

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2003

Third Quarter

Stewards of God's Treasure

Fourth Quarter

Biblical Education

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Introduction

Undoubtfully God has special blessings for His faithful stewards.

“Sending His disciples to spread out the message of the gospel in the whole world and to all creatures” Christ entrusted them with the duty of spreading the knowledge of His grace. While He invites some to preach, He calls others to support the work with their offerings. He has entrusted us the necessary means to transmit the divine gifts for the salvation of our neighbours. Thus can man cooperate with God and this action is indispensable to make his heart more sensitive and to put in practice his best mental faculties.

“Everything positive that exists around us is a gift from God, it is the expression of His love. He cares for the poor as the essence of religion. Gold and silver belong to Him and if He wants He can make them fall from heaven. Instead, He has decided to ask man to be the steward of His treasure, not for him to accumulate it, but to use it for other people’s benefit. In this way man becomes the channel through which He distributes His blessings upon the earth. God established the system of Christian stewardship so that man could become, as generous and altruistic as his Creator and participate together with Christ of the gift of eternal life.

“The love expressed on Calvary should be revived, strengthened, and diffused among our churches. Shall we not do all we can to give power to the principles which Christ brought to this world? Shall we not strive to establish and give efficiency to the benevolent enterprises which are now called for without delay? As you stand before the cross and see the Prince of heaven dying for you, can you seal your heart, saying: ‘No; I have nothing to give?’

“Christ’s believing people are to perpetuate His love. This love is to draw them together round the cross. It is to divest them of all selfishness and bind them to God and to one another.

“Meet around the cross of Calvary in self-sacrifice and self-denial. God will bless you as you do your best. As you approach the throne of grace, as you find yourself bound to this throne by the golden chain let down from heaven to earth to draw men from the pit of sin, your heart will go out in love for your brethren and sisters who are without God and without hope in the world.”

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 253-256.

—THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS
OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Special Sabbath School Offering for RUSSIA

God bless the offerings of each generous heart!

1

Sabbath, 5 July 2003

EVERYTHING BELONGS TO THE LORD

INTRODUCTION

“Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord’s thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.” Deuteronomy 10:14.

THE UNIVERSE BELONGS TO GOD BY RIGHT OF CREATION

- 1. Who has created all things, both visible and invisible, and is the real owner of the heavens and the earth? Genesis 14:19, 22; Isaiah 48:12, 13; Psalm 24:1.**
- 2. What invitation does the Lord extend to His people in order to strengthen their faith and establish trust? Isaiah 40:26-31.**

“ ‘... He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth.’ Isaiah 40:26. It is through His power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom. He ‘maketh grass to grow upon the mountains’ (Psalm 147:8) and by Him the valleys are made fruitful. ‘All the beasts of the forest... seek their meat from God,’ and every living creature, from the smallest insect up to man, is daily dependent upon His providential care. In the beautiful words of the psalmist, ‘These wait all upon Thee...’.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 115.

3. Which silent messengers give testimony of the power of God in creation? Psalm 19:1-6.

“After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man. Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God’s great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God’s wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker....

“God designs that the Sabbath shall direct the minds of men to the contemplation of His created works. Nature speaks to their senses, declaring that there is a living God, the Creator, the Supreme Ruler of all. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.’ Psalm 19:1,2.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 47,48.

ARCHITECT AND PERFORMER OF CREATION

4. Through whom has God brought the universe into existence? What does the inspired apostle say regarding this? Colossians 1:15-17.

“The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. ‘By Him were all things created,... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him.’ Colossians 1:16. Angels are God’s ministers, radiant with the light ever flowing from His presence and speeding on rapid wing to execute His will. But the Son, the anointed of God, the ‘express image of His person,’ ‘the brightness of His glory,’ ‘upholding all things by the word of His power,’ holds supremacy over them all. (Hebrews 1:3) ‘A glorious high throne from the beginning’ was the place of His sanctuary (Jeremiah 17:12); ‘a scepter of righteousness,’ the scepter of His kingdom. Hebrews 1:8. ‘Honor and majesty are before Him: strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.’ Psalm 96:6. ‘Mercy and truth go before His face.’ Psalm 89:14.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 34,35.

MAN ALSO BELONGS TO HIM BY THE RIGHT OF REDEMPTION

5. What infinite price has been paid to redeem man? 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

“Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be ‘without blemish.’ Exodus 12:5. The priests were to examine all animals brought as a sacrifice, and were to reject every one in which a defect was discovered. Only an offering ‘without blemish’ could be a symbol of His perfect purity who was to offer Himself as ‘a lamb without blemish and without spot.’ 1 Peter 1:19. The apostle Paul points to these sacrifices as an illustration of what the followers of Christ are to become. He says, ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.’ Romans 12:1. We are to give ourselves to the service of God, and we should seek to make the offering as nearly perfect as possible. God will not be pleased with anything less than the best we can offer... Those who love Him with all the heart, will desire to give Him the best service of the life, and they will be constantly seeking to bring every power of their being into harmony with the laws that will promote their ability to do His will.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 352, 353.

6. Why can't man consider himself his own master? 1 Corinthians 6:19.

“To the rich no less than to the poor are the words of the Holy Spirit spoke: ‘Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.’ 1 Cor. 6:19,20. When men believe this, their possessions will be held as a trust, to be used as God shall direct, for the saving of the lost, and the comfort of the suffering and the poor. With man this is impossible, for the heart clings to its earthly treasure. The soul that is bound in service to mammon is deaf to the cry of human need....” —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 394.

RIGHT TO BE A CHILD OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST

7. In spite of apostasy, what high privilege will the man who accepts the plan of redemption obtain through Christ? 1 John 3:1-3.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.’ 1 John 3:1. And Christ says, ‘As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.’ (John 17:18) to ‘fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, ... for His body’s sake, which is the church.’ Co. 1:24. Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost... This work has been neglected in Israel. Is it not neglected today by those who profess to be Christ’s followers?” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 191.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- **Do you personally feel you are a creature of God?**
 - **Are you convinced to have been redeemed by Christ?**
 - **Do you consider it a real honor to have become a child of God?**
 - **What do you do to preserve the position entrusted to you?**
-

A DIVINE PLAN TO SUPPORT THE WORK

INTRODUCTION

- Have we ever stopped to consider the privilege and honour of becoming co-workers of God?

“That man might not lose the blessed results of benevolence, our Redeemer formed the plan of enlisting him as His co-worker. God could have reached His object in saving sinners without the aid of man, but He knew that man could not be happy without acting a part in the great work. By a chain of circumstances which would call forth his charities, He bestows upon man the best means of cultivating benevolence, and keeps him habitually giving to help the poor and to advance His cause.” —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p. 401.

A GREAT NEED IN THE WORK OF GOD

1. **To build a house it is not enough to have a plan, but what is absolutely necessary in order to be able to carry it on? Luke 14:28-30.**

If man, in order to carry out his enterprise needs a project, God could do without one, but since He is a God of order, He acts according to a precise project.

2. **What sense of responsibility did Jesus try to awake in the mind of His disciples as He looked at the work to be done? Matthew 9:36-38.**

“God is not dependent upon man for the support of His cause. He could have sent means direct from heaven to supply His treasury, if His providence had seen that this was best for man. He might have devised means whereby angels would have been sent to publish the truth to the world without the agency of men. He might have written the truth upon the heavens, and let that declare to the world His requirements in living characters. God is not dependent upon any man’s gold or silver...” –*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, pp. 369,370.

3. For God it is possible to make even the stones speak, but what instruments does He want to use to carry forward the plan of salvation? Romans 10:13-15.

“Every good thing on earth was placed here by the bountiful hand of God as an expression of His love to man. The poor are His, and the cause of religion is His. He has placed means in the hands of men, that His divine gifts may flow through human channels in doing the work appointed us in saving our fellow men. Everyone has his appointed work in the great field; and yet none should receive the idea that God is dependent upon man....

“God works through human instrumentalities; and whoever shall awaken the consciences of men, provoking them to good works and a real interest in the advancement of the cause of truth, does not do it of himself, but by the Spirit of God which worketh in him. Pledges made under these circumstances are of a sacred character, being the fruit of the work of the Spirit of God. When these pledges are canceled, Heaven accepts the offering, and these liberal workers are credited for so much treasure invested in the bank of heaven. Such are laying up a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” –*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, pp. 552,553.

4. It is indispensable to organize a working plan and coordinate to send messengers to the different parts of the world, but what is necessary in order to support them? 1 Corinthians 9:7.

“The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth - that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence.

“‘He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.’ Acts 17:25. The Lord declares: ‘Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.’ Psalm 50:10. ‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine.’ Haggai 2:8. As an acknowledgment that all things came from Him, the Lord directed that a portion of His bounty should be returned to Him in gifts and offerings to sustain His worship.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

REFLEXIONS ABOUT SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE PAST

5. What joyful examples of cordial cooperation do we find in the Holy Scriptures and what is the message they convey to us? Exodus 36:2, 3; 1 Chronicles 29:6-9.

“A striking illustration of the results of selfishly withholding even free-will offerings from the cause of God was given in the days of the prophet Haggai. After their return from the captivity in Babylon, the Jews undertook to rebuild the temple of the Lord; but meeting determined opposition from their enemies, they discontinued the work; and a severe drought, by which they were reduced to actual want, convinced them that it was impossible to complete the building of the temple. ‘The time is not come,’ they said, ‘the time that the Lord’s house should be built.’ But a message was sent them by the Lord’s prophet: ‘Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put into a bag with holes.’ Haggai 1:2-6.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 527.

6. How many times has that wonderful experience described in Exodus 36:4-7, lived by the people of God in the days of Moses, been repeated in the course of history?

After that marvelous experience it has never been heard or written that the leaders of the people of God have said ‘Enough! We do not need any more.’ Evidently the generosity of those people was unique in the history of the church. Nevertheless, we have a big and perfect heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:11), a unique and most excellent sacrifice (Hebrew 9:14; 10:12,14), a perfect and eternal High Priest (Hebrews 8:1,2; 9:2) How come there is so little generosity and liberality?

“God intended that His people Israel should be light bearers to all the inhabitants of the earth. In maintaining His public worship they were bearing a testimony to the existence and sovereignty of the living God. And this worship it was their privilege to sustain, as an expression of their loyalty and their love to Him. The Lord has ordained that the diffusion of light and truth in the earth shall be dependent upon the efforts and offerings of those who are partakers of the heavenly gift.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 528.

7. With what noble feelings and a joyful heart did the people of God have to present themselves in the weekly ceremonies, in the regional and national assemblies? Exodus 23:15; Psalm 96:8.

“There are many members in our churches who should bring large offerings, and not content themselves with presenting a feeble pittance to Him who has done so much for them.” *—Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 153.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- **How many times have you come before the Lord empty-handed?**
- **Have you ever thought that God’s work on the earth needs voluntary offerings?**
- **What capital have you invested in the heavenly bank? (Matthew 6:20,21)**
- **Do you really know that the investments deposited in the heavenly bank are an absolute guarantee that the interests will be extended in eternity?**
- **Do you consider yourself a regular supporter of God’s work, maybe just an occasional one or neither the one nor the other?**

IT IS SACRED TO THE LORD

INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson, even if in a summarized way, we dealt with the subject of supporting God's work by means of voluntary offerings. In this lesson, on the other hand, we shall deal with a similar topic, according to clear and precise divine commands. It is true that God does not impose anything to anyone and leaves freedom of choice, but it is also true that God's freedom does not at all authorize us to fail in the fulfillment of our duties or to transgress them.

Before we deal with this topic let us ask ourselves the following:

- 1) Have we been correctly instructed regarding support of God's messengers?
- 2) Have we been well trained that to keep the holy service and the plan of salvation depends on man's cooperation?
- 3) If by any chance that has not happened, have we tried, to look into this subject and make a research about it?

A DIVINE INSTITUTION

- 1. Who has established that the plan of salvation should be supported by funds of the divine institution? 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14.**

"He (God) has given His people a plan for raising sums sufficient to make the enterprise self-sustaining. God's plan in the tithing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility, and it does not require depth of learning to understand and execute it. All may feel that they can act a part in carrying forward the precious work of salvation." —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 367.

"It was by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who gave His life for the life of the world, that this plan for systematic giving was devised." —*Review and Herald*, February 4, 1902; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 66.

2. What did the Lord establish already in Eden? When was the system of tithes and offerings confirmed? Genesis 2:16,17.

“The tithing system reaches back beyond the days of Moses. Men were required to offer to God gifts for religious purposes before the definite system was given to Moses, even as far back as the days of Adam. In complying with God’s requirements, they were to manifest in offerings their appreciation of His mercies and blessings to them. This was continued through successive generations, and was carried out by Abraham, who gave tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God.” –*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 69.

“The same principle existed in the days of Job. Jacob, when at Bethel, an exile and penniless wanderer, lay down at night, solitary and alone, with a rock for his pillow, and there promised the Lord, ‘Of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.’ God does not compel men to give. All that they give must be voluntary. He will not have His treasury replenished with unwilling offerings.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 , p. 393; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 69.

WHERE TO MAKE OUR DEPOSITS

3. Whom does the tithe belong to and how is it considered in the Scriptures? Leviticus 27:30

“The very same language is used concerning the Sabbath as in the law of the tithe: ‘The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.’ Man has no right nor power to substitute the first day for the seventh. He may pretend to do this; ‘nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure.’ The customs and teachings of men will not lessen the claims of the divine law. God has sanctified the seventh day. That specified portion of time, set apart by God Himself for religious worship, continues as sacred today as when first hallowed by our Creator.

“In like manner a tithe of our income is ‘holy unto the Lord.’ The New Testament does not reenact the law of the tithe, as it does not that of the Sabbath; for the validity of both is assumed, and their deep spiritual import explained. . . . While we as a people are seeking faithfully to give to God the time which He has reserved as His own, shall we not also render to Him that portion of our means which He claims?” –*Review and Herald*, May 16, 1882; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 66.

4. Where do the tithes and offerings have to be regularly brought? Malachi 3:10

“The Lord has given His people a message for this time. It is presented in the third chapter of Malachi. How could the Lord present His requirements in a clearer or more forcible manner than He has done in this chapter? All should remember that God’s claims upon us underlie every other claim. He gives to us bountifully, and the contract which He has made with man is that a tenth of his possessions shall be returned to God. The Lord graciously entrusts to His stewards His treasures, but of the tenth He says: This is Mine. Just in proportion as God has given His property to man, so man is to return to God a faithful tithe of all his substance. This distinct arrangement was made by Jesus Christ Himself. This work involves solemn and eternal results, and it is too sacred to be left to human impulse.” –*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p. 35.

5. What do we understand when we read “my house”, “the house of worship”, “Mount Zion”? Isaiah 2:3; 56:5,7; Obadiah 1:17; Matthew 21:13; Luke 14:23.

UNFAITHFULNESS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

6. Of what terrible sin are guilty those who do not faithfully return to the Lord the tithes and offerings? Malachi 3:8,9.

“To rob” God is not simply to take hold in an improper way of what is sacred and belongs to Him. The term used by the Spirit of Prophecy regarding this infidelity is a severe admonishment to shake us and make us reflect seriously. Here are some expressions of how the failure to give what belongs to God is considered:

1. Theft
–*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, 257.
2. Crime
–*Review and Herald*, October 13, 1896, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 61.
3. Sacrilege
–*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 246, 247.
–*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 370.

4. Hateful sin
–*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 370.
5. Fraud
–*Review and Herald*, December 23, 1890; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 61.
6. Offence to God
–*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 2, p. 26.
7. Negligence that hurts God
–*Counsel on Stewardship*, p. 48.
8. Unfaithfulness to God
–*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p. 25.
9. To rob the donor
–*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, pp. 24, 25.
10. Shameful ingratitude
–*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 257.

“Christ calls upon every one to consider. Make an honest reckoning. Put into one scale Jesus, which means eternal treasure, life, truth, heaven, and the joy of Christ in souls redeemed; put into the other every attraction the world can offer. Into one scale put the loss of your own soul, and the souls of those whom you might have been instrumental in saving; into the other, for yourself and for them, a life that measures with the life of God. Weigh for time and for eternity. While you are thus engaged, Christ speaks: ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 374.

APPLYING THE REMEDIES APPROVED BY GOD

7. What urgent decisions have to be taken to find a remedy to such ungrateful unfaithfulness? Luke 19:7-9.

The repentance and confession of he who has robbed God is not enough. Considering what the Scriptures teach us, after having paid the debt, there should be a certain compensation. (Luke 19:8; Matthew 25:27).

“Wherever there has been any neglect on your part to give back to the Lord His own, repent with contrition of soul, and make restitution, lest His curse rest upon you... When you have done what you can on your part, withholding nothing that belongs to your Maker, you may ask Him to provide means to send the message of truth to the world.” –*Review and Herald*, January 20, 1885; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 98.

“One brother, a noble-looking man, a delegate from Tasmania, came to me and said, ‘I am glad I heard you speak today upon tithing. I did not know it was so important a matter. I dare not neglect it longer.’ He is now figuring up the amount of his tithe for the last twenty years, and says he shall pay it all as fast as he is able, for he cannot have robbery of God registered in the books of heaven meet him in the judgment.

“One sister belonging to the Melbourne church, has brought in eleven pounds [\$54] back tithe which she had not understood that it devolved on her to pay. As they have received the light, many have made confession in regard to their indebtedness to God, and expressed their determination to meet this debt. . . . I proposed that they place in the treasury their note promising to pay the full amount of an honest tithe as soon as they could obtain the money to do so. Many heads bowed assent, and I am confident that next year we shall not, as now, have an empty treasury.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 96, 97.

