in His Life

“As we discern the perfection of our Saviour’s character we shall desire to become wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. The more we know of God, the higher will be our ideal of character and the more earnest our longing to reflect His likeness. A divine element combines with the human when the soul reaches out after God and the longing heart can say, ‘My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.’ Psalm 62:5.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 19.

AN EXAMPLE IN SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. **With what types of people did Jesus associate? Matthew 9:9, 10; John 2:1, 2; Matthew 19:14, 15.**

“Jesus reproved self-indulgence in all its forms, yet He was social in His nature. He accepted the hospitality of all classes, visiting the homes of the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, and seeking to elevate their thoughts from questions of commonplace life to those things that are spiritual and eternal. He gave no license to dissipation, and no shadow of worldly levity marred His conduct; yet He found pleasure in scenes of innocent happiness, and by His presence sanctioned the social gathering.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 150, 151.

LOVE

2. **How was the the definition of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) demonstrated in Jesus’ life?**

“His tender compassion fell with a touch of healing upon weary and troubled hearts. Even amid the turbulence of angry enemies He was surrounded with an atmosphere of peace. The beauty of His countenance, the loveliness of His character, above all, the love expressed in look and tone, drew to Him all who were not hardened in unbelief. Had it not been for the sweet, sympathetic spirit that shone out in every look and word, He would not have attracted the large congregations that He did. The afflicted ones who came to Him felt that He linked His interest with theirs as a faithful and tender friend, and they desired to know more of the truths He taught. Heaven was

brought near. They longed to abide in His presence, that the comfort of His love might be with them continually.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 254, 255.

“Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 551.

SYMPATHY AND CARING

3. How does the golden rule change our relationship with our fellow man? Matthew 7:12.

“In your association with others, put yourself in their place. Enter into their feelings, their difficulties, their disappointments, their joys, and their sorrows. Identify yourself with them, and then do to them as, were you to exchange places with them, you would wish them to deal with you. This is the true rule of honesty....

“The golden rule is the principle of true courtesy, and its truest illustration is seen in the life and character of Jesus. Oh, what rays of softness and beauty shone forth in the daily life of our Saviour! What sweetness flowed from His very presence! The same spirit will be revealed in His children....

“No man who has the true ideal of what constitutes a perfect character will fail to manifest the sympathy and tenderness of Christ. The influence of grace is to soften the heart, to refine and purify the feelings, giving a heaven-born delicacy and sense of propriety.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 420.

POLITENESS

4. According to the Spirit of prophecy, how can we define true politeness? Titus 3:2.

“The essence of true politeness is consideration for others....

“Real refinement of thought and manner is better learned in the school of the divine Teacher than by any observance of set rules. His love pervading the heart gives to the character those refining touches that fashion it in the semblance of His own. This education imparts a heaven-born dignity and sense of propriety. It gives a sweetness of disposition and a gentleness of manner that can never be equaled by the superficial polish of fashionable society.

“The Bible enjoins courtesy, and it presents many illustrations of the unselfish spirit, the gentle grace, the winsome temper, that characterize true politeness. These are but reflections of the character of Christ. All the real tenderness and courtesy in the world, even among those who do not acknowl-

edge His name, is from Him. And He desires these characteristics to be perfectly reflected in His children. It is His purpose that in us men shall behold His beauty.” —*Education*, pp. 241, 242.

HUMILITY

5. Humility is related to meekness. How is this precious trait manifested? Psalm 25:9; Matthew 11:29.

“Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate....

“A meek and quiet spirit will not be ever looking out for happiness for itself, but will seek for self-forgetfulness and find sweet content and true satisfaction in making others happy.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 335, 536.

JOY

6. What was Jesus’ desire for His disciples? John 17:13.

“Those who are learning at the feet of Jesus will surely exemplify by their deportment and conversation the character of Christ.... Their experience is marked less with bustle and excitement than with a subdued and reverent joy. Their love for Christ is a quiet, peaceful, yet all-controlling power. The light and love of an indwelling Saviour are revealed in every word and every act.” —*My Life Today*, p. 51.

KINDNESS

7. How is the transformation of character revealed? Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 4:29.

“Let the law of kindness be upon your lips and the oil of grace in your heart. This will produce wonderful results. You will be tender, sympathetic, courteous. You need all these graces. The Holy Spirit must be received and brought into your character; then it will be as holy fire, giving forth incense which will rise up to God, not from lips that condemn, but as a healer of the souls of men. Your countenance will express the image of the divine.... By beholding the character of Christ you will become changed into His likeness. The grace of Christ alone can change your heart and then you will reflect the

image of the Lord Jesus. God calls upon us to be like Him—pure, holy, and undefiled. We are to bear the divine image....

“The Lord Jesus is our only helper. Through His grace we shall learn to cultivate love, to educate ourselves to speak kindly and tenderly. Through His grace our cold, harsh manners will be transformed. The law of kindness will be upon our lips, and those who are under the precious influences of the Holy Spirit, will not feel that it is an evidence of weakness to weep with those who weep, to rejoice with them that rejoice. We are to cultivate heavenly excellences of character. We are to learn what it means to have good-will toward all men, a sincere desire to be as sunshine and not as shadow in the lives of others.

“Seize every opportunity to contribute to the happiness of those around you, sharing with them your affection. Words of kindness, looks of sympathy, expressions of appreciation, would to many a struggling, lonely one be as a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul....” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 299.

MEEKNESS

8. Meekness is one of Christ’s qualities. How is it seen in His followers? Philippians 4:5; Ephesians 4:1, 2; James 3:13.

“Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate. Meekness is not to be silent and sulky. A morose temper is the opposite of meekness; for this only wounds and gives pain to others, and takes no pleasure to itself.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 335.

FOR MEDITATION

“To the extent of our ability, we are to make manifest the truth and love and excellence of the divine character. As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 337

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Looking unto Jesus to Become Like Him

“It should be the work of the Christian’s life to put on Christ and to bring himself to a more perfect likeness of Christ. The sons and daughters of God are to advance in their resemblance to Christ, our pattern. Daily they are to behold His glory and contemplate His incomparable excellence.” —*My Life Today*, p. 49.

CHANGED BY BEHOLDING

1. Why is it so important to behold Jesus only? Acts 4:12.

“The disorders and imperfections of human words and human characters can be restored only by the Lord Jesus Christ. He, then, should be the object of your contemplation, the theme of your conversation. You must have an altogether higher exercise of thought and action if you would understand the great plan of redemption.” —(MS 13, 1897) *Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 663.

“It is only as we behold Jesus that we desire to be like Him...” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 255.

“Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. Every one God has predestinated to be ‘conformed to the image of His Son.’ Romans 8:29. In every one Christ’s longsuffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested to the world.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.

2. What do we see when we behold Him? 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; John 15:9, 10.

“Wherever there is union with Christ there is love. Whatever other fruits we may bear, if love be missing, they profit nothing. Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion. No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the

Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world. Those who are truly Christians are bound with the chain of love which links earth to heaven, which binds finite man to the infinite God. The light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ shines in the hearts of His followers, to the glory of God.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 337, 338.

3. How can we be changed? John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18.

“By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 338.

4. What is the privilege of those who behold Jesus? 1 John 5:20; John 17:3.

“Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 355.

BEHOLDING THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST’S CHARACTER

5. What should be our daily concern? Luke 1:74, 75.

“It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross....

“If we are Christ’s, our sweetest thoughts will be of Him. We shall love to talk of Him; and as we speak to one another of His love, our hearts will be softened by divine influences. Beholding the beauty of His character, we shall be ‘changed into the same image from glory to glory.’ 2 Corinthians 3:18.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

6. How can we learn to know Jesus better? Hebrews 12:1-3.

“We should dwell upon the character of our dear Redeemer and Intercessor. We should seek to comprehend the meaning of the plan of salvation. We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. By constantly contemplating heavenly themes our faith and love will grow stronger.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 406.

“Through the merits of Christ, through His righteousness, which by faith is imputed unto us, we are to attain to the perfection of Christian character. Our daily and hourly work is set forth in the words of the apostle: ‘Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.’ While doing this our minds become clearer and our faith stronger, and our hope is confirmed; we are so engrossed with the view of His purity and loveliness, and the sacrifice He has made to bring us into agreement with God, that we have no disposition to speak of doubts and discouragements.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 744.

