

Readings for the Week of Prayer

To be read from Friday,
December 4,
through Sabbath,
December 12, 2015



Gifts of Grace

Introduction

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." Romans 12:6-8.

The apostle Paul gives this list within the larger context of practical duties that are recommended to the believers for the blessing of all and specifically for the body of Christ, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Verse 5.

The seven gifts of grace on the above list come directly from Heaven's storehouse. Generally we think of a gift as something for the person to whom it is given; parents love to give gifts to their children to make them happy, not really requiring that they share the gift with others. But in Acts 20:35, the apostle told the Ephesian elders when he met with them on his way to Jerusalem that Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. That being the case, the gifts being considered during this Week of Prayer are based on the great joy and gift of giving. They are distributed freely to individuals to advance God's church on earth, which is encompassed and upheld by Heaven.

People in the world know about gifts. The findings of a survey of 80,000 business managers in more than 400 companies done by the Gallup Organization were published in a 2009 book titled *First, Break All the Rules*, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. These authors found that the very first key that great managers used was "Select for Talent." They knew that "People don't change that much. Don't waste your time trying to put in what can be left out. Try to draw out what was left in. That is hard enough." A person's upbringing or education may have caused him to neglect and even abandon his greatest ability. The great

manager seeks to discover every person's strengths for the benefit of both the company and the blessing of the person himself or herself.

It is important to apply this concept within the church. Children and youth need to be helped to improve the talents God has given them. And then there is the new birth, when the Holy Spirit is given in fuller measure and gives a specific gift of grace to each person as surely as when one is born. All the gifts need to be seen for what they are and be properly "managed" within the church.

"The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence

of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

The seven gifts of grace are related to the apostle's list of the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-10 as well as to the gifts that Paul said Christ gave to men in Ephesians 4. They are all given for the same purpose—to advance the heavenly kingdom and to promote the well being of Christ's body so all are served and are stronger together than they could ever be separately. "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying [building up] of the church." "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work

Readings for the Week of Prayer

December 4-12, 2015

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1. The Gift of Prophecy | 4 |
| <i>Ellen G. White</i> | |
| 2. The Gift and Spirit of Service | 7 |
| <i>Alfred Ngwenya</i> | |
| 3. Apt to Teach | 11 |
| <i>Larry Watts</i> | |
| 4. Exhortation—Love and Encouragement | 14 |
| <i>Humberto Ajucum</i> | |
| 5. The Gift of Giving | 17 |
| <i>Gustavo Castellanos</i> | |
| 6. Compassion to All | 20 |
| <i>Arnolfo Cortez</i> | |
| 7. Leadership—Courageous Service | 23 |
| <i>Idel Suarez, Jr.</i> | |

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of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:12-16.

"All men do not receive the same gifts, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.... Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327.

As we read and pray about the gifts of grace during this special week, we are grateful for this time of peace in which to consider these spiritual matters and meditate with joy on the heavenly gifts. But let us also think about them practically and, indeed, marvel at the infinite wisdom that is behind

them. At the same time, it would be excellent for each person individually to look at his own gift and consider how best to use it for Christ. God is faithful and guides the local churches and governing structures so there is no lack of talent. It is up to each person to so "love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" that the gifts reach their maximum potential under the moving of the Holy Spirit. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might:..." Deuteronomy 6:5; Ecclesiastes 9:10.

All church leaders and officers are exhorted to make these Readings for the Week of Prayer available to the members, especially those who are not always able to meet with the group, and to take time to pray with them. The Readings are also available on various Internet websites for download and printing, such as www.sda1844.org and www.sda1888.org (English, Spanish and French), www.asd1844.org (Span-

ish), and www.reform-adventisten.net (German), in addition to websites in many countries in other languages.

Sabbath, December 12, the final day of the Week of Prayer, is an annual day of fasting and prayer; all are encouraged to take part in the special meetings for study, fellowship, worship, prayer, and praise, knowing that all over the world the believers are united in mind and heart through the grace of Christ. The annual Week of Prayer offerings will be gathered for the General Conference; this fund is used for a broad spectrum of missionary outreach. Please give generously with the realization that today is the best time to give.

May the gifts of Christ have power in your individual life and the life of the church to the honor, glory, and praise of God the Father and Jesus Christ, to whom He has given all power.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*



"To Christ has been committed all judgment because He is the Son of man. Nothing escapes His knowledge. However high the rank and great the power of spiritual apostates, One higher and greater has borne the sin of the whole world. He is infinite in righteousness, in goodness, and in truth. He has power to withstand principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. Armed and equipped as the Captain of the Lord's host, He comes to the front in defense of His people....

"In the future there will be perplexity and trouble and deception. The only safety of God's people is their unity in the work He has given them to do, over which He alone can act as supervisor. All who hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end will receive in their foreheads the mark of God....

"At this time the only safety of those who are keeping God's commandments is in being of one heart, bound up with Christ and with one another, hid with Christ in God. John 13:33-35. The Saviour looks upon the coming conflict and He calls upon His people to strengthen themselves by taking hold of His strength, by making peace with Him so that when they are challenged, as they will be, God can give them the experience of Jacob....

"God gives to every man His work. He has given different ones different endowments. All must work according to the ability God has given them." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, pp. 271, 272.

The Gift of Prophecy

By Ellen G. White

“... This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 2:16-21.

We are living in the last days, in a time when we may expect much from the Lord. These words should bring us to the throne of grace to claim great things of Him. Here the promise is given that on the men and women and on our sons and daughters the Holy Spirit is to come; and “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 2:21. This brings to view a wonderful work to be done, for which we need the converting power of God in our hearts every day. It is our privilege to experience this. –*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1909.

We have the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the Spirit of prophecy. Priceless gems are to be found in the word of God. Those who search this word should keep the mind clear. –*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 114.

From the beginning

From the beginning the church of God has had the gift of prophecy in her midst as a living voice to counsel, admonish, and instruct. We have now

come to the last days of the work of the third angel’s message, when Satan will work with increasing power because he knows that his time is short. At the same time there will come to us through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, diversities of operations in the outpouring of the Spirit. This is the time of the latter rain. –*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 278.

“It was not long after the passing of the time in 1844 that my first vision was given me. I was visiting a dear sister in Christ, whose heart was knit with mine; five of us, all women, were kneeling quietly at the family altar. While we were praying, the power of God came upon me as I had never felt it before. I seemed to be surrounded with light, and to be rising higher and higher from the earth.” [*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 58.] At this time I had a view of the experience of the advent believers, the coming of Christ, and the reward to be given to the faithful. –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 654, 655.

God still speaks

In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will, and the course that He would have them pursue. –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 661 (1889); *Evangelism*, pp. 255, 256.

We must follow the directions given through the Spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church, and through the books that

have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 298 (1904); *Evangelism*, p. 260.

Before sending that testimony my mind was so impressed by the Spirit of God that I had no rest day or night until I wrote to you. It was not a work that I would have chosen for myself.... I had little hope that my words would be understood; but when the Lord moved upon me so decidedly, I could not resist His Spirit. Knowing that you were involving yourselves in the snares of Satan, I felt that the danger was too great for me to keep silent....

I was told to gather up the light that had been given me and let its rays shine forth to God’s people. I have been doing this in articles in the papers. I arose at three o’clock nearly every morning for months and gathered the different items written after the last two testimonies were given me in Battle Creek. I wrote out these matters and hurried them on to you; but I had neglected to take proper care of myself, and the result was that I sank under the burden; my writings were not all finished to reach you at the General Conference. –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 62, 63, 68.

Not mere opinion—past, present, and future revealed

Yet now when I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have thereby insulted the Spirit of God. You know how the Lord has manifested Himself through the Spirit of prophecy. Past, present, and future have passed before me. I have been shown faces that I had never seen, and years afterward I knew them when I saw them. I have been aroused from my sleep with a vivid sense of

subjects previously presented to my mind and I have written, at midnight, letters that have gone across the continent, and arriving at a crisis, have saved great disaster to the cause of God. This has been my work for many years. A power has impelled me to reprove and rebuke wrongs that I had not thought of. Is this work of the last thirty-six years from above or from beneath? —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 27; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 64.

My husband, with Elders Joseph Bates, Stephen Pierce, Hiram Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, was among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure.

We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be one in faith and doctrine; for we knew that Christ is not divided. One point at a time was made the subject of investigation. The Scriptures were opened with a sense of awe. Often we fasted, that we might be better fitted to understand the truth. After earnest prayer, if any point was not understood, it was discussed, and each one expressed his opinion freely; then we would again bow in prayer, and earnest supplications went up to heaven that God would help us to see eye to eye, that we might be one as Christ and the Father are one. Many tears were shed.

We spent many hours in this way. Sometimes the entire night was spent in solemn investigation of the Scriptures, that we might understand the truth for our time. On some occasions the Spirit of God would come upon me, and difficult portions were made clear through God's appointed way, and then there was perfect harmony. We were all of one mind and one spirit. —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 24, 25.

Guiding to and confirming Biblical truth

The word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind, and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the word of God their study are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men

and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the word that they have neglected to follow. The word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and personal, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 663, 664 (1889); *Evangelism*, pp. 256, 257.

Through His Holy Spirit the voice of God has come to us continually in warning and instruction, to confirm the faith of the believers in the Spirit of prophecy. Repeatedly the word has come, Write the things that I have given you to confirm the faith of My people in the position they have taken. Time and trial have not made void the instruction given, but through years of suffering and self-sacrifice have established the truth of the testimony given. The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days. —*Review and Herald*, July 18, 1907; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 41.

Clarifying our current position, need, and danger

God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer? —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 298.

The Lord has seen fit to give me a view of the needs and errors of His people. Painful though it has been to me, I have faithfully set before the offenders their faults and the means of remedying them.... Thus has the Spirit of God pronounced warnings and judgments, withholding not, however, the sweet promise of mercy.... —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 661.

The word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and personal, have been

calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles....

Thus are revealed the snares and devices of Satan, the importance of perfecting Christian character, and the means by which this result may be obtained. Thus God indicates what is necessary to secure His blessing. There is a disposition on the part of many to let rebellious feelings arise if their peculiar sins are reproved. The spirit of this generation is: "Speak unto us smooth things." But the Spirit of prophecy speaks only the truth. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 323, 13.

No substitute for the holy word

The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's word is the unerring standard. The testimonies are not to take the place of the word. Great care should be exercised by all believers to advance these questions carefully, and always stop when you have said enough. Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed word of God. —(Letter 12, 1890.)

The more we look at the promises of the word of God, the brighter they grow. The more we practice them, the deeper will be our understanding of them. Our position and faith is in the Bible. And never do we want any soul to bring in the testimonies ahead of the Bible. —(Manuscript 7, 1894) *Evangelism*, p. 256.

The Lord designs to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His word. The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. Man's duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God's word, yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 665.

Not personal opinion but for spiritual benefit

When I went to Colorado I was so burdened for you that, in my weakness, I wrote many pages to be read at your camp meeting. Weak and trembling, I arose at three o'clock in the morning to write to you. God was speaking through clay. You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.... —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 27.

Let the *Testimonies* be judged by their fruits. What is the spirit of their teaching? What has been the result of their influence? “All who desire to do so can acquaint themselves with the fruits of these visions” [*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 330]....

God is either teaching His church, reproving their wrongs, and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work ... bears the stamp of God, or the stamp of the enemy. There is no half-way work in the matter. The *Testimonies* are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 671 (1889); *Evangelism*, p. 260.

God has shown me much in regard to the work of Satan in Texas and the unchristian conduct of some who have moved there from Michigan. I was shown that the Brethren B have not in heart accepted the testimony which has been given them. They have more confidence in themselves than in the Spirit of prophecy. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 330.