8. Are we maybe authorized not to give the tithe or offerings due to lack of trust or a faulty management? Does the eventual lack of correctness or the inefficiency of others justify our unfaithfulness?

“The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work. For a long time the Lord has been robbed because there are those who do not realize that the tithe is God’s reserved portion. Some have been dissatisfied and have said: ‘I will no longer pay my tithe, for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work.’ But will you rob God because you think the management of the work is not right? Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order; but do not withdraw from the work of God, and prove unfaithful, because others are not doing right.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 249; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 93.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF IMPARTING RIGHT TEACHINGS

INTRODUCTION

God makes an appeal to everyone to cooperate in His holy cause: leaders, ministers, Bible workers, teachers or whoever carries out an activity in the religious field, church elders, deacons and treasurers are not excluded. All have to feel the burden of the responsibility and impart precise teachings. It is a sacred duty to instruct the souls regarding this truth. When Ellen G. White gave a study in Australia about the duty to return the tithes and offerings to the Lord, many members completely ignored this matter.

A CAUSE OF SPIRITUAL DETERIORATION

1. What is the reason of the spiritual condition of God's people? Isaiah 1:3; 5:13; Hosea 4:6

“Those who go forth as ministers have a solemn responsibility devolving upon them which is strangely neglected. Some enjoy preaching, but they do not give personal labor to the churches. There is great need of instruction concerning the obligations and duties to God, especially in regard to paying an honest tithe. Our ministers would feel sadly aggrieved if they were not promptly paid for their labor; but will they consider that there must be meat in the treasure house of God wherewith to sustain the laborers? If they fail to do their whole duty in educating the people to be faithful in paying to God His own, there will be a shortage of means in the treasury to carry forward the Lord's work.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 250.

2. Above all, upon whom does the fault of this unfulfilled duty fall? Matthew 28:19,20; 1 Peter 5:1,2

Unfortunately, more than once, it has been found that candidates to baptism or already baptized members have no instruction regarding their sacred financial duties.

“The overseer of the flock of God should faithfully discharge his duty. If he takes the position that because this is not pleasant to him, he will leave it for someone else to do, he is not a faithful worker. Let him read in Malachi the words of the Lord charging the people with robbery toward God in withholding the tithes. The mighty God declares: ‘Ye are cursed with a curse.’ Malachi 3:9. When the one who ministers in word and doctrine sees the people pursuing a course that will bring this curse upon them, how can he neglect his duty to give them instruction and warning? Every church member should be taught to be faithful in paying an honest tithe.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 250, 251.

3. Why are some co-workers negligent with this holy duty or leave it to their successors? Maybe they feel uncomfortable due to the big selfishness in the human heart or is there maybe another reason? Ezekiel 34:4; Luke 12:42.

In some cases it may be that the minister is not ready to sacrifice his personal prestige, or has not the courage to deal with such a delicate matter.

“A laborer should never leave some portion of the work undone because it is not agreeable to perform, thinking that the minister coming next will do it for him. When this is the case, if a second minister follows the first, and presents the claims that God has upon His people, some draw back saying: ‘The minister who brought us the truth did not mention these things.’ And they become offended because of the word. Some refuse to accept the tithing system; they turn away, and no longer walk with those who believe and love the truth. When other lines are opened before them, they answer: ‘It was not so taught us,’ and they hesitate to move forward. How much better it would have been if the first messenger of truth had faithfully and thoroughly educated these converts in regard to all essential matters, even if fewer had been added to the church under his labors. God would be better pleased to have six thoroughly converted to the truth than to have sixty make a profession and yet not be truly converted.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 369,370.

- 4. If the minister does not teach this specific topic, is this enough of a reason to dismiss him from his position? Ezekiel 34:1,2,10; Luke 16:2.**

“If the pastors show that they are not fitted for their charge, if they fail to set before the church the importance of returning to God His own, if they do not see to it that the officers under them are faithful, and that the tithe is brought in, they are in peril. They are neglecting a matter which involves a blessing or a curse to the church. They should be relieved of their responsibility, and other men should be tested and tried.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 106.

- 5. Does the responsibility of instructing the members fall only upon the ministers? Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:3**

The idea that the deacons should only keep the church in order and prepare the Lord's supper is very limited. In order to broaden our horizon it would be necessary to remember the duty fulfilled by the seven deacons. Even the treasurers should not be considered as if they occupied a commercial office but a spiritual one. Therefore, deacons and treasurers should not only feel the responsibility to instruct the people together with the elders, but also to exhort and counsel.

“It is the duty of the elders and officers of the church to instruct the people on this important matter, and to set things in order. As laborers together with God, the officers of the church should be sound upon this plainly revealed question. The ministers themselves should be strict to carry out to the letter the injunctions of God's word. Those who hold positions of trust in the church should not be negligent, but they should see that the members are faithful in performing this duty. . . . Let the elders and officers of the church follow the direction of the Sacred Word, and urge upon their members the necessity of faithfulness in the payment of pledges, tithes, and offerings.” —*Review and Herald*, December 17, 1889; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 106.

WORKING HONESTLY AND TEACHING FAITHFULLY

- 6. Why do laziness and idleness dishonour God? What does the apostle Paul say in the occasion of his commission in Miletus and why? Acts 20:17,18, 32-35; 1 Thessalonians 4:11,12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Ephesians 4:28.**

“The word of God teaches that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat. The Lord does not require the hard-working man to support those who are not diligent. There is a waste of time, a lack of effort, which brings to poverty and want. If these faults are not seen and corrected by those who indulge in them, all that might be done in their behalf is like putting treasure into a basket with holes. But there is an unavoidable poverty; and we are to manifest tenderness and compassion toward those who are unfortunate.” —*Review and Herald*, January 3, 1899; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 122.

7. Is it correct not to instruct the poor about this duty and thus exclude him from receiving God’s blessings? Does God use partiality toward them or does He consider their offering even if meagre? Leviticus 19:15, fist part; Luke 21:1-4.

“Frequently those who receive the truth are among the poor of this world; but they should not make this an excuse for neglecting those duties which devolve upon them in view of the precious light they have received. They should not allow poverty to prevent them from laying up a treasure in heaven. The blessings within reach of the rich are also within their reach. If they are faithful in using what little they possess, their treasure in heaven will increase according to their fidelity. It is the motive with which they work, not the amount they do, that makes their offering valuable in the sight of heaven.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 222; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 107.

God wishes His ministers to take care of the people who are well off, so that they, touched by the grace of God and the Holy Spirit, may consecrate part of their goods to the work of the Lord.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- **Has it ever happened to you to instruct souls about this subject?**
 - **Have you been clear and explicit so that you may have a clear conscience?**
 - **What do you do in regard to generosity to serve and honour the Lord?**
-

THE SECRET OF PROSPERITY

INTRODUCTION

- “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” Proverbs 11:24,25.
- “The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.” Isaiah 32:8.
- “Divine wisdom has appointed, in the plan of salvation, the law of action and reaction, making the work of beneficence, in all its branches, twice blessed. He who gives to the needy blesses others and is blessed himself in a still greater degree.” —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p. 401.

SENSITIVENESS TOWARD OTHER PEOPLE’S NEEDS

1. **What should Christ’s disciples never get tired of? Galatians 6:9-10.**
2. **What particular recommendation do we find in the Holy Scriptures? Deuteronomy 15:11; James 2:5.**

“Never are we to be cold and unsympathetic, especially when dealing with the poor. Courtesy, sympathy, and compassion are to be shown to all. Partiality for the wealthy is displeasing to God. Jesus is slighted when His needy children are slighted. They are not rich in this world’s goods, but they are dear to His heart of love. God recognizes no distinction of rank. With Him there is no caste.” —*Review and Herald*, July 29, 1910; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 162.

3. What is it that makes God's heart joyful and the offering pleasant? 2 Corinthians 9:6,7.

"The Lord says, 'Give, and it shall be given unto you.' 'He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth with blessings shall reap also with blessings... And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: as it is written, He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor: His righteousness abideth forever. And He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God. ... of grace of God.' Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6,8-11." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 371.

"There are many in our churches who should bring large offerings, and not content themselves with presenting a feeble pittance to Him who has done so much for them. Immeasurable blessings are falling upon them, but how little they return to the Giver! Let those who are indeed pilgrims and strangers upon the earth, now send their treasures before them to the heavenly country, in the much needed gifts to the Lord's treasury." *—Review and Herald*, December 18, 1888; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 153.

THE GIFT THAT MAKES RICH

4. What did Jesus Christ do for us and what was His noble motivation? 2 Corinthians 8:9.

"All the riches, even of the most wealthy, are not sufficient to hide the smallest sin from God. Neither riches nor intellect will be accepted as a ransom for the transgressor. Repentance, true humility, a broken heart, and a contrite spirit, alone will be acceptable to God." *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 153.

"I was shown that there is no lack of means among the Sabbath keeping Adventists. At present their greatest danger is in their accumulations of property. Some are continually increasing their cares and labors; they are overcharged. The result is, God and the wants of His cause are nearly

forgotten by them; they are spiritually dead. They are required to make a sacrifice to God, an offering. A sacrifice does not increase, but decreases and consumes. Here, I was shown, was a worthy enterprise for God's people to engage in, one in which they can invest means to His glory and the advancement of His cause. Much of the means among our people is only proving an injury to those who are holding on to it."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 492.

A WORK THAT GOD HIGHLY APPRECIATES

- 5. What is revealed in the conduct of some who have felt in their hearts the imploring voice of the poor and the needy? What answer will receive the prayers of those who are sensitive to the needs of others? Proverbs 31:20; Galatians 2:10; Acts 10: 2-4.**

"It is God's purpose that the rich and the poor shall be closely bound together by the ties of sympathy and helpfulness. He has a plan for us individually. To all who shall serve Him He has appointed a work. He bids us to interest ourselves in every case of suffering or need that shall come to our knowledge. Our Lord Jesus Christ was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. He bids all whom He has entrusted with temporal blessings to follow His example. Jesus says, 'Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good.' The want and wretchedness in the world are constantly appealing to our compassion and sympathy, and the Saviour declares that ministry to the afflicted and suffering is the service most pleasing to Him. 'Is it not,' He says, '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?' We are to minister to the sick, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to instruct the ignorant."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 161, 162.

DONATIONS AND BLESSINGS

- 6. About what specific facts does Jesus call our attention in order to awake our conscience? 1 Kings 17:7-16; Luke 21: 1-4; James 1:27.**

"It is not wise to give indiscriminately to everyone who may solicit our aid; for we may thus encourage idleness, intemperance, and extravagance. But if one comes to your door and says he is hungry, do not turn him away empty. Give him something to eat, of such things as you have. You know not his circumstances, and it may be that his poverty is the result of misfortune.

"But among all whose needs demand our interest, the widow and the fatherless have the strongest claims upon our tender sympathy and care. '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'... Every kind act done to them in the name of Jesus, is accepted by Him as if done to Himself, for He identifies His interest with that of suffering humanity, and He has entrusted to His church the grand work of ministering to Jesus by helping and blessing the needy and suffering. On all who shall minister to them with willing hearts, the blessing of the Lord will rest."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 163, 164.

7. Who was that man whom they heard about and considered him blessed and those who saw Him gave a "good testimony"? For what reason? Job 29:11-13, 15,16,

"To the appeal of the erring, the tempted, the wretched victims of want and sin, the Christian does not ask, Are they worthy? but, How can I benefit them? In the most wretched, the most debased, he sees souls whom Christ died to save and for whom God has given to His children the ministry of reconciliation. The merciful are those who manifest compassion to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed. Job declares.... There are many to whom life is a painful struggle; they feel their deficiencies and are miserable and unbelieving; they think they have nothing for which to be grateful. Kind words, looks of sympathy, expressions of appreciation, would be to many a struggling and lonely one as the cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. A word of sympathy, an act of kindness, would lift burdens that rest heavily upon weary shoulders. And every word or deed of unselfish kindness is an expression of the love of Christ for lost humanity."—*Thoughts of the Mount of Blessings*, pp. 22,23.

Men of good will, moved by God's grace and by the Holy Spirit, will be able to accomplish so many good works for the Lord. For this purpose we advise to read 1 Timothy 6:18-19 and *Testimony Treasure*, vol. 2, pp. 519-525.

- **If you want the secret of prosperity to be translated in reality, imitate one of the many examples described in the word of God. For example. Luke 10: 25-37; 14:12-14.**

6

Sabbath, 9 August 2003

THE USE OF THE TITHE

AN INSTITUTION PREVIOUS TO THE LEVITICAL TIME

1. **Why and to whom did the patriarchs give the tithes when the levitical ceremonial had not yet been established or organized? Genesis 14:18-20.**

Neither Abraham nor Melchizedek were from the tribe of Levi. We should remember that Melchizedek was a Priest of the Lord and His office had not come by means of a carnal order.

“In the days of Israel the tithe and freewill offerings were needed to maintain the ordinances of divine service. Should the people of God give less in this age? The principle laid down by Christ is that our offerings to God should be in proportion to the light and privileges enjoyed. ‘Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.’ Luke 12:48. Said the Saviour to His disciples as He sent them forth, ‘Freely ye have received, freely give.’ Matthew 10:8. As our blessings and privileges are increased - above all, as we have before us the unparalleled sacrifice of the glorious Son of God - should not our gratitude find expression in more abundant gifts to extend to others the message of salvation? The work of the gospel, as it widens, requires greater provision to sustain it than

was called for anciently; and this makes the law of tithes and offerings of even more urgent necessity now than under the Hebrew economy. If His people were liberally to sustain His cause by their voluntary gifts, instead of resorting to unchristian and unhallowed methods to fill the treasury, God would be honored, and many more souls would be won to Christ.”
–*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 528,529.

USE OF THE TITHE IN THE LEVITICAL SYSTEM

2. What does priest mean and which is his holy and solemn duty? Hebrews 9:8,11,12,19-24, 4:16.

The term priest for some means “he who makes sacrifices”, for others “the one who approaches the altar.” In other words we can say that it is a consecrated person who renders service to the altar of God in order to keep God’s worship alive, intercedes for the people and presents sacrifices of praise to the Lord.

3. Who was in charge of receiving the tithes when the earthly sanctuary was established and the levitical system began to be organized? Numbers 18:21; Hebrews 7:5.

4. On the other hand, what did the Levites have to do and to whom did they have to give the tithe of the tithe? Numbers 18:26; Nehemiah 10:38; 12:47 (second part).

THE TITHE BELONGS TO THE LORD AND IS HOLY

5. May the tithe be used as one wishes or according to a personal criteria even if it is used for God’s cause?

Note to clarify the use of the tithe:

Some, refering to the quotations in the *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, pp. 542-543 and 550-551, mantain that with the tithes one can build churches, buy buildings, found schools, keep the printing house, publish books, or other things of the kind.

We need to know that at the beginning of the Adventist movement, the use of the tithe had not yet been introduced. In order to support the work they had established the so called “systematic beneficency.” Later, the Adventist began to establish the system of the tithe, but without precise definition or clear rules. In England, for example, they used it to build churches or to buy buildings. This situation lasted approximately until 1880-1882. After this date, Testimonies began to be published with more clarity and definition regarding the tithes. The following testimonies and the one already given are clear enough to avoid doubts confusion or controversy.

“God has given special direction as to the use of the tithe. He does not design that His work shall be crippled for want of means. That there may be no haphazard work and no error, He has made our duty on these points very plain. The portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use it for themselves in any emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord’s work.

“God desires all His stewards to be exact in following divine arrangements. They are not to offset the Lord’s plans by performing some deed of charity or giving some gift or some offering when or how they, the human agents, shall see fit. It is a very poor policy for men to seek to improve on God’s plan, and invent a makeshift, averaging up their good impulses on this and that occasion, and offsetting them against God’s requirements. God calls upon all to give their influence to His own arrangement. He has made His plan known, and all who would co-operate with Him must carry out this plan instead of daring to attempt an improvement on it.

“A very plain, definite message has been given to me for our people. I am bidden to tell them that they are making a mistake in applying the tithe to various objects which, though good in themselves, are not the object to which the Lord has said that the tithe should be applied. Those who make this use of the tithe are departing from the Lord’s arrangement. God will judge for these things.

“One reasons that the tithe may be applied to school purposes. Still others reason that canvassers and colporteurs should be supported from the tithe. But a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used - the support of the ministers.....

“The tithe is the Lord’s, and those who meddle with it will be punished with the loss of their heavenly treasure unless they repent. Let the work no longer be hedged up because the tithe has been diverted into various channels other than the one to which the Lord has said it should go. Provision is to be made for these other lines of work. They are to be sustained, but not from the tithe. God has not changed; the tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 247-250.

- 6. What does the Lord require from his people even at the time of the end and what exhortation does he make to everyone personally? Malachi 3:10-12.**
- 7. Is the law of the tithes also valid for the minister of the New Testament? 1 Corinthians 9:2-14; 1 Timothy 5:18.**

“It was to this plan for the support of the ministry that Paul referred when he said, ‘Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.’ And later, in writing to Timothy, the apostle said, ‘The laborer is worthy of his reward.’ 1 Timothy 5:18.

“By this system of benevolence the Lord sought to teach Israel that in everything He must be first. Thus they were reminded that God was the proprietor of their fields, their flocks, and their herds; that it was He who sent them the sunshine and the rain that developed and ripened the harvest. Everything that they possessed was His; they were but the stewards of His goods.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 336-338.

STEWARDS OF GOD'S TREASURE

INTRODUCTION

For spiritual and conscientious people, it is a privilege and a big honour to become stewards of God's treasure. Obviously, there are different kinds of stewardships, but summarized and in brief: what characteristic should God's stewards have and be very careful with?