7. As we come closer to Jesus and encounter the purity of His character, what will we discover about ourselves? Romans 7:18-24.

“The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone....” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561.

FOR MEDITATION

“The great Master Artist has taken thought for the lilies, making them so beautiful that they outshine the glory of Solomon. How much more does He care for man, who is the image and glory of God. He longs to see His children reveal a character after His similitude. As the sunbeam imparts to the flowers their varied and delicate tints, so does God impart to the soul the beauty of His own character.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 313.

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Examples of Character Transformation

“John warred earnestly against his faults;...” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 557.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. What necessity did Jesus' forerunner understand? John 3:30.

“John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. When, after Christ's ministry began, the disciples of John came to him with the complaint that all men were following the new teacher, John showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way.... ‘He must increase, but I must decrease’ (John 3:30). Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 308.

JOHN THE BELOVED

2. Did John remain a son of thunder? How does his teaching reveal his transformation? Mark 3:17; 1 John 3:3; 2:6.

“In the life of the disciple John true sanctification is exemplified. During the years of his close association with Christ, he was often warned and cautioned by the Saviour; and these reproofs he accepted. As the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, John saw his own deficiencies, and was humbled by the revelation. Day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience. Day by day his heart was drawn out to Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master. The power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, the strength and patience, that he saw in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration. He yielded his resentful, ambitious temper to the molding power of Christ, and divine love wrought in him a transformation of character.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 557.

3. How was John transformed? Romans 12:2, 3.

“Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores....

“He taught that the Christian must be pure in heart and life. Never should he be satisfied with an empty profession. As God is holy in His sphere, so fallen man, through faith in Christ, is to be holy in his sphere.

“‘This is the will of God,’ the apostle Paul wrote, ‘even your sanctification.’ 1 Thessalonians 4:3....

“True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love. ‘God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.’ 1 John 4:16. The life of him in whose heart Christ abides, will reveal practical godliness. The character will be purified, elevated, ennobled, and glorified. Pure doctrine will blend with works of righteousness; heavenly precepts will mingle with holy practices.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 559, 560.

THE APOSTLE PETER

4. What great difference was evident in the character of Peter before and after his conversion? John 18:10, 26, 27; 21:17.

“Before his fall, Peter was always speaking unadvisedly, from the impulse of the moment. He was always ready to correct others, and to express his mind, before he had a clear comprehension of himself or of what he had to say. But the converted Peter was very different. He retained his former fervor, but the grace of Christ regulated his zeal. He was no longer impetuous, self-confident, and self-exalted, but calm, self-possessed, and teachable.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 812, 815.

“But the Peter who denied Christ in the hour of His greatest need was impulsive and self-confident, differing widely from the Peter who was brought before the Sanhedrin for examination. Since his fall he had been converted. He was no longer proud and boastful, but modest and self-distrustful. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and by the help of this power he was resolved to remove the stain of his apostasy by honoring the name he had once disowned.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 63.

5. How did this transformation come about, and how can that take place in us as well? 2 Corinthians 10:5.

“In his own strength man cannot rule his spirit. But through Christ he may gain self-control. In His strength he may bring his thoughts and words into subjection to the will of God. The religion of Christ brings the emotions under the control of reason and disciplines the tongue. Under its influence the hasty temper is subdued, and the heart is filled with patience and gentleness.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 136.

MARY MAGDALENE

6. How thankful was Mary to Jesus for delivering her from demons? How did she show her gratitude? Luke 8:2; John 20:1, 13, 18.

“Mary had been looked upon as a great sinner, but Christ knew the circumstances that had shaped her life. He might have extinguished every spark of hope in her soul, but He did not. It was He who had lifted her from despair and ruin. Seven times she had heard His rebuke of the demons that controlled her heart and mind. She had heard His strong cries to the Father in her behalf. She knew how offensive is sin to His unsullied purity, and in His strength she had overcome.

“When to human eyes her case appeared hopeless, Christ saw in Mary capabilities for good. He saw the better traits of her character. The plan of redemption has invested humanity with great possibilities, and in Mary these possibilities were to be realized. Through His grace she became a partaker of the divine nature. The one who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry. It was Mary who sat at His feet and learned of Him. It was Mary who poured upon His head the precious anointing oil, and bathed His feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher. Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 568.

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

7. How was the life of the adulteress transformed? John 8:3, 11.

“A group of Pharisees and scribes approached Him, dragging with them a terror-stricken woman, whom with hard, eager voices they accused of having violated the seventh commandment....

“In astonishment she saw her accusers depart speechless and confounded; then those words of hope fell upon her ear, ‘Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.’ Her heart was melted, and she cast herself at the feet of Jesus, sobbing out her grateful love, and with bitter tears confessing her sins.

“This was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to the service of God....

“In His act of pardoning this woman and encouraging her to live a better life, the character of Jesus shines forth in the beauty of perfect righteousness. While He does not palliate sin, nor lessen the sense of guilt, He seeks not to condemn, but to save.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 460, 462.

FOR MEDITATION

“Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. You may say, I am sinful, very sinful. You may be; but the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He turns no weeping, contrite one away. He does not tell to any all that He might reveal, but He bids every trembling soul take courage. Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 568.

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6

Sabbath, November 6, 2010

God’s Law—the Measure of Character

“There is no mystery in the law of God. The feeblest intellect can grasp these rules to regulate the life and form the character after the Divine Model.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 562.

- 1. What will be the foundation of character for all who inhabit the heavenly kingdom? Psalm 119:160; Luke 6:47, 48.**

“The whole Bible is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ. Received, believed, obeyed, it is the great instrumentality in the transformation of character. It is the grand stimulus, the constraining force, that quickens the physical, mental, and spiritual powers, and directs the life into right channels.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 458.

“It is not enough, He says, for you to hear My words. By obedience you must make them the foundation of your character. Self is but shifting sand. If you build upon human theories and inventions, your house will fall. By the winds of temptation, the tempests of trial, it will be swept away. But these principles that I have given will endure. Receive Me; build on My words.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 314.

“When Moses was about to erect the sanctuary in the wilderness, he was cautioned, ‘See ... that thou make all things according to the pattern showed

to thee in the mount.’ Hebrews 8:5. In His law, God has given us the pattern. Our character building is to be after ‘the pattern showed to thee in the mount.’ The law is the great standard of righteousness. It represents the character of God, and is the test of our loyalty to His government. And it is revealed to us, in all its beauty and excellence, in the life of Christ.” —*Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students*, p. 62.

2. What is the purpose of the holy law? Galatians 3:24.

“When the law was proclaimed from Sinai, God made known to men the holiness of His character, that by contrast they might see the sinfulness of their own. The law was given to convict them of sin, and reveal their need of a Saviour. It would do this as its principles were applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. This work it is still to do. In the life of Christ the principles of the law are made plain; and as the Holy Spirit of God touches the heart, as the light of Christ reveals to men their need of His cleansing blood and His justifying righteousness, the law is still an agent in bringing us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. ‘The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ Psalm 19:7.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

“The law of God, as presented in the Scriptures, is broad in its requirements. Every principle is holy, just, and good. The law lays men under obligation to God; it reaches to the thoughts and feelings; and it will produce conviction of sin in every one who is sensible of having transgressed its requirements. If the law extended to the outward conduct only, men would not be guilty in their wrong thoughts, desires, and designs. But the law requires that the soul itself be pure and the mind holy, that the thoughts and feelings may be in accordance with the standard of love and righteousness....

“The Law of God reaches to those secret purposes, which, though they may be sinful, are often passed over lightly, but which are in reality the basis and the test of character. It is the mirror into which the sinner is to look if he would have a correct knowledge of his moral character. And when he sees himself condemned by that great standard of righteousness, his next move must be to repent of his sins, and seek forgiveness through Christ. Failing to do this, many try to break the mirror which reveals their defects, to make void the law which points out the blemishes in their life and character.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 211, 219.

3. As it reveals God’s character, what does the law do for us? Romans 3:20; 7:7.

“Well would it be for us each to hold up the mirror, God’s royal law, and see in it the reflection of His own character. Let us be careful not to neglect the danger signals and the warnings given in His word. Unless heed is given to these warnings, and defects of character are overcome, these defects will

overcome those who possess them, and they will fall into error, apostasy, and open sin. The mind that is not elevated to the highest standard will in time lose its power to retain that which it had once gained.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 537.