To be used carefully

Some who are not willing to receive the light, but who prefer to walk in ways of their own choosing, will search the testimonies to find something in them to encourage the spirit of unbelief and

disobedience. Thus a spirit of disunion will be brought in; for the spirit which leads them to criticize the testimonies will also lead them to watch their brethren to find in them something to condemn. —(Manuscript 73, 1908) *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 48.

The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Proverbs 29:18. Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony. He will bring in spurious visions to mislead, and will mingle the false with the true, and so disgust people that they will regard everything that bears the name of visions as a species of fanaticism; but honest souls, by contrasting false and true, will be en-

We must resist and conquer inclination, and obey the conscience.

abled to distinguish between them.... —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 78.

The apostle cautioned the Thessalonians not to despise the gift of prophecy, and in the words, “Quench not the Spirit; Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21), he enjoined a careful discrimination in distinguishing the false from the true. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 263.

Its importance and influence

As the end draws near, and the work of giving the last warning to the world extends, it becomes more important for those who accept present truth to have a clear understanding of the nature and influence of the *Testimonies*, which God in His providence has linked with the work of the third angel’s message from its very rise....

The Lord requires us to obey the voice of duty, when there are other voices all around us urging us to pursue an opposite course. It requires earnest attention from us to distinguish the voice which speaks from God. We must resist and conquer inclination, and obey the voice of conscience with-

out parleying or compromise, lest its promptings cease and will and impulse control. The word of the Lord comes to us all who have not resisted His Spirit by determining not to hear and obey. This voice is heard in warnings, in counsels, in reproof. It is the Lord’s message of light to His people. If we wait for louder calls or better opportunities, the light may be withdrawn, and we left in darkness. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 654, 68.

I am authorized from God to tell you that not another ray of light through the *Testimonies* will shine upon your pathway until you make a practical use of the light already given. The Lord has walled you about with light; but you have not appreciated the light; you have trampled upon it. While some have despised the light, others have neglected it, or followed it but indifferently. A few have set their hearts to obey the light which God has been pleased to give them. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 606.

The Lord has sent His people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light. Oh, how much good would be accomplished if the books containing this light were read with a determination to carry out the principles they contain! There would be a thousand-fold greater vigilance, a thousandfold more self-denial and resolute effort. And many more would now be rejoicing in the light of present truth. —*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 125, 126. ■

“... To leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the word that they have neglected to follow.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 455.

The Gift and Spirit of Service

By Alfred Ngwenya, Zimbabwe/Swaziland

“As His representatives among men, God does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took humanity that He might reach humanity. A divine-human Saviour was needed to bring salvation to the world. And to men and women has been committed the sacred trust of making known ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ.’” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 134.

The gift of service we may understand to be “the spirit of service,” or “the gift of giving.” From the very beginning of human history, we can see that man was created to live a life of activity—of service. He was not created to just sit and think about himself but rather always to focus on what he should do to be God’s helping hand and thus glorify Him. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” Genesis 2:15. Such a life of service would make him healthy and happy and be a shield against temptation. Consider how such a life protects man from selfishness and idleness. Adam was expected to have dominion over even non-living nature, and he named the animals. He would communicate with and take care of them.

Thus, “Every one should consider the solemn question, What is my life toward God and my fellow men? No man liveth unto himself. No life is simply neutral in its results....” –*The Faith I Live By*, p. 30.

God Himself so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Today we enjoy the blessings of salvation and the saving grace of God through His service. Did not Christ give His life for the children of Adam? He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane and accepted death upon the cross, because He wanted to give an approved service

to man—salvation. We read in Hebrews 12:2, 3: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:8. This was what Jesus said to the twelve when He sent them out to serve; and after accomplishing the tasks, they expressed much joy because they had performed what was expected of them. Today many people want to receive payment or praise in return for their service, but this is not true service, for that comes from a free heart. “Freely ye have received, freely give.” And Paul in the Spirit says: “I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35.

“Every soul is under obligation to live a Christian life. Our individuality, our talents, our time, our influence, our abilities, all given to us of God, are to be rendered back to Him in willing service. The aim and object of life is not to secure temporal advantages, but to make sure of the eternal advantages. God claims your soul, your body, your capabilities; for He has bought them by His own precious blood, and they all belong to Him. It is robbery to withhold yourself from God.... The question of importance to us is, Is our life interwoven with that of Jesus?” –*The Faith I Live By*, p. 30.

All the talents we possess are given for service to the Lord and our neighbors. Our talents may not be the same

type or size as those of others, but we all have talents. Today there are rich people in the world, some of whom are gifted in singing, in addressing crowds, or in speaking eloquently, and they receive applause from people. But this is not what God had in mind when He imparted the talents. “In the life of the true Christian there is nothing of self. Self is dead. There was no selfishness in the life that Christ lived while on this earth. Bearing our nature, He lived a life wholly devoted to the service of others.” –*In Heavenly Places*, p. 166.

Because of self-centeredness this world is groping in darkness and is dying from lack of knowledge about the true, living God, the Creator of heaven and earth. We see people every day who have no food or clothing. Others are sick and in pain from different diseases and have lost all hope of recovering from their difficulties. And crimes are committed every day in every city, town, and village. Because of this darkness, God enlists servicemen and servicewomen.

Preaching

Seeing the world in darkness and dying, Jesus sent His disciples out with the commission, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:19, 20. This commission was itself a gift of service that He gave to His disciples and also to us. Everyone has this gift to serve his neighbor and the whole world with the light of salvation. “And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” John 20:22. With the Holy Spir-

it, He breathed into them the spirit of service. He sent them to share the good news with people in darkness.

It is the duty of everyone who has received the gospel to perform faithful service by enlightening others. No one needs to be afraid or to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it has the power to save both the person who serves and the one who is served. As long as there are people who do not know salvation through Jesus Christ, there are plenty of openings for one to enter into this service. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Isaiah 52:7. God knows very well how people suffer under the satanic hand of oppression. The devil has blinded them so they cannot see the way to salvation, but God provided the service of His people to help them find the way out of the prison of darkness.

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Isaiah 42:6, 7. This is a call to service. Will you not heed the call? For how long are these souls to remain in this prison of darkness? Are you not the recipient of God's grace? To you, to me, and to all His people He says, as He did to Saul of Tarsus: "... For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." Acts 26:16-18.

God has selected you to preach the word, because this word testifies of Christ, whom you have heard, met, and accepted. God expects us to preach the gospel faithfully, meeting people where they are. We should not wait for

them to come to us so we can share this word of light. True Christian service is to get up and go seek those to whom you can give this gospel that saves. The results of such service will be marvelous. "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Acts 6:7. In this preaching service, there should be no fear of disappointment or failure, for the promise is: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psalm 126:5, 6. When this service has all been completed, those who are faithfully engaged in it now will hear the great words: "... Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:23.

Service for the sick

"I was sick, and ye visited Me." "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." Matthew 25:36; Acts 10:38.

"Read the Scriptures carefully, and you will find that Christ spent the largest part of His ministry in restoring the suffering and afflicted to health. Thus He threw back upon Satan the reproach of the evil which the enemy of all good had originated. Satan is the destroyer; Christ is the Restorer. And in our work as Christ's co-laborers, we shall have success if we work on practical lines. Ministers, do not confine your work to giving Bible instruction. Do practical work. Seek to restore the sick to health. This is true ministry. Remember that the restoration of the body prepares the way for the restoration of the soul." —(Manuscript 55, 1901) *Medical Ministry*, p. 240.

Every single day, sick, suffering souls need our help; we see them left and right. At our work places, in our neighborhoods, in hospitals, and wherever people live, there is suffering. Jesus said that at the end of time there would be "famines, and pestilences." Matthew 24:7. People sense their need

of help most when they are under the power of disease. Then they are ready to accept our prayers and songs. Then they can recognize the helping hand and pitying love of God. Do what you can to help those who are in pain, remembering how Christ was ever ready to enter the house of the sick and the crying. Before sending His disciples to preach the gospel, what did He do? "And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Matthew 10:1. This shows how near Christ is to the sick, and He entrusted all of His followers with this important service.

The shepherd's service

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep." John 21:15, 16.

A shepherd protects, looks after, and feeds the sheep. Christ calls Himself the "good Shepherd" because He lays down His life for His sheep. Christ Himself was ever with His disciples, and not only they but also the multitudes were blessed by His presence. People came in search of Him at the crack of dawn, because they felt protected and at peace in His presence. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth, and taught them...." "Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets." Matthew 5:1, 2; Luke 9:16, 17. This is what we call Christian service—to care for our brethren, to feed them spiritually and physically. That is why Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself. It is the responsibility of pastors, church elders, and officers of

the church, as well as members, to take care of God's flock.

When those who are spiritually weak are not cared for properly in the church, it declines quickly. In other cases, poverty causes some to fall into temptation and leave the church. But it is the work of the minister and every brother and sister to watch over the souls whom Christ has purchased with His own blood.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly." Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Peter 5:2. God's flock needs to be fed regularly from His word. Now is the time to do this, because a time is coming when it will be very hard to teach the truth. God's flock needs to be firmly established in the present truth.

Unfortunately, often only pleasing sermons are taught and many people stop listening to the real truth, fearing that their sins will be pointed out. But everyone needs to base his life and experience on a "thus saith the Lord," "to the law and to the testimony." And those who faithfully care for God's flock will one day hear the blessing to be pronounced upon them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34), while at the same time those who did not do faithful service will hear God pronounce irreversible judgment casting them into darkness. "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41.

Yet today, as in ancient times, people make excuses. "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned." Isaiah 29:11, 12. After he re-

ceived the gospel commission, the apostle Paul did not feel at peace if he had not preached to and fed God's flock with the word: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" 1 Corinthians 9:16. He knew that everyone will be called to account on the judgment day for souls who were committed to them for safe keeping. If we fail as God's watchmen on the walls of Zion, a terrible negligence will be charged against us. Let us do faithful service as undershepherds.

Service for the poor

"For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." Deuteronomy 15:11.

Every person—rich or poor—is very precious to God. He does not belittle anyone who lives in poverty. "For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy." Psalm 72:12, 13. When Christ began His ministry, He began with the poor; in fact, He says He was anointed "to preach the gospel to the poor." Whenever an opportunity arises, we need to do whatever we can for the poor and weak so they will receive the joy of the rich. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." Psalm 41:1-3.

Kindness shown to poor, weak, suffering ones is like having bread for the future, for "the merciful" "shall obtain mercy." Matthew 5:7. God will pay him back. God does not forget our work and labor of love if we do everything as if done to Jesus, in His name. We cannot afford to close our eyes and ears as though we are blind and deaf to the cries of the poor, thinking that we will not be seen by God. In this world and in the church, there are people who are oppressed—widows and the fatherless. Our eyes, ears, and sympathies should be drawn to such people. Our light should shine so that these suffering

ones may see and glorify God. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27.

Members and leaders in the church have great truth and knowledge about the current events surrounding us. We even fast often, asking for God's favor. But God in His mercy poses a question: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Isaiah 58:6. This will open the ears of God to hear our prayers, and He will guide us into the paths of righteousness. We should be like a father to the poor and fatherless, even searching out the cases which we do not know. There is one young man in the Bible who was called to be a disciple of Jesus on condition that he sell all that he had and give it to the poor and destitute. Matthew 19:21. This shows that Christ identifies with the poor and will hold us responsible if we do not serve them. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink." "Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me." Matthew 25:42, 45. We are our brother's keeper.

Service to prisoners

"I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." Matthew 25:36.