SERVICES AND GOODS ENTRUSTED TO US

- 1. Among the many services assigned to the Levites, which particular duties should they fulfill and what should they jealously watch? Numbers 1:47-54.**

- 2. Besides material things, which gifts does God entrust His people? 1 Peter 4:10,11.**

God's gifts are all precious, we mention just a few: the gift of life, the word, the grace of Jesus Christ, God's peace, the Holy Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit, etc, should be carefully, honestly and faithfully managed.

"To His servants Christ commits 'His goods'--something to be put to use for Him. He gives 'to every man his work.' Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in co-operation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God." *—Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 326.

"All was the Lord's, and He had made them stewards of His goods." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 77.

- 3. What should we not underestimate or forget in the choice of the managers both of spiritual and material goods? Exodus 18:19-24.**

- 4. God considers every member individually, as His steward, What is then expected from each one of us and what do we have to be carefully and pay attention to? 2 Corinthians 9:6; Matthew 23:23; Luke 12:41-43; Nehemiah 13:10.**

“There are many who urge with great enthusiasm that all men should have an equal share in the temporal blessings of God. But this was not the purpose of the Creator. A diversity of condition is one of the means by which God designs to prove and develop character. Yet He intends that those who have worldly possessions shall regard themselves merely as stewards of His goods, as entrusted with means to be employed for the benefit of the suffering and the needy.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 535.

- 5. What does the apostle Paul say regarding the stewards? 1 Corinthians 4:1,2.**

“God has made men His stewards. The property which He has placed in their hands is the means that He has provided for the spread of the gospel. To those who prove themselves faithful stewards He will commit greater trusts. Saith the Lord: ‘Them that honour Me I will honour.’ 1 Samuel 2:30. ‘God loveth a cheerful giver,’ and when His people, with grateful hearts, bring their gifts and offerings to Him, ‘not grudgingly, or of necessity,’ His blessing will attend them, as He has promised. ‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall be no room enough to receive it.’ Malachi 3:10.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 529.

- 6. With what care and attention did Nehemiah choose the men for the various responsibilities? What qualities did they need to have? Nehemiah 13:13.**

“God has deposited with His people in this world enough to carry forward His work without embarrassment, and it is His plan that the means which He has entrusted to them be judiciously used.” —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 67.

7. What do all stewards should keep in mind and what should they not forget? Luke 16:2,10,11.

Instead of waiting for the Master to come and say, when it may be too late: “Give account of your stewardship” wouldn’t it be better for the stewards of God’s work to present periodically to the leaders, the respective committee and the people, a clear report and specific and transparent projects? To introduce such a system would give the stewards a better guarantee and it generates trust and generosity towards the whole people.

8

Sabbath, 23 August 2003

PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED BY THE LORD

INTRODUCCIÓN

Surely someone will ask how far in the past goes the institution of the tithe and how long will it last. It is really very old and maybe we shall be surprised to hear it is a eternal principle.

Some ask themselves whether the first fruit offering was not prior to the tithe and whether it was not also an eternal principle. From the Bible and the Testimonies it may be possible to have satisfying answers.

- 1. Which is the one of the sacred institution that goes back to paradise and was successively practiced by the patriarchs? Genesis 2:16,17; 14:20; 28:20-22.**

“Herein is set forth a principle that is seen in all God’s dealings with men. The Lord placed our first parents in the Garden of Eden. He surrounded them with everything that could minister to their happiness, and He bade them acknowledge Him as the possessor of all things. In the garden He caused to grow every tree that was pleasant to the eye or good for food; but among them He made one reserve.” –*Review and Herald*, February 4, 1920; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 65.

“As the Israelites were about to be established as a nation, the law of tithing was reaffirmed as one of the divinely ordained statutes upon obedience to which their prosperity depended.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

“The tithing system reaches back beyond the days of Moses. Men were required to offer to God gifts for religious purposes before the definite system was given to Moses, even as far back as the days of Adam.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 50.

- 2. Which were the first offerings presented to the Lord by the children of Adam and who had preceeded them? Genesis 4:3,4; 3:21. (God Himself gave the practical example of the first sacrifices).**

PREMINENCE ON THE EXPRESSION OF OUR ATTITUDE

- 3. Which further offering does the Lord demand and how is it defined? Which is really the most excellent one? Exodus 23: 19 first part; Proverbs 3:9; 1 Corinthians 15:20,23; Revelation 13:8.**

In the book of Revelation the word “Lamb” appears 28 times. Jesus is not only the first fruit of those who sleep in the grave but the first fruit par excellence since He offered Himself willingly for the redemption of man before the foundation of the world.

“Even before the tithe could be reserved there had been an acknowledgment of the claims of God. The first that ripened of every product of the land was consecrated to Him. The first of the wool when the seed were shorn, of the grain when the wheat was threshed, the first of the oil and the wine, was set apart for God. So also were the first-born of all animals; and a redemption price was paid for the first born son. The first fruits were to be presented before the Lord at the sanctuary, and were then devoted to the use of the priests.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 526.

- 4. Showing His great interest for some special classes, which particular commandment did God give Moses? Deuteronomy 15:11; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; James 1:27.**

“And further provision was made for the poor. There is nothing, after their recognition of the claims of God, that more distinguishes the laws given by Moses than the liberal, tender, and hospitable spirit enjoined toward the poor.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 530.

OTHER NEEDS AND OTHER DONATIONS

- 5. What kind of offerings were required to build the tabernacle, the temple and other initiatives? Exodus 36:3-7; 1 Chronicles 29:6-8.**

“The payment of the tithe was but a part of God’s plan for the support of His service. Numerous gifts and offerings were divinely specified. Under the Jewish system the people were taught to cherish a spirit of liberality both in sustaining the cause of God and in supplying the wants of the needy. For special occasions there were freewill offerings.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 337, 338.

- 6. Which other offerings please the Lord? 1 Chronicles 29:13-17; Psalm 22:23; Hebrews 13:15 1 Thessalonians 5:18.**

Gratefulness and praise are not only expressed with words but also with offerings. See last part of the note to the seventh question.

7. Which other tithe was practiced in Israel? Why and how was it used? Deuteronomy 12:17-19; 14:22-25, 28,29; 26:12,13.

“To promote the assembling of the people for religious service, as well as to provide for the poor, a second tithe of all the increase was required. Concerning the first tithe, the Lord had declared, ‘I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel.’ Numbers 18:21. But in regard to the second He commanded, ‘Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.’ Deuteronomy 14:23,29; 16:11-14. This tithe, or its equivalent in money, they were for two years to bring to the place where the sanctuary was established. After presenting a thank offering to God, and a specified portion to the priest, the offerers were to use the remainder for a religious feast at the yearly festivals, and the people were drawn to the society of the priests and Levites, that they might receive instruction and encouragement in the service of God.

“Every third year, however, this second tithe was to be used at home, in entertaining the Levite and the poor, as Moses said, ‘That they may eat within thy gates, and be filled.’ Deuteronomy 26:12. This tithe would provide a fund for the uses of charity and hospitality.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 530.

DANGEROUS SNARES

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the Old Testament and particularly in the psalms, we notice that the Lord is pleaded to protect His people from the enemies. In the New Testament the dangers are not fewer and in some aspects they are much more subtle. The apostle Paul writes that Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), while Peter describes the devil like a roaring lion who goes around looking for a prey. (1 Peter 5:8,9) The enemy of man is so sophisticated and subtle that we may be sure only if we watch and pray. If we do not watch and pray enough, he will surely find a way of access.

BEWARE OF THE SNARES OF EVIL

1. **Why does man rarely suspect that the enemy may come from above? According to the Scriptures, where do the powers of evil dwell? Ephesians 2:2,3.**

“Not only man but the earth had by sin come under the power of the wicked one, and was to be restored by the plan of redemption. At his creation Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation, he was brought under the power of Satan. ‘Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.’ 2 Peter 2:19. When man became Satan’s captive, the dominion which he held, passed to his conqueror. Thus Satan became ‘the god of this world’.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 67.

“Satan deceives many with the plausible theory that God’s love for His people is so great that He will excuse sin in them; he represents that while the threatenings of God’s word are to serve a certain purpose in His moral government, they are never to be literally fulfilled.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 522.

2. What snares do the Holy Scriptures warn us about? 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; Galatians 6:7; 1 Peter 5:8.

“I say to all: Be on your guard; for as an angel of light Satan is walking in every assembly of Christian workers, and in every church, trying to win the members to his side. I am bidden to give to the people of God the warning: ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked.’” –*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p. 272.

“The more nearly the Christian imitates the divine Pattern, the more surely will he make himself a mark for the attacks of Satan.... Satan assailed Christ with his fiercest and most subtle temptations, but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those battles were fought in our behalf; those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it. No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 510.

VULNERABLE POINTS

3. From which strategical points do the dangerous snares of the enemy specially work? Matthew 15:18,19; Jeremiah 17:9; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Proverbs 4:23.

Satan addresses particularly the heart and the mind. “No man of himself understands his errors. ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?’ Jer. 17:9. The lips may express a poverty of soul that the heart does not acknowledge. While speaking to God of poverty of spirit, the heart may be swelling with the conceit of its own superior humility and exalted righteousness. In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained. We must behold Christ.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 159.

4. Considering that man’s heart is deceitful, what is hidden behind the garment of gentleness, refinement and politeness? 2 Timothy 3:1-3, 5.

“The sin which is indulged to the greatest extent, and which separates us from God and produces so many contagious spiritual disorders, is selfishness. There can be no returning to the Lord except by self-denial. Of ourselves we can do nothing; but, through God strengthening us, we can live to do good to others, and in this way shun the evil of selfishness. We need not to go to heathen lands to manifest our desire to devote all to God in a useful, unselfish life. We should do this in the home circle, in the church, among those with whom we associate and with whom we do business. Right in the common walks of life is where self is to be denied and kept in subordination.”—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 206.

“Oh, selfishness! What a curse! It prevents us from engaging in the service of God. It prevents us from perceiving the claims of duty, which should set our hearts aglow with fervent zeal.”—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 469.

AN EVIL THAT GIVES BIRTH TO ANOTHER

5. Are we actually aware that there is a sin defined as the root of all evils? 1 Timothy 6:10; Ephesians 5:3, 5.

Avarice is a morbose attachment to money, it is such a serious and hateful sin that the word of God calls it idolatry.

Not to the early church only, but to all the future generations, this example of God’s hatred of covetousness, fraud, and hypocrisy, was given as a danger-signal. It was covetousness that Ananias and Sapphira had first cherished...

“From the stern punishment meted out to those perjurers, God would have us learn also how deep is His hatred and contempt for all hypocrisy and deception. In pretending that they have given all, Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, and as a result, they lost this life and the life that is to come.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 74-76.

“This case should be a warning to all to guard against the first approach of Satan. Covetousness was first cherished; then, ashamed to have their brethren know that their selfish souls grudged that which they had solemnly dedicated and pledged to God, deception was practiced. They talked the matter over together and deliberately decided to withhold a part of the price of the land.”—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 542.

6. What particular warning did Jesus give His disciples? Why did He want to warn them? Luke 12:15.

7. To which low and disgusting level may avarice lead a man, without excluding the professed Christians?

- a) The man who is possessed by avarice easily practices usury.
Nehemiah 5:6-12.
- b) He can change the salary, even the one of his own relatives, ten times and keep his own children as slaves.
Genesis 31:7,14,15.
- c) He may sell the truth and even Jesus for a few coins.
Matthew 26:14,15.

THE RIGHT AND SURE MEDICINE

8. Whom do we have to take as an example and imitate in order to overcome the selfishness and avarice that exists in us? Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 8:9.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- **What is the use of gaining the whole world and losing one's own life? What can man give in exchange for life? Matthew 16:26.**
 - **With what price can man rescue his own life or the one of his neighbour? Psalm 49:7,8.**
 - **Can we allow something as selfishness to separate us from the love of God? Romans 8:38,39.**
-

THE SACRED CHARACTER OF THE VOWS

A GOAL TO BE REACHED

1. **When a person gets into debt, which holy duty does the debtor have? Matthew 18:24,25.**

“You bring a reproach upon the cause by locating in a place, where you indulge indolence for a time and then are obliged to run in debt for provision for your family. These your honest debts you are not always particular to pay, but, instead, move to another place. This is defrauding your neighbor. The world has a right to expect strict integrity in those who profess to be Bible Christians. By one man’s indifference in regard to paying his just dues, all our people are in danger of being regarded as unreliable.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 179.

VOWS, PROMISES AND FULFILLMENT

2. **What does God’s word say regarding vows? Deuteronomy 23:21; Ecclesiastes 5:4,5; Proverbs 20:25.**
3. **Even though at the beginning there may be a financial advantage, what will the conscientious Christian acknowledge as his duty if he has made an oath to the Lord? Psalm 15:4.**

“God works through human instrumentalities; and whoever shall awaken the consciences of men, provoking them to good works and a real interest in the advancement of the cause of truth, does not do it of himself,

but by the Spirit of God which worketh in him. Pledges made under these circumstances are of a sacred character, being the fruit of the work of the Spirit of God. When these pledges are canceled, Heaven accepts the offering, and these liberal workers are credited for so much treasure invested in the bank of heaven. Such are laying up a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 309.

4. May the disciple that makes a covenant with God through baptism feel free from the commitment he made? 1 Peter 3: 21; Numbers 30:2,4.

“When a verbal or written pledge has been made in the presence of our brethren, to give a certain amount, they are the visible witnesses of a contract made between ourselves and God. The pledge is not made to man, but to God, and is as a written note given to a neighbor. No legal bond is more binding upon the Christian for the payment of money, than a pledge made to God.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 315.

“Persons who thus pledge to their fellow men do not generally think of asking to be released from their pledges. A vow made to God, the giver of all favors, is of still greater importance; then why should we seek to be released from our vows to God? Will man consider his promise less binding because made to God? Because his vow will not be put to trial in courts of justice, is it less valid? Will a man who professes to be saved by the blood of the infinite sacrifice of Jesus Christ, ‘rob God?’”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 315.

AN EXAMPLE TO BE IMITATED

5. In spite of the different problems, proofs and temptations on the way, what example did Jacob give us in regard to keeping promises? Genesis 29:16-20, 22-30.

6. What happens with the goods that belong to him who does not keep his promise? How does the Lord reward the one who keeps his word although he was deceived? Genesis 31: 1-7, 11-16.

“Long years intervened before Jacob dared to return to his own country, but when he did he faithfully discharged his debt to his Master. He had become a wealthy man, and a very large amount of property passed from his possessions to the treasury of the Lord...

“Many in our day fail where Jacob made a success. Those to whom God has given the greatest amount have the strongest inclination to retain what they have, because they must give a sum proportionate to their property. Jacob gave the tenth of all what he had, and then reckoned the use of the tenth, and gave the Lord the benefit of that which he had used for his own interest during the time he was in a heathen land and could not pay his vow. This was a large amount, but he did not hesitate; that which he had vowed to God he did not regard as his, but as the Lord’s.”
—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 545.

- 7. Just as the psalmist did, what will every soul that is thankful to the Lord do for all the benefits received? Psalm 66:13, 14.**

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Sabbath, 13 September 2003

THE SACRIFICES THAT PLEASE GOD

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the real spirit of sacrifice we must gather at the foot of the cross.

“The love expressed on Calvary should be revived, strengthened, and diffused among our churches. Shall we not do all to give power to the principles which Christ brought to this world? Shall we not strive to establish and give efficiency to the benevolent enterprises which are now called for without delay? As you stand before the cross and see the Prince of heaven dying for you, can you seal your heart saying: ‘No, I have nothing to give?’...” —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, pp. 402,403.

- 1. Through the biblical prophecies we know that we are living in the time of the end, therefore, what particular fact does Jesus call our attention to? Revelation 3:20; 1 Corinthians 11:24; Romans 8:34.**

- 2. What does “sacrifice” mean and what does the Lord require from us? Jona 2:10; Mark 12:33.**

“In the balances of the sanctuary the gifts of the poor, made from love to Christ, are not estimated according to the amount given, but according to the love that prompts the sacrifice. The promises of Jesus will as surely be realized by the liberal poor man, who has but little to offer, but who gives that little freely, as by the wealthy man who gives of his abundance. The poor man makes a sacrifice of his little, which he really feels. He really denies himself of some things that he needs for his own comfort, while the wealthy man gives of his abundance, and feels no want, denies himself nothing that he really needs. Therefore there is a sacredness in the poor man’s offering that is not found in the rich man’s gift, for the rich give of their abundance. God’s providence has arranged the entire plan of systematic benevolence for the benefit of man. His providence never stands still. If God’s servants follow His opening providence, all will be active workers.” –*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, pp. 378,379.

THE MOST PLEASANT SACRIFICE

- 3. Why did Jesus sit in front of the offering box and what did he carefully watch? Mark 12:41.**

- 4. The rich put much money into the box for offerings, but why did Jesus stop to observe those few coins of the widow? What teaching did He try to give His disciples? Mark 12:42-44.**

It is not wrong to say that the two mines of the poor widow were a sacrifice, but we may really say that for her it was an holocaust since she gave everything she had to live out of.

“If professed Christians would use less of their wealth in adorning the body and in beautifying their own houses, and would consume less in extravagant, health-destroying luxuries upon their tables, they could place much larger sums in the treasury of God. They would thus imitate their Redeemer, who left heaven, His riches, and His glory, and for our sakes became poor, that we might have eternal riches. If we are too poor to faithfully render to God the tithes and offerings that He requires, we are certainly too poor to dress expensively and to eat luxuriously; for we thus waste our Lord’s money in hurtful indulgences to please and glorify ourselves: What treasure have we secured in the kingdom of God? Are we rich toward God?” —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 381.