“Objectionable traits of character, whether hereditary or cultivated, should be taken up separately, and compared with the great rule of righteousness; and in the light reflected from the word of God, they should be firmly resisted and overcome, through the strength of Christ. ‘Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.’” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 136.

JESUS KEPT THE COMMANDMENTS

4. During His life, what did Jesus our Model do? Therefore, what should we do as well? John 15:10.

“God requires perfection of His children. His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character. This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God’s law, and when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God’s commandments.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 315.

“God’s law is the mirror presenting a complete reflection of the man as he is, and holding up before him the correct likeness. Some will turn away and forget this picture, while others will employ abusive epithets against the law, as though this would cure their defects of character. Still others who are condemned by the law will repent of their transgressions and, through faith in Christ’s merits, will perfect Christian character.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 31.

5. If we strive by God’s grace and in His strength to attain perfection of character, how will we be justified? Romans 3:23-26.

“The trials and sufferings of Christ were to impress man with a sense of his great sin in breaking the law of God, and to bring him to repentance and obedience to that law, and through obedience to acceptance with God. His righteousness He would impute to man, and thus raise him in moral value with God, so that his efforts to keep the divine law would be acceptable. Christ’s work was to reconcile man to God through His human nature, and God to man through His divine nature.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 273.

“It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are

sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned." —*Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AS A TRANSFORMING AGENCY

6. What is the purpose of the sacred Scriptures? 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Psalm 119:105, 106.

"... God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers....

"The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character. Christ prayed, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.' John 17:17. If studied and obeyed, the word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us in body, soul, and spirit to His own image. Then God can use us to do His will. The power given us works from within outwardly, leading us to communicate to others the truth that has been communicated to us." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 414, 100.

7. The Scriptures being the strongest character transforming agency, with what spirit should we study the word of God to be sanctified by the truth? Psalms 139:23, 24; 119:133.

"O that you would search the Scriptures with prayerful hearts, and a spirit of surrender to God! O that you would search your hearts as with a lighted candle, and discover and break the finest thread that binds you to worldly habits, which divert the mind from God! Plead with God to show you every practice that draws your thoughts and affections from Him. God has given His holy law to man as His measure of character. By this law you may see and overcome every defect in your character. You may sever yourself from every idol, and link yourself to the throne of God by the golden chain

of grace and truth.” —(*The Review and Herald*, May 14, 1901) *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 318.

8. Why is it so important to practice the commandments? Matthew 19:17.

“He who becomes a partaker of the divine nature will be in harmony with God’s great standard of righteousness, His holy law. This is the rule by which God measures the actions of men. This will be the test of character in the judgment....

“The truth is to be planted in the heart. It is to control the mind and regulate the affections. The whole character must be stamped with the divine utterances. Every jot and tittle of the word of God is to be brought into the daily practice.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 314.

“Says the prophet: ‘The heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge Himself.’ Psalm 50:6. That holy law, God’s righteousness, that amid thunder and flame was proclaimed from Sinai as the guide of life, is now revealed to men as the rule of judgment. The hand opens the tables, and there are seen the precepts of the Decalogue, traced as with a pen of fire. The words are so plain that all can read them.... God’s ten words, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, are presented to the view of all the inhabitants of the earth.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 639.

FOR MEDITATION

“The glory of Christ is revealed in the law, which is a transcript of His character, and His transforming efficacy is felt upon the soul until men become changed to His likeness. They are made partakers of the divine nature, and grow more and more like their Saviour, advancing step by step in conformity to the will of God, till they reach perfection.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 80.

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Why Tribulations?

“In Christian experience, the Lord permits trials of various kinds to call men and women to a higher order of living and to a more sanctified service. Without these trials there would be a continual falling away from the likeness of Christ, and men would become imbued with a spirit of scientific, fanciful, human philosophy, which would lead them to unite with Satan’s followers.

“In the providence of God, every good and great enterprise is subjected to trials, to test the purity and the strength of the principles of those who are standing in positions of responsibility, and to mold and substantiate the individual human character after God’s model. This is the highest order of education.” – *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 160, 161.

THE PURPOSE OF TRIALS

1. What is the Lord’s purpose in having us deal with trials? 1 Peter 5:10.

“‘In the world ye shall have tribulation,’ says Christ; but in Me ye shall have peace. The trials to which Christians are subjected in sorrow, adversity, and reproach are the means appointed of God to separate the chaff from the wheat. Our pride, selfishness, evil passions, and love of worldly pleasure must all be overcome; therefore God sends us afflictions to test and prove us, and show us that these evils exist in our characters. We must overcome through His strength and grace, that we may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ‘For our light affliction,’ says Paul, ‘which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.’ Afflictions, crosses, temptations, adversity, and our varied trials are God’s workmen to refine us, sanctify us, and fit us for the heavenly garner.” – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 115.

“It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Our precious Saviour invites us to join ourselves to Him, to unite our weakness to His strength, our ignorance to His wisdom, our unworthiness to His merits. God’s providence is the school in which we are to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus. The Lord is ever setting before us, not the way we would choose, which seems easier and pleasanter

to us, but the true aims of life. It rests with us to cooperate with the agencies which Heaven employs in the work of conforming our characters to the divine model. None can neglect or defer this work but at the most fearful peril to their souls.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 623.

2. To what are we compared, and how does the Lord bring about our restoration? 1 Peter 2:5.

“It may be that much work needs to be done in your character building, that you are a rough stone, which must be squared and polished before it can fill a place in God’s temple. You need not be surprised if with hammer and chisel God cuts away the sharp corners of your character until you are prepared to fill the place He has for you. No human being can accomplish this work. Only by God can it be done. And be assured that He will not strike one useless blow. His every blow is struck in love, for your eternal happiness. He knows your infirmities and works to restore, not to destroy.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 264.

“God gives us strength, reasoning power, time, in order that we may build characters on which He can place His stamp of approval. He desires each child of His to build a noble character, by the doing of pure, noble deeds, that in the end he may present a symmetrical structure, a fair temple, honored by man and God....

“He who would grow into a beautiful building for the Lord must cultivate every power of the being. It is only by the right use of the talents that the character can be developed harmoniously.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 224.

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

3. As fire consumes dross to purify gold, how are we to be tested in order to be purified? 1 Peter 1:5-7.

“The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop. If He saw in us nothing whereby He might glorify His name, He would not spend time in refining us. He does not cast worthless stones into His furnace. It is valuable ore that He refines.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 471.

“God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test; He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal, that it may reflect the radiance of His love. It is by close, testing trials that God disciplines His servants. He sees that some have powers which may be used in the advancement of His work, and He puts these persons upon trial; in His providence He brings them into posi-

tions that test their character and reveal defects and weaknesses that have been hidden from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. He shows them their own weakness, and teaches them to lean upon Him; for He is their only help and safeguard. Thus His object is attained. They are educated, trained, and disciplined, prepared to fulfill the grand purpose for which their powers were given them. When God calls them to action, they are ready, and heavenly angels can unite with them in the work to be accomplished on the earth.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 129, 130.

4. In what transformed state will the overcomer exit the furnace? 1 Peter 4:12, 13; Malachi 3:2, 3.

“Christ desires nothing so much as to redeem His heritage from the dominion of Satan. But before we are delivered from Satan’s power without, we must be delivered from his power within. The Lord permits trials in order that we may be cleansed from earthliness, from selfishness, from harsh, unchristlike traits of character. He suffers the deep waters of affliction to go over our souls in order that we may know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, in order that we may have deep heart longings to be cleansed from defilement, and may come forth from the trial purer, holier, happier. Often we enter the furnace of trial with our souls darkened with selfishness; but if patient under the crucial test, we shall come forth reflecting the divine character.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 174, 175.

“It is in mercy that the Lord reveals to men their hidden defects. He would have them critically examine the complicated emotions and motives of their own hearts, and detect that which is wrong, and modify their dispositions and refine their manners. God would have His servants become acquainted with their own hearts. In order to bring to them a true knowledge of their condition, He permits the fire of affliction to assail them, so that they may be purified. The trials of life are God’s workmen to remove the impurities, infirmities, and roughness from our characters, and fit them for the society of pure, heavenly angels in glory.... The fire will not consume us, but only remove the dross, and we shall come forth seven times purified, bearing the impress of the Divine.” —*My Life Today*, p. 92.