There are many people in the world who are afflicted and chained because of crimes that they have committed, and the law has not been merciful to them. God in heaven looks down and sees and hears the groaning of these souls. In compassion, He sent His only Son to give them relief. Jesus said that His mission was "to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Isaiah 42:7. Before Christ comes into our lives, we are all

prisoners of the devil. Christ preached the gospel of deliverance for the captives and for those who were chained. It would not be possible for us to praise God if Jesus had not come and delivered those who were imprisoned by the prince of this world "that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners." Isaiah 14:17.

Many people are locked away in the prisons of this world. Not all have been rightly judged. Some were condemned falsely, like our Lord, so there is no excuse for refusing to visit the prisoners or for asking why they broke the law. In this world, there is little justice. We do not know why so many people are in jail. Let us remember Peter, Paul, John, and others who were imprisoned, even though they had done nothing wrong in the sight of God. But even if people are in prison for a real cause, let us visit them and win them to the everlasting hope of eternal life.

Remember the thief on the cross. Christ was revealed to him and promised him eternal life, even though he was not freed from the cross. He died that day, but in eternal hope. Likewise, visiting prisoners does not mean that we are to fight to get them released from jail, rather that they may be freed from the prison of sin even while they remain in jail, with the hope of eternal life and liberation. In fact, there are people whom God permitted to be placed in prison so they may receive the crown of life. The promise of God is, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10. Therefore, let us "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Hebrews 13:3.

Support of the ministry

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." Proverbs 3:9.

God is calling us to join Him in the service of ministry by supporting those who have left their families, homes, and countries to preach the gospel.

How do we serve them? God instructs all to give their tithes and offerings so that those who preach the gospel may live—they and their families. The Lord, who owns this world and everything in it (silver and gold), has given man talents, wisdom, and the ability to obtain wealth. Let us remember how faithful Abraham was, giving tithes and offerings to the King of Salem (Melchisedec). Similarly, Jacob understood his obligation to the ministry and promised God that he would pay the tithes and offerings to support the sacred service if God would spare his life and return him to his home country. This service of tithes and offerings is as old as human history. The promise connected to faithfulness in such service states: "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Proverbs 3:10.

Hospitality

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." Romans 12:10-13.

Many people say to friends and strangers, "God bless you," rather than sharing their blessings with those who are needy. Such verbal blessings have no value if someone is in need and we do not supply those needs. As born-again children of the Most High, we are to love one another and do good to our fellow pilgrims—those of the household of faith. When we show hospitality and welcome the needy into our homes, we may be welcoming heavenly beings into our dwellings. God is able to supply us abundantly. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in." Matthew 25:35.

Tracing the divine footprints

"Many feel that it would be a great privilege to visit the scenes of Christ's life on earth, to walk where He trod, to look upon the lake beside which He loved to teach, and the hills and valleys on which His eyes so often rested. But we need

not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sick bed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great city, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation. In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall walk in His steps....

"Jesus worked to relieve every case of suffering that He saw. He had little money to give, but He often denied Himself of food in order to relieve those who appeared more needy than He. His brothers felt that His influence went far to counteract theirs. He possessed a tact which none of them had, or desired to have. When they spoke harshly to poor, degraded beings, Jesus sought out these very ones, and spoke to them words of encouragement. To those who were in need He would give a cup of cold water, and would quietly place His own meal in their hands. As He relieved their sufferings, the truths He taught were associated with His acts of mercy, and were thus riveted in the memory." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 640, 86, 87.

Reward of service

"It is not a vain thing to serve God. There is a priceless reward for those who devote their life to His service." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 107.

"... Every sacrifice that is made in His ministry will be recompensed according to 'the exceeding riches of His grace.'" —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 249.

"Our reward for working with Christ in this world is the greater power and wider privilege of working with Him in the world to come." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 361.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us consider it a great privilege to be engaged in the service of God and our fellow man. Let us not faint but endure the hardships we may meet while doing this wonderful service. When we have done God's will, relieved many who might have remained forever without hope, helped others to escape the gross darkness that covers the world, and then meet in eternity those who were rescued through our service in various lines, our joy will be unspeakable. What a gift our Lord gives us in the spirit of service! Amen. ■

Apt to Teach

By Larry Watts, U.S.A.

At the end of His ministry, as Jesus approached Jerusalem for the last time, many were hoping that the long-awaited, promised kingdom of heaven would at last be set up. He had to correct the assumption “that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.” Luke 19:11-13.

In the apostle Paul’s writings, he states that “unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children...” Ephesians 4:7, 8, 11-14.

The nobleman who gives gifts is Jesus, and the servants who await His return are those who live at the end of time, when the wedding and the establishment of the kingdom of glory take place. We pray that we are those servants. Yes, we are sure of this and are confident that the application is correct. But what do the “pounds” represent? They are emblems of the gifts given for the edification of the body of Christ, to “build it up” until He returns. These gifts total ten if the three texts mentioning them are taken as a whole, while in the letters of the apostle Paul (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians

12:7-11; Ephesians 4:11-13) no specific number is given.

The gift

Having this confidence and applying the verses of the apostle Paul, can we also know what gift is ours? Certainly no one has every gift, and just as certainly it can be said that none have none, for the nobleman called his ten servants and gave each of them ten pounds—ten being a numerical symbol of ordinal perfection and completeness. Therefore, each of us not only

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may but should know what his gift is, for he will be called to give an account of it when the Lord of glory returns.

The apostle Peter was speaking about this when he said that all who “repent” and are “baptized” “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” “shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:38. Thus, God promises that those who sincerely come to Christ will receive the gift of the Spirit, including at least one primary gift to be used to advance the cause of Christ. How long does it take for a committed child of God to recognize his or her gift? God knows!

The first words of Jesus recorded in the New Testament, spoken to His Mother and Joseph when they found Him conversing with the rabbis in the temple, give us a clue about this: “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” Luke 2:49. What did His answer show? His first and foremost interest was to take care of His Father’s business—His mission. When that is

also our primary business, we will know in due time what gift has been entrusted to us, and it is very likely that others will see it before we do. From their lips we will hear, for example, “You’re a teacher!”

One of the primary tasks of a teacher is to help his or her students recognize their own special gifts and to challenge them to develop and use them for God’s glory, thus fulfilling the purpose of their existence. Yet even beyond our individual gift(s) is the greatest gift that God has granted to us as a people—our children. When God’s people are faithful, committed teachers play an important part in that faithfulness. In fact, in Scripture, unfaithfulness is defined as a lack of proper commitment to instruct the youth in religious duties! Concerning a difficult time in the history of Israel, it was written: “Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.” 2 Chronicles 15:3.

Schools of the prophets

In the time of Samuel, schools were established for the instruction of the young people. “If a youth desired to search deeper into the truths of the word of God and to seek wisdom from above, that he might become a teacher in Israel, these schools were ... to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, to provide for the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the future prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 593.

“From the earliest times the faithful in Israel had given much care to the education of the youth....

“In the days of Christ the town or city that did not provide for the re-

ligious instruction of the young was regarded as under the curse of God.... But the Jewish teachers gave their attention to ... material that was worthless to the learner, and that would not be recognized in the higher school of the courts above. The experience which is obtained through a personal acceptance of God's word had no place in the educational system.... The great essentials of the service of God were neglected. The principles of the law were obscured. That which was regarded as superior education was the greatest hindrance to real development. Under the training of the rabbis the powers of the youth were repressed. Their minds became cramped and narrow.

"The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher." *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 69, 70.

Concerning John the Baptist, we read that "in the natural order of things, the son of Zacharias would have been educated for the priesthood. But the training of the rabbinical schools [of his day] would have unfitted him for his work. God did not send him to the teachers of theology to learn how to interpret the Scriptures. He called him to the desert, that he might learn of nature and nature's God." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 101.

The persecuted church

Although Christ's church from its inception has been pursued and persecuted, it has always valued very highly the education of its children, no matter what the circumstances were.

"Pure, simple, and fervent was the piety of these followers of Christ. The principles of truth they valued above houses and lands, friends, kindred, even life itself. These principles they earnestly sought to impress upon the hearts of the young. From earliest childhood the youth were instructed in the Scriptures and taught to regard sacredly the claims of the law of God. Copies of the Bible were rare; therefore its precious words were committed to memory....

"Parents, tender and affectionate as they were, loved their children too wisely to accustom them to self-indulgence. Before them was a life of trial and hardship, perhaps a martyr's

death. They were educated from childhood to endure hardness, to submit to control, and yet to think and act for themselves....

"The Waldenses had sacrificed their worldly prosperity for the truth's sake, and with persevering patience they toiled for their bread.... Economy and severe self-denial formed a part of the education which the children received as their only legacy. They were taught that God designs life to be a discipline, and that their wants could be supplied only by personal labor, by forethought, care, and faith. The process was laborious and wearisome, but it was wholesome, just what man needs in his fallen

"They were taught that all their powers belonged to God, and that all were to be improved and developed for His service."

state, the school which God has provided for his training and development. While the youth were inured to toil and hardship, the culture of the intellect was not neglected. They were taught that all their powers belonged to God, and that all were to be improved and developed for His service." *—The Great Controversy*, pp. 67, 68.

An emphasis on Christian education

The Reformation of the sixteenth century brought far-reaching changes in education. Before the Protestant Reformation, education was generally geared to the preparation of the clergy. However, the thorough education of the believers naturally followed the Reformation's emphasis on doctrines such as the priesthood of all the believers, justification by faith, and the responsibility of each person to know the Scriptures for himself. Every Christian was encouraged to read, know, memorize, learn, understand, and apply the word in every area of life so God would truly be honored in society.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) emphasized the necessity of reformed, Biblical education; and much of what he said is still fresh and pertinent today. Likewise, John Calvin (1509-1564) put a great deal of effort into the establish-

ment of Christian schools. And Charles Wesley (1707-1788), founder of the Methodist Church, for more than fifty years placed great emphasis on developing educational enterprises.

In the United States, universities that were originally established primarily to train men for the ministry are today considered some of the best in the world. Harvard was founded in 1636 to fill the need for clergy for the "church in the wilderness." In 1701, Congregationalist ministers who were unhappy with the growing liberalism at Harvard founded Yale University, originally called Collegiate School. In 1746, the Presbyterian Synod started Princeton University, which was originally called the College of New Jersey. Duke University was started in 1835 in Durham, North Carolina, when Methodist and Quaker families employed a permanent teacher for their subscription school.

While the above educational institutions especially in the past century strayed far from their originally stated purpose, they and others, such as Oberlin College, were a major influence in American society and the world two hundred years ago, just as God was preparing people to proclaim the three angels' messages. Charles G. Finney (1792-1875), the second president of Oberlin College, was a Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States, 1825-35. Finney was an advocate of Christian perfectionism, abolition of slavery, and equal education for women and African Americans.

The true foundation of education

"The Bible ... is the foundation of all true education. The fear of the Lord—the very first lesson to be taught—is the beginning of wisdom." *—Child Guidance*, p. 316.

The emphasis on the Bible as the true foundation of education for all people, no matter what their race or gender, was a factor that played a very important part in the advancement of the Advent Movement. The blueprint for early Adventist schools was created out of the desire to pattern all things after the Scriptures. Unfortunately, the same thing that happened to universities such as Harvard, Yale, and Prince-

ton happened in Adventism. Practical training was replaced by human methods and priorities, described as “the popular method of filling the student’s mind with that which is not practical and hurrying him through a certain course.” –G.H. Bell, *Review and Herald*, December 26, 1882.

“In true education the selfish ambition, the greed for power, the disregard for the rights and needs of humanity, that are the curse of our world, find a counter influence. God’s plan of life has a place for every human being. Each is to improve his talents to the utmost; and faithfulness in doing this, be the gifts few or many, entitles one to honor.” –*Child Guidance*, pp. 293, 294.

“True education is religion.” –*Child Guidance*, p. 493.