A COMPLETE AND LIVING SACRIFICE

- 5. Why did Jesus categorically tell the rich young man, “sell everything”? Mark 10:21; Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:33,34. Maybe we would have told him to sell half or just a part of his possessions.**

Not only did he have to sell everything, but he also had to take his cross, symbol of denial and sacrifice.

- 6. What invitation does the apostle Paul address to the believers and what should be the motive of the real praise that pleases God? Hebrews 13:15,16; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5**

“The apostles counted not their lives dear unto themselves, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. Paul and Silas suffered the loss of all things. They suffered scourging, and were in no gentle manner thrown upon the cold floor of a dungeon in a most painful position, their feet elevated and fastened in the stocks. Did repinings and complaints then reach the ear of the jailer? Oh, no! From the inner prison, voices broke the silence of midnight with songs of joy and praise to God. These disciples were cheered by a deep and earnest love for the cause of their Redeemer, for which they suffered.

“As the truth of God fills our hearts, absorbs our affections, and controls our lives, we also will count it joy to suffer for the truth’s sake. No prison walls, no martyr’s stake, can then daunt or hinder us in the great work.” —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 387.

7. If there has ever been a time where the work described in Isaiah 58 should have its total fulfillment it is today. But what do we do? Isaiah 58:7-11; James 2:14-17.

"Divine truth exerts little influence upon the world, when it should exert much influence through our practice. The mere profession of religion abounds, but it has little weight. We may claim to be followers of Christ, we may claim to believe every truth in the word of God; but this will do our neighbor no good unless our belief is carried into our daily life. Our profession may be as high as heaven, but it will save neither ourselves nor our fellow men unless we are Christians. A right example will do more to benefit the world than all our profession.

"By no selfish practices can the cause of Christ be served. His cause is the cause of the oppressed and the poor. In the hearts of His professed followers there is need of the tender sympathy of Christ - a deeper love for those whom He has so valued as to give him His own life for their salvation. These souls are precious, infinitely more precious than any other offering we can bring to God. To bend every energy toward some apparently great work, while we neglect the needy or turn the stranger from his right, is not a service that will meet His approval." -*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 383, 384.

"A congregation may be the poorest in the land. It may be without the attraction of any outward show; but if the members possess the principles of the character of Christ, they will have His joy in their souls. Angels will unite with them in their worship. The praise and thanksgiving from grateful hearts will ascend to God as a sweet oblation." -*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 298.

THE ENTRUSTED TALENTS

GOODS, CAPABILITIES AND POSSIBILITIES PLACED AT OUR DISPOSITION

1. **For what reason did the man of the parable not entrust the same talents to every one? Would it not have been better to give them a present? Matthew 25:15.**

“To every man has God given ‘according to his several abilities’. The talents are not apportioned capriciously. He who has ability to use five talents receives five. He who can improve but two, receives two. He who can wisely use one, receives one. None need lament that they have not receive larger gifts; for He who as apportioned to every man is equally honoured by the improvement of each trust, whether it is great or small. The one to whom five talents have been committed is to render the improvement of five; he who has but one, the improvement of one. God expects returns ‘according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.’ 2 Corinthians 8:12” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 328.

“The talents, however few, are to be put to use. The question that most concerns us is not, How much have I received? but, What am I doing with that which I have? The development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellowmen. No one who is not growing daily in capability and usefulness is fulfilling the purpose of life. In making a profession of faith in Christ we pledge ourselves to become all that it is possible for us to be as workers for the Master, and we should cultivate every faculty to the highest degree of perfection, that we may do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 329.

2. **What do talents correspond to? Which are the best goods? Matthew 25:14; 1 Corinthians 12:1-12, 28-31.**

"All men have been bought with this infinite price. By pouring the whole treasury of heaven into this world, by giving us in Christ all heaven, God has purchased the will, the affections, the mind, the soul, of every human being. Whether believers or unbelievers, all men are the Lord's property. All are called to do service for Him, and for the manner in which they have met His claim, all will be required to render an account at the great judgment day." –*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 326.

3. Do talents have only a spiritual nature? Genesis 13:2; Deuteronomy 28:3-6,8,11; Job 1:1-3.

"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 special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellowmen." –*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

A MAN WHO MADE GOOD USE OF THE TALENTS RECEIVED

4. Although Job was the richest man in the East and he had seven sons, three daughters, and many servants, therefore many duties; in spite of all, what did he care for? Job 29:15,16.

"Our money has not been given us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards we are to use it for the honor and glory of God. Some think that only a portion of their means in the Lord's. When they have set apart a portion for religious and charitable purposes, they regard the remainder as their own, to be used as they set fit. But in this

they mistake. All we possess is the Lord's, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. In the use of every penny, it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves...

"Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and clothing for the naked. It is a defence for the oppressed, and a means of help for the sick. But money is of no more value than sand, only as it is put to use in providing for the necessities of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 351.

5. What other wonderful talent did Job have? Job 29:21,22.

TALENTS TO BE SPECIALLY USED

6. All talents should be used for benefit, but at the end of times, which talent does the Lord want and counsel to be particular made effective? Isaiah 43:12; Acts 1:8.

"But what are the members of the church doing that they should be designed 'laborers together with God?' 1 Corinthians 3:9. Where do we see travail of soul? Where do we see the members of the church absorbed in religious themes, self-surrendered to the will of God? Where do we see Christians feeling their responsibility to make the church prosperous, a wide-awake, light -giving people? Where are those who do not stint or measure their loving labor for the Master? Our Redeemer is to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; how is it with those who profess to be His followers? Will they be satisfied when they see the fruits of their labors?" —*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p. 57.

"To His church God has committed the work of diffusing light and bearing the message of His love. Our work is not to condemn, not to denounce, but to draw with Christ, beseeching men to be reconciled to God. We are to encourage souls, to attract them, and thus win them to the Saviour. If there is not our interest, if we withhold from God the service of heart and life, we are robbing Him of influence, of time, of money and effort. In failing to benefit our fellow men, we rob God of the glory that should flow to Him through the conversion of souls." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 61.

"The work that the disciples did, we also are to do. Every Christian is to be a missionary..."

"All may find something to do. None need feel that there is no place where they can labor for Christ." —*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 104,105.

RESULTS OF INACTIVITY

- 7. If we are not diligent, active and generous, which fatal risk shall we run? Matthew 25:25-30.**

REFLECTIONS FOR PRAYER AND PLEADING

- **Lord, awake in me the first love!**
 - **O, good and merciful God, wake in me the zeal and activity of the first Christians!**
 - **Good heavenly Father, give us a generous heart and hands ready to give!**
 - **Lord, help us use our talents to your glory and our spiritual growth!**
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***Please read the Missionary Report
from the General Conference
Publishing Department
on page 54.***

Sabbath, 27 September 2003

HEIRS OF GOD AND CO-HEIRS OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

Today more than ever is valid the appeal the Lord makes through His prophets: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” Micah 6:6. “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.” Psalm 50:14.

FALSE HOPES THAT WILL FACE DECEPTION

1. **What happens when Jesus is looked for only in order to receive the heritage? Luke 12:13,14.**

2. **What bitter disappointment will experience he who thinks to have the right of inheritance only because he carries His name? Matthew 7:21-23.**

3. **In order not to be disappointed or considered a bastard (Hebrews 12:8) in which book does one have to be registered and what citizenship must one have? Luke 10:20; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20.**

“And the absence of self-denial in His professed followers, God regards as a denial of the Christian name. Those who profess to be one with

Christ, and indulge their selfish desires for rich and expensive clothing, furniture, and food, are Christians only in name. To be a Christian is to be Christlike...

"Many Christians do not have works corresponding to the name they bear. They act as if they had never heard of the plan of redemption wrought out at infinite cost.

"Because Christ's self-sacrificing love is not interwoven in the life practices, the church is weak where it should be strong." –*Review and Herald*, October 13, 1896; *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 54-55.

LET US DECIDE ABOUT OUR GOODS WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME

4. What does the word of God call our attention to? Psalm 90: 10-12; 103:15,16; Ecclesiastes 9:5,10.

"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." 1 Chronicle 29:15.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13.

5. What advice does the Lord give us through the Spirit of prophecy?

"When God blesses His children, it is not alone for their own sake, but for the world's sake. As He bestows His gifts on us, it is that we may multiply them by imparting." –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 102.

"There are aged ones among us who are nearing the close of their probation; but for the want of wide-awake men to secure to the cause of God the means in their possession, it passes into the hands of those who are serving Satan. This means was only lent them of God to be returned to Him; but in nine cases out of ten these brethren, when passing from the stage of action, appropriate God's property in a way that cannot glorify Him, for not one dollar of it will ever flow into the Lord's treasury. In some cases these apparently good brethren have had unconsecrated advisers, who counseled from their own standpoint and not according to the mind of God. Property is often bequeathed to children and grandchildren only to their injury. They have no love for God or for the truth, and therefore this means, all of which is the Lord's passes into Satan's ranks, to be con-

trolled by him. Satan is much more vigilant, keen-sighted, and skillful in devising ways to secure means to himself than our brethren are to secure the Lord's own to His cause."—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 556.

"The Lord would have His followers dispense their means while they can do it themselves. Some may inquire: 'Must we actually dispossess ourselves of everything which we call our own?' We may not be required to do this now; but we must be willing to do so for God's sake. We must acknowledge that our possessions are absolutely His, by using of them freely whenever means is needed to advance his cause."—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, 557.

"Therefore they live a life of avarice, robbing God in tithes and in offerings, and in their wills return to God but a small portion of that which He has lent them, while a very large proportion is appropriated to relatives who have no interest in the truth. This is the worst kind of robbery. They rob God of His just dues, not only all through life, but also at death."—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 557.

LET'S US OFFER OUR BEST TO GOD

- 6. What will has been assured us from God and what must we not forget? Hebrews 9:16,17; Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7; Hebrews 3:15.**

- 8. Jesus has done so much for you, what do you do for Him? 2 Corinthians 8:9; John 12:3.**

"The work of God is to become more extensive, and if His people follow His counsel, there will not be such means in their possession to be consumed in the final conflagration."—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 67.

"There are men in the ranks of the Sabbathkeepers who are holding fast to their earthly treasure. It their god, their idol; and they love their money, their farms, their cattle and their merchandise better than they love their Saviour, who for their sake became poor, that they, through His poverty, might be made rich. They exalt their earthly treasures, considering them of greater value than the souls of men....

"Now is the time for all to work.... What will many answer in the day of God, when He inquires, What have ye done for Me, who gave My riches, My honor, My command, and My life to save you from ruin? The do-nothings will be speechless in that day."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 123,124.

- **What did Noah do with his possessions?**

“While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. All that he possessed, he invested in the ark.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95.

- **What proof of faith and courage did Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimatea give at Jesus’ grave?**

“With Joseph of Arimatea, Nicodemus had borne the expense of the burial of Jesus. The disciples had been afraid to show themselves openly as Christ’s followers, but Nicodemus and Joseph had come bodily to their aid. The help of these rich and honored men was greatly needed in that hour of darkness. They had been able to do for their dead Master what it had been impossible for the poor disciples to do; and their wealth and influence had protected them, in a great measure, from the malice of the priests and rulers.” —*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 103,104.

- **Besides paying the expenses for the funeral of his Master, what did Nicodemus do with his richness?**

“Now, when the Jews were trying to destroy the infant church, Nicodemus came forward in its defense. No longer cautious and questioning, he encouraged the faith of the disciples and used his wealth in helping to sustain the church at Jerusalem and in advancing the work of the gospel. Those who in other days had paid him reverence, now scorned and persecuted them, and he became poor in this world’s goods; yet he faltered not in the defense of his faith.” —*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 104-105.

“The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” Psalm 16:5,6.

***Missionary Report from the General Conference
Publishing Department***

To be read on Sabbath, September 27, 2003

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered Sabbath, October 4, 2003*

“Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!” Job 19:23.

The solemn and wonderful present truths, which God entrusted to His people, living at the end of the world’s history, should be carefully recorded in thousands of books and then scattered “like the leaves of autumn.”

The general topics included in our publications, that show the importance of the present truth and the health reform, are defined in the following quotations:

“Our publications have a most sacred work to do in making clear, simple, and plain the spiritual basis of our faith. ... At this time God’s message to the world is to be given with such prominence and power that the people will be brought face to face, mind to mind, heart to heart, with truth. They must be brought to see its superiority over the multitudinous errors that are pushing their way into notice, to supplant, if possible, the word of God for this solemn time.

“The great object of our publications is to exalt God, to call men’s attention to the living truths of His word. God calls upon us to lift up, not our own standard, not the standard of this world, but His standard of truth.--*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 150, 151, and “health reform will reach a class and has reached a class that otherwise would never have been reached by the truth. There is a great necessity for labor being put forth to help the people, believers and unbelievers, at the present time by health talks, and health publications. (Letter 25a, 1889).” *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 134.

The message must be proclaimed: In all continents “publications must be multiplied, and scattered like the leaves of autumn. These silent messengers are enlightening and molding the minds of thousands in every country and in every clime. (Review and Herald, November 21, 1878).” *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 5, in all languages “from city to city, from country to country, they [canvasser-evangelists] are to carry the publications containing the promise of the Saviour’s soon coming. These publications are to be translated into every language, for to all the world the gospel is to be preached. To every worker Christ promises the divine efficiency that will make his labors a success. (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 34).” *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 5; to enlighten the whole world, “the world is to receive the light of truth through

an evangelizing ministry of the word in our books and periodicals. ... From our books and papers bright beams of light are to shine forth to enlighten the world in regard to present truth.” *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 5.

After having read these selected Testimonies we can understand the importance and extent of the responsibilities of the Publishing Department. I would therefore like the members around the world to be fully aware of the responsibility given to this branch of God’s cause. The following Bible text further clarifies its significance: “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make [it] plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” Habakkuk 2:1, 2.

May the Lord bless the voluntary offerings given for this department.

—*Raquel Orce, Spain*
General Conference Publishing Department Leader

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2003

Fourth Quarter

Biblical Education

Introduction

As we study the subject of Biblical Education in this last quarter of 2003, it is with the realization that such education is multifaceted and broader, deeper, and higher than any one human mind can grasp. Life is literally education. From the moment of a human being's birth until he breathes his last breath, he is a student. The person who can best teach is the one who understands that he is a learner. The big question is what is being learned.

A well-known prophetic characteristic of the end times is the increase of knowledge. Daniel 12:4. If one is to give credence to those who are supposed to be experts, the total store of human knowledge is presently doubling every eight years. It is also said that 80 percent of all the scientists who have ever lived are alive today. Every minute they add 2,000 pages to man's scientific knowledge, and the scientific material they produce every 24 hours would take one person 5 years to read. About a half-million new books are published every year.

Without assessing whether all this increasing knowledge is really valuable or of benefit to anyone (and some of it would definitely be considered worse than worthless and even destructive), we want to focus on that which Heaven regards as essential for graduation from this earthly school into that of eternity. The most brilliant man on earth will be accounted truly a fool if he fails in this.

Therefore, we want to follow the Saviour's example. "Christ imparted only that knowledge which could be utilized. His instruction of the people was confined to the needs of their own condition in practical life. The curiosity that led them to come to Him with prying questions, He did not gratify. All such questionings He made the occasion for solemn, earnest, vital appeals. To those who were so eager to pluck from the tree of knowledge, He offered the fruit of the tree of life. They found every avenue closed, except the narrow way that leads to God. Every fountain was sealed, save the fountain of eternal life."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 310.

We will examine basic Biblical education from several sides—physical or life style, intellectual, and spiritual. In addition, Biblical values that every child (indeed, every person) should learn appear in some lessons. These values will be recognized as primarily the fruit of the Spirit. The stress here is that such values are learned.

We appeal to each student—young, middle aged, or old: Resolve to be more selective and aware of what you are learning, as well as of what you are teaching (especially by your example). Let the principles Christ used in education prevail now, so one day we may all enjoy the thrill of participating in that great heavenly education!

—THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS
OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

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God bless the offerings of each generous heart!

1

Sabbath, October 4, 2003

The Source of True Education

“...God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom:...”
Daniel 1:17.

THEMES

- Biblical education begins with God’s mind.
- Faith and infinity go together.
- God defines the direction education should take.

THE MIND OF GOD

1. What absolute truths are contained in the Scriptures concerning God and His intentions for people on earth and their education?

- Isaiah 55:8-11.
- Jeremiah 29:11-13.
- Exodus 19:3-6.
- 2 Peter 3:9-11.
- Deuteronomy 29:29.
- Deuteronomy 30:16, 19.

2. What evidence do we have that the great Creator is very interested in guiding our education?

- Exodus 24:12.
- Leviticus 10:11.
- Deuteronomy 4:1, 10, 14.
- Deuteronomy 6:1-3.
- 1 Samuel 12:23-25.
- Hebrews 8:10-13.

“True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.

“The source of such an education is brought to view in these words of Holy Writ, pointing to the Infinite One: In Him ‘are hid all the treasures of wisdom.’ Colossians 2:3. ‘He hath counsel and understanding,’ Job 12:13.”—*Education*, p. 13.

INFINITY AND FAITH

3. What link is there between faith and the evidence God has given concerning His infinity, power, and love? Deuteronomy 3:24; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Psalm 145.

«Let none think that there is no more knowledge for them to gain.... The highest, deepest, broadest flight of the imagination cannot find out God. There is infinity beyond all that we can comprehend. We have seen only the glimmering of divine glory and of the infinitude of knowledge and wisdom; we have, as it were, been working on the surface of the mine, when rich golden ore is beneath the surface, to reward the one who will dig for it. The shaft must be sunk deeper and yet deeper in the mine, and the result will be glorious treasure. Through a correct faith, divine knowledge will become human knowledge.»—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 113.