PERSEVERING IN TRIBULATION

5. Who is always our support in tribulation? 1 Corinthians 10:13; Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 12:1-3.

“As the enemy worked to overcome the Saviour, so he will work with the human family today. But in every time of trial and difficulty, remember that Christ has passed through similar experiences, and He came out

from every trial without a stain of sin upon His character. He came to show what every member of the human family may become through His grace. He understands every difficulty that we must meet, and He stands ready to strengthen those who struggle with Him against the powers of evil. He waits to hear and answer their prayers.

“When heaven is won, and we pass through the gates of the City of God to hear the words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,’ how small will seem the trials and difficulties that have beset our pathway here.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 245.

6. Knowing that God does not tempt us above our ability to bear it—and He knows better than we what that is—with what attitude should we face our trials? Romans 12:12; James 1:12.

“In order to be conformed to the image of our Saviour, we pass through a most painful process of refining....

“Our prayers for conformity to the image of Christ may not be answered exactly as we desire. We may be tested and proved, for God sees it best to put us under a course of discipline which is essential for us before we are fit subjects for the blessing we crave. We should not become discouraged and give way to doubt, and think that our prayers are not noticed. We should rely more securely upon Christ and leave our case with God to answer our prayers in His own way. God has not promised to bestow His blessings through the channels we have marked out. God is too wise to err and too regardful of our good to allow us to choose for ourselves.

“The plans of God are always the best, although we may not always discern them. Perfection of Christian character can be obtained only through labor, conflict, and self-denial.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 109.

OVERCOMING

7. How does the overcomer approach difficulties? Psalm 26:2.

“The Lord in His providence brings men where He can test their moral powers and reveal their motives of action, that they may improve what is right in themselves and put away that which is wrong. God would have His servants become acquainted with the moral machinery of their own hearts. In order to bring this about, He often permits the fire of affliction to assail them that they may become purified....

“True grace is willing to be tried; if we are loath to be searched by the Lord, our condition is serious indeed. God is the refiner and purifier of souls; in the heat of the furnace the dross is separated forever from the true silver and gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test. He knows what

is needed to purify the precious metal that it may reflect the radiance of His divine love....

“Not in freedom from trial, but in the midst of it, is Christian character developed.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 330.

8. What living faith will be possessed by those who are overcomers? 1 Peter 5:7-10.

“In this time of trial we need to be encouraged and comforted by one another. The temptations of Satan are greater now than ever before, for he knows that his time is short and that very soon every case will be decided, either for life or for death. It is no time now to sink down beneath discouragement and trial; we must bear up under all our afflictions and trust wholly in the Almighty God of Jacob. The Lord has shown me that His grace is sufficient for all our trials; and although they are greater than ever before, yet if we trust wholly in God, we can overcome every temptation and through His grace come off victorious.

“If we overcome our trials and get victory over the temptations of Satan, then we endure the trial of our faith, which is more precious than gold, and are stronger and better prepared to meet the next.... When temptations and trials rush in upon us, let us go to God and agonize with Him in prayer. He will not turn us away empty, but will give us grace and strength to overcome, and to break the power of the enemy.” —*Early Writings*, p. 46.

FOR MEDITATION

“God has shown me that He gave His people a bitter cup to drink, to purify and cleanse them. It is a bitter draught, and they can make it still more bitter by murmuring, complaining, and repining. But those who receive it thus must have another draught, for the first does not have its designed effect upon the heart. And if the second does not effect the work, then they must have another, and another, until it does have its designed effect, or they will be left filthy, impure in heart. I saw that this bitter cup can be sweetened by patience, endurance, and prayer, and that it will have its designed effect upon the hearts of those who thus receive it, and God will be honored and glorified. It is no small thing to be a Christian and to be owned and approved of God.” —*Early Writings*, p. 47.

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Character Transformation by the Holy Spirit

“The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. What is the Christian’s part in the process of transformation by the Holy Spirit? Revelation 3:20.

“No man can of himself cast out the evil throng that have taken possession of the heart. Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.’ Revelation 3:20. He will come, not for one day merely; for He says, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them;... and they shall be My people.’ ‘He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.’ 2 Corinthians 6:16; Micah 7:19. His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord, and ‘an habitation of God through the Spirit.’ Ephesians 2:21, 22.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 161, 162.

2. What great longing will never be overlooked or disregarded by God? Matthew 5:6.

“The sense of unworthiness will lead the heart to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and this desire will not be disappointed. Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will realize His love. All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied. The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

3. How does the Holy Spirit work in one's mind, heart, and spirit? John 15:8-11.

“Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan.” —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 408, 411.

“It is the Spirit that causes to shine into darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; that makes men's hearts burn within them with an awakened realization of the truths of eternity; that presents before the mind the great standard of righteousness, and convinces of sin; that inspires faith in Him who alone can save from sin; that works to transform character by withdrawing the affections of men from those things which are temporal and perishable, and fixing them upon the eternal inheritance. The Spirit recreates, refines, and sanctifies human beings, fitting them to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.” —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 194.

SURRENDER

4. On what condition can the Holy Spirit transform one's life? Proverbs 23:26. What happens then? John 16:13-15.

“When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the joy of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see, creates a new being in the image of God.

“The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ.” —*My Life Today*, p. 46.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE GENUINE CHARACTER

5. Why is it so important for the character to be built on the true foundation? Matthew 7:24, 25.

“The Christian must build all the foundation if he would build a strong, symmetrical character, if he would be well balanced in his religious experience. It is in this way that the man will be prepared to meet the demands of truth and righteousness as they are represented in the Bible; for he will be sustained and energized by the Holy Spirit of God. He who is a true Christian combines great tenderness of feeling with great firmness of purpose, with unswerving fidelity to God; he will in no case become the betrayer of sacred trusts. He who is endowed with the Holy Spirit has great capacities of heart and intellect, with strength of will and purpose that is unconquerable.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 176.

**6. After the foundation of the character is set, what comes next?
Philippians 2:12-14.**

“The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man’s sanctification, and man is to cooperate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 532.

THE REWARD

**7. As the apostle Paul, what efforts does the believer put forth?
Philippians 3:12-14.**

“The Holy Spirit ever abides with him who is seeking for perfection of Christian character. The Holy Spirit furnishes the pure motive, the living, active principle, that sustains striving, wrestling, believing souls in every emergency and under every temptation. The Holy Spirit sustains the believer amid the world’s hatred, amid the unfriendliness of relatives, amid disappointment, amid the realization of imperfection, and amid the mistakes of life. Depending upon the matchless purity and perfection of Christ, the victory is sure to him who looks unto the Author and Finisher of our faith.... He has borne our sins, in order that through Him we might have moral excellence, and attain unto the perfection of Christian character.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 195.

8. Why is there no substitute for taking personal responsibility for the transformation of one's own character? 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 22:12.

“No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit's working. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it [the land], as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.’ Ezekiel 14:20.” —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 411.

FOR MEDITATION

“We have great victories to gain, and a heaven to lose if we do not gain them. The carnal heart must be crucified; for its tendency is to moral corruption, and the end thereof is death. Nothing but the life-giving influences of the gospel can help the soul. Pray that the mighty energies of the Holy Spirit, with all their quickening, recuperative, and transforming power, may fall like an electric shock on the palsy-stricken soul, causing every nerve to thrill with new life, restoring the whole man from his dead, earthly, sensual state to spiritual soundness. You will thus become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; and in your souls will be reflected the image of Him by whose stripes you are healed.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 267.

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Sabbath, November 27, 2010

Shaping the Character

“A great name among men is as letters traced in sand, but a spotless character will endure to all eternity. God gives you intelligence and a reasoning mind, whereby you may grasp His promises; and Jesus is ready to help you in forming a strong, symmetrical character. Those who possess such a character need never become discouraged because they have not success in worldly affairs. They ‘are the light of the world.’ Satan cannot destroy or make of none effect the light that shines forth from them.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 579.

CHRIST FORMED HIS CHARACTER

1. What do we know about Jesus?

“At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for Himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God’s word. ‘It is written’ was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. But the influence of the rabbis made His life a bitter one. Even in His youth He had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 86.