“True education is the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of body, mind, and soul for divine service. This is the education that will endure unto eternal life.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 330.

*No matter what our talent is,
we all have an influence
upon others, especially the young.*

The word for “teacher” in the Old Testament Hebrew is *Yarah*, which also means to “flow as water” or “to rain.” A striking example of this occurred in the life of one of history’s most famous teachers, Anne Sullivan. She is the young teacher who broke into the entombed mind of the deaf and blind Helen Keller in 1887, when, at the pump gushing water on one of Helen’s hands, she took the girl’s other hand and spelled out *w-a-t-e-r*. Without that breakthrough, Helen would have lived her entire life in a dark, silent world. For Anne to communicate with that mind required enormous love and patience, as well as a divinely inspired stroke of genius.

Helen Keller eventually learned to speak and became a sought-after lecturer and author of twelve books. She once said, “Everyone of us is blind and deaf until our eyes are opened to our fellowmen, until our ears hear the voice of humanity.” She also presented

a correct view of education when she said, “Unless we form the habit of going to the Bible in the bright moments as well as in trouble, we cannot fully respond to its consolations....”

Anne Sullivan learned by practical experience that “it is the nicest work [the most important, most noble work that God calls people to do for Him] ever assumed by men and women to deal with youthful minds.” –*Christian Education*, p. 5.

Undoubtedly there are individuals in God’s cause who have the talent of teaching. God has called you for such a time as this. Consider your gift,

and joyfully take up the “nicest work ever assumed by men and women.” God and His cause need godly teachers along with those who support the work of education with their prayers and contributions. And no matter what our talent is, we all have an influence upon others, especially the young. “Just as you treat your children, so will you treat Christ.” –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131.

Let us support our teachers and schools and value our own gift(s). Let all who are apt to teach, teach! “Educate, educate, educate.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 330. Amen. ■



“The entrusted talents are not reserved for a favorite few who are exalted above their fellow men in education, in smartness of intellect. The talents are endowments bestowed upon the Lord’s family individually,

from the lowliest and most obscure to those who are in highest positions of trust. The entrusted gifts are proportioned to our varied capabilities, and everyone is to use these talents to God’s glory. He is to increase their usefulness because through using them he becomes more and better qualified to trade on his Lord’s goods and to accumulate by trading. The light of truth and all spiritual advantages are the Lord’s gifts. They are to be appreciated and are to have influence upon the mind and character. We are to return to God corresponding increase, according to the gifts entrusted.

“We have by grace been chosen as His servants. A servant means a worker, one who bears cares, burdens, responsibilities.... We are to realize that it is not our goods we are handling, but the Master’s entrusted capital for us to invest and increase as wise stewards of our Lord’s goods, that we may return to Him His investment with usury. We cannot hoard the Lord’s goods and do nothing with it; thus did the slothful servant with his one pound, and lost his soul. Every man has a solemn work to do and he cannot trifle with his time; he cannot trifle with his privileges and his opportunities granted him. He must improve in character, in ability, according to his privileges and opportunities, to make a complete worker in the cause of God.” –(Manuscript 81, July 18, 1893) *This Day with God*, p. 208.

Exhortation—Love and Encouragement

By Humberto Ajucum, Puerto Rico

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.” Romans 12:6-8.

As we have read and heard, one of the gifts that God has given His church is “exhortation.” It is perfect, as are all the gifts, because He who gives it is perfect, as the apostle says: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17. We read that Jesus “ascended up on high,... and gave gifts unto men.” For what purpose? “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Ephesians 4:8, 12. God is perfect, and He gives means to uplift His children. Today, we will unite in prayer to petition the great benefactor, our God, to help us understand and possibly receive the gift of exhortation.

What is exhortation?

Careful! “To exhort” is not to nag, as some think. Someone could think that God has entrusted him with the gift of exhortation, and that authorizes him to scold or mistreat his fellowmen, thus doing more harm than good by using rough, harsh, severe speech. The Scriptures warn us not to provoke our children to wrath or anger. Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21. Nagging is not a gift, nor is verbal abuse or attacking people. Exhortation is not cursing, censuring, or condemning others. It is rather giving warning or notice to at-

tempt to persuade someone. According to the dictionary, to exhort means to “strongly encourage or urge (someone) to do something.” The Greek word translated “exhort” is *parakaleo*. In the New Testament, it includes “to call to one’s side, call for, summon to address, speak to,... to admonish, exhort to beg, entreat, beseech, to strive to appease by entreaty, to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort, to receive consolation.”¹ Similarly, the Greek word translated as “exhortation” is *paraklesis*, used in almost all New Testament passages to mean “implore,” “exhortation,” “consolation,” etc.²

Purpose of the gift

The apostle Paul says, “Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.” Romans 12:8. *The Common English Bible Version* says, “If your gift is encouragement, devote

*One is to exhort in the manner,
form, and style of God.*

yourself to encouraging.” One is not simply to exhort by exhortation but to exhort in the manner, form, and style of God. The repetition of the words “exhort” and “exhortation” emphasizes that in the exercise of this gift divine guidance must be present if its purpose is to be achieved.

Other instruction we want to present here is the value of such ministry done with a sense of one’s own responsibility and trust in God. Commenting about the gifts, Sister White writes: “Many who are entrusted with some humble line of work to do for the Master, soon become dissatisfied, and think that they should be teachers and leaders. They want to leave their humble ministering, which is just as

important in its place as the larger responsibilities. Those who are set to do visiting, soon come to think that anyone can do that work, that anyone can speak words of sympathy and encouragement, and lead men in a humble, quiet way to a correct understanding of the Scriptures. But it is a work that demands much grace, much patience, and an ever-increasing stock of wisdom.” –(Letter 88, 1895, pp. 4, 5) *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 279.

The purpose of exhortation is to restore or rebuild, to improve the spiritual life of the one receiving the counsel, to go to his rescue. Both the one who exhorts as well as the one who is being exhorted should be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit so the will of God is done.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10.

“The knowledge of God’s grace, the truths of His word, and temporal gifts as well–time and means, talents and influence—are all a trust from God to be employed to His glory and the salvation of men. Nothing can be more offensive to God, who is constantly bestowing His gifts upon man, than to see him selfishly grasping these gifts and making no returns to the Giver....”

“Angels of God, whose perceptions are unclouded by sin, recognize the endowments of heaven as bestowed with the intention that they be returned in such a way as to add to the glory of the great Giver.... God calls for the consecration to His service of every faculty, of every gift, you have received from Him. He wants you to say, with David: ‘All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.’ 1 Chronicles 29:14.” –*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 62.

“Different gifts are imparted to different ones, that the workers may feel

their need of one another. God bestows these gifts, and they are to be employed in His service; not to glorify the possessor, not to uplift man, but to uplift the world's Redeemer. They are to be used for the good of all mankind by representing the truth, not testifying to a falsehood." *—Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 386.

"In every word and act, kindness and love will be revealed; and as each worker fills his appointed place faithfully, the prayer of Christ for the unity of His followers will be answered, and the world will know that these are His disciples." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 146.

"God dispenses His gifts as it pleases Him. He bestows one gift upon one, and another gift upon another, but all for the good of the whole body. It is in God's order that some shall be of service in one line of work, and others in other lines—all working under the self-same Spirit. The recognition of this plan will be a safeguard against emulation, pride, envy, or contempt of one another. It will strengthen unity and mutual love." *—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 314, 315.

Exercising the gift

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Timothy 4:1-4; see also 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

One should not give exhortation to give the impression that one feels superior to others and is belittling them. One should exhort with wisdom, love, firmness, respect, and purity, showing a good example. The exercise of this and other gifts requires wisdom from above, and expresses the inspired mind: "Skill in the common arts is a gift from God. He provides both the gift and wisdom to use the gift aright."

—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 314.

Precious inspired counsel concerning exhortation is also found in the apostle Paul's writings. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." "... But be thou an example of the believers, in

*"... If the erring persist in sin,
treat them kindly and leave
them with your Heavenly Father."*

word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee,..." "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 4:12-14; Titus 2:15; 2 Timothy 4:2.

As God desires

"As you go to the one you suppose to be in error, see that you speak in a meek and lowly spirit; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The erring can in no other way be restored than in the spirit of meekness, and gentleness, and tender love. Be careful in your manner. Avoid anything in look or gesture, word or tone of voice, that savors of pride, or self-sufficiency. Guard yourself against a word or look that would exalt self, or present your goodness and righteousness in contrast with their failings. Beware of the most distant approach to disdain, overbearing, or contempt. With care avoid every appearance of anger; and though you use plainness of speech, yet let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of warmth, but that of earnest love. Above all let there be no shadow of hate or ill-will, no bitterness, nor sourness of expression.... Bear in mind that the success of reproof depends greatly upon the spirit in which it is given. Do not neglect earnest prayer that you may pos-

sess a lowly mind, and that angels of God may work upon the hearts you are trying to reach, before you, and so soften them by heavenly impressions, that your efforts may avail....

"Sometimes the mildest and tenderest reproof will have no good effect. In that case, the blessing you wanted another to receive by pursuing a course of righteousness, ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, will return into your own bosom. If the erring persist in sin, treat them kindly and leave them with your Heavenly Father." *—Review and Herald*, July 17, 1879.

"Men and women who, with their different organizations, are brought together in church capacity have peculiarities and faults. As these are developed, they will require reproof. If those who are placed in important positions never reproofed, never rebuked, there would soon be a demoralized condition of things that would greatly dishonor God. But how shall the reproof be given? Let the apostle answer: 'With all long-suffering and doctrine.' 2 Timothy 4:2. Principle should be brought to bear upon the one who needs reproof, but never should the wrongs of God's people be passed by indifferently." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 358.

Not everyone will respond positively

"The person who is drawn again and again by his Redeemer, and who slights the warnings given, yields not to his convictions to repent, and heeds not when he is exhorted to seek pardon and grace, is in a perilous position. Jesus is drawing him, the Spirit is exerting His power upon him, urging him to surrender his will to the will of God; and when this invitation is unheeded, the Spirit is grieved away. The sinner chooses to remain in sin and impenitence, although he has evidence to encourage his faith, and more evidence would do no good...." *—That I May Know Him*, p. 244.

"God requires His servants to be always in earnest to do His will. In the apostle's charge to Timothy he exhorts him to 'preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.' 2 Timothy 4:2." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 359, 360.

What exhortation should not ignore

In respect to this, it is recorded: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Galatians 6:1.

"We are threads in the great web of humanity, and, as such, related with each other. Our life leaves upon the minds of others impressions which will be transferred even into eternity. Angels take note of our works, of our words, of the spirit which actuates us. Those who desire to reform others must begin the reformation in their own hearts, and show that they have acquired kindness and humility of heart in the school of Christ. Those who have charge of others must learn first to master themselves, to refrain from blunt expressions and exaggerated censure. There are cutting words which are indulged in, which may offend, hurt, and leave upon a soul a scar which will remain. There are sharp words that fall as sparks upon an inflammable temper. There are biting words that bite like vipers....

"By trying to correct evil in a hasty, cross spirit, two evils will be created instead of correcting one. Mutual support is essential. It is the fruit of the Spirit which grows upon the Christian tree.

"A radical conversion must take place as regards the manner in which the various minds are to be dealt with.... If harsh language is used; if for difficulties small or great a spirit of impatience is manifested which stirs up and irritates, there will soon be a state of things worse than if nothing had been done to correct the evil. If such dispositions are entertained by believers; if everyone feels free to utter hasty words, we shall have miserable hearts, miserable families, and in the church, discord and dissension.

"But there is a Christlike way of settling all these things. The presence of Christ's love in the heart will lead to love the very ones who are astray and who are in the wrong....