“In divine revelation God has given to men mysteries that are incomprehensible, to command their faith.” –*Healthful Living*, p. 296.

“Faith is the spiritual hand that touches infinity.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 467.

4. But what danger must be carefully avoided? Job 11:7, 8. What will be the result of such discretion? 1 Corinthians 8:2.

“There are deep mysteries in the Word of God, there are mysteries in His providences, and there are mysteries in the plan of salvation, that man cannot fathom. But the finite mind, strong in its desire to satisfy curiosity, and solve the problems of infinity, neglects to follow the plain course indicated by the revealed will of God, and pries into the secrets hidden since the foundation of the world. Man builds his theories, loses the simplicity of true faith, becomes too self-important to believe the declarations of the Lord, and hedges himself in with his own conceits.

“Many who profess to be children of God are in this position. They are weak because they trust to their own strength. God works mightily for a faithful people, who obey His Word without questioning or doubt. The Majesty of heaven, with His army of angels, leveled the walls of Jericho before His people. The armed warriors of Israel had no cause to glory in their achievements. All was done through the power of God. Let the people give up all desire for self-exaltation, let them humbly submit to the divine will, and God will again manifest His power, and bring freedom and victory to His children.” –(*Signs of the Times*, April 14, 1881) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 995.

GOD’S DEFINITION OF EDUCATION

5. Looking back at what has already been presented in this lesson, find and list some of God’s objectives in education, in addition to those contained in the following verses.

- 1 Chronicles 28:9.
- Proverbs 8:17
- Matthew 11:27-30.
- John 17:3.

“The first great lesson in all education is to know and understand the will of God. We should bring into every day of life the effort to gain this knowledge. To learn science through human interpretation alone is to obtain a false education, but to learn of God and Christ is to learn the science of heaven. The confusion in education has come because the wisdom and knowledge of God have not been exalted.” –*Child Guidance*, p. 293.

6. What basic principle operates in every type of education? 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ezekiel 36:25- 27. In addition, what special element is present when one seeks divine education?

“As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. The sure result of our intercourse and fellowship with our Lord will be to increase piety, purity, and fervor. There will be a growing intelligence in prayer. We are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of diligence and zeal.

“The soul that turns to God for its help, its support, its power, by daily, earnest prayer, will have noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty, lofty purposes of action, and a continual hungering and thirsting after righteousness. By maintaining a connection with God, we shall be enabled to diffuse to others, through our association with them, the light, the peace, the serenity, that rule in our hearts. The strength acquired in prayer to God, united with persevering effort in training the mind in thoughtfulness and care-taking, prepares one for daily duties and keeps the spirit in peace under all circumstances.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 85.

7. How alone is it possible to receive this education? 2 Chronicles 15:12.

“The Jewish economy was the gospel in figure, a presentation of Christianity which was to be developed as fast as the minds of the people could comprehend spiritual light. Christ was manifested as the Saviour of men, the embodiment of this light. To know Him, to be instructed by Him is true wisdom. A man may have a knowledge of the Scriptures which will not make him wise unto salvation. If his knowledge, begun in ambition, is

carried forward in pride, he flatters himself in vain that he is a Christian. The fruit of the Spirit is 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Neither talent, eloquence, nor selfish study of the Scriptures, will produce love to God or conformity to the image of Christ. Nothing but divine power can regenerate the human heart and character, and imbue the soul with the love of Christ, which will ever manifest itself in love to those for whom He died." *—Bible Echo*, February 19, 1894.

POINTS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

- **In the society in which you live, what different things are people in your age group learning? Which of these things are from God and truly beneficial?**
 - **What things are you learning without making a conscious choice to do so? Which of these are beneficial?**
 - **What can you do so that later you will not have to unlearn what you are now learning?**
-

The Who and the Where

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” 1 Peter 5:10.

THEMES

- Every person on earth is called to be a recipient of Biblical education.
- God Himself and all who cooperate with Him are the educators.
- The educational sessions take place in formal settings (schools, churches, and institutions) as well as in informal settings (homes, gardens, parks, fields, on the street)—everywhere and at all times.
- After reaching the age of maturity, each person decides and is responsible for his own course of study.

THE RECIPIENTS

1. **Who is a candidate for Biblical education? John 5:24; 1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11.**
2. **Give some examples of how the invitation to study in God’s university is worded. Isaiah 55:1-3; Revelation 22:17; John 6:37.**

“Happy are they who from the commencement of their religious life have been true to their first love, growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sure result of their intercourse and fellowship with their beloved Lord will be to increase their piety, their purity, their fervor. They are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of fervor, of diligence and zeal.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 956, 957.

**3. From what are those who accept this invitation protected?
2 Peter 1:4; Revelation 20:10.**

THE EDUCATORS

4. Name some of the instructors in this great system of Biblical education.

- Exodus 4:11, 12.
- Job 12:7, 8.
- 1 Timothy 5:14.
- Isaiah 58:11.
- Psalm 119:11, 99.
- Isaiah 30:20, 21.
- 1 Corinthians 12:28.
- Ephesians 4:11, 12.
- Titus 2:11-13.
- Matthew 28:20.
- Deuteronomy 4:1, 9.
- Luke 12:12; John 14:26.
- 1 John 2:27.
- Galatians 1:12.

5. List some settings in which Biblical education is transmitted.

- Deuteronomy 6:7.
- 2 Chronicles 17:9.
- Nehemiah 8:9.
- Matthew 13:54.
- Mark 2:13.
- Luke 13:26.
- Acts 20:20.

6. As God opens the way, what formal institutions of learning should be established, and with what object?

“As far as possible, all our children should have the privilege of a Christian education.

“To provide this we must sometimes establish home church schools. It would be well if several families in a neighborhood would unite to employ a humble, God-fearing teacher to give to the parents that help that is needed in educating their children.”—*Child Guidance*, pp. 307, 308.

“What is the object of establishing colleges among Seventh-day Adventists? It is to provide for our youth, so far as possible, the very best instruction, that which is free from error and in every respect pure from corrupting influences. There are in our land, schools in abundance where education in the sciences may be carried to a high point, but they fail to reach the Bible standard of education. ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’ The Lord must preside in our institutions of learning, or the object for which they were brought into existence, with great outlay of means, will fail of being accomplished.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 459.

7. What personal responsibility and what blessing are given to every person who desires to receive and use that highest of all education—Biblical education? Matthew 25:14, 15, 20-28.

“In the parable of the man who buried his one talent in the earth, the Lord has faithfully pointed out your duty. It shows to every one, high or low, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, that he has a personal responsibility. You must arouse from your lethargy, your carnal security, and go to work to make use of every talent, every power, given you by God. You may reason that because your talent is small, it is no matter whether you use it or not; but it matters just as much to you as it did to that man in the parable. Your life is bound up with the lives of others. If you feel no care to be a blessing to others, if you are not laboring together with God here, right here in this life, you will have no place in the mansions above. You do not know how successfully God can use you if you will put your whole heart, your whole mind and soul and might, into His service.”
—*Review and Herald*, August 11, 1891.

POINTS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

- **Whom or what do you consider to be your favorite teacher? Why? Have you learned the most in your life from this teacher?**
 - **To what extent (or for whom) are you a teacher?**
 - **What roles do you have which involve teaching?**
 - **Where do you fit in God’s system of Biblical education (there is more than one place for each of us!)?**
-

Sabbath, October 18, 2003

The When and the How

“A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!” Proverbs 15:23.

THEMES

- Every moment is a time to learn.
- But there are special times and ways to teach.
- Biblical education is based on God’s teaching methods.
- Success in that education has eternal consequences.

WHEN LEARNING TAKES PLACE

1. **Practically speaking, when are we educated? Hebrews 2:1; 1 Peter 1:5-7; Psalm 23:2.**

“If you trust in the Lord moment by moment, if you search the scriptures with earnest prayer, you will have opened to you the richest treasures from the word of God. In humility, as a learner in the school of Christ, you will learn His meekness and lowliness of heart. God is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts unto their children.” —*The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters*, pp. 103, 104.

“A sheep is a timid creature at best, and a stream of swiftly flowing water inspires it with a great fear.... A drinking place therefore means some quiet pool which holds no terrors.” —Roy L. Smith, *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, p. 19.

2. **What can adults learn from the attitude of small children toward learning (consider particularly eagerness and acceptance)? Matthew 18:2-4; Luke 18:17; 1 Peter 2:1-3.**

"The very trials that test our faith most severely, and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are designed to lead us more closely to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace He will give us in exchange. You need a new conversion; you need to be sanctified through the truth and to become in spirit like a little child, meek and humble, relying wholly upon Christ as your Redeemer.... When you surrender yourself entirely to God, when you fall all broken upon Jesus, you will be rewarded by a victory the joy of which you have never yet experienced. As you review the past with a clear vision, you will see that at the very time when life seemed to you only a perplexity and a burden, Jesus Himself was near you, seeking to lead you into the light. Your Father was by your side, bending over you with unutterable love, afflicting you for your good, as the refiner purifies the precious ore. When you have thought yourself forsaken, He has been near you to comfort and sustain. We seldom view Jesus as He is, and are never so ready to receive His help as He is to help us."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 220, 221.

THE TIME TO TEACH

3. Whether dealing with children, youth, or adults, what balance and timing require the constant inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Genesis 33:14.

"The mother should call into exercise all the purer, nobler emotions which are to be wrought into principles. The precious finer feelings are to be carefully nourished that they may bloom into actions of goodness, truth, and holiness. How carefully and prayerfully should the soil of the heart be cultivated and enriched. Precious seed should be sown, both by precept and example. The words that are spoken by a mother should be choice words. The looks, the dress, and every act, should be of such a character that its reproduction in the daughter may not in any way deface her character. If the character of the mother is pervaded with benevolence and love, the character of the children will also be pervaded, to a greater or less degree, with these noble feelings. Unselfishness, patience, gentleness, kindness, forbearance, must all be cultivated by the mother; she is a learner as well as a teacher. These precious traits must be well cultivated, for they will be found essential in the home-life of the mother. The best impulses must be encouraged, the noblest affections cherished. If the mother's heart is filled with holy love, her life and character will be a savor of life unto life to her children and friends, and will bring forth abiding fruit. She will be enabled to mould the developing minds of her children so that they may be useful in this life, and be fitted for the future, immortal life."—*Signs of the Times*, March 23, 1891.

4. What knowledge and connection with God must a teacher have? 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2.

“True education is not the forcing of instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened, the interest aroused. For this, God’s method of teaching provided.”—*Education*, p. 41.

GOD’S METHODS OF EDUCATION

5. Give some practical examples of how the following principles of divine education can be carried out in our lives today.

- Illustration and arousing interest.

“He who created the mind and ordained its laws, provided for its development in accordance with them. In the home and the sanctuary, through the things of nature and of art, in labor and in festivity, in sacred building and memorial stone, by methods and rites and symbols unnumbered, God gave to Israel lessons illustrating His principles and preserving the memory of His wonderful works. Then, as inquiry was made, the instruction given impressed mind and heart.”—*Education*, p. 41.

- Free will (Psalm 51:12; Deuteronomy 30:19).

“He waits to raise to newness of life those who are dead in trespasses and sins. But He uses no compulsion. He employs no external force. We are left free to act as we choose. If we turn from disloyalty, and place ourselves under the banner of Christ, it is because that of our own free will we choose to do this.”—*Youth’s Instructor*, September 20, 1900.

- Respect (Ephesians 4:32; Philippians 2:3).

“Every one who loves God in sincerity and truth, will love the souls for whom Christ has died. If we wish to do good to souls, our success with these souls will be in proportion to their belief in our belief in, and appreciation of, them. Respect shown to the struggling human soul is the sure means through Christ Jesus of the restoration of the self-respect the man has lost.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 281.

- Individual responsibility and natural consequences. (Galatians 6:7, 8).

“Those who once really awaken to individual responsibility, and realize the blessings which result from having a purpose and aim in life, will find enough to do and cannot be induced, while they live, to be satisfied to simply eat, and breathe, and do nothing to make their lives a blessing to others. They will then dread indolence worse than disease.”
–*The Health Reformer*, July 1, 1872.

- No force.

“Jesus died, not to save man in his sins, but from his sins. Man is to leave the error of his ways, to follow the example of Christ, to take up his cross and follow the Master, denying self, and obeying God at any cost.

“If men, after this great and merciful condescension on the part of God, maintain their position with the first apostate, no force will be used with them. God accepts no unwilling service. Rational, accountable beings have the light in contrast with darkness placed before them, and they are invited to walk in the light in harmony with God.” –*Review and Herald*, September 13, 1898.

KEEP THE OBJECTIVE IN MIND

6. What is the great objective of our own learning, as well as of our teaching of others? Proverbs 22:6; 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18; 7:1; Ephesians 4:13-16.

“The training which Solomon enjoins is to direct, educate, and develop. In order for parents and teachers to do this work, they must themselves understand the way the child should go. This embraces more than merely having a knowledge of books. It takes in everything that is good, virtuous, righteous, and holy. It comprehends the practice of temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to God, and to each other. In order to attain to this object, the physical, mental, moral, and religious education of children must have attention....

“The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul.... Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man. To bring him back to the perfection in which he was first created, is the great object of life—the object that underlies every other. It is the work of parents and teachers, in the education of the youth, to co-operate with the divine purpose;...

“All the varied capabilities that men possess—of mind and soul and body—are given them by God, to be so employed as to reach the highest possible degree of excellence. But this cannot be a selfish and exclusive culture; for the character of God, whose likeness we are to receive, is benevolence and love. Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us, is to be employed for His glory and for the uplifting of our fellowmen. And in this employment is found its purest, noblest, and happiest exercise.”—*Christian Education*, pp. 5, 6, 63, 64.

POINTS TO DISCUSS

- **Why is it so important to help both children and adults engage their will in the learning process? What will result if this is not done?**
 - **What role does the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) have here?**
-

4

Sabbath, October 25, 2003

What Should Be Learned and Taught?

“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” Ecclesiastes 7:29.

THEMES

- The schools of the prophets illustrated the Biblical pattern of education.
- There needs to be a proper balance between left-brained and right-brained learning.
- The physical, intellectual, social (moral), and spiritual sides of education are best learned when integrated.

We understand from the Spirit of Prophecy that the schools of the prophets were established by Samuel; there are various references to the sons of the prophets especially in the time of Elisha.

1. What subject matter was taught in these schools, and what style of teaching was used?

“The schools of the prophets were founded by Samuel 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.... As they communed with God and studied His word and His works, wisdom from above was added to their natural endowments....

“The pupils of these schools sustained themselves by their own labor in tilling the soil or in some mechanical employment....

“The chief subjects of study in these schools were the law of God, with the instructions given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry. The manner of instruction was far different from that in the theological schools of the present day, from which many students graduate with less real knowledge of God and religious truth than when they entered. In those schools of the olden time it was the grand object of all study to learn the will of God and man’s duty toward Him. In the records of sacred history were traced the footsteps of Jehovah. The great truths set forth by the types were brought to view, and faith grasped the central object of all that system—the Lamb of God that was to take away the sin of the world.

“A spirit of devotion was cherished. Not only were students taught the duty of prayer, but they were taught how to pray, how to approach their Creator, how to exercise faith in Him, and how to understand and obey the teachings of His Spirit. Sanctified intellects brought forth from the treasure house of God things new and old, and the Spirit of God was manifested in prophecy and sacred song.

“Music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble, and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 593, 594.

2. What was the role of the Holy Spirit in those activities? What does that imply about Heaven’s desire to guide every branch of education and how It wishes to accomplish this? 1 Samuel 19:20.

“The Holy Spirit is an effective helper in restoring the image of God in the human soul, but Its efficiency and power have not been appreciated in our schools. It came into the schools of the prophets, bringing even the thoughts into harmony with the will of God. There was a living connection between heaven and these schools; and the joy and thanksgiving of loving hearts found expression in songs of praise in which angels joined....

“The Holy Spirit has often come to our schools and has not been recognized, but has been treated as a stranger, perhaps even as an intruder. Every teacher should know and welcome this heavenly Guest. If the teachers will open their own hearts to receive the Spirit, they will be prepared to cooperate with It in working for their students. And when It is given free course, It will effect wonderful transformations. It will work in each heart, correcting selfishness, molding and refining the character, and bringing even the thoughts into captivity to Christ.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, pp. 67, 68.

3. What attitude on the part of teachers is essential, and what will result from it? 1 Samuel 12:6, 7.

“Teachers may learn a lesson from the experience of the farmer who placed the food for his sheep in a crib so high that the young of the flock could not reach it. Some teachers present the truth to their students in a similar manner. They place the crib so high that those whom they teach cannot reach the food. They forget that the students have only a small part of the opportunity that they have had to gain a knowledge of God. They are too high up on the ladder to reach down a helping hand, warm with tenderness and love and deep, earnest interest. Let them step down and by their manner say to the students:

“I will no longer stand so far above you. Let us climb together, and we will see what can be gained by a united study of the Scriptures. Christ is the One who imparts all knowledge. Let us work together in an earnest effort to learn from God how to understand the truths of His word, and how to place these truths before others in their beauty and simplicity.

“Let us study together. I have nothing that you cannot receive if you open your mind to Christ’s teachings. The Bible is your guidebook and my guidebook. By asking questions you may suggest ideas that are new to me. Various ways of expressing the truth we are studying will bring light into our class. If any explanation of the word differs from your previous understanding, do not hesitate to state your views of the subject. Light will shine upon us as in the meekness and lowliness of Christ we study together.”