“Christ is our example in all things. In the providence of God, His early life was passed in Nazareth, where the inhabitants were of that character that He was continually exposed to temptations, and it was necessary for Him to be guarded in order to remain pure and spotless amid so much sin and wickedness. Christ did not select this place Himself. His Heavenly Father chose this place for Him, where His character would be tested and tried in a variety of ways. The early life of Christ was subjected to severe trials, hardships, and conflicts, that He might develop the perfect character which makes Him a perfect example for children, youth, and manhood.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 78.

2. How is character formed? John 3:30; Galatians 2:20.

“... The thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 310.

“Every act of life, however unimportant, has its influence in forming the character. A good character is more precious than worldly possessions, and the work of forming it is the noblest in which men can engage.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 657.

“... Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 331.

“To the heart that has become purified, all is changed. Transformation of character is the testimony to the world of an indwelling Christ. The Spirit of God produces a new life in the soul, bringing the thoughts and desires into obedience to the will of Christ; and the inward man is renewed in the image of God. Weak and erring men and women show to the world that the redeeming power of grace can cause the faulty character to develop into symmetry and abundant fruitfulness. To the heart that has become purified, all is changed. Transformation of character is the testimony to the world of an indwelling Christ. The Spirit of God produces a new life in the soul, bringing the thoughts and desires into obedience to the will of Christ; and the inward man is renewed in the image of God. Weak and erring men and women show

to the world that the redeeming power of grace can cause the faulty character to develop into symmetry and abundant fruitfulness.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 233.

3. What danger will we automatically fall into—as did Peter—if we take our eyes off of Jesus? Matthew 14:29-31.

“Looking unto Jesus, Peter walks securely; but as in self-satisfaction he glances back toward his companions in the boat, his eyes are turned from the Saviour. The wind is boisterous. The waves roll high, and come directly between him and the Master; and he is afraid. For a moment Christ is hidden from his view, and his faith gives way. He begins to sink. But while the billows talk with death, Peter lifts his eyes from the angry waters, and fixing them upon Jesus, cries, ‘Lord, save me.’ Immediately Jesus grasps the outstretched hand, saying, ‘O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 381.

“So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul’s contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 70, 71.

“Your last thought at night, your first thought in the morning, should be of Him in whom is centered your hope of eternal life.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 666.

A NOBLE CHARACTER

4. How is a noble character formed? 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; Philippians 4:8.

“The formation of a right character is the work of a lifetime, and is the outgrowth of prayerful meditation united with a grand purpose. The excellence of character that you possess must be the result of your own effort. Friends may encourage you, but they cannot do the work for you. Wishing, sighing, dreaming, will never make you great or good. You must climb.

“The conversation we have by the fireside, the books we read, the business we transact, are all agents in forming our characters, and day by day decide our eternal destiny.

“Mental ability and genius are not character, for these are often possessed by those who have the very opposite of a good character. Reputation is not character. True character is a quality of the soul, revealing itself in the conduct.” —*My Life Today*, p. 267.

5. What is the role of parents and teachers in the formation of character? 2 Timothy 3:14.

“The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. It needs men in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle....

“Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now....

“It is not by arbitrary law or rule that the graces of character are developed. It is by dwelling in the atmosphere of the pure, the noble, the true. And wherever there is purity of heart and nobleness of character, it will be revealed in purity and nobleness of action and of speech....

“A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.” —*Education*, pp. 225, 237, 57.

6. What is an essential element for the transformation of character? Hebrews 11:1.

“Faith in Christ as a personal Saviour will give strength and solidity to the character. Those who have genuine faith in Christ will be sober-minded, remembering that God’s eye is upon them, that the Judge of all men is weighing moral worth, that heavenly intelligences are watching to see what manner of character is being developed.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 413.

“Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christ-like temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, ‘Ye shall receive.’” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564.

“The grace of Christ and the law of God are inseparable. In Jesus mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. In His life and character He not only reveals the character of God, but the possibility of man. He was the representative of God and the exemplar of humanity. He presented to the world what humanity might become when united by faith with divinity. The only-begotten Son of God took upon Him the nature of man, and established His cross between earth and heaven. Through the cross, man was drawn to God, and God to man. Justice moved from its high and awful position, and the heavenly hosts, the armies of holiness, drew near to the cross, bowing with reverence; for at the cross justice was satisfied. Through the cross the sinner was drawn from the stronghold of sin, from the confederacy of evil, and at every approach to the cross his heart relents and in penitence he cries, ‘It was my sins that crucified the Son

of God.' At the cross he leaves his sins, and through the grace of Christ his character is transformed. The Redeemer raises the sinner from the dust, and places him under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As the sinner looks upon the Redeemer, he finds hope, assurance, and joy. Faith takes hold of Christ in love. Faith works by love, and purifies the soul." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 349.

7. What else is important in the formation of character? 3 John 2.

"The body is a most important medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 488.

"God desires us to reach the standard of perfection made possible for us by the gift of Christ. He calls upon us to make our choice on the right side, to connect with heavenly agencies, to adopt principles that will restore in us the divine image. In His written word and in the great book of nature He has revealed the principles of life. It is our work to obtain a knowledge of these principles, and by obedience to cooperate with Him in restoring health to the body as well as to the soul." —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 16.

"Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character. Without health no one can as distinctly understand or as completely fulfill his obligations to himself, to his fellow beings, or to his Creator. Therefore the health should be as faithfully guarded as the character." —*Education*, p. 195.

8. Why is keeping one's mind fixed on eternity so important in the formation of character? 1 Timothy 6:7; Revelation 22:11.

"A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve.

"A good character is a capital of more value than gold or silver. It is unaffected by panics or failures, and in that day when earthly possessions shall be swept away, it will bring rich returns. Integrity, firmness, and perseverance are qualities that all should seek earnestly to cultivate; for they clothe the possessor with a power which is irresistible—a power which makes him strong to do good, strong to resist evil, strong to bear adversity." —*My Life Today*, p. 267.

“Wrongs cannot be righted, nor can reformations in conduct be made by a few feeble, intermittent efforts. Character building is the work, not of a day, nor of a year, but of a lifetime. The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a lifelong struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity, there can be no advancement in the divine life, no attainment of the victor’s crown.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 452.

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10

Sabbath, December 4, 2010

Overcoming

“God has given man intellect, and endowed him with capacities for improvement. Then let there be a strong taking hold upon God, a putting away of frivolity, amusement, and all uncleanness. Overcome all defects of character.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 105.

SHORTCOMINGS

- 1. What are the works of the flesh, which keep us from reaching the mark? Galatians 5:19-21; Proverbs 6:16-19.**

“Every good principle must be cherished if we would have it thrive in the soul. That which Satan plants in the heart—envy, jealousy, evil surmising, evil speaking, impatience, prejudice, selfishness, covetousness, and vanity—must be uprooted. If these evil things are allowed to remain in the soul, they will bear fruit by which many shall be defiled. Oh, how many cultivate the poisonous plants that kill out the precious fruits of love and defile the soul!” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 196.

“Envy, malice, evil thinking, evilspeaking, covetousness—these are weights that the Christian must lay aside if he would run successfully the race for immortality. Every habit or practice that leads into sin and brings dishonor upon Christ, must be put away, whatever the sacrifice. The blessing of heaven cannot attend any man in violating the eternal principles of right.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 273.

- 2. How is it possible to gain the victory over these natural tendencies and produce the fruit of the Spirit? Galatians 5:16, 22-25.**

“Through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.” —*Education*, p. 257.

“God has given us intellectual and moral power; but to a great extent every one is the architect of his own character. Every day the structure more nearly approaches completion. The word of God warns us to take heed how we build, to see that our building is founded upon the eternal rock. The time is coming when our work will stand revealed just as it is. Now is the time for all to cultivate the powers that God has given them, that they may form characters for usefulness here and for a higher life hereafter....

“The precious hours of probation are granted that you may remove every defect from your character, and this you should seek to do, not only that you may obtain the future life, but that you may be useful in this life. A good character is a capital of more value than gold or silver.” —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 412, 413, 415, 416.

“Are you ready to make the surrender now? You are to put away your sin right now when you see it.... Do not make leeway [that] you are going to overcome by degrees; you are going to try little by little to give up sin. Now, while it is called today, heed the invitation and harden not your hearts.

“Oh, my soul, why not leave the cursed thing today? Sin crucified my Lord. Why not turn from it with loathing? Why not love the things that Christ loved, and hate the things that Christ hated? He has made provision ample enough for you that you can, through Him, be more, yea, more than overcomers.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 283.