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." James 3:13." —*The Upward Look*, p. 59.

In the time of the end

Exhortation is needed not only when a brother has committed a fault, but also when one desires to encourage brothers and sisters to overcome problems and difficulties and considers how to encourage them to be faithful. The following quotations give us some examples.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to pro-

"... Faithfully are they to warn their fellowmen of the sure result of transgression, and faithfully are they to safeguard the interest of the church."

voke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:19-25.

"We must have a knowledge of the Scriptures, that we may trace down the lines of prophecy and ... see that the day is approaching, so that with increased zeal and effort we may exhort one another to faithfulness.... Give up our faith? lose our confidence? become impatient? No, no. We will not think of such a thing.... Let us lift up our heads and rejoice, for our redemption draweth nigh. It is nearer than when we first believed." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 348.

"It will not be an easy task to work for the Master in this age. But how much perplexity might be saved, if workers continually relied upon God, and duly considered the directions that God has given. He says, 'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait

on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.' Romans 12:6-8." —*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 213.

Watchmen on Zion's walls

The need of exhortation when danger approaches is very timely. Referring to the prophet's mission to His people, the Lord commanded him: "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it,... thou hast delivered thy soul." Ezekiel 33:7-9.

What is true for the prophet still has broad application to the ministers, workers, church elders, and all who are entrusted with the care of souls.

Ministers, preachers, and leaders "are to stand as watchmen on the walls of Zion, to sound the note of alarm at the approach of the enemy....

"It is the privilege of the watchmen on the walls of Zion to live so near to God, and to be so susceptible to the impressions of His Spirit, that He can work through them to tell sinners of their peril, and point them to the place of safety. Chosen of God, sealed with the blood of consecration, they are to rescue men and women from impending destruction. Faithfully are they to warn their fellowmen of the sure result of transgression, and faithfully are they to safeguard the interest 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 should they sound one wavering, uncertain note. Not for wages are they to labor, but because they cannot do otherwise, because they realize that there is a woe upon them if they fail to preach the gospel." —*Gospel Workers*, p. 15.

"Satan has laid every measure possible that nothing shall come among us as a people to reprove and rebuke us, and exhort us to put away our errors. But there is a people who will bear the ark of God. Some will go out from among us who will bear the ark no longer. But these cannot make walls to obstruct the truth; for it will go onward and upward to the end. In the past God has raised up men, and He still has men of opportunity waiting, prepared to do His bidding—men who will go through restrictions which are only as walls daubed with untempered mortar. When God puts His Spirit upon men, they will work. They will proclaim the word of the Lord; they will lift up their voice like a trumpet. The truth will not be diminished or lose its power in their hands. They will show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 411.

Our final exhortation to our dear brothers and sisters around the world is that we direct our attention to the Most Holy Place to receive the power promised by the Lord for the completion of the sacred gospel commission. Bearing in mind that for every gift received there are joyful results and wonderful blessings, let us encourage each other to use the chosen means of the spiritual gifts God has placed among us. Let us also remember that for every gift we are accountable to God. Therefore, let us take advantage of our favorable opportunities and accept the responsibility for carrying out our sacred duty. God bless us now and forever. Amen. ■

¹ Strong's Concordance, #3870.

² Ibid., #3874.

"For our present and eternal good, God has given us temporal and spiritual blessings. He enjoins upon us to become servants of His love, to impart to others the grace He has bestowed upon us." —*Review and Herald*, December 10, 1901.

Reading 5 – Wednesday, December 9, 2015

The Gift of Giving

By Gustavo Castellanos, Austria

"... He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity." *Romans 12:8*.

The spiritual gifts are the instruments by which the Lord empowers His church in these last days to accomplish the commission that He has given it. The key for the power and effectiveness of God's people is to allow these gifts to develop in all their diversity.

The gift of giving covers all the other spiritual gifts. Teaching, helping, serving, and having mercy are all expressions of the gift of giving. The principles on which the latter is based are of the utmost importance for the exercise of the other spiritual gifts.

The gift of giving is not limited to the sharing of material goods but encompasses the whole area of non-material goods—the area of values governing Christian action. That which gives happiness to people cannot be bought or sold. A kind look, a friendly smile, or a word that imparts faith and hope do not cost a cent and can light up the daily lives of many people and arouse the longing for eternity.

The word "gift" (from the Greek word *charisma*) is related to the word "grace" (Greek, *charis*). The Biblical meaning for "grace" denotes a gift, an undeserved present from God. The sinner, for example, is saved by grace. And the spiritual gifts are undeserved blessings that the Holy Spirit gives according to His will. These gifts cannot be earned or bought; they can only be received as a free favor from God.

When God gives the gifts of His grace, He is not basing His action on our outward appearance, our economic situation, or the qualities we possess. The Lord only focuses on our situation of need as sinners. To make of sinners instruments of His grace is the wonderful work of God's love.

"He has in the past accepted persons no more promising or attractive to do a great work for Him. His Spirit, moving upon the heart, has roused every faculty to vigorous action. The Lord saw in these rough, unhewn stones precious material, which would stand the test of storm and heat and pressure. God does not see as man sees. He does not judge from appearances." —*Gospel Workers*, p. 123.

Remember to recharge your batteries!

Recently a team of social workers installed a solar energy system at the "Rama" school for needy children in Uganda. Some of the most essential parts were the solar collectors. These are important, because the electrical power is needed especially in the afternoon and evening, when the sun does not shine. The batteries are recharged during the day by solar energy so they can provide electricity at night. How great the students' joy was when the lights in the school came on for the first time at night!

Our hearts, our souls, are like solar collectors. We must receive before we can give. We can only give love if we have received it beforehand. We can only impart what we have "collected." Do we have complete connection to the power source—the Holy Spirit? "Without Me ye can do nothing," Jesus says in John 15:5, stating unequivocally that the ability to share spiritual blessings is possible only if we have a constant connection with Him.

This vital connection with Christ, which allows us to keep our spiritual batteries charged, consists of three elements that cannot be neglected:

- **Daily contemplation of Jesus' life**
"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." – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

- ***The deliberate imitation of Jesus' example***

"'Without Me,' says Christ, 'ye can do nothing;' but with His divine grace working through our human efforts, we can do all things. His patience and meekness will pervade the character, diffusing a precious radiance which makes bright and clear the pathway to heaven. By beholding and imitating His life we shall become renewed in His image." – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 306.

- ***Pray daily, asking for power to share the spiritual gifts***

"Our prayers are not to be a selfish asking, merely for our own benefit. We are to ask that we may give.... Our mission to the world is not to serve or please ourselves; we are to glorify God by cooperating with Him to save sinners. We are to ask blessings from God that we may communicate to others. The capacity for receiving is preserved only by imparting." – *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 142, 143.

Giving is the working program of the church

The Lord has given each of us as members of His body a concrete commission with precise instructions for carrying out that commission. No one should remain ignorant of what to do at this time. The divine assignment and the instructions for completing it are in Isaiah 68. In this chapter, the Lord questioned the religious practices of His people and opened their eyes to the areas of practical faith that had been neglected.

The greatest stumbling block in carrying out the divine commission is selfishness. When dedication and commitment to God and His cause are lacking, one's heart fills automatically with idolatry of self. Included in this is

self-sufficiency, a hard heart, and deliberate ignorance of the needs of one's neighbors. There is a lack of identification with Christ, His cause, and the church's mission.

Therefore, the Spirit of prophecy urges us to study Isaiah 58 and implement it in our lives: "Read Isaiah 58, ye who claim to be children of the light. Especially do you read it again and again who have felt so reluctant to inconvenience yourselves by favoring the needy. You whose hearts and houses are too narrow to make a home

The church will enlighten the earth when it experiences a spiritual awakening and its members reveal the divine character:

for the homeless, read it; you who can see orphans and widows oppressed by the iron hand of poverty and bowed down by hardhearted worldlings, read it.... The reason why God's people are not more spiritually minded and have not more faith, I have been shown, is because they are narrowed up with selfishness. The prophet is addressing Sabbath keepers, not sinners, not unbelievers, but those who make great pretensions to godliness. It is not the abundance of your meetings that God accepts. It is not the numerous prayers, but the right doing, doing the right thing and at the right time. It is to be less self-caring and more benevolent. Our souls must expand. Then God will make them like a watered garden, whose waters fail not." – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 35, 36.

"Then shall thy light rise in obscurity"

Isaiah 58 is the working program for God's people today. In verse 8 is described the result of carrying out this divine plan. The church will enlighten the earth when it experiences a spiritual awakening and its members reveal the divine character: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." This is the church for which

"will eventually be made manifest, even to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full display of the love of God." – *The Acts of Apostles*, p. 9.

At this point, I ask the person leading this service of the Week of Prayer to read with the congregation Isaiah 58:1-12. It would be good for several believers to read the verses and share their thoughts concerning them.

The gift of giving described in Isaiah 58 includes three areas of action:

- Giving service that focuses on the spiritual and emotional needs of one's neighbors, reaching their hearts and souls (verse 10).
- Giving according to the material needs of the poor and of one's neighbors (verses 5-7).
- Giving for spiritual reform (verse 12).

The inspired pen says that this is the task for our time: "Please read Isaiah 58.... This is the special work now before us. All our praying and abstinence from food will avail nothing unless we resolutely lay hold of this work. Sacred obligations are resting upon us. Our duty is plainly stated. The Lord has spoken to us by His prophet." – *Welfare Ministry*, p. 29.

Concentrate on quality, not quantity

The word of God in Romans 12:8 says, "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity;..." In this text, simplicity refers to a pure, generous, genuine spirit, without any dual purpose in the act of sharing. The most important thing to give to others is the quality of our attitude and motives.

One who gives just to ease his conscience does not understand the essence and meaning of giving. Quality spiritual giving reaches beyond satisfying the material needs of those in need. It encompasses the surrender of the heart to the cause of the needy; it is dedicated to reaching the souls of our neighbors. "And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday." Isaiah 58:10.

While it is true that salvation by grace through faith in Christ is ob-

tained not by works of righteousness which we have done, it is also true that the experience of salvation becomes the motivation for our actions. Every act of benevolence is based on one's personal commitment to Christ. The personal experience with God leads one to connect with His love. If we have received love, then we give with all our hearts—with joy and generosity. The poor widow who gave everything she owned as an offering to the temple was praised by Jesus, not because she gave a large quantity but because she wholeheartedly and in faith gave everything she had.

"It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or with high moral worth. Not the great things which every eye sees and every tongue praises does God account most precious. The little duties cheerfully done, the little gifts which make no show, and which to human eyes may appear worthless, often stand highest in His sight. A heart of faith and love is dearer to God than the most costly gift. The poor widow gave her living to do the little that she did. She deprived herself of food in order to give those two mites to the cause she loved. And she did it in faith, believing that her heavenly Father would not overlook her great need. It was this unselfish spirit and childlike faith that won the Saviour's commendation." — *The Desire of Ages*, p. 615.

A step of faith

Giving is always a matter of faith. The farmer, for example, sows the seed and waits for the harvest with confidence, for he did his job and trusts that God will do His part in nature. Similarly, the believer gives with the confidence that what he has done will germinate and grow into a blessing for others.

Let us take into account that:

Every action is a seed. The actions that we sow will determine the outcome of the harvest of our lives. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7.

"As the seed sown produces a harvest, and this in turn is sown, the harvest is multiplied. In our relation to others, this law holds true. Every act,

every word, is a seed that will bear fruit. Every deed of thoughtful kindness, of obedience, of self-denial, will reproduce itself in others, and through them in still others. So every act of envy, malice, or dissension is a seed that will spring up in a 'root of bitterness' whereby many shall be defiled. Hebrews 12:15. And how much larger number will the 'many' poison!" — *Prophets and Kings*, p. 86.