“This is the way in which the schools of the prophets were conducted. Time was given in the class for a faithful study of the thoughts presented. Hearts were warmed, and the voice of praise and thanksgiving was heard. The sacred gospel was humanized, as in the teachings of Christ. Much was accomplished for both teachers and students. Time was given for each one to partake of the heavenly repast—to study the truths presented and then to add that which he had received from God.

“When the right spirit is cherished by teachers and students, they will have special grace from God, enough for each, enough for all, enough continually and forever.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, pp. 436, 437.

LEFT BRAIN VS. RIGHT BRAIN ACTIVITIES

Science and research have shown that every person’s brain is composed of two halves, each of which processes information in a different manner. The left side deals with the facts, looking at things logically, sequentially, rationally, analytically, objectively, and in parts. The right side is creative, seeing things randomly, intuitively, holistically, in synthesis, subjectively, and in entirety. In each person, one side tends to dominate.

Experiments show that most children rank highly creative (right brain) before entering school. However, since most educational systems place a higher value on left brain skills, such as mathematics, logic and language, than on drawing or using one’s imagination or creativity, only ten percent of these same children will rank highly creative by age 7. By the time people reach adulthood, high creativity remains in only 2 percent of the population.

It should be a priority for parents and teachers to help students cultivate both sides of their brain—not neglecting the logical side, while making sure that the creative characteristics have plenty of room to grow. Both sides need to be developed under the complete control and influence of God’s Spirit.

4. Look at the following texts, and determine how each one contains both logic and spiritual creativity.

- Deuteronomy 5:1.
- Deuteronomy 18:9.
- Psalm 119:71.
- Isaiah 1:17.

- Matthew 9:13.
- Galatians 3:2.
- 1 Samuel 12:23, 24.
- Psalm 132:12.
- Proverbs 9:9.
- Luke 12:11, 12.

“Where there is not only a belief in God’s word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

EDUCATION OF BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

- 5. What parts of a human being is God interested in redeeming and training? 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Romans 6:19, 22; 3 John 2.**
- 6. Why is it important to learn and maintain good physical health practices? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.**

“The relation of the physical organism to the spiritual life is one of the most important branches of education. It should receive careful attention in the home and in the school. All need to become acquainted with their physical structure and the laws that control natural life.... All should place themselves in the best possible relation to life and health. Our habits should be brought under the control of a mind that is itself under the control of God.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 348.

“Erroneous eating and drinking result in erroneous thinking and acting.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 133.

- 7. But on what is physical health heavily dependent? Proverbs 12:25; 15:13; Isaiah 50:4.**

“Many are suffering far more from maladies of the soul than from diseases of the body, and they will find no relief until they come to the well-spring of life. The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, lies at the foundation of a large share of the maladies the sinner suffers. Christ is the mighty Healer of the sin-sick soul. These afflicted ones need to have a clearer knowledge of Him whom to know aright is life eternal. They need to be patiently, kindly, and earnestly taught how to throw open the windows of the soul to the sunlight of God’s love. Then complaints of weariness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction will cease. Satisfying joys will give vigor to the mind and health and vital energy to the body.”—*Review and Herald*, April 25, 1912.

POINTS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS

- **Christ is the mighty Healer of body and soul. What is the relationship between direct, divine healing and Biblical education?**
 - **What can happen to us if we focus too heavily on one side of education? How does this relate to the apostle’s statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6?**
 - **How has our own learning emphasis been shaped by worldly educational styles? How can we become willing to examine this aspect of our lives objectively and to make positive changes?**
 - **Why and for whom is it important that we make such changes?**
-

Bodily Education

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” 1 Corinthians 9:27.

THEMES

- Principles of bodily education (what we eat, drink, wear, and do) are important factors for mental and spiritual strength.
- Basic life style principles have been given by God and cannot be neglected without heavy consequences.
- The home environment is where the foundation of life style and habit is laid.
- Moderation and self-control are two of the most valuable gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

PRINCIPLES OF LIFE STYLE EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

1. Explain the interrelationship of the following basic principles of practical life.

- **Nourishment** (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- **Abstinence** (Acts 15:20).
- **Exercise** (1 Timothy 4:8).
- **Rest and restoration** (Mark 6:31).
- **Useful labor and thoroughness** (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- **Careful use of talents** (Matthew 25:27).

“Physical culture is an essential part of all right methods of education. The young need to be taught how to develop their physical powers, how to preserve these powers in the best condition, and how to make them useful in the practical duties of life.” –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 425.

2. What basic health needs must be met daily? List 8 to 10, beginning with those contained in the following quotation.

“There are many ways of practicing the healing art, but there is only one way that Heaven approves. God’s remedies are the simple agencies of nature that will not tax or debilitate the system through their powerful properties. Pure air and water, cleanliness, a proper diet, purity of life, and a firm trust in God are remedies for the want of which thousands are dying; yet these remedies are going out of date because their skillful use requires work that the people do not appreciate. Fresh air, exercise, pure water, and clean, sweet premises are within the reach of all with but little expense;...” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 443.

THE FIRST, BEST SCHOOL

3. Give some reasons why the home is the most influential school in God’s plan of education. Describe some Scriptural examples showing the results of such education. For example, see the following texts:

- Genesis 39:2, 3.
- Numbers 12:3.
- 1 Samuel 7:13.
- Daniel 1:19, 20.
- Luke 2:51, 52.
- 2 Timothy 1:5.

“The place for physical training to begin is in the home, with the little child. Parents should lay the foundation for a healthy, happy life. One of the first questions to be decided is that of the food on their tables; for this is a matter upon which the development of the little ones and the health of the family very largely depend. Skill in the preparation of food is very important, and it is not less important that the food be of the proper quantity and quality.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 425.

“Parents, remember that the training of your children is your life-work. You are under obligation to make yourselves examples of what you desire your children to become. In the home you are to be the Lord’s physicians—healers of physical, mental, and spiritual afflictions. Keep in touch with your sons and daughters as they grow from childhood to manhood and womanhood. Be sure that their physical habits are such as will help them to build up strong, symmetrical characters. Allow in the home nothing that savors of cheapness or commonness. You are preparing your children for entrance into the City of God, and nothing that defiles can enter there.” —*Signs of the Times*, September 16, 1903.

- 4. Explain what the home needs to be like for it to function as the very best place for the child’s all-round education—physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually. Proverbs 22:6.**

“A child’s first school should be his home. His first instructors should be his father and his mother. His first lessons should be the lessons of respect, obedience, reverence, and self-control. If he is not instructed aright by his parents, Satan will instruct him in evil through agencies that are most objectionable. How important, then, is the school in the home! Here the character is first shaped. Here the destiny of souls is often largely influenced. Even the parents who are endeavoring to do their best have not a hundredth part of the realization they should have of the value of a human soul.” —*Peter’s Counsel to Parents*, p. 42.

BIBLICAL VALUES

- 5. Describe how the Biblical value of moderation (temperance) impacts every side of a human being. Galatians 5:23; Acts 24:25.**

“We should educate ourselves, not only to live in harmony with the laws of health, but to teach others the better way.... This matter must not be passed over as non-essential; for nearly every family needs to be

stirred up on the question. The conscience must be aroused to the duty of practicing the principles of true reform. God requires that His people shall be temperate in all things. Unless they practice true temperance, they will not, they cannot, be susceptible to the sanctifying influence of the truth.” –*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 451.

6. Why is self-control or self-discipline worth more than millions of dollars? Deuteronomy 4:9; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Thessalonians 5: 22.

“Let the habit of self-control be early established. Let the youth be impressed with the thought that they are to be masters, and not slaves. Of the kingdom within them God has made them rulers, and they are to exercise their Heaven-appointed kingship. When such instruction is faithfully given, the results will extend far beyond the youth themselves. Influences will reach out that will save thousands of men and women who are on the very brink of ruin.” –*Education*, pp. 203, 204.

“How can they discipline their children aright till they learn the meaning and the value of self-discipline? How can they lead their children up the difficult heights of self-control, self-denial, patience, and truthfulness, unless they first climb these heights themselves?

“A parent gives way to temper before the child, and then wonders why the child is so difficult to control. But what could he expect? Children are quick to imitate; and the child is but putting into practice the lessons taught him by his parents in their outbursts of anger.” –*Review and Herald*, July 8, 1902.

7. What promise of the Saviour is for every parent and teacher who is responsible for teaching self-control to children and youth? Matthew 28:20. What is essential for success in this area?

“We urge that the principles of temperance be carried into all the details of home life; that the example of the parents should be a lesson of temperance; that self-denial and self-control should be taught to the children, and enforced upon them, so far as consistent, from babyhood. And first it is important that the little ones be taught that they eat to live, and not live to eat; that the appetite must be held in subjection to the will; and that the will must be governed by calm, intelligent reason.” –*Review and Herald*, September 23, 1884.

“Let them, by observing strict temperance themselves, give the right stamp of character to their children, and then educate and train these children, in the fear of God, to habits of self-denial and self-control. Youth who have been thus trained will have moral stamina to resist temptation, and to control appetite and passion. They will stand unmoved by the folly and dissipation that are corrupting society.” —*Gospel Temperance Work*, p. 14.

FOR PERSONAL CONSIDERATION AND GROUP DISCUSSION

- **Education in how to conduct one's life in a practical sense, health reform, cleanliness, neatness, and dispatch are very important; but they need to stay in balance with the intellectual and spiritual realms and not degenerate into rigidity, self-righteousness, or fanaticism (one-sidedness). What will keep the family free of such dangers?**
- **Children often seek to gain the upper hand over their parents by demanding or refusing food and other physical things. Discuss how the following counsel applies to this and related areas of practical life.**

“The mother should not allow her child to gain an advantage over her in a single instance; and, in order to maintain this authority, it is not necessary to resort to harsh measures; a firm, steady hand, and a kindness which convinces the child of your love, will accomplish the purpose.” —*Signs of the Times*, April 20, 1882.

“One precious lesson which the mother will need to repeat again and again is that the child is not to rule; he is not the master, but her will and her wishes are to be supreme. Thus she is teaching them self-control. Give them nothing for which they cry, even if your tender heart desires ever so much to do this; for if they gain the victory once by crying they will expect to do it again. The second time the battle will be more vehement.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 92.

Intellectual Education

Part 1

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” 1 Corinthians 1:26, 27.

THEMES

- The intellect (for the purpose of this study, we’ll call it the mind and consider it the area that deals with facts, logic, and skill) must be connected to and guided by moral judgment and spiritual values.
- There are major differences between how God wants the intellect to be trained and how the world’s educational systems train it.
- Research into brain development shows how amazing the Creator’s handiwork is and provides guidelines how to teach in the most effective ways at different stages of life.

TRAINING THE INTELLECT

“The chief subjects of study in these schools [of the prophets] were the law of God, with the instructions given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 593.

1. Select one of these subjects and then answer the following questions concerning it?

- What would constitute the factual side of this subject?
- What learning methods might be used to obtain and retain the facts of the subject (e.g., listening to an instructor, reading and repetition, underlining, taking notes, making outlines, memorization, study questions, research and writing, discussion, practice)?

- What would the social and moral sides of this subject include?
 - Which learning methods might be used to derive, examine, and evaluate the moral issues?
 - What spiritual issues would relate to this subject?
 - How might an instructor help his students discover and discern the spiritual issues of the subject?
- 2. What important principle is present in the education which God intends for every human being? Romans 14:5, last part. Thus, how does our concept of morality govern *what* we learn and teach, as well as the *way* we learn and teach?**

“Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions.” —*Education*, pp. 17, 18.

- 3. Explain how this ideal was achieved in the lives of Daniel and his friends. Daniel 1:17-20.**

A COMPARISON

- 4. What do you see as the focus of this university’s statement? How does it compare with the focus of the note to question 2? See Job 28:15-18.**

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth.”—*Education*, pp. 18, 19.

5. What was the experience of King Solomon in this area? Ecclesiastes 1:18; 12:14. Why is this so? Ecclesiastes 2:13; 1 Corinthians 8:1, last part.

“Whenever pride and ambition are indulged, the life is marred, for pride, feeling no need, closes the heart against the infinite blessings of Heaven. He who makes self-glorification his aim will find himself destitute of the grace of God, through whose efficiency the truest riches and the most satisfying joys are won. But he who gives all and does all for Christ will know the fulfillment of the promise, ‘The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it’. Proverbs 10:22.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 60.

“All the sins and excesses of Solomon can be traced to his great mistake in ceasing to rely upon God for wisdom, and to walk in humility before Him.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1031.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND INTELLECT

Research into how the brain develops reveals that during the first 10 years of life there is a dynamic phase of “synapse” building, in which the brain opens “windows” in a sequence planned by the Creator and builds connections, all the while searching for and matching up likenesses and differences. The more patterns and connections a child recognizes between various objects and concepts, the greater is his understanding. Around the age of 10, the brain changes phases, cutting off areas of the brain that have not been “opened up” and strengthening those that have been. Thus, what a child learns in his first 10 years is supremely important; beginning an entirely new area of learning later is more difficult.

6. Parents are very aware of how quickly a child is able to learn something and also how quickly he can forget it. How does this confirm Moses’ counsel as the optimal method for educating children? Deuteronomy 6:5-7

7. What does it imply about the importance of first learning practical things before burdening the mind with many hours in the classroom or focusing on intellectual studies? Proverbs 22:6.

“The mother should be the teacher, and home the school where every child receives his first lessons; and these lessons should include habits of industry. Mothers, let the little ones play in the open air; let them listen to the songs of the birds and learn the love of God as expressed in His beautiful works. Teach them simple lessons from the book of nature and the things about them; and as their minds expand, lessons from books may be added and firmly fixed in the memory. But let them also learn, even in their earliest years, to be useful. Train them to think that, as members of the household, they are to act an interested, helpful part in sharing the domestic burdens, and to seek healthful exercise in the performance of necessary home duties.

“Such a training is of untold value to a child, and this training need not be a painful process. It can be so given that the child will find pleasure in learning to be helpful. Mothers can amuse their children while teaching them to perform little offices of love, little home duties. This is the mother’s work—patiently to instruct her children, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. And in doing this work, the mother herself will gain an invaluable training and discipline.” —*Child Guidance*, pp. 301, 302.

POINTS TO DISCUSS

- **Consider the two concepts of wisdom and intellectual learning. How are they similar, and how are they different? Which should come first, and why?**
- **Imagine a kindergarten setting in which 30 or more 5-year-old (or younger) children spend 3-5 hours together in a classroom each day. What will be the likely result for the children? Will they learn more from the other children (whether good or bad) or from the teacher?**

- **Discuss how the following inspired counsel can be followed practically where you live:**

“The only schoolroom for children until eight or ten years of age should be in the open air, amid the opening flowers and nature’s beautiful scenery, and their most familiar textbook the treasures of nature. These lessons, imprinted upon the minds of young children amid the pleasant, attractive scenes of nature, will not be soon forgotten.” *—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 80.

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Sabbath, November 15, 2003

Intellectual Education Part 2

*“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
1 Peter 1:13.*

THEMES

- The understanding and exercise of proper discipline are essential and a great blessing.
- A distinction is made in Biblical education between that which is important and that which is not, as well as between the sacred and the common.
- In intellectual development, the Biblical values to learn include respect, responsibility, honesty, humility, patience, and perseverance.

A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF DISCIPLINE

1. **What two extremes in discipline have ruined untold numbers of children and left their characters scarred? Proverbs 13:24; Colossians 3:21.**

“Great harm is done by a lack of firmness and decision. I have known parents to say, You cannot have this or that, and then relent, thinking they may be too strict, and give the child the very thing they at first refused. A lifelong injury is thus inflicted....

“When it is necessary for parents to give a direct command, the penalty of disobedience should be as unvarying as are the laws of nature. Children who are under this firm, decisive rule know that when a thing is forbidden or denied, no teasing or artifice will secure their object. Hence they soon learn to submit and are much happier in so doing. The children of undecided and overindulgent parents have a constant hope that coaxing, crying, or sullenness may gain their object, or that they may venture to disobey without suffering the penalty. Thus they are kept in a state of desire, hope, and uncertainty, which makes them restless, irritable, and insubordinate. God holds such parents guilty of wrecking the happiness of their children. This wicked mismanagement is the key to the impenitence and irreligion of thousands. It has proved the ruin of many who have professed the Christian name....

“Children are sensitive to the least injustice, and some become discouraged under it and will neither heed the loud, angry voice of command, nor care for threatenings of punishment. Rebellion is too frequently established in the hearts of children through the wrong discipline of the parents, when if a proper course had been taken, the children would have formed good and harmonious characters. A mother who does not have perfect control of herself is unfit to have the management of children.

“When the mother gives her child a jerk or blow, do you think it enables him to see the beauty of the Christian character? No indeed; it only tends to raise evil feelings in the heart, and the child is not corrected at all.” —*Child Guidance*, pp. 283, 284, 282.

2. Proper discipline is essential. Explain what it consists of. Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 1:7, 8, 10; 29:15; Luke 11:11.

«The mother should not be governed by the world’s opinion, nor labor to reach its standard. She should decide for herself what is the great end and aim of life and then bend all her efforts to attain that end. She may, for want of time, neglect many things about her house, with no serious evil results; but she cannot with impunity neglect the proper discipline of her children. Their defective characters will publish her unfaithfulness. The evils which she permits to pass uncorrected, the coarse, rough manners, the disrespect and disobedience, the habits of idleness and inattention, will reflect dishonor upon her and embitter her life. Mothers, the destiny

of your children rests to a great extent in your hands. If you fail in duty, you may place them in Satan's ranks, and make them his agents to ruin other souls. Or your faithful discipline and godly example may lead them to Christ, and they in turn will influence others, and thus many souls may be saved through your instrumentality.