WITH JESUS BY OUR SIDE

3. How do we know that God has not left us alone to overcome temptations and character defects? Hebrews 2:18; 4:15, 16; Philippians 2:13; 4:13.

“There is hope for every one of us, but only in one way, and that is by binding ourselves to Christ, and exerting every energy to attain to the perfection of His character.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 540.

“Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you cannot overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 99.

“The tempter’s agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

- 4. In the Old Testament, we read that just one spot or blemish was enough for the leper to be declared unclean by the priest (Leviticus 13). What will happen if one cherishes even a single sin? Why is this the case? James 2:10.**

“We may flatter ourselves that we are free from many things of which others are guilty; but if we have some strong points of character, and but one weak point, there is yet a communion between sin and the soul. The heart is divided in its service, and says, ‘Some of self and some of Thee.’ The child of God must search out the sin which he has petted and indulged himself in, and permit God to cut it out of his heart. He must overcome that one sin; for it is not a trifling matter in the sight of God....

“One defect, cultivated instead of being overcome, makes the man imperfect, and closes against him the gate of the Holy City. He who enters heaven must have a character that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Naught that defileth can ever enter there. In all the redeemed host not one defect will be seen.” —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 91, 144.

“We should learn wherein we fail, and then guard ourselves upon that point. We must have perfect control over our own spirit. ‘If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 307.

- 5. What does becoming a partaker of the divine nature encompass? Philipians 2:12; 2 Peter 1:3-11.**

“You can never secure a good character by merely wishing for it. It can be gained only by labor. Your desires in this direction must be expressed in earnest, honest endeavor and patient toil. By taking advance steps each day up the ladder of progress, you will find at last at the top—a conqueror, yes, more than a conqueror, through Him who has loved you.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 348.

“When you ask for the blessings you need, that you may perfect a character after Christ’s likeness, the Lord assures you that you are asking according to a promise that will be verified. That you feel and know you are a sinner is sufficient ground for asking for His mercy and compassion.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 130, 131.

OVERCOMING EVERY DEFECT

- 6. Just as Jesus prayed without ceasing, how should we cherish this precious means for conquering the foe? Luke 22:40; Ephesians 6:18.**

“In God is our strength. Pray much. Prayer is the life of the soul. The prayer of faith is the weapon by which we may successfully resist every assault of the enemy.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 88.

“Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christ-like temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, ‘Ye shall receive.’” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564.

“When secret prayer and reading of the Scriptures are neglected today, tomorrow they can be omitted with less remonstrance of conscience. There will be a long list of omissions, all for a single grain sown in the soil of the heart. On the other hand, every ray of light cherished will yield a harvest of light. Temptation once resisted will give power to more firmly resist the second time; every new victory gained over self will smooth the way for higher and nobler triumphs. Every victory is a seed sown to eternal life.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 120.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

7. What is the key to success? John 15:4-11.

“Men and women can reach God’s ideal for them if they will take Christ as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will accomplish for those who give themselves to Him in loving trust.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 115.

“Christ must dwell in him by faith. He, their Exemplar, was self-possessed. He walked in humility. He had true dignity. He had patience....

“The example of Christ is before us, ever to keep the law and the gospel closely connected. They cannot be separated. Let calmness and self-possession be cultivated and perseveringly maintained, for this was the character of Christ....

“Remember in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. If Christ is abiding in our hearts by faith, we shall, by beholding the manner of His life, seek to be like Jesus, pure, peaceable, and undefiled. We shall reveal Christ in our character. We will not only receive and absorb light but will also diffuse it. We will have more clear and distinct views of what Jesus is to us. The symmetry, loveliness, and benevolence that were in the life of Jesus Christ will be shining forth in our lives.” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 22, 23.

“Christ does not weigh character in scales of human judgment. He says, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me’ (John 12:32). Every soul who responds to this drawing will turn from iniquity. Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him. He who comes to Jesus is setting his feet upon a ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. Teach it by pen, by voice, that God is above the ladder; the bright rays of His glory are shining upon every round of the ladder. He is looking graciously upon all who are climbing painfully upward, that He may send them help, divine help, when the hand seems to be relaxing and the foot trembling. Yes, tell it, tell it in words that will melt the heart, that not one who shall perseveringly climb the ladder will fail of an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; those who believe in Christ shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 181, 182.

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11

Sabbath, December 11, 2010

Being an Example

“The spirit and word and influence you carry are making impressions upon the minds of others. The atmosphere which surrounds the soul, if it is evil, will be like a spiritual malaria, which will be poisonous to those around. But it is profitable for the soul to have an atmosphere that will be as a savor of life unto life to others. When the soul is weighted with the truth which works by love and purifies the soul, a heavenly atmosphere will pervade the soul. ‘He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed’ (Proverbs 13:20). Every soul that claims to believe the truth, should manifest uprightness of character, devotion to God, steadfastness of purpose, and represent the character of Christ in a well-ordered life and godly conversation.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 27.

TRUTH IN PRACTICE

1. **How will truth be revealed in practical application? Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12.**

“Those who are looking for the revelation of Christ in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, in life and character will seek to represent Him to the world. ‘And every man that hath

this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure' (1 John 3:3). They will hate sin and iniquity, even as Christ hated sin. They will keep the commandments of God, as Christ kept His Father's commandments. They will realize that it is not enough to acquiesce in the doctrines of truth, but that the truth must be applied to the heart, practiced in the life, in order that the followers of Christ may be one with Him, and that men may be as pure in their sphere as God is in His sphere." –*Faith and Works*, pp. 115, 116.

"Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them." –*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.

2. How will the world be able to see that we know God and that we are walking as did Christ? 1 John 2:3-6.

"And the natural powers are enlarged because of holy obedience. From the study of the word of life, students may come forth with minds expanded, elevated, ennobled. If they are, like Daniel, hearers and doers of the word of God, they may advance as he did in all branches of learning. Being pure-minded, they will become strong-minded. Every intellectual faculty will be quickened. They may so educate and discipline themselves that all within the sphere of their influence shall see what man can be, and what he can do, when connected with the God of wisdom and power." –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 466.

SAVOR OF LIFE UNTO LIFE

3. What illustration depicts the life of one who lives in a manner that attracts people to Christ? 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

"If Christ is in the heart, He will appear in the home, in the workshop, in the marketplace, in the church. The power of the truth will be felt in elevating, ennobling the mind and softening and subduing the heart, bringing the whole man into harmony with God. He who is transformed by the truth will shed a light upon the world. He that hath the hope of Christ in him will purify himself even as He is pure. The hope of Christ's appearing is a large hope, a far-reaching hope. It is the hope of seeing the King in His beauty and of being made like Him." –*Faith and Works*, p. 116.

"Christ wants His followers to be like Him, because He desires to be correctly represented in the family circle, in the church, and in the world.... We

are to accept Christ as our efficiency, our strength, that we may reveal His character to the world.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 274.

“While helping the poor in temporal things, keep always in view their spiritual needs. Let your own life testify to the Saviour’s keeping power. Let your character reveal the high standard to which all may attain. Teach the gospel in simple object lessons. Let everything with which you have to do be a lesson in character building.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 198, 199.

“If we would become Christlike, we must study Christ’s character.... It is necessary that we should closely examine ourselves, and enquire, ‘Is this Christ’s way? Would Christ pursue this course of action? What kind of an impression am I leaving upon the minds of those with whom I am connected? Shall I pursue a course of action that will weaken the confidence of anyone with whom I deal and cause them to think lightly of the Christianity that I profess? Shall I be uncourteous, un-Christlike, unmerciful toward the purchase of the blood of Christ?’” —*The Upward Look*, p. 66.

LIVING EPISTLES

4. What living letter do the people we meet read? 2 Corinthians 3:3.

“We must live a twofold life—a life of thought and action, of silent prayer and earnest work.... God requires us to be living epistles, known and read of all men.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 317.

“Let Christ be seen in all that you do. Let all see that you are living epistles of Jesus Christ.... Be lovable. Let your life win the hearts of all who are brought in contact with you. There is too little done at the present time to render the truth attractive to others.” —*Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 433.

“God can be honored by those who profess to believe in Him, only as they are conformed to His image and controlled by His Spirit. Then, as witnesses for the Saviour, they may make known what divine grace has done for them.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 559.