He who sows generously will reap bountifully. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." 2 Corinthians 9:6.

Also, when the sower casts the seed into the ground when planting, he does not do it in a stingy manner, but spreads it out as much as he can. What appears to be a waste of seed is actually the secret to the multiplication of fruit. Each seed that comes into contact with the soil is reproduced. So it is when we use what God has entrusted to us. We give generously to someone else, and the Lord multiplies the result of our benevolence.

"However small your talent, God has a place for it. That one talent, wisely used, will accomplish its appointed work. By faithfulness in little duties, we are to work on the plan of addition, and God will work for us on the plan of multiplication. These littles will become the most precious influences in His work." — *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 360.

We are co-laborers with God. "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." 1 Corinthians 3:9.

In our life of faith and especially in exercising the gift of giving, everything is a matter of constant cooperation with God and His laws. We depend on Him in both the natural and the spiritual realms. He has promised that in our every act of giving, every word, every service, He will be adding the Holy Spirit's infinite power to the human instrument; and this cooperative work will result in great blessing to all around us and also to the church.

Sharing multiplies the gift that is given. This is like when garlic multiplies. One who plants garlic knows that first there is a "breaking off," a

"destruction" of the head of garlic; and then the individual cloves of garlic are put into the ground one by one. That is when the miracle happens: Each clove of garlic becomes a new full head of garlic. Just by starting and spreading the gifts, both spiritually and materially, the blessings that we have received from God multiply.

The Lord works if we give Him space in our lives to do so. Often access to our souls is blocked by the burdens and cares of everyday life. On the other hand, nowadays there are many things that captivate our attention. That is why we often become insensitive to our true spiritual condition. We are in danger of losing sight of the needs of our neighbors and God's church. But remember, no one is so poor that he has nothing to give, and no one is so old that he cannot have a part in God's work. Everyone of us can give something. This is our privilege as Christians, as Adventists of the Reform Movement.

What needs do we find in the church? What are the needs all around us? How can we exercise the gift of giving, both materially and spiritually?

To have room for the Lord in our hearts and minds, we must have windows of time during the day. These windows are special moments dedicated to cultivating our relationship with God. They are special times for prayer and meditation without distraction; their purpose is to recharge our spiritual being and fill up the reservoir of spiritual power that we need. The result of a life of communion with God, cultivating our relationship with Him, giving of the blessings that He has entrusted to us, will be a character like that of Christ. "The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others." — *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

Dear brothers and sisters, dear youth, dear children, let us open our hearts so we can be generous givers of the Lord, so the promise is fulfilled in our lives and in the church, "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." Isaiah 58:8. Amen! ■

Compassion to All

By Arnolfo Cortez, Philippines

Compassion: Sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. Synonyms: Sympathy, empathy, care, concern, solicitude, sensitivity, warmth, love, tenderness, mercy, leniency, tolerance, kindness, charity.

The source

Our heavenly Father alone is the source of compassion and mercy. "He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious and full of compassion." Psalm 111:4. "It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men." –*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 188.

"Though now He has ascended to the presence of God, and shares the throne of the universe, Jesus has lost none of His compassionate nature. Today, the same tender, sympathizing heart is open to all the woes of humanity. Today the hand that was pierced is reached forth to bless more abundantly His people that are in the world." –*Our Father Cares*, p. 203.

"His every word and act revealed divine compassion, and His unlikeness to the world provoked the bitterest hostility." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 576.

Reformers are compassionate

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." Colossians 3:12. God's people in this last generation need to have that warmth of spirit from heaven that prompts righteous action every day. Great compassion needs to be exercised toward souls who are ready to perish and will be lost unless they are warned. Think, brothers and sisters, of the countries with millions

of people who have never heard the last message of mercy. Oh, that every member would have the compassion demonstrated by our Master and use his God-given means to reach those souls before the door of mercy closes forever.

"With hearts filled with sympathy and compassion, they are to minister to those in need of help, bringing to sinners a knowledge of the Saviour's love. Such work calls for laborious effort, but it brings a rich reward. Those who engage in it with sincerity of purpose will see souls won to the Saviour, for the influence that attends the practical carrying out of the divine commission is irresistible.

"Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men. 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.' Revelation 22:17. The charge to give this invitation includes the entire church. Everyone who has heard the invitation is to echo the message from hill and valley, saying, 'Come.'" –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 109, 110.

While it is true that this is laborious effort, always remember that God will be with all who work for His glory. I experienced His intervention many times; He kept me safe in His Almighty arms when I was working in Malaysia and other countries of Asia.

In the family

Satan's attacks against the family for the purpose of tearing down society are relentless, and he works twice as hard against Reformers, so we need to be on guard constantly to keep every family member safe. It is very sad to see that we have many broken

households in the family of faith. Even within the ministerial circle, while the pastor is putting forth great efforts to connect souls with the church, Satan has succeeded in taking his children away from the church into perdition. We must make a fence around our families, and the best fence is involving them in active service.

"Rule your children with tenderness and compassion, remembering that 'their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.' If you desire the angels to do for your children the work given them of God, cooperate with them by doing your part." –*The Adventist Home*, p. 193. "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for Jehovah hath comforted His people, and will have compassion upon His afflicted." "And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land." "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof." Isaiah 49:13; Jeremiah 12:15; 30:18.

"Parents are to make the religion of Christ attractive by their cheerfulness, their Christian courtesy, and their tender, compassionate sympathy; but they are to be firm in requiring respect and obedience. Right principles must be established in the mind of the child....

"Let the overseers of the church devise plans whereby young men and women may be trained to put to use their entrusted talents. Let the older members of the church seek to do earnest, compassionate work for the children and youth. Let ministers put to

use all their ingenuity in devising plans whereby the younger members of the church may be led to cooperate with them in missionary work. But do not imagine that you can arouse their interest merely by preaching a long sermon at the missionary meeting. Plan ways whereby a live interest may be kindled. Let all have a part to act. Train the young to do what is appointed them, and from week to week let them bring their reports to the missionary meeting, telling what they have experienced and through the grace of Christ what success has been theirs." *—The Adventist Home*, pp. 323, 487.

"For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you, if ye return unto Him." 2 Chronicles 30:9.

"Husbands should be careful, attentive, constant, faithful, and compassionate. They should manifest love and sympathy. If they fulfill the words of Christ, their love will not be of a base, earthly, sensual character that will lead to the destruction of their own bodies and bring upon their wives debility and disease. They will not indulge in the gratification of base passions, while ringing in the ears of their wives that they must be subject to the husband in everything. When the husband has the nobility of character, purity of heart, elevation of mind that every true Christian must possess, it will be made manifest in the marriage relation. If he has the mind of Christ, he will not be a destroyer of the body, but will be full of tender love, seeking to reach the highest standard in Christ." *—The Adventist Home*, p. 125.

In the spiritual family and in favor of the poor

"Thus hath Jehovah of hosts spoken, saying, Execute true judgment, and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother." "So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him." Zechariah 7:9; Matthew 20:34. "With tender compassion should brother deal

with brother. Delicately should he deal with feelings. It is the nicest and most important work that ever yet was done to touch the wrongs of another. With the deepest humility should a brother do this, considering his own weakness, lest he also should be tempted." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 166.

In our Christian families, let no one venture to say as did Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Let the sisters and brothers deal with the very wrong deeds and actions that cause displeasure and the frown of God and encourage one another in repentance so the heavenly visitants can stay with us, along with the presence of the most High God. "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean." Mark 1:41.

Just as Jesus stretched out His hand to touch and help those in need around Him, so we are also to give a helping hand to those who are blind to the truth at this time so they will see, be led to repentance, and be saved.

"God places no value on outward display or boasting. Many who in this life are looked upon as superior to others will one day see that God values men according to their compassion and self-denial.... Those who follow the example of Him who went about doing good, who help and bless their fellow men, trying always to lift them up, are in God's sight infinitely higher than the selfish ones who exalt themselves....

"The great heart of Infinite Love is drawn toward the sinner with boundless compassion.... He wants to restore His moral image in man. As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness." *—God's Amazing Grace*, pp. 67, 82.

Cornelius showed "the sincerity of his faith by compassion to the poor. He was known far and near for his beneficence, and His righteous life made him of good repute among both Jews and Gentiles. His influence was a blessing to all with whom he came in contact. The inspired record describes him as 'a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.'" *—The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 132, 133.

For the multitude with no shepherd

Every day people are going to their graves without hearing the message of salvation. It is high time that we wake up and do our work heartily; but we cannot do this sincerely without God's compassion in our hearts, so we must pray and ask Him to give us this gift for the souls around us. What can we do to help the many wanderers in our localities, in the city, and in the country where we live? Are they not sheep without a shepherd? When will we arouse to work with deep interest to help save these souls? Brothers and sisters, we need the tender compassion of Jesus in our hearts to flow out to those around us.

"All around us are afflicted souls. Here and there, everywhere, we may find them. Let us search out these suffering ones and speak a word in season to comfort their hearts. Let us ever be channels through which shall flow the refreshing waters of compassion." *—Lift Him Up*, p. 95.

"If sinners can be led to give one earnest look at the cross, if they can obtain a full view of the crucified Saviour, they will realize the depth of God's compassion and the sinfulness of sin." *—The Faith I Live By*, p. 103. "And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things." "But who-so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Mark 6:34; 1 John 3:17.

When I meditate on these words of our Master, I realize the great claims that God has not only on our physical being but also on all that we have. The question for us is, Knowing all these things and the great need for the message of salvation to be preached, are we investing our time and money into this work? What a difference it would make, dear brothers and sisters, if you would make the decision to invest a portion of your money to open a country by sponsoring a minister to carry the glad tidings there! I am looking forward to the time when we are

in the kingdom of heaven and someone comes, extends his hand, and says, "Thank you for your unselfish act in investing your money so that we could hear the message. You made it possible for a minister to share the message of salvation with us. Now I am eternally saved!" Oh, what a day that will be!

For all who suffer

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him." Luke 10:33. "To leave a suffering neighbor unrelieved is a breach of the law of God.... He who loves God will not only love his fellow men, but will regard with tender compassion the creatures which God has made.... We are to care for every case of suffering, and to look upon ourselves as God's agents to relieve the needy to the very uttermost of our ability. We are to be laborers together with God. There are some who manifest great affection for their relatives, for their friends and favorites, who yet fail to be kind and considerate to those who need tender sympathy, who need kindness and love. With earnest heart, let us inquire, Who is my neighbor? Our neighbors are not merely our neighbors and special friends, are not simply those who belong to our church or who think as

*Let us heal every wound
and restore peace and unity
in our midst.*

we do. Our neighbors are the whole human family. We are to do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. We are to give to the world an exhibition of what it means to carry out the law of God. We are to love God supremely and our neighbors as ourselves." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 52.

"The compassion and tenderness that He revealed toward those who had sinned, either willfully or through ignorance, should be an object lesson to all who seek to bring about reforms. The servants of God are to be as firm as a rock where right principles are involved; and yet, withal, they are to manifest sympathy

and forbearance. Like Ezra, they are to teach transgressors the way of life by inculcating principles that are the foundation of all right doing." —*Lift Him Up*, p. 165.

On those who have wronged us

In his efforts to destroy the influence of God's people in these last days, Satan has brought great temptation to our brethren, and they have done great wrong even to God's cause, which sometimes is hard to bear. Nevertheless, we need to have compassion on them also, because they are still our brethren who have been attacked by the enemy of souls. Let us heal every wound and restore peace and unity in our midst. And let us continue doing the work entrusted to us.

"Satan sometimes so influences minds as to destroy all feelings of mercy or compassion. The iron seems to enter the heart, and both the human and the divine disappear." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 594.