"Parents are to cooperate with God by bringing their children up in His love and fear. They cannot displease Him more than by neglecting to train their children aright.... Kindly, interestedly, tenderly, parents are to work for their children, cultivating every good thing and repressing every evil thing which develops in the characters of their little ones."—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 267, 268.

THE SACRED VS. THE COMMON

3. What motivates parents to exercise this proper discipline, and what makes it possible for them to be successful? Psalm 128; Proverbs 13:25; Isaiah 49:25; 3 John 4.

"Children will be happier, far happier, under proper discipline than if left to do as their untrained impulses suggest.

"Prompt and continual obedience to wise parental rule will promote the happiness of the children themselves, as well as the honor of God and the good of society. Children should learn that in submission to the laws of the household is their perfect liberty. Christians will learn the same lesson—that in their obedience to God's law is their perfect freedom."—*Child Guidance*, p. 79.

4. What principle of Scripture is grossly violated in society, in the media, in schools (particularly as a result of teaching evolution), and even in churches? Leviticus 10:10; Jeremiah 10:2.

"Americans are particularly concerned about the discourteous and disrespectful conduct of children, and they hold parents primarily responsible for this phenomenon. People say that too many parents don't invest the energy needed to teach their children good behavior, and that too often they fail to set a good example themselves. But even when parents try hard, Americans say, social forces—especially in popular culture and the entertainment media—routinely undercut their efforts."—*Public Agenda Online Special Edition 2002*.

“Every one has a work to do to learn the lessons of justice, humility, patience, purity, and love. These traits of character are more precious in the sight of our Lord than offerings of gold or silver. They are more acceptable to him than the most costly sacrifice.” —*Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 232.

BIBLICAL VALUES IN INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION

5. Examine and define the following three Biblical values, and explain how they belong to the proper development of the human intellect (both child and adult).

- **Respect** for God, other human beings, all creation, and sacred things (relationships, marriage, family). Psalm 119:6, 15; 138:6; 1 Peter 2:17.

“Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments.” “I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways.” “Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off.” Psalm 119:6, 15; 138:6, King James Version.

- **Personal responsibility.** Ecclesiastes 9:10; Luke 6:31.
- **Honesty.** 2 Corinthians 8:21; 1 Peter 2:12.

“Let only pleasant words be spoken by parents to their children, and respectful words by children to their parents. Attention must be given to these things in the home life; for if, in their character building, children form right habits, it will be much easier for them to be taught by God and to be obedient to His requirements....

“Indulge in no foolish talking in your house. Even very young children will be benefited by ‘the form of sound words.’ But idle and foolish words exchanged between father and mother will lead to the same kind of words among the children; while right, candid, truthful, and serious words will lead to the same in all the household and will lead to right actions also.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 437, 438.

6. Now consider the following Biblical values, and define and explain how they fit into the development of the human intellect (again, both for children and for adults).

- **Humility.** 1 Peter 5:5; Proverbs 16:19; Isaiah 57:15; Matthew 18:4; James 4:6, 10.
- **Patience.** James 1:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 2:24, 25.
- **Perseverance.** Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 24:13.

7. What challenges confront all who take up the task of educating children and youth? Ecclesiastes 11:6.

“The children and youth under the teacher’s care differ widely in disposition, habits, and training. Some have no definite purpose or fixed principles. They need to be awakened to their responsibilities and possibilities. Few children have been rightly trained at home. Some have been household pets. Their whole training has been superficial. Allowed to follow inclination and to shun responsibility and burden bearing, they lack stability, perseverance, and self-denial. These often regard all discipline as an unnecessary restraint. Others have been censured and discouraged. Arbitrary restraint and harshness have developed in them obstinacy and defiance. If these deformed characters are reshaped, the work must, in most cases, be done by the teacher. In order to accomplish it successfully, he must have the sympathy and insight that will enable him to trace to their cause the faults and errors manifest in his pupils. He must have also the tact and skill, the patience and firmness, that will enable him to impart to each the needed help—to the vacillating and ease loving, such encouragement and assistance as will be a stimulus to exertion; to the discouraged, sympathy and appreciation that will create confidence and thus inspire effort.” —*Education*, pp. 279, 280.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- **The Biblical values being presented in these lessons (and more will follow in the subsequent weeks) are essential to be taught to children. So far, we have touched on moderation, self-control, respect, responsibility, honesty, humility, patience, and perseverance. Select at least one of these values and discuss how it is taught at varying stages of child development. (For example: What differences are there be in the way one would teach patience to a 4-year-old child, as opposed to a 12-year-old?)**

- **In what ways can we and our children maintain respect for sacred things (e.g., God, the Bible and the truths it contains, life itself, less favored individuals, certain nationalities, parents, and the family) when disrespect for such things pervades society and especially the media?**
- **In the light of the following statement, explain the relationship which exists between intellectual education and spiritual education.**

“The minds of men need literary as well as spiritual training that they may be harmoniously developed; for without literary training, men cannot fill acceptably various positions of trust.”—*Christian Education*, p. 136.

- **What relationship is there between morality and the development of the intellect?**
-

Spiritual Education

Part 1

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.” John 15:4.

THEMES

- The spiritual side of Biblical education encompasses the great matters of redemption (repentance, conversion, justification by faith, sanctification), the hope of eternal life, one’s personal relationship with God, a love for heavenly principles, and a oneness of purpose with Heaven.
- The spiritual life is fed by revelation (different types of communication from and with God).
- The teacher has a responsibility to connect the student to Jesus, not merely to himself.
- Many Biblical values come together and are active in the individual’s relationship with God and with other people; four of them are put in focus in this lesson.

THE GIFT OF LIFE

1. **As physical life is a gift (one comes into being through no knowledge or volition of his own) and comes about through love, so spiritual life is a gift and also comes about through love. How does the Bible present this? John 3:16; 6:63; Romans 6:23; 1 John 4:9.**
2. **How is spiritual life sustained? Psalm 119:11, 116, 130; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 4:4.**

3. What are God's means of revelation to and communication with each individual? Psalm 19:1; 119:105; 143:10; Matthew 6:26.

“Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual intercourse with our heavenly Father. Our minds may be drawn out toward Him; we may meditate upon His works, His mercies, His blessings; but this is not, in the fullest sense, communing with Him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life.

“Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 93.

4. Which character of God's law was consistently and constantly reflected in Jesus' life and teaching? Romans 7:14.

“In all His lessons, Jesus presented to men the worthlessness of ceremonial obedience. He sought to impress men with the spirituality of the law, unveiling its vital principles, and making plain its eternal obligations. The righteousness of the law was presented to the world in the character of Christ, and the holy, benevolent, and paternal attributes of God were revealed in His dealings with mankind. He explained the solemn relation which existed between man and God, between man and his fellowman. He taught the necessity of prayer, repentance, faith, virtue, and perfection of character.”—*Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1890.

THE AIM OF SPIRITUAL TEACHING

5. As in intellectual instruction, what does God want the teacher of spiritual matters to do for his students? 2 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 6:1; John 17:3.

“The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. It lights up the far-distant past, where

human research seeks vainly to penetrate. In God's word we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. Here are recorded the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the greatest men this world has ever known. Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted, and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; and all is but a revelation of the character of God. In the reverent contemplation of the truths presented in His word the mind of the student is brought into communion with the infinite mind. Such a study will not only refine and ennoble the character, but it cannot fail to expand and invigorate the mental powers."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 596, 599.

6. What must the teacher keep in mind in order to do this? Acts 9:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:21.

"None but He who has created man can effect a change in the human heart. God alone can give the increase. Every teacher is to realize that he is to be moved by divine agencies. The human judgment and ideas of the most experienced are liable to be imperfect and faulty, and the frail instrument, subject to his own hereditary traits of character, has need to submit to the sanctification of the Holy Spirit every day, else self will gather the reins and want to drive. In the meek and lowly spirit of the learner all human methods and plans and ideas must be brought to God for His correction and endorsement; otherwise the restless energy of Paul or the skillful logic of Apollos will be powerless to effect the conversion of souls."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 167.

7. What principle is active when our relationships with God and with our fellowmen are proper? Luke 10:27.

"The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to cooperate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164.

BIBLICAL VALUES IN RELATIONSHIPS

Although other values are also essential in our relationship to God and our fellow beings, we want to concentrate here on only four.

8. Explain how the parent and teacher cannot simply teach about but must actually transmit the following important values to those under his tutelage by the way he teaches and how he lives his own life.

- **Love.** 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8.
- **Joy.** Psalm 5:11; 35:27; 67:4.
- **Peace.** Galatians 6:14-16; Philippians 4:4-7; Colossians 3:15.
- **Gratitude.** Psalm 30:4; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 9:10, 11; Colossians 2:6, 7.

POINTS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

- **In our relationship with God, what percentage of the communication flows from God to man, and how much of the communication flows from man to God? How much is this communication dependent on God, and how much is it dependent on the person?**
- **How does one's relationship with God impact his every other relationship? Choose and consider this from the perspective of some specific types of relationships (such as that between father and son, among siblings, or between young people).**
- **In what contrasting settings is our spiritual side particularly exercised? See the following two statements:**

“Love for a lost world was manifested every day, in every act of His [Jesus’] life. Those who are imbued by His spirit will work in the same lines as those in which Christ worked. In Christ the light and love of God were manifested in human nature. No human being has ever possessed so sensitive a nature as did the sinless, Holy One of God, who stood as head and representative of what humanity may become through the imparting of the divine nature.” —(*Youth’s Instructor*, August 16, 1894) *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 249.

“No resentment must come into our hearts. When reviled, we must not revile again. O jealousy and evil surmising, what mischief have ye wrought! how have ye turned friendship and love into bitterness and hatred! We must be less proud, less sensitive, have less self-love, and be dead to self-interest. Our interest must be submerged in Christ and we be able to say: ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’” —(*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 566.

- **For a parent or teacher, what joy do you think is even greater than seeing a child or student develop a strong relationship with Jesus?**
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Spiritual Education

Part 2

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” Colossians 3:12-14.

THEMES

- The spiritual life is constantly developing (being trained).
- There are stages or phases in spiritual development, and God Himself is in charge of it in each life; this occurs individually and also at the group level.
- Interaction between people and a sense of one's mission in life are key factors in spiritual life.
- Certain Biblical values are particularly important for service to others.

EVERYONE IS IN SPIRITUAL TRAINING—FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

1. **How does the Bible present the educational development of the spirit? Hosea 14:5-7; Ephesians 4:14-16; 2 Peter 3:18.**

2. **What is one very powerful means that God uses to bring about this growth and development? Psalm 66:10-12; Isaiah 30:20, 21; 48:10; 2 Corinthians 8:2. Why does He use this method?**

“Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness.” —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 61.

- 3. What attitudes do parents and teachers need to develop consciously in children and youth before they will be capable of facing the trials of life with courage and joy? Acts 14: 22. How is it possible to view problems and difficulties as something positive?**

“The mother must realize that God is her helper, that love is her success, her power. If she is a wise Christian, she will not attempt to force the child into submission. She will pray; and as she prays, she will be conscious of a renewal of spiritual life within herself. And she will see that at the same time the power that is working in her is working also in the child. And the child, in the place of being compelled, is led and grows gentler; and the battle is gained. Each kindly thought, each patient action, each word of wise restraint, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. The mother has gained a victory more precious than language can express.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 212.

“I have found that every trial of life is given to teach me a new lesson of my own dependence, and of trust in my heavenly Father. We may believe that God is with us in every place, and in every trying hour we may hold fast that hand which has all power.”—*My Life Today*, p. 336.

- 4. Describe the natural spiritual growth of a child. Mark 4: 26-28.**

“The moral sensibilities of parents must be roused to appreciate the responsibility incumbent upon them in rearing their children with the strength of character, and integrity of purpose to resist temptation, and to present a firm front against the attacks of popular vice, in all its seductive and dangerous phases.”—*The Health Reformer*, November 1, 1877.

- 5. What two illustrations present the dynamic interaction which takes place among spiritual individuals for the purpose of carrying out a noble purpose for God’s kingdom—His church? Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:15, 16; Romans 12:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 12:18-20.**

6. Present some practical ways in which the following Biblical values, which are essential in carrying out life's mission, are developed in a child.

- **Integrity.** 1 Kings 9:4; Psalm 25:20-22; Proverbs 19:1.
- **Kindness.** Ruth 3:10; Proverbs 31:26; Colossians 3:12.
- **Gentleness.** 1 Thessalonians 2:7; 2 Timothy 2:24; James 3:17.
- **Goodness.** Romans 15:14; Ephesians 5:9.
- **Meekness.** Zephaniah 2:3; Galatians 6:1; James 1:21; 3:13.
- **Compassion.** Matthew 14:14; Luke 10:33, 34; Hebrews 5:2; 1 Peter 3:8.
- **Hospitality.** Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2.

“It is natural for the man whose soul is flooded with the love of Jesus, to see in God his father and his friend. He can and will teach others in harmony with the light which shines into the chambers of his heart. He will teach men the one way from sin to righteousness, revealing to the world the character of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.”
—*Review and Herald*, February 10, 1891.

POINTS TO DISCUSS

- **In the Sabbath school and services conducted by the church, there is much presentation of Biblical facts; give some examples of this. What is the purpose in learning these facts?**

- **Consider what Biblical values parents themselves need to plead with God to help them develop so as to be able to handle the circumstances described in the following quotation:**

“Fathers and mothers may study their own character in their children. They may often read humiliating lessons as they see their own imperfections reproduced in their sons and daughters. While seeking to repress and correct in their children hereditary tendencies to evil, parents should call to their aid double patience, perseverance, and love.

“When a child reveals the wrong traits which it has inherited from its parents, shall they storm over this reproduction of their own defects? No, no! Let parents keep a careful watch over themselves, guarding against all coarseness and roughness, lest these defects be seen once more in their children.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 173, 174.

- **What does the following quotation imply about an important part of Biblical education?**

“You who love God, whose minds are stored with precious bits of experience, and with the living realities of eternal life, kindle the flame of love and light in the hearts of God’s people. Help them to deal with the problems of life.” —*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 18.

Biblical Values in Action

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” 1 Corinthians 12:25-27.

THEMES

- Spiritual development always brings the individual into contact with and makes him part of a group.
- Each person has his own personal mission (responsibility, purpose) which fits harmoniously within a larger whole; he needs to keep both the small picture and the big picture in mind at all times.
- The great Master Worker has each individual and the group in His hand.
- When, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all of the individuals in a group cherish the Biblical values of faith, loyalty, commitment, and a strong sense of what is sacred, the group will reflect the image of Christ.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS IN PRACTICE

1. **What occurs when an individual makes the commitment to place His life in God’s hands and live according to the two great commandments? Matthew 22:36-40.**

“Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life.... To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored.

“Like the first is the second commandment—‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Matthew 22:39. The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature. We are fitted for heaven, for we receive heaven into our hearts.” —*Education*, p. 16.

- 2. How does this play out in practical, everyday life? See Proverbs 31:10-31.**
- 3. What spirit is then maintained in the group (the church)? Galatians 6:10.**

“Zeal for God’s glory is the motive implanted by the Holy Spirit; and only the effectual working of the Spirit can implant this motive. Only the power of God can banish self-seeking and hypocrisy. This change is the sign of His working. When the faith we accept destroys selfishness and pretense, when it leads us to seek God’s glory and not our own, we may know that it is of the right order.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 409.

- 4. What small picture and what big picture will each person always keep in mind? James 1:4; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 2:2, 3.**

“The Lord has given to His followers talents of intellect and energy and means. Those who are known to be men of well-balanced minds, who have the love and fear of God before them, should be appointed as elders and deacons; and through the exercise of the ability God has given them, they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They may plan wisely, and educate the individual members of the church to act their part in trading with their Lord’s talents. By a right use of their talents they may increase their efficiency in the cause of God. The church may be visited only occasionally by a minister, and yet be a growing church; for Jesus is our minister, and we are never to think that we are left alone.” —*Review and Herald*, January 17, 1893.

- 5. Why are we not to become frustrated or dictatorial when matters in the family or the church family do not proceed as we think they should? Isaiah 41:13. What should we do? 2 Thessalonians 3:1.**

“The intense longing to see the church imbued with life must be tempered with entire trust in God; for ‘without Me,’ said the great Burden Bearer, ‘ye can do nothing.’ ‘Follow Me.’ He leads the way; we are to follow....

“In simplicity and meekness man is to cooperate with divine agencies, at all times doing his best, yet ever realizing that God is the great Master Workman. He is not to feel self-confident, for thus he will exhaust his reserve force and destroy his mental and physical powers. Though all the workmen now bearing the heaviest burdens should be laid aside, God’s work would be carried forward. Then let our zeal in labor be tempered with reason; let us cease our efforts to do that which the Lord alone can accomplish.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 298.

- 6. What important balance do parents and teachers need to have and teach their students so they may be valuable contributors in group settings and activities? Isaiah 1:18; 1 Samuel 12:7; Acts 17:2.**

“God never designed that one human mind should be under the complete control of another. And those who make efforts to have the individuality of their pupils merged in themselves, to be mind, will, and conscience for them, assume fearful responsibilities. These scholars may, upon certain occasions, appear like well-drilled soldiers; but when the restraint is removed, there will be seen in them a want of independent action from firm principle.

“Those who make it their object so to educate their pupils that they may see and feel that the power lies in themselves to make men and women of firm principle, qualified for any position in life, are the most useful and permanently successful teachers. Their work may not show to the very best advantage to careless observers, and their labors may not be valued as highly as are those of the teacher who holds the minds and wills of his scholars by absolute authority; but the future lives of the pupils will show the fruits of the better plan of education.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 76, 77.