“No member of the family can enclose himself within himself, where other members of the family shall not feel his influence and spirit. The very expression of the countenance has an influence for good or evil. His spirit, his words, his actions, his attitude toward others, are unmistakable.... If he is filled with the love of Christ, he will manifest courtesy, kindness, and tender regard for the feelings of others, and will communicate to his associates, by his acts of love, a tender, grateful, happy feeling. It will be made manifest that he is living for Jesus.... He will be able to say to the Lord, ‘Thy gentleness hath made me great.’” —*My Life Today*, p. 53.

5. What will happen when it is our desire, by our teaching and example, to connect sinners with Christ? Psalm 51:15; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

“The very example and deportment as well as the words of the Christian should be such as to awaken in the sinner a desire to come to the Fountain of life.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 424.

“The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others. They may not realize that they are doing any special good, but by their unconscious influence they may start waves of blessing that will widen and deepen, and the blessed results they may never know until the day of final reward. They do not feel or know that they are doing anything great. They are not required to weary themselves with anxiety about success. They have only to go forward quietly, doing faithfully the work that God’s providence assigns, and their life will not be in vain. Their own souls will be growing more and more into the likeness of Christ; they are workers together with God in this life and are thus fitting for the higher work and the unshadowed joy of the life to come.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 83.

“The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition; but a godly example has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 268.

6. What great influence do our words have on the people with whom we speak? Luke 4:22; Colossians 3:17; Proverbs 15:23; 16:24.

“Those with whom we associate day by day need our help, our guidance. They may be in such a condition of mind that a word spoken in season will be as a nail in a sure place. Tomorrow some of these souls may be where we can never reach them again. What is our influence over these fellow travelers?” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 348.

“The words and the character of Christ should be often the subject of our thoughts and of our conversation, and each day some time should be especially devoted to prayerful meditation upon these sacred themes.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 663.

“It is our own character and experience that determine our influence upon others. In order to convince others of the power of Christ’s grace, we must know its power in our own hearts and lives. The gospel we present for the saving of souls must be the gospel by which our own souls are saved. Only through a living faith in Christ as a personal Saviour is it possible to

make our influence felt in a skeptical world. If we would draw sinners out of the swift-running current, our own feet must be firmly set upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 469, 470.

KINDNESS AND LOVE

7. In what different ways do we represent Christ? Galatians 2:20; 1 John 4:19.

“You are to represent Christ in His meekness and gentleness and love.” —*My Life Today*, p. 53.

“God sends you into the world as His representatives. In every act of life you are to make manifest the name of God. This petition calls upon you to possess His character. You cannot hallow His name, you cannot represent Him to the world, unless in life and character you represent the very life and character of God. This you can do only through the acceptance of the grace and righteousness of Christ....

“The Christian who is such in his private life, in the daily surrender of self, in sincerity of purpose and purity of thought, in meekness under provocation, in faith and piety, in fidelity in that which is least, the one who in the home life represents the character of Christ—such a one may in the sight of God be more precious than even the world-renowned missionary or martyr.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, pp. 94, 270.

“In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 59.

FAITH AND ACTION

8. How can we prove our faith? James 2:14-17; 1:22.

“By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected.... Our words, our acts, our dress, our deportment, even the expression of the countenance, has an influence.... Every impulse thus imparted is seed sown which will produce its harvest. It is a link in the long chain of human events, extending we know not whither. If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same influence upon others, and they upon still others. Thus by our unconscious influence thousands may be blessed....

“And the wider the sphere of our influence the more good we may do. When those who profess to serve God follow Christ’s example, practicing the

principles of the law in their daily life; when every act bears witness that they love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves, then will the church have power to move the world.” —*My Life Today*, p. 121.

FOR MEDITATION

“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 415.

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12

Sabbath, December 18, 2010

Being a True Christian

“Christianity is simply living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. We are to believe in, and live in, Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. We have faith in God when we believe His Word; we trust and obey God when we keep His commandments; and we love God when we love His law.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 122.

“A Christian life will be revealed by Christian thoughts, Christian words, and Christian deportment. In Christ there is a divine completeness of character.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 184.

A CHRISTIAN IN NAME AND DEED

1. Who first called Jesus’ followers “Christians”? Acts 11:26.

“It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. The name was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, their teaching, and their conversation. Continually they were recounting the incidents that had occurred during the days of His earthly ministry, when His disciples were blessed with His personal presence.... Well might the heathen call them Christians, since they preached Christ and addressed their prayers to God through Him.

“It was God who gave to them the name of Christian. This is a royal name, given to all who join themselves to Christ.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 157.

2. Who alone can rightly value a Christian? 1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 21:2; Luke 16:15.

“True character is not shaped from without, and put on; it radiates from within.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 307.

“Christian worth does not depend on brilliant talents, lofty birth, wonderful powers, but on a clean heart—a heart purified and refined, that does not exalt self, but, by beholding Christ, reflects the long lost image of divinity.” —*Evangelism*, p. 135.

“It is the purpose of God to glorify Himself in His people before the world. He expects those who bear the name of Christ to represent Him in thought, word, and deed. Their thoughts are to be pure and their words noble and uplifting, drawing those around them nearer the Saviour. The religion of Christ is to be interwoven with all that they do and say.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 21.

RECOGNIZING A TRUE CHRISTIAN

3. How does one recognize such individuals? John 13:35.

“During every hour of Christ’s sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved. The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another.

“This love is the evidence of their discipleship. ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,’ said Jesus, ‘if ye have love one to another.’ When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart....

“Men hate the sinner, while they love the sin. Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 678, 462.

4. What does Christ’s follower do? Matthew 16:24.

“None are living Christians unless they have a daily experience in the things of God and daily practice self-denial, cheerfully bearing the cross and following Christ. Every living Christian will advance daily in the divine life. As he advances toward perfection, he experiences a conversion to God every day; and this conversion is not completed until he attains to perfection of Christian character, a full preparation for the finishing touch of immortality.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 291.

“There are some who are seeking, always seeking, for the goodly pearl. But they do not make an entire surrender of their wrong habits. They do not die to self that Christ may live in them. Therefore they do not find the precious pearl. They have not overcome unholy ambition and their love for worldly attractions. They do not lift the cross, and follow Christ in the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice. They never know what it is to have peace and harmony in the soul; for without entire surrender there is no rest, no joy. Almost Christians, yet not fully Christians, they seem near the kingdom of heaven, but they do not enter therein. Almost but not wholly saved means to be not almost but wholly lost.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 399, 400.

THE CHRISTIAN’S BADGE

5. What evidence is revealed by those who walk with God? In what sense is this outward, and how is it inward? Colossians 1:10, 12.

“There is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says....

“The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God. By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer. No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 276.

6. What will finally be revealed on the judgment day? Revelation 3:5.

“It is the character, not the placing of our names on the church books, that makes us Christians. What manifestations will appear when Christ, abiding in the heart, is shining in the faces of those who love Him and keep His commandments. Truth is written there. The man is transformed into Christ’s image. A worldling may pass by and not mark the change, but those who have had communion with Christ discern the expression of Christ in

word, in spirit. The influence upon the heart is seen in a habitual gentleness, a more than human love. The sweet peace of heaven will be in the soul, and will be revealed in the countenances.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 28.

THE WATCHFUL CHRISTIAN

7. What will characterize the Christian’s actions and very being? John 9:4; Acts 20:24.

“The watchful Christian is a working Christian, seeking zealously to do all in his power for the advancement of the gospel. As love for his Redeemer increases, so also does love for his fellow men. He has severe trials, as had his Master; but he does not allow affliction to sour his temper or destroy his peace of mind. He knows that trial, if well borne, will refine and purify him, and bring him into closer fellowship with Christ. Those who are partakers of Christ’s sufferings will also be partakers of His consolation and at last sharers of His glory.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 261.

“If Christians were to act in concert, moving forward as one, under the direction of one Power, for the accomplishment of one purpose, they would move the world.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 221.

8. What should be done immediately if we realize that we are not rightly representing Christ? Matthew 24:13.

“There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Said the beloved John, ‘These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ 1 John 2:1. And do not forget the words of Christ, ‘The Father Himself loveth you.’ John 16:27. He desires to restore you to Himself, to see His own purity and holiness reflected in you. And if you will but yield yourself to Him, He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it forward to the day of Jesus Christ. Pray more fervently; believe more fully. As we come to distrust our own power, let us trust the power of our Redeemer, and we shall praise Him who is the health of our countenance.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

“Christians are set as light bearers on the way to heaven. They are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ. Their life and character should be such that through them others will get a right conception of Christ and of His service.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 115.