"Jesus has given us an example that we should follow in His steps, and manifest compassion and love and goodwill toward all. Let us cultivate a kind spirit, a spirit of forbearance, and tender, pitying love toward those, who, when under temptation, have done us grievous wrongs. If possible, let us heal these wounds, and close the door of temptation by removing every barrier the wrongdoer has erected between himself and us.... The Lord delights to bestow His blessings upon those who will honor Him, who will acknowledge His mercy, and show that they appreciate His love to them by manifesting the same gracious characteristic to those around them." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 144.

"The fact that we are under so great obligation to Christ places us under the most sacred obligation to those whom He died to redeem. We are to manifest toward them the same sympathy, the same tender compassion and unselfish love, which Christ has manifested toward us.

"He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are

justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a

*"We are to have a spirit of
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or not they confess their faults."*

spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries; but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God, we are to pardon all who have done evil to us." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 328. "Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Matthew 18:33.

Final words of inspiration

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." Galatians 6:9, 10; Jude 20-23; Philippians 2:1-3; 1 Peter 3:8, 9.

May the grace and love of our compassionate Saviour melt our hearts so we may have His Spirit and the tenderness of the good Samaritan shown in his ministry to the suffering stranger on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. This is my wish and prayer. Amen! ■

Leadership—Courageous Service

By Idel Suarez, Jr., U.S.A.

“He that ruleth [let him do it], with diligence.” Romans 12:8.

Modeling—leading by example

When Julius Caesar led the Roman legions to invade Britain, they were met on the rocky shores by barbarians who were seemingly wild and savage. These natives ran against the Romans like a whirlwind, like a tornado wishing to devastate everything in its path. They burst yelling angrily like madmen and frightening even the most stoic Latin soldiers. What did Caesar do? He seized the banner of Rome, lifted it up, and rushed off his ship toward the shore. He also raised his voice and cried to his companions, “Romans, soldiers, will you allow your general to be cut to pieces?” The actions and words of the mighty leader electrified his troops, who leaped from their boats and charged on shore with their leader, vanquishing the native islanders of Britain and bringing them under the banner of Rome.¹

As the greatest of all leaders in Rome, Julius Caesar led by example. He modeled what his followers were to do. He did not recoil in the face of threat, nor at the prospect of uncertainty; rather, he pushed forward with courage and called on his followers to imitate him in the battle.

Jesus said, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done....” John 13:15. He also encouraged His apostles to be servants like their Master and Lord. He modeled the behavior of a great leader so that they, too, could become leaders of the Christian church. “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.” Matthew 10:25.

The apostle Peter, addressing the first century leaders of the Christian church, advised them to lead by ex-

ample, as Christ had done. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” 1 Peter 5:3. Church leaders are not to be lords or kings, for only one is Lord and King; that is Jesus Christ. Rather, elders are to be examples to the flock of believers in the fight against worldliness, sin, and evil. They are to be examples in the role of service for the community, the needy, and the outcasts. They are to be examples in leading a life of prayer, in studying God’s word, and in testifying to others of Jesus.

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The apostle Paul, who was a leader among leaders, knew the importance of leading by example. He knew that it is easier to copy, model, or imitate someone than it is to learn something theoretically. Paul was so confident of this concept that he wrote to the Corinthians: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1. The Spanish *Reina Valera* version literally says: “Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

In offices throughout the world, there are machines that are exact imitators. They are called photocopy machines. They duplicate any page that is placed on their glass. Now engineers have devised a three-dimensional copier. These 3D copiers are even able to reproduce exact copies of body parts made from plastic or other materials for individuals lacking an external organ like a hand, an ear, or a toe. Inventors anticipate being able to print spare human anatomical parts.

In a similar way, every Christian can be programmed by the Spirit of Christ

to become a 3D duplicator or model of Jesus. Through the work of grace, we are to clone Christ in our inner being. Every leader, whether a teacher, parent, or pastor, is to duplicate Christ, to model Him, to live Him out so that others may be followers of them, as they are of Christ.

Sister Ellen G. White wrote about “leading by example” in addressing the leaders of the Adventist institutions: “Those who occupy a leading position should set the example.”² “If you strive to live as He lived, you are saying to the world, ‘Behold the Man of Calvary.’ By precept and example you are leading others in the way of righteousness.”³

Minutemen—acting at a moment’s notice

During the American Revolution, many young men, husbands, fathers, farmers, carpenters, and storekeepers became Minutemen in their desire for liberty. The Minutemen made up about one-third of the American forces during the American Revolution’s first battles in Massachusetts in 1775. They joined the militia to fight against the British and became famous as sons of liberty and patriot soldiers who were “ready to assemble under arms at a minute’s notice.”⁴

In the Old Testament, there was a tribe that was known for being swift to action; it had leaders who knew what Israel needed to do, and their brethren were willing to follow them. “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.” 1 Chronicles 12:32. Such leaders are needed in the church today—those who are diligent, quick to discern

what to do, not delaying in carrying out duty, and not wavering like Lot did when the angels urged him to hurry.

Jesus Christ knew the importance of not delaying in doing what was right. He encouraged His disciples to act on a moment's notice to accomplish their purpose. "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." John 4:35.

Do you remember the old cliché, "Strike while the iron is hot"? When people are yearning for the truth, when they are craving to do something to help but don't know how, we need to seize the opportunity and take advantage of the teachable moment to lead them to Jesus. With diligence and great earnestness, let us share the gospel story and teach the gospel message to those who are willing to be led.

The text which we have been studying during this Week of Prayer includes the minuteman ideal—he that "ruleth [let him do it], with diligence." Romans 12:8. The American Minutemen were diligent, dependable, efficient, and timely. Within one minute they would assemble at a preset location, their weapons at the ready. They did not hesitate. They did not delay. They did not stop to reason if the conditions were safe or convenient. They were men of action, willing to risk all for liberty.

"God wants men connected with His work ... whose judgment is at hand, whose minds, when it is necessary, will act like the lightnings."

"It is even more excusable to make a wrong decision sometimes than to be continually in a wavering position, to be hesitating, sometimes inclined in one direction, then in another. More perplexity and wretchedness result from thus hesitating and doubting than from sometimes moving too hastily....

"The most signal victories and the most fearful defeats have been on the turn of minutes. God requires promptness of action."⁵

"Victories are frequently lost through delays. There will be crises in

this cause. Prompt and decisive action at the right time will gain glorious triumphs, while delay and neglect will result in great failures and positive dishonor to God. Rapid movements at the critical moment often disarm the enemy, and he is disappointed and vanquished, for he had expected time to lay plans and work by artifice.

"God wants men connected with His work ... whose judgment is at hand, whose minds, when it is necessary, will act like the lightnings."⁶

Being familiar with American history, Sister White frequently made reference to the Minutemen of the American Revolution. She compared the believers to soldiers, for they are fighting against the enemy of our souls and are willing to risk all for freedom under the blood-stained banner of Jesus Christ.

"God's people are to be minutemen, always ready, always composed in Jesus Christ. The time is come now when one moment we may be on solid earth, the next the earth may be heaving beneath our feet."⁷

"God wants minutemen. He will have men who, when important decisions are to be made, are as true as the needle to the pole; men whose special and personal interests are swallowed up, as were our Saviour's, in the one great general interest for the salvation of souls."⁸

"God's servants should be minutemen, ever ready to move as fast as His providence opens the way. Any delay on their part gives time for Satan to work to defeat them."⁹

"Ministers go where they are sent; they are minutemen, ready to move at any moment, to meet any emergency. They are necessarily separated, to a great degree, from their families.... Brethren, do not study how little you may do, in order to reach the very lowest standard, but arouse to grasp the fullness of Christ, that you may do much for Him."¹⁰

"There is a world to be warned. To us has been entrusted this work. At any cost we must practice the truth. We are to stand as self-sacrificing minutemen, willing to suffer the loss of life itself, if need be, in the service of God. There is a great work to be done in a short time. We need to understand our work, and to do it with fidelity. Everyone who is

finally crowned victor will, by noble, determined effort to serve God, have earned the right to be clothed with Christ's righteousness."¹¹

Ministering—as a servant leader

One of the most renowned scientists and thinkers of the past century was Albert Einstein, a professor at Princeton University, who won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1921. He is credited with saying, "Only a life lived in the service of others is worth living."¹²

Jesus was the greatest of all servants, the chief Shepherd, and a true Minister. On His way to Jericho, Jesus stated the most important role of a leader, pastor, parent, or teacher. He said, "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mark 10:44, 45. Thus, the chiefest leaders and highest-ranking officers should consider it a pleasure to serve and minister to others with good works.

A student once complained to the principal of a school in the Philippines that the bathrooms were dirty and smelled bad and the toilets were not clean. The principal listened to the student and assured him that the bathrooms would be cleaned. The principal then stepped out and walked to the restrooms, picking up a mop and bucket with liquid soap and water on the way. The principal rolled up his sleeves and mopped the floors of the bathroom, cleaned the toilets, and removed the bad odor himself. The murmuring student saw the principal doing the work of a janitor and told a friend, "I thought the principal was going to call the cleaning lady, but no, he cleaned it himself. He made me feel guilty that I did not seize the opportunity to clean the bathroom."

So it was at the Lord's Supper. Jesus arose and took a bowl, towel, and some water and removed His outer garment. He washed the dirty feet of the twelve grown men. Each of them felt embarrassed and wondered why he had not taken the role of a servant in the place of their Leader.

It was after that vivid example of a servant leader that Jesus gave all His

followers throughout all time a wonderful, inspiring promise. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do....” John 14:12.

What works did Jesus do? He did works of mercy, service, and love. He was constantly meeting people from all walks of life and asking them simple questions to find out how He could help them.

To the blind man Bartimaeus, Jesus asked, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Mark 10:51. To the paralytic at Bethesda, Jesus inquired, “Wilt thou be made whole?” John 5:6. Now, two thousand years later, Jesus comes to you at the end of this Week of Prayer and asks you the same question, “What may I grant you? Do you want to be made whole—physically, mentally, spiritually?” Jesus yearns to bless you. He desires to heal your doubts. He wishes to grant you a new life. He longs to serve you and shower you with peace.

As followers of Jesus, every leader must seek to minister to the needs of those in his home, his church, his school, his business, his institute, and his community. She is to rise up and serve diligently those in her sphere for the glory of God. And in serving others, she will vicariously teach her children, her students, her parishioners, and her workers that it is more blessed to minister than to be ministered to.

Mentoring—training others for the season

The Beatles, who took America by storm with their rock music in the 1960’s, borrowed some of their lyrics from the Bible, as do many in Hollywood, and achieved financial success. In the song “Turn, Turn, Turn,” they set music to the words of Ecclesiastes. “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Leadership also has its season. Leaders need to understand that their position, influence, and authority are on loan. Their possessions, networks, and resources are all on loan to them for a limited time. Knowing that they are not eternal, they need to develop

others to take their place. They are responsible before God to prepare others to carry on after their “season of leadership influence is completed.”¹³ They need to lead with a plan for successors.

Moses knew this, and he trained Joshua. Asa knew this, and he trained Jehoshaphat. Jesus knew this, and He trained the twelve apostles. Paul knew this, and he trained Timothy and Titus. Peter knew this, and he trained Mark. John knew this, and he trained Polycarp.

True leaders mentor their successors. Each one is to lead with diligence, faithfulness, and sacrifice.

As parents, we need to take every opportunity to train our children to become good parents. As teachers, we need to take every opportunity to encourage young people to enter the teaching field and become good teachers. As ministers, we need to inspire young men to follow the calling of God and become servant pastors. As mothers, we need to train our girls to become great women like those of Galilee who ministered to Jesus.