7. Examine the following values and explain why they are indispensable to all who serve under the great Master Worker.

- **Faith.** Matthew 17:20; Hebrews 6:12.
- **Loyalty.** Psalm 101:6; Matthew 24:45, 46; Revelation 17:14.
- **Commitment.** Proverbs 16:3; 1 Peter 4:19.

“Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.” “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” Proverbs 16:3; 1 Peter 4:19, King James Version.

“Are we following Christ with unswerving loyalty, keeping His life of perfect obedience, of purity and self-sacrifice, ever before us, that, by beholding, we may become changed into His image? Do we strive to imitate His fidelity? If we educate ourselves to say, Be Thou my Pattern; if by the eye of faith we see Him as a living Saviour, we shall be strengthened to follow Him. Then with the undefiled we shall follow Him in the future life. As eye- and heart-witnesses, we can bear testimony to His majesty; for by faith we have been with Him in the holy mount.” *—Review and Herald*, April 12, 1898.

POINTS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS

- **Jesus’ life was a study in perfect balance. Discuss the practical ways in which some of the themes we have considered were exemplified in His practical life and actions (e.g., physical / spiritual, intellectual / spiritual, left-brain / right-brain thinking, rectitude / love, perfection / compassion).**
- **Consider the habits in Jesus’ life which made it possible for Him to accomplish His mission in just three and half years.**

- **In this light, what is the significance of the following statement for us at this exact moment in history?**

“If those who claimed to have a living experience in the things of God had done their appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would have been warned ere this, and the Lord Jesus would have come in power and great glory.” —*Review and Herald*, October 6, 1896.

11

Sabbath, December 13, 2003

Protecting and Abstaining

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.” Isaiah 26:3.

THEMES

- The body, soul, and spirit need to be preserved from evil.
- Jesus’ life was a lesson book in practically living a holy life.
- Biblical education presents ways to maintain purity of heart and soul.
- Confidence and trust in God are the strongest possible weapons against doubt or unbelief.

EXHORTATIONS TO WATCHFULNESS

1. **What is Heaven’s intention for every person? 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8-10; John 6:40.**
2. **Amid the perils of earth’s final days, as listed in 2 Timothy 3:1-7, what will preserve God’s children from evil? 1 Thesalonians 5:15-24.**

“With the growing contempt for God’s law there is an increasing distaste for religion, an increase of pride, love of pleasure, disobedience to parents, and self-indulgence; and thoughtful minds everywhere are anxiously inquiring, What can be done to correct these alarming evils? The answer is found in Paul’s exhortation to Timothy, ‘Preach the word.’ In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an _expression of divine wisdom. It opens to man’s understanding the great problems of life, and to all who heed its precepts it will prove an unerring guide, keeping them from wasting their lives in misdirected effort.

“God has made known His will, and it is folly for man to question that which has gone out of His lips. After Infinite Wisdom has spoken, there can be no doubtful questions for man to settle, no wavering possibilities for him to adjust. All that is required of him is a frank, earnest concurrence in the expressed will of God. Obedience is the highest dictate of reason as well as of conscience.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 506.

THE GREAT TEACHER’S LIFE PROVIDED THE BEST INSTRUCTION

- 3. List some practical means Jesus used in living the perfect life. Begin with the following Bible texts: Luke 2:49, 51; 4: 16-21; 6:12; Mark 2:15; John 4:34.**

- 4. What wonderful ideal did He place before us? 1 Peter 2: 21-25. What special helps are available to us? Hebrews 4: 14-16; 8:1; Matthew 11:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:8, last part.**

THE FRONTS AND WEAPONS OF THE BATTLE

- 5. On what fronts does Biblical education train students to fight, and alongside whom? Joshua 23:11-13; Ephesians 6: 11-13; Deuteronomy 1:30; Psalm 35:1; John 18:36; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Timothy 6:12.**

6. **Select one area of our being that needs to be protected from evil, according to 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Then explain ways in which its purity is protected (some examples are: prevention, abstention, submission, connection, and resistance). See also Job 10:12; Psalm 37:27, 28; James 4:7.**
7. **How powerful and effective can trust and confidence in God be? Proverbs 18:10; Isaiah 26:4; John 14:12; Hebrews 10:35-37; 1 John 5:13-15.**

“Faith is simple in its operation and powerful in its results. Many professed Christians, who have a knowledge of the sacred word, and believe its truth, fail in the childlike trust that is essential to the religion of Jesus. They do not reach out with that peculiar touch that brings the virtue of healing to the soul. They allow cold doubt to creep in and destroy their confidence. He who waits for entire knowledge before he can exercise faith, will never be blessed of God.”—*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 322.

“Christ desired the disciples to understand that they were not to be bereft of power because He was going to His Father. The promise He made to them is for us. If we will take it just as it reads, we shall feel such confidence and such trust in God and the truth that He will be able to reveal His power through us. By our good works we shall show our faith. We can receive power and grace from Christ to enable us to work the works of God. And let us ever remember that we are never to take any credit to ourselves for the work we do. There is nothing good in us; therefore we should not seek to glorify ourselves. God is to receive all the glory.”—*The Gospel Herald*, March 1, 1901.

POINTS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS

- **The saying is that a good offense is better than a good defense. Give an example of a spiritual defense and a corresponding offense.**
- **How does the following quotation apply to protecting the treasure of moral purity?**

“Heart and mind are to be trained to preserve their purity by receiving daily supplies from the fountain of eternal truth.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 13.

- **Discuss how this concept is active for those living in the final generation before Jesus comes. Revelation 14:4, 5.**

12

Sabbath, December 20, 2003

The Gift of Choice

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” Deuteronomy 30:19.

THEMES

- God wants and can accept only service that is voluntarily given.
- One of the greatest tasks of parents and teachers is to train children and youth how to make decisions.
- Motivation is much stronger than obligation and also produces totally different results.
- The eternal kingdom will be made up individuals who both hope and choose.

ACCEPTABLE SERVICE

1. **Why can God work only with a person who voluntarily chooses His service? Romans 6:16-18; Psalm 40:8.**

“Every child should understand the true force of the will. He should be led to see how great is the responsibility involved in this gift. The will is ... the power of decision, or choice.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 209.

“We have a heaven to win; a possession to gain that requires the vigilant exercise of every spiritual muscle. Half-hearted work will not do here. God will accept nothing short of whole-hearted service, willing obedience.” —*Review and Herald*, April 12, 1887.

2. What do the Scriptures explain concerning this? Matthew 6:22, 24; James 1:6-8; 4:8; Psalm 12:2.

“God does not force the will of any; hence He cannot lead those who are too proud to be taught, who are bent upon having their own way. Of the double-minded man—he who seeks to follow his own will, while professing to do the will of God—it is written, ‘Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.’ James 1:7.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 384.

TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO MAKE DECISIONS

3. What principle is active for parents and teachers who help children and students learn how to make good choices? Matthew 25:21, 23; Luke 16:10-12.

“Let the youth and the little children be taught to choose for themselves that royal robe woven in heaven’s loom, the ‘fine linen, clean and white’ which all the holy ones of earth will wear. This robe, Christ’s own spotless character, is freely offered to every human being. But all who receive it will receive and wear it here.

“Let the children be taught that as they open their minds to pure, loving thoughts and do loving and helpful deeds, they are clothing themselves with His beautiful garment of character. This apparel will make them beautiful and beloved here and will hereafter be their title of admission to the palace of the King.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 536, 537.

4. How can this be done?

“Study how to teach the children to be thoughtful of others. The youth should be early accustomed to submission, self-denial, and regard for others’ happiness. They should be taught to subdue the hasty temper, to withhold the passionate word, to manifest unvarying kindness, courtesy, and self-control.

“How carefully should parents manage their children in order to counteract every inclination to selfishness! They should continually suggest ways by which their children may become thoughtful for others and learn to do things for their fathers and mothers, who are doing everything for them.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 133.

MOTIVATION VS. OBLIGATION

5. What contrast does the Spirit of Prophecy present between a religion of obligation and one motivated by love? Philemon 14; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Romans 12:8.

“There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action.... A profession of Christ without this deep love is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 44, 45.

6. How does this apply to the education of youth? Hebrew 13:17.

“The young are often urged to do duty, to speak or pray in meeting; urged to die to pride. Every step they are urged. Such religion is worth nothing. Let the carnal heart be changed, and it will not be such drudgery...”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 162.

“The thoughts must be centered upon God. Now is the time to put forth earnest effort to overcome the natural tendencies of the carnal heart.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 315.

7. Explain the connection between hope and choice. Romans 5:5; 8:24, 25.

“We are not to be driven to Christ. It is our part to come—to make our own choice, and come to the fountain of life. Why should we not come to Christ? for in Him our hope of eternal life is centered. The lessons that have come to us through Christ are not oft-repeated maxims; they are full of vital thought. But it is our part to appropriate divine truth. The apostle Paul exhorts us to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel. By faith we are to appropriate the promises of God, and to provide ourselves with the abundant blessings which have been secured for us through Christ Jesus. Hope has been set before us, even the hope of eternal life. Nothing short of this blessing for us will satisfy our Redeemer; but it is our part to lay hold upon this hope by faith in Him who has promised.”—(*Review and Herald*, June 9, 1896) *Lift Him Up*, p. 331.

POINTS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS

- **Children and youth are taught how to think for themselves and to make good choices based on the natural law of cause and effect (sowing and reaping, according to Job 4:8; Galatians 6:7, etc.). Review the following statement, and discuss the balance to be sought and the extremes to be avoided:**

“On the other hand, the young should not be left to think and act independently of the judgment of their parents and teachers. Children should be taught to respect experienced judgment and to be guided by their parents and teachers.... They should be so educated that their minds will be united with the minds of their parents and teachers, and so instructed that they can see the propriety of heeding their counsel. Then when they go forth from the guiding hand of their parents and teachers, their characters will not be like the reed trembling in the wind.

“The severe training of youth—without properly directing them to think and act for themselves as their own capacity and turn of mind will allow, that by this means they may have growth of thought, feelings of self-respect, and confidence in their own ability to perform—will ever produce a class who are weak in mental and moral power. And when they stand in the world to act for themselves, they will reveal the fact that they were trained, like the animals, and not educated. Their wills, instead of being guided, were forced into subjection by the harsh discipline of parents and teachers.”—*Child Guidance*, pp. 226, 227.

- Although this is an individual family matter and the instruction must be tailor made for each child, discuss some practical ways in which children and youth can be taught how to make good decisions.
- How is the church directly affected by the way children are taught at home?

***Please read the Missionary Report
from Belice on page 118.***

13

Sabbath, December 27, 2003

A Power in the World

*“That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.”
Psalm 144:12.*

THEMES

- Biblical education, when accepted and practiced, makes a person the head, not the tail, in society.
- The Christian home is one of several spiritual fortresses in a corrupt world, where children become empowered to stand for the right—for God.
- Spiritual defenses are built by training children in the Biblical values.
- Those who have a constant sense of the reality of eternity and cherish it will be a power in the world.

1. List some elements of Biblical education—to which God has devoted every possible heavenly resource—which make His children a positive power in the world, as presented or implied in the following texts.

- Exodus 19:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9.
- Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 14:2; 26:16-19.
- Jeremiah 9:23, 24.
- Daniel 2:20-22.
- Matthew 5:13-16.
- Romans 15:4.
- Philippians 2:13-15.
- Titus 2:11-14.

“If all who claim to be children of God would respond to the earnest prayer of Christ [John 17:19-21], if they would refuse to give up the determination to answer that prayer as true disciples, they would become one with Christ and one with their brethren. Then Christianity would be a power in the world, to convict souls and convert them to Christ. By the unity and love of the believers, the world would be given evidence of the power of the gospel. The believers would be bound up with Christ in God, and thus they would testify to the world that God has sent His Son into the world to refine, ennoble, and sanctify the church.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, p. 362.

2. What type of power is supremely valuable? Proverbs 14:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 27-31; 2:4, 5; Zechariah 4:6; Luke 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:7.

“Moral and spiritual perfection, through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all. Jesus is the source of power, the fountain of life. He brings us to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves

for the healing of sin-sick souls. He leads us to the throne of God, and puts into our mouth a prayer through which we are brought into close contact with Himself. In our behalf He sets in operation the all-powerful agencies of heaven. At every step we touch His living power.

“God fixes no limit to the advancement of those who desire to be ‘filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.’ Through prayer, through watchfulness, through growth in knowledge and understanding, they are to be ‘strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power.’ “ *—The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 478.

IMPREGNABLE FORTRESSES

3. How does the human soul become an impregnable fortress in the world? Psalm 112:2.

“The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery. The angels of God, seraphim and cherubim, the powers commissioned to cooperate with human agencies, look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven.” *—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 18.

“Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan. ‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ “ *—Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1903.

4. For God, what is His church? 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:20-22.

“The church of Christ, enfeebled, defective as she may appear, is the one object on earth upon which He bestows in a special sense His love and His regard. The church is the theatre of His grace, in which He delights in making experiments of His mercy on human hearts. The Holy Spirit is His representative, and It works to effect transformations so wonderful

that angels look upon them with astonishment and joy. Heaven is full of rejoicing when the members of the human family are seen to be full of compassion for one another, loving one another as Christ has loved them. The church is God's fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world."—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1554.

5. What is the position of the family? What power may parents have as they instill Biblical values in their children? John 14:23, 26.

"The family circle is the school in which the child receives its first and most enduring lessons. Hence parents should be much at home. By precept and example, they should teach their children the love and the fear of God; teach them to be intelligent, social, affectionate, to cultivate habits of industry, economy, and self-denial. By giving their children love, sympathy, and encouragement at home, parents may provide for them a safe and welcome retreat from many of the world's temptations."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 65.

A SENSE OF ETERNAL REALITY

6. How does the constant awareness of eternity act as a great motivator for children, youth, parents, teachers, and the church, not just for their own blessing but in ministry to those around them? Ephesians 4:12.

"We are in view of the eternal world, and how diligently we should count the cost of our influence.... Our opportunities to gain knowledge from heaven have placed upon us large responsibilities, and with intense solicitude, we should inquire, Am I walking in the light? Am I, according to the great light given me, leading in the right way, or making such crooked paths that the lame shall be turned out of the way? How many golden opportunities to know the way of life, to be enriched with heavenly treasures, have been granted to us? How many times have the deep things of God been unfolded before us, and how highly should we prize these precious privileges. We should be pervaded with a deep, abiding sense of the value, sanctity, and authority of the truth. The bright beams of heaven's light are shining upon your pathway, dear youth, and I pray that you may make the most of your opportunities. Receive and cherish every heaven-sent ray, and your path will grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."—*Youth's Instructor*, February 2, 1893.

POINTS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS

- **In light of the following statement, discuss the special, unique strength available to all teachers and students of Biblical education.**

“ ‘If a man love Me,’ Christ says, ‘He will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.’ The power that comes with Christ’s abiding presence is at the command of His believing ones. The man who makes God his trust is barricaded by an impregnable wall.” –*Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1905.

- **How will the joy, challenge, and reward of Biblical education on earth be carried forward in the new earth, and how far? See Isaiah 65:17-25.**
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Missionary Report from Belize
To be read on Sabbath, December 27, 2003
The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered Sabbath, January 3, 2004

“And the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.” Exodus 14:15.

Belize, the former British colony known as British Honduras, gained its independence after a territorial conflict between Britain and Guatemala in 1981. The tourism is now the main industry. English and Spanish are the two official languages, as well as several indigenous dialects: Garifona, Caribbean Criollo, and Ketchi. Belize has a population of approximately 249,000, of which 64.3% are Catholic. The climate is tropical, warm and humid, with rainfall between May and February.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the command “to go forward” has been given to the church around the world and although there is much work to be done, God has promised us, the “children of Israel”, that through Him, we can be victorious and fulfil the commission given to us in Revelation 14:6.

The work of Reformation was first begun in Belize through Brother Uldarico Alejos in 1987. Several years later, brethren from the West Central American Union made contact with the Valle family.

Then, in 1994, the West Central American Union, with financial assistance from the General Conference, sent Brother Pedro Castro to continue the work in Belize. Shortly after this, he was transferred to Honduras, leaving a group of highly motivated canvassers administered by the West Central American Union, which, with the Lord’s help, was able to win precious souls for the truth.

In August 2001 the General Conference Foreign Missions Program resumed the missionary outreach program by transferring Brother C. Iván Rizzo to Belize. Consequently, in March 2002, with the assistance of the ministers from the West Central American Union, several public meetings were successfully held in Progreso and Punta Gorda and many souls were baptized and accepted into the church. Punta Gorda, located in the south of the country, now has the highest number of interested and baptized souls. Tracts were then printed to inform members in neighbouring unions of the need of a house of worship. As a result of many generous contributions and assistance from Canada, land was purchased.

Under the guidance of the West Central American Union leaders, further public meetings were conducted in Punta Gorda in September 2002. Cooking classes were held and free advice was given on natural health treatments while, in the afternoon, children's Bible classes were conducted.

Brother Henry Dering was then invited to help with a series of crusade seminars aimed at leaders from the Pentecostal Movement. The Lord blessed these seminars and we have had many requests for personal Bible studies and the correspondence course.

We now need means to purchase a house of worship. Please help us, dear brothers and sisters, by opening your hearts to the moving of the Holy Spirit and giving us a generous offering for this most urgent need.

We thank you in advance for your offerings and prayers.

*—C. Ivan Rizzo D.
Bibel Worker in Belize*