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*Please read the Missionary Report
from Nepal on page 117*

13

Sabbath, December 25, 2010

The Character of Christ's Redeemed at His Second Coming

“... Christ's faithful ones will appear in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God’ (Psalm 90:17), in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord.” —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 360.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 1. What will be revealed on the judgment day about every person's sense of responsibility for his salvation? Romans 14:12.**

“But character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit's working.” —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 412.

“Character is personal. We each have a work to do for time and for eternity. God abhors indifference in regard to the formation of character.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 429.

- 2. What will the harvest of this life be? Galatians 6:7, 8.**

“The harvest of life is character, and it is this that determines destiny, both for this life and for the life to come.” —*Education*, p. 109.

“A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 332.

3. Can we hope for a change from unrighteousness to righteousness to take place when Christ gathers His elect? 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24.

“... The character you bear in probationary time will be the character you will have at the coming of Christ. If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth. The traits of character you cherish in life will not be changed by death or by the resurrection. You will come up from the grave with the same disposition you manifested in your home and in society. Jesus does not change the character at His coming. The work of transformation must be done now. Our daily lives are determining our destiny.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 16.

“What we shall be in heaven is the reflection of what we are now in character and holy service.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 361.

“I urge you to prepare for the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 355.

THE FINAL RESULT

4. What is still possible today that will end when Jesus leaves the Most Holy Place? Revelation 22:11.

“But those who are waiting to behold a magical change in their characters without determined effort on their part to overcome sin, will be disappointed. We have no reason to fear while looking to Jesus, no reason to doubt but that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him; but we may constantly fear lest our old nature will again obtain the supremacy, that the enemy shall devise some snare whereby we shall again become his captives. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. With our limited powers we are to be as holy in our sphere as God is holy in His sphere. To the extent of our ability, we are to make manifest the truth and love and excellence of the divine character. As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ.

“We are to grow daily in spiritual loveliness. We shall fail often in our efforts to copy the divine pattern. We shall often have to bow down to weep at the feet of Jesus, because of our shortcomings and mistakes; but we are

not to be discouraged; we are to pray more fervently, believe more fully, and try again with more steadfastness to grow into the likeness of our Lord. As we distrust our own power, we shall trust the power of our Redeemer, and render praise to God, who is the health of our countenance, and our God.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 336, 337.

5. At this time of earth’s history, what exhortation of the apostle Paul is particularly significant? Romans 13:11-14.

“We have no time to lose. We know not how soon our probation may close. At the longest, we have but a brief lifetime here, and we know not how soon the arrow of death may strike our hearts. We know not how soon we may be called to give up the world and all its interests. Eternity stretches before us. The curtain is about to be lifted. But a few short years, and for everyone now numbered with the living the mandate will go forth:

“‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still:... and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.’ Revelation 22:11.

“Are we prepared? Have we become acquainted with God, the Governor of heaven, the Lawgiver, and with Jesus Christ whom He sent into the world as His representative? When our lifework is ended, shall we be able to say, as did Christ our example:

“‘I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.... I have manifested Thy name?’ John 17:4-6.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 454.

6. At Jesus’ second coming there will be two groups of people. What will determine which one we belong to? Matthew 25:31-36.

“The love of a holy God is an amazing principle, which can stir the universe in our behalf during the hours of our probation and trial. But after the season of our probation, if we are found transgressors of God’s law, the God of love will be found a minister of vengeance. God makes no compromise with sin. The disobedient will be punished. The wrath of God fell upon His beloved Son as Christ hung upon the cross of Calvary in the transgressor’s place. The love of God now reaches out to embrace the lowest, vilest sinner that will come to Christ with contrition. It reaches out to transform the sinner into an obedient, faithful child of God; but not a soul can be saved if he continues in sin.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 313.

“In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 107.

“In order for us to be like the Saviour, we must be changed (see Philip-
pians 3:20, 21). Now is the time for us to bring into the daily life the virtues
of Christ’s life. We have no time to lose. Should we fail in our character build-
ing, we shall lose eternal life. We must build on the true foundation.... We
must do the work of Christ, and be constantly watching and praying. Then
we shall be ready for His appearing, prepared to receive eternal life.” —*The
Upward Look*, p. 311.

**7. Of what should we be absolutely sure in relation to God’s
work in making up His kingdom? 2 Peter 3:9.**

“The divine Worker spends little time on worthless material. Only the pre-
cious jewels does He polish after the similitude of a palace, cutting away the
rough edges. The process is severe and trying; Christ cuts away the surplus
surface, and putting the stone to the polishing wheel, presses it close, that all
roughness may be worn off. Then, holding the jewel up to the light, the Master
sees in it a reflection of Himself, and He pronounces it worthy of a place in His
casket.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1154.

“When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people,
then He will come to claim them as His own.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69.

“In that day the redeemed will shine forth in the glory of the Father and
the Son.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 355.

ETERNAL PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS

**8. What will be the privilege of those who reflect perfectly the
likeness of their Saviour? Revelation 2:7.**

“Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will ‘grow
up’ to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory. The last lingering
traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ’s faithful ones will
appear in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God’ (Psalm 90:17), in mind and soul
and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord. Oh, wonderful redemp-
tion! long talked of, long hoped for, contemplated with eager anticipation,
but never fully understood.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 360.

FOR MEDITATION

“A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that
we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of
Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly
mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is
the development of character in this life.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 332.

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MISSIONARY REPORT FROM NEPAL

To be read on Sabbath, December 25, 2010

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, January 1, 2011*

Nepal is a small mountainous country between China on the north and India on the southeast and west. The population of this country is almost 25 million, of whom 96% are Hindu, while the rest are Baudha, Muslim, or Christian. Most of the people are engaged in agriculture. Because of the Hindu influences, it is quite difficult to approach the people with the message of the Bible.

At the beginning of the 18th century, there were some preachers who reached this country from India; but because of the strength of Hinduism, their mission was not successful.

The work of the Reform Movement began in the capital city, Kathmandu, in 2005 when Pastors Henry Dering, Joel Barnedo, and Jerry Eaton visited this country. It was quite difficult to share the truth of Reformation, because no one had ever heard about this message before. My wife Sumitra and I were the first to meet these three brethren and become acquainted with the truth about the Creator and with the message of Reformation. God our Creator was so kind to send His Holy Spirit to start us on our journey with Him as Reformers. There are so many places we need to go with the sacred message. Since we are close to the Chinese border, I have been able to go into China on three occasions. We recently started worship services with a few local brothers in a border area, and we will continue to help them. Interested individuals in Bhutan, which is close to Nepal, are also waiting to receive the Reformation message. In November 2008, I visited Bhutan and met some brothers from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They attended our short meeting and were happy to learn about the Reform Movement. Please join us in prayer that God will continue to open doors so we may spread the seeds of the gospel.

Since all of these areas are underdeveloped, our believers are not strong financially. We receive very little in tithe income, but there is a lot that we can do to develop the church work. At present we have baptized members, in addition to 50 people who join us in our worship services. Some of them are interested in baptism.

Currently there are four groups which worship together and seek to advance the Lord's work. They are:

1. Headquarters and church in Kathmandu, the capital city.
2. Chitwan church, which is 180 kilometers from the city.
3. Bhaktapur church.
4. Sindhu church, near the Chinese border.

In addition, there are home churches located in different places. It is not possible for the individuals in those places to come to church. We are giving them Bible studies and preach the truth at every opportunity.

At present, the following things are needed for the Nepal Mission Field:

1. We would like to open a small school to meet the needs of children from poor families.
2. We also want to open a sewing institute to train people and as a source of income.
3. We need to build a church, which is very necessary for worship.
4. We also need a projector (LCD) to be used to show slides with a laptop computer. Such presentations are a great blessing for the people, so we are really praying for this.

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, we are praying very much for the work of God in this country. We also request your prayers and your helping hand by which God's blessings may be poured upon us. Many souls are thirsty for God, so we ask for your generous assistance in helping us with your blessed offerings to support our missionary efforts in the Nepal Mission Field.

*—Rakesh Lamichhane
Nepal Mission Field President*