Sister White was once asked if it was all right for a good Field President to continue as such in the same location without a change of leadership. “The question is asked me if it is not a mistake to remove the president of a State conference to a new field when many of the people under his present charge are unwilling to give him up. The Lord has been pleased to give me light on this question. I have been shown that ministers should not be retained in the same district year after year, nor should the same man long preside over a conference. A change of gifts is for the good of our conferences and churches.”¹⁴

“Some have pleaded to remain one year longer in the same field, and frequently the request has been respected. They have claimed to have plans for accomplishing a greater work than heretofore. But at the close of the year there was a worse state of things than before. If a minister has been unfaithful in his work, it is not likely that he will mend the matter by remaining.”¹⁵

I have noticed that some leaders seem to have the misconception that

if the church, field, union, or General Conference calls one to continue for many years in a leadership position, it would be wrong to refuse the call. That seems to have been the problem with Elder James White, the husband of Ellen G. White. He was such a talented leader that his brethren insisted that he serve as General Conference President for a long time. Sister White wrote concerning this: “My husband bore the heaviest burden.... Here is where the mistake has been made by his brethren in urging him, and by himself in consenting, to stand under the burdens and responsibilities that he had borne alone for years. He should have laid down these burdens years ago, and they should have been divided with other men chosen to act in behalf of the people.”¹⁶

Jesus was the greatest mentor of all. He did not hoard office nor seek to do everything all by Himself. He was visibly on earth for a very short season and trained His successors.¹⁷ He instilled hope, courage, and a sense of mission in His apostles who would go on to lead the Christian church. He told His disciples, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” John 16:7.

Christ knew that He needed to leave His disciples after His mission was fulfilled. He knew that He needed to let go and allow the Holy Spirit to continue to minister on His behalf. Through the Holy Spirit, He would bestow the gift of leading with diligence. He would train new leaders to relive the life of Jesus in them. Each would, in turn and like Christ, learn that leadership is for a season. True leaders mentor their successors. Each one is to lead with diligence, faithfulness, and sacrifice.

The man, the minister, and the mission

A man hurried up the steps of a chapel, rushing to reach the front doors. He asked the usher, as he and the minister were chatting together, “Is the service over?” The usher, who understood the essence of the minister’s sermon for that Sabbath, replied to the gentleman:

"Sir, the worship is over, but the service is only beginning."¹⁸

Yes, the Week of Prayer is over, but the service is just beginning. You and I are called by God to serve with diligence, to remember that leadership means to model the life of Jesus, to act as a minuteman for Christ, to minister to the needy, and to mentor others to be soul winners. This is our mission—to lead with diligence, as Jesus did and as He would have all leaders do. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." 1 Peter 1:10. Amen. ■

¹ Walter Baxendale, "Love of Leader," *Dictionary of Anecdote, Incident, Illustrative Fact, Selected and Arranged for the Pulpit and the Platform* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, Bible House, 1892), p. 347.

² Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1951), p. 281.

³ Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), p. 233.

⁴ *Encyclopedia Americana*, International Edition, vol. 19, s.v. "minutemen."

⁵ Ellen G. White, "Leadership," *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), pp. 497-498.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20 (Silver Spring, MD: E.G. White Estate, 1993), p. 114.

⁸ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 505.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), p. 423.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), pp. 208-209.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940), pp. 43-44.

¹² John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, tenth edition (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), p. 52.

¹³ Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2005), p. 45.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, "Conference Presidents," *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948), p. 420.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 501.

¹⁷ Laurie Beth Jones, "He Trained His Replacements," *Jesus CEO—Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* (New York: Hyperion, 1995), p. 151.

¹⁸ Charles L. Wallis, editor, "Service," *A Treasury of Sermon Illustrations* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 260.

Christian Liberty

God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love. —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 77.

Unselfishness, [is] the principle of God's kingdom,... —*Education*, p. 154.

Behold the substitute which heaven has provided for you! Herein is love! God has given you amazing proof of His love, a proof which defies all computation. We have no line with which to measure it, no standard with which to compare it. God gave His beloved Son as a propitiation for our sins. —*Review and Herald*, May 28, 1901.

Oh, how weak is our faith, that we do not avail ourselves of the rich, glorious promises of God! It is His nature to bestow His gifts upon us. All-wise and all-powerful, He will give liberally to all who ask in faith. He is more merciful, more tender, more patient and loving than any earthly parent. —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 81.

Jesus gave His life ... for us, and shall we not give Him our best affections, our holiest aspirations, our fullest service? —*Maranatha*, p. 237.

Jesus gave His life for us, that we should not perish, but believe in Him and have everlasting life. And shall we distrust God for one moment, when He has given us such evidence of His love? No, no; my soul cries out for the living water of life that I may refresh others.... —*Testimonies to Southern Africa*, p. 63.

It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in demonstrating it in practical life. To choose the right because it is right; to stand for truth at the cost of suffering and sacrifice—"this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord." Isaiah 54:17. —*Education*, pp. 154, 155.

The angels of glory find their joy in giving,...

Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself. No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud. —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 21, 20.

God gives regularly and freely to bless man. His gifts are not only rich and munificent but systematic. The light of day, the recurring seasons, the dew and rains causing vegetation to flourish, are blessings of God unceasingly flowing to the children of men. And God requires of those whom He blesses beneficent efforts in conformity to the divine Model. Our liberalities are never to cease; our charities must be regular and constant; and order must be observed in the work. It is not a trait of the natural heart to be beneficent; men must be taught, giving them line upon line and precept upon precept, how to work and how to give after God's order. —*Review and Herald*, December 12, 1878.

Spiritual prosperity is closely bound up with Christian liberality. The followers of Christ should rejoice in the privilege of revealing in their lives the beneficence of their Redeemer. As they give to the Lord, they have the assurance that their treasure is going before them to the heavenly courts. Would

and Spiritual Prosperity

men make their property secure? Let them place it in the hands that bear the marks of the crucifixion. Would they enjoy their substance? Let them use it to bless the needy and suffering. Would they increase their possessions? Let them heed the divine injunction, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Proverbs 3:9, 10. Let them seek to retain their possessions for selfish purposes, and it will be to their eternal loss. But let their treasure be given to God, and from that moment it bears His inscription. It is sealed with His immutability. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 344, 345.

Paul lays down a rule for giving to God's cause, and tells us what the result will be both in regard to ourselves and to God. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." "This I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (... Now He that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 735.

We are required to do good and bless others by our labors and prayers as well as by the gift of means. In order to be Christians and to gain heaven we must imitate the great Exemplar. He cheerfully gave His life to ransom an apostate world. Selfishness and worldliness were condemned by the daily life of Christ; and none of us can live for ourselves and yet enjoy the approval of God. —*Review and Herald*, December 12, 1878.

Those whom God has endowed with ability to acquire means are under obligation to Him to use that means, through Heaven's imparted wisdom, to His name's glory. Every shilling wasted on self-indulgence, or given to special friends who will spend it to indulge pride and selfishness, is robbing God's treasury. The money expended for garments to make a pleasing show is so much that might have been used to advance the cause of God in new places. Oh, that God would give all a true sense of what it means to be a Christian! It is to be Christlike, and Christ lived not to please Himself. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 214, 215.

We are not to feel that we can do or give anything that will entitle us to the favor of God. Says the apostle: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" When David and the people of Israel had gathered together the material they had prepared for the building of the temple, the king, as he committed the treasure to the princes of the congregation, rejoiced and gave thanks to God in words that should ever dwell in the hearts of God's people. "David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be Thou Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine.... And in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thine holy name cometh

of Thine hand, and is all Thine own. I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy Thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto Thee."

It was God who had provided the people with the riches of earth, and His Spirit had made them willing to bring their precious things for the temple. It was all of the Lord; if His divine power had not moved upon the hearts of the people, the king's efforts would have been in vain, and the temple would never have been erected....

None of us can do without the blessing of God, but God can do His work without the aid of man if He so chooses. But He has given to every man his work, and He trusts men with treasures of wealth or of intellect, as His stewards. Whatever we render to God is, through His mercy and generosity, placed to our account as faithful stewards. But we should ever realize that this is not a work of merit on man's part. However great the ability of man, he possesses nothing which God did not give him, and which He cannot withdraw if these precious tokens of His favor are not appreciated and rightly applied. Angels of God, whose perceptions are unclouded by sin, recognize the endowments of heaven as bestowed with the intention that they be returned in such a way as to add to the glory of the great Giver. With the sovereignty of God is bound up the well-being of man. The glory of God is the joy and the blessing of all created beings. When we seek to promote His glory we are seeking for ourselves the highest good which it is possible for us to receive. Brethren and sisters in Christ, God calls for the consecration to His service of every faculty, of every gift, you have received from Him. He wants you to say, with David: "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 735-737.

Every impulse of the Holy Spirit leading men to goodness and to God is noted in the books of heaven, and in the day of God everyone who has given himself as an instrument for the Holy Spirit's working will be permitted to behold what his life has wrought. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 310.

All that men receive of God's bounty still belongs to God. Whatever He has bestowed in the valuable and beautiful things of earth is placed in our hands to test us, to sound the depths of our love for Him and our appreciation of His favors. Whether it be the treasures of wealth or of intellect, they are to be laid, a willing offering, at the feet of Jesus. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 736.

"A book of remembrance" is written before God, in which are recorded the good deeds of "them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Malachi 3:16. Their words of faith, their acts of love, are registered in heaven. Nehemiah refers to this when he says, "Remember me, O my God,... and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God." Nehemiah 13:14. In the book of God's remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalized. —*The Great Controversy*, p. 481.

Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the sins of those who profess the truth. Under the general heading of "selfishness" came every other sin. —*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 241.

The poor widow who cast her two mites into the Lord's treasury little knew what she was doing. Her example of self-sacrifice has acted and reacted upon thousands of hearts in every land and in every age. It has brought to the treasury of God gifts from the high and the low, the rich and the poor. It has helped to sustain missions, to establish hospitals, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and preach the gospel to the poor. Multitudes have been blessed through her unselfish deed. And the outworking of all these lines of influence she, in the day of God, will be permitted to see. So with Mary's precious gift to the Saviour. How many have been inspired to loving service by the memory of that broken alabaster box! And how she will rejoice as she beholds all this!

Wonderful will be the revealing as the lines of holy influence, with their precious results, are brought to view. What will be the gratitude of souls that will meet us in the heavenly courts as they understand the sympathetic, loving interest which has been taken in their salvation! All praise, honor, and glory will be given to God and to the Lamb for our redemption; but it will not detract from the glory of God to express gratitude to the instrumentality He has employed in the salvation of souls ready to perish. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 310, 311.

My brethren and sisters, do not plead for retrenchment in evangelical work. So long as there are souls to save, our interest in the work of soul saving is to know no abating. The church cannot abridge her task without denying her Master. Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can give of their means for the carrying forward of foreign missions. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 55, 56.

To show a liberal, self-denying spirit for the success of foreign missions is a sure way to advance home missionary work; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off. It is in working to supply the necessities of others that we bring our souls into touch with the Source of all power. The Lord has marked every phase of missionary zeal that has been shown by His people in behalf of foreign fields. He designs that in every home, in every church, and at all the centers of the work, a spirit of liberality shall be shown in sending help to foreign fields, where the workers are struggling against great odds to give the light to those who sit in darkness.

That which is given to start the work in one field will result in strengthening the work in other places. As the laborers are freed from financial embarrassment, their efforts can be extended; and as people are brought into the truth and churches are established, there will be increasing financial strength. As these churches grow stronger, they will be able not only to carry on the work in their own borders, but to send help to other fields. —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 465, 466. ■

"Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies.

From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name."

—*Education*, p. 154.

